

Roof Project – July 2024

This update has some good news and some bad news. The good news is that we have received an estimate for the work needed on the roof from one of the contractors and this came to just short of £1million. I met with another contractor to show him around the building and he hopes to have a quote in by the end of July.

The other good news is that the Church of England has recognised that there are a lot of churches needing some major repairs. Getting funding from various trusts for this work is very difficult. Since COVID this has become more difficult because trusts are now focusing on charities which will directly support people rather than for repairing buildings and particularly those charities based away from the South East. The good news is that a lady called Katherine Prior has joined the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) to give support to churches trying to raise money for building work. She has a lot of experience in this area.

Some good news on the VAT side of things is that from 1 February 2024 the government has extended the zero-rated VAT on energy saving materials (ESMs) to charity buildings. This won't get rid of VAT altogether from your works, but the zero rating will apply to the solar panels and the insulation materials and the installation of both, so there will be some relief there. This concession is currently scheduled to end by 31 March 2027. So, it's an incentive to crack on with things. We could also consider applying to be heritage listed and if accepted then we would not have to pay VAT on the work however it would come with restriction, but is certain something we will be thinking about. As Barney says the latest news is: "Coming soon to a church near you - "Vat on a Hot Zinc Roof".

One of the first tasks she was given was to look at our situation at St Matthew's. She was impressed with how much we had raised and the work we had done but could see we still had a long way to go with a shortening timescale to start this work and estimated costs of the work continuing to rise. She came to visit us and explained the brutal fact that we have assets in the form of the bungalows and all the time the trusts can see these on our books they are not keen on giving us any money. This has been mentioned in our rejection letters from the trusts. Also the amount the trusts will give is in the order of £20k each application.

So the suggestion to sell the bungalows has been discussed at several meetings (Finance and PCC) and a period for reflection and prays was allowed so we came to the right decision. Very reluctantly the decision is to sell the bungalows. We had considered raising a loan against them but we can only just meet our parish share so to try to also service a loan just would not be possible. Without the income from the rent of the bungalows we are going to find it a struggle going forward so some belt tightening will have to take place.

So the bad news is that we are going to start the process to sell the bungalows. Some of you will be aware we have a lovely tenant in one of the bungalows and our concern was to look after them so we will be keeping them fully informed and allowing them to remain for the time being. We have some legal work to do to prepare the bungalows ready for sale. We need to create separate land registry entries for the bungalows which will detail such things as access and drains! So this will take time. Once the refurbishment in bungalow number 3 is completed we will ask estate agents to have a look to give us an estimate on prices we could expect.