

STRAIDE CHURCH CONSERVATION PROJECT UPDATE

Dear Parishioner,

Last year we were advised of two serious problems in relation to our Church in Straide, namely:

- the significant intake of water into the fabric of the building and
- the discovery of dry rot present in some of the wood in the Church.

In order to protect and preserve our Church building, local architect John Halligan was enlisted for advice and guidance. He gave the following recommendations:

- The original (1916) lead flashing under the stone barges on the roof needs to be replaced.
- The gutters and down pipes should, also, be replaced.
- Cracked / broken roof slates need to be replaced.
- Some stone work requires repointing.
- Storm glazing on the windows needs to be replaced.
- Dry rot infected wood needs to be removed, replaced and the affected areas treated.
- The lightening conductors also need to be upgraded.

The cost of the above work was put at €165,000.

However, since the commencement of the works, the situation in relation to the two original problems has been found to have been considerably worse than originally anticipated. The following *additional* issues emerged:

Gallery Area

- All the joists supporting the gallery floor (at the gable end) had been severely rotted by dry rot – to such an extent that the gallery would, almost certainly, have collapsed if remedial work had not been undertaken when it was. All damaged / infected joists have now been replaced and dry rot treatment carried out on all timber in the gallery area.

West Gable

- The dry rot had also spread throughout the entire length and height of the west gable wall. There were even early signs of the brickwork inside the plaster and drylining becoming compromised. All drylining had to be removed and all plaster stripped off before the wall was treated for dry rot. The plaster has now been replaced by mortar and lime render and awaits new drylining.

The Sacristy and Sacristy Entrance Hall

- The sacristy area was particularly badly affected by dry rot. All wood (including the floor and floor joists) had to be removed. The dry lining and plaster on all the internal walls in the sacristy area had also to be removed prior to dry rot treatment being carried out. The plaster has now been replaced by mortar and lime render and awaits new drylining.
- The dry rot had also spread up to some of the rafters of the sacristy roof. These had to be removed and replaced before all the timber in the roof was treated. This work necessitated the tiles being taken off the sacristy roof. The tiles were not put back until such time as the replacement of lead under the adjoining barges of the main church body was completed – in order to avoid possible damage to the new slates.

The Cross on the Bell Tower

- The cross, when examined, was found to be very unstable and, in all likelihood, would not have survived this winter's storms had it not been removed. It was also found to be badly corroded - to such an extent that it is more cost efficient to replace it rather than repair it. A new one is now being made locally.

Wet Rot

- Wet rot was found in the roof rafters in the area where the main roof is attached to the gable of the sanctuary wall. This came about due to water coming in through cracked tiles and corroded lead flashing in that area of the roof. This explains why the arch over the sanctuary had begun to crumble in recent years – due to water ingress. The same wet rot problem was identified in rafters in the area where the roof of the sanctuary joins the east gable. In both locations, slates had to be removed and rotted rafters replaced as well as new lead flashing fitted before new / undamaged slates were refitted.

Dry Rot in the internal south facing wall

- With a view to replacing one of the wooden support structures of the internal roof beams (which showed very obvious signs of dry rot), the drylining was removed from the surrounding area to assess the overall extent of the problem. Unfortunately, initial signs at this stage are not very positive. The area requires further investigation and treatment.

Review of Project

As this new (and unbudgeted) work proceeded, and in order to keep costs to a minimum, it was necessary to review some of the original planned works. It became obvious that work that was *absolutely essential* would have to take priority over work which was *desirable but not essential*. Thus, storm glazing of the windows will not now take place during this stage of Conservation. The gutters and down pipes will be repaired to make them viable for another few years. In time, the gutters will have to be replaced.

Work already completed / nearing completion

The replacement of lead under the barges has now been completed. The lead under the barge on the west facing gable was found to be in good condition and was not replaced.

The external repointing of the east and west facing gables is now complete. Some pointing work still remains to be completed on the external walls of the sacristy. This can not be done until the temperature rises to a constant 5°C or higher. For this reason the tradesmen doing this work have not been on site the past two weeks.

Final Costs

It is very likely that the final costs will exceed the original estimate of €165,000. Exact figures are not available at this moment in time due to the extent of essential repairs in some of the areas highlighted above not yet being determined. However, money will be saved by not replacing the gutters and downpipes at this time as well as by not having to replace the lead under all barges as was originally budgeted for.

Funding

The response (both within and outside of the parish) to the *Church Conservation Fund Appeal* launched last October has been extremely positive. Over the course of 18 weeks it has brought in €20,375. The generosity and good will of all who are supporting our Church Appeal is to be commended. However, as a community, we will have to raise additional funds for this project. Fundraising is never easy – despite how good and deserving the project may be, especially when a significant amount of money has already come out of the locality to date.

A very active Fundraising Committee has been planning and working on how best to raise funds to complete our Church Conservation project. I am very indebted to them. Realistically, as a community, we should be aware that the bulk of the funds needed will have to be raised from outside the parish. As when the Church was being built (1914 – 1916), friends of the Church and those connected to the Church, both at home and abroad, will have to be approached by all of us and their generosity to our cause relied upon.

Further details of this fundraising initiative, as well as our own participation in it, will be unveiled next weekend (February 24th / 25th). On the following weekend (March 3rd / 4th) Mayo Person of the Year 2018 (Sr. Maureen Lally) will formally launch our Fundraising Drive immediately after the 11.00 am Mass.



On behalf of the Parish Finance Committee

February 17th 2018