

## **Update for local community re St Wistan's**

1<sup>st</sup> March 2022

*from the Revd Christopher Johnson*

- First and foremost, thank you for your continued patience regarding the St Wistan's situation. I appreciate the frustration and concern – and share much of it too.
- The process is a lengthy one and the timeframe is in the hands of the Church Commissioners, a national body with the legal responsibility for deciding on church closure and new uses for former church buildings. We're far from the only case on the Commissioners' desk at the present time - which continues to lead to a backlog in processing these matters.
- Thank you also for your forbearance as I pick up the case having taken oversight of All Saints' & St Wistan's following Fr Trevor Thurston Smith's departure.
- I'm hugely grateful to Fr Trevor for the hard work that he's put in, largely behind the scenes, in what is a difficult and complex process. This was a burden that he held in addition to the many other aspects of parish ministry that make up the diaries of the clergy in the present day – something he did without additional administrative capacity within the parish as we simply don't have it.

### **Current Situation & Next steps**

- As you may know, the decision has been taken by the PCC of All Saints' & St Wistan's to seek to close St Wistan's Church as a place of worship and to find a sustainable future use for it. (St Wistan's as a building has not always exclusively been a place of worship, so there's historical precedent for a change).
- The relevant paperwork has been submitted and we await further communication from the Commissioners as they produce a 'Draft Scheme' – the legal document relating to the closure proposal.
- When they publish the Draft Scheme the Commissioners will allow approximately 6 weeks for the consultation to take place and will seek representations for or against the proposal from the interested parties.
- *In the event that any representations are in favour of the closure or neutral*, the Commissioners will then move to make the Scheme, which would mean the building ceases to be a place of worship. However, the precise date for that to come into effect will follow once certain measures like passing the insurance responsibilities from the PCC to the diocese have been put in place. From that point, a new use for the building can begin to be considered.
- *If there are objections to the Draft Scheme (for closure as a place of worship)* then a longer process follows in order for the Church Commissioners to arrive at a decision.

- I'm sorry that this means that there's not a huge amount to report since the last update back in October 2021 – I wish there was more to report too.
- We have, of course, been in touch with the Church Commissioners pressing for publication of the Draft Scheme as soon as possible.
- Meanwhile, St Wistan's church is regularly monitored to check on any changes to its condition and advice is sought from our highly experienced conservation architect when required.

### **Further updates & contact**

- We'll update this webpage as and when there are further developments: [www.wigstonbenefice.org.uk/wistanupdates](http://www.wigstonbenefice.org.uk/wistanupdates)
- You can also email me at: [revchrisjohnson.wbs@gmail.com](mailto:revchrisjohnson.wbs@gmail.com)

### **St Thomas' Tower Appeal**

- As the priest currently responsible for both All Saints' & St Wistan's Wigston Magna and St Thomas' South Wigston, please can I also take the opportunity to point out that St Thomas' South Wigston is overseen by a *separate* PCC to All Saints' & St Wistan's.
- This means that the decisions made regarding St Thomas' are independent of matters relating to St Wistan's. The finances of both parishes are also separate. They are two separate charities and legally required to be so.
- We've recently launched a tower appeal at St Thomas' so it's important to note that any decisions with regard to St Thomas' do *not* happen to the 'detriment' of St Wistan's. It's not an 'either-or' situation.
- You can read more about that project here: [www.wigstonbenefice.org.uk/thomastower](http://www.wigstonbenefice.org.uk/thomastower)

With best wishes,  
Revd Christopher Johnson  
*Associate Vicar – Wigston Benefice.*