

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:** Leader and Cabinet  
**AUTHOR:** Development Services Director

9 June 2005

### ST. DENIS CHURCH, EAST HATLEY REPORT ON THE TENDERS RECEIVED FOR THE UNDERTAKING OF RE-ROOFING AND GENERAL REPAIR WORKS AND SUPPORT TO LET A CONTRACT

#### Purpose

1. To advise Cabinet of the results of the recent tender process and seek support to let a contract.

#### Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	The proposed project will secure the future of a 'building at risk', such action is an adopted performance indicator (SP903)
Village Life	The project will: enable the churchyard and County Wildlife Site to be restored to full accessibility; make possible the development of a community facility; make safe a semi-derelict building; lay the grounds to restore an important part of local heritage; thereby enhancing village life.
Sustainability	The restoration and re-use of historic buildings is a key sustainability measure.
Partnership	The scheme will be developed as a partnership project with the Parish Council, SCDC and English Heritage and will facilitate further partnership working with other national heritage bodies to secure an appropriate use for the building.

#### Background

3. Members will be aware of the report to the meeting of the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2005, Conservation Advisory Group, where it was agreed that as English Heritage had confirmed grant support of up to £61,000 to support the repair works, tenders would be sought to implement a programme of work to arrest the deterioration of the building.
4. The tenders report will be tabled at the meeting. In order to secure the grant offer, from English Heritage, the repair works must be completed by June 2006.
5. Further background details of the project are included as **Appendix 1**.

#### Considerations

6. In order to progress the project the English Heritage grant offer has been formally accepted and the design works are part of the repair programme and have commenced, funded from the Historic Buildings Preservation Fund.
7. The proposed funding to enable a building contract to be let would also be from the portfolio holder's, "*Historic Buildings Preservation Fund*". This is a capital sum made available to the portfolio holder to facilitate intervention to secure the preservation of historic buildings at risk. To date, at St. Denis, East Hatley, the budget has been utilised to erect the security/safety fencing and structural scaffolding to protect both

the building and the public. The 9<sup>th</sup> June 2005 Cabinet will also be requested to approve a 'roll forward' of the uncommitted balance from this budget to enable a contract to be financed in 2005/06.

8. The generous grant offer from English Heritage, of £61,000, estimated to be 75% of the costs of the works, will enable the fabric of the medieval church to be stabilised and protected. These works to the roof and walls will consequently:
  - (a) Address the health and safety issues;
  - (b) Remove the need for on-going costs for maintenance of the security fencing and scaffolding – approximating to £7,000 per annum.
  - (c) Re-open full access to the churchyard, which is in use as a burial ground.
  - (d) Provide the opportunity to examine options for a viable community use for the building, funded by other external grant or by identifying a new ownership.
9. Prior to letting a contract it will be a condition of the grant offer that a "Maintenance Plan" is agreed, this will largely require regular monitoring of the building and implementation of minor works, such as clearing out of gutters and control of vegetation on the elevations. It is understood that

### **Options**

10. The Cabinet are asked to consider the following options:
  - (a) To note the tender report and authorise the letting of a contract to undertake these first phase repair works to St. Denis Church, East Hatley, subject to confirmation of final grant support from English Heritage.
  - (b) To declines to authorise the letting of a contract, rejecting the grant support form English Heritage and suggests alternative means to resolve the long-term future of this building.

### **Financial Implications**

11. The costs of the necessary repair works will be set out in the tender report, to be tabled. The overall costs of the project exceed the portfolio holder's delegation expenditure, although grant support of £61,000 has been secured from English Heritage.
12. The English Heritage grant offer , is both cash and time limited (i.e will not be increased or extended) but is both generous and probably the only immediate source of external finance available to the Council to assist in the first stage of the restoration of the building.
13. English Heritage grant support for these phase 1 works does, however, indicate the importance of this medieval building as an item of the national heritage and could help secure subsequent funding from other bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund.
14. Resolution of the immediate structural problems and removal of the danger presented to the public, will also open the prospect of creating interest amongst other heritage bodies who might be approached to assist with the long-term management of the building. The completion of these works would then not only buy time to consider a community use it would also help re-establish the building as a possible asset.

### **Legal Implications**

15. SCDC is the owner of the building and has a duty to try to secure its future as a national heritage component. It also has duty of care to users of the adjoining churchyard.

### **Staffing Implications**

16. None specific. The project will be coordinated by the Conservation Manager and the project architect's Purcell Miller Tritton.

### **Risk Management Implications**

17. The building is in the ownership of the Council and is at present both a hazard and an on-going drain on resources. The main risk of not proceeding to implement these basic repairs is that the physical danger will increase along with on-going maintenance costs. The implementation of these works will remove the risk, on-going financial drain and the potential criticism of the authority.

### **Consultations**

18. The Parish Council have supported the action to date and have offered to contribute to the costs of the works (upto £2,000). Members will be aware that the issue has been subject to considerable debate in the authority over a number of years.

### **Conclusions/Summary**

19. The offer of generous English Heritage grant support to secure the structural stabilisation of the former church of St. Denis would appear to offer the potential to finally start to implement the restoration of this medieval church. The immediately proposed action is necessary to protect the offer of external funding. Successful implementation of these works will enable subsequent consideration to be given to an appropriate community based use for the building. Members are, therefore, requested to support this action to start the process of returning the building to active use.

### **Recommendations**

20. Cabinet are requested to authorise officers to let a contract to implement first phase repair works at St. Denis, East Hatley based on the receipt of satisfactory tenders as set out in the Tender Report and funded by grant support from English Heritage and funding from the '*Historic Buildings Preservation Fund*'.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

1. Grant offer letter from English Heritage – 10<sup>th</sup> January 2005
2. Report to Conservation Advisory Group - 15<sup>th</sup> September 2004.
3. Report to the Conservation Advisory Group & Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder – 9<sup>th</sup> March 2005

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## Appendix 1

### Denis Church, East Hatley - Background Material

1. The former parish church of St. Denis, East Hatley is a listed Grade II\* building which dates from the fourteenth century, although it was restored by the notable nineteenth century architect, William Butterfield, who also built the Chancel.
2. The church was made redundant for worship in 1959. The ownership of the former church was conveyed to the Council in 1983 to avoid the demolition of the former church by the Church Commissioners. It was conveyed by the Church Commissioners to South Cambridgeshire District Council *“for use as a nature reserve and for the study of natural history...”*. The conveyance was for the church building only, accessed by a right of way through the churchyard. Conditions applied to the conveyance prohibit any demolition or architectural or structural changes without the approval of the Church Commissioners.
3. The churchyard, which is designated as a *County Wildlife Site*, remains open for burials but its present access and use is restricted by the dangerous condition of the building. The churchyard is maintained by the St. Denis Local Nature Reserve Committee who organise working parties to maintain the grass, hedges, etc.
4. By November 2002 the church building had become almost completely overgrown by ivy, which combined with high winds to cause significant damage to the roofs and walls, such that parts of the structure were deemed unsafe.
5. Architects were commissioned in January 2002 and March 2002 to report on the condition of the fabric but were unable to complete the structural assessment due to the extent of the ivy growth.
6. Messrs E. Bowman & Sons Ltd were, therefore, appointed in early 2003 to remove the ivy from the fabric of the Church to enable the building to be surveyed and public safety works to be undertaken.
7. Subsequently, on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2003 Purcell Miller Tritton (Architects) revisited the site to carry out further inspections following the removal of the ivy. Their report is summarised below.
8. *Summary of key points by Purcell Miller Tritton, ARCHITECTS.*
  - Severe damage to part of the external walls discovered. Some of the walls are unstable and are in danger of collapse. Scaffolding was, therefore, retained to the east end of the church to prevent the wall from collapsing.
  - The roof tiles are insecure and are liable to fall off during windy weather. The perimeter security fencing has consequently been left in place to protect the public from injury by falling roof tiles.
  - The removal of the ivy has left voids in the fabric and has affected the integrity of both the roof and the walls leaving many of the tiles loose and much of the flint stone facing in a decayed condition.
9. *Key objectives:*

It is evident that St. Denis East Hatley presents two main issues for the Council:

(a) *The need to tackle the immediate public safety issue and re-open access to the churchyard.*

*(b) The need to find a viable use for the building, to secure its long-term future as a community asset.*

10. *Objective (a) – Public safety/use of churchyard.*  
A detailed summary of the issues and options raised in the architect's report were considered by the Conservation Advisory Group (CAG) on 28 May 2003. The conclusions of CAG and the Conservation Portfolio Holder were that the architects should be instructed to seek tenders based on a Specification and Schedule of Works to implement "holding repairs" to the building to tackle Objective (a) – Public Safety/Churchyard access, while future long-term uses were investigated.
11. Purcell Miller Tritton Architects were, therefore, instructed to seek tenders based on a specification for repairs which would:
  - (a) make safe the east and west gables and the south porch (west side) by means of stainless steel pins to stitch repair the walls.
  - (b) Strip the loose tiles off the roof (stored in church for later use) and carryout minimal repairs to the roof timbers.
  - (c) Recover roof with a corrugated sheet covering to create a robust roof covering with a lifetime of upto 10 years. (The material proposed by PMT is a brown corrugated material known as 'Onduline' which is very light as it made of bitumen soaked organic fibres).
12. The architect's Tender Report was received on 18 November 2003. The total cost of the contract would have been approximately £50,000. These works would have been entirely funded by SCDC as no grant support was on offer at this time. However, these works were not proceeded with due to serious objections by the Parish Council to the material used for the roofing and concern at ongoing maintenance of the temporary roof covering.
13. A submission was then made to English Heritage in May 2004 to seek grant support for a more extensive programme of repair works, estimated at approx. £85,000 plus fees. Confirmation of grant support was given in January 2005 of upto £61,000 on the basis of a scheme of works which includes re-roofing and wall repairs, although with use of a corrugated iron roof.
14. While the more extensive works programme was deemed appropriate, there were still concerns at the roof material. The additional cost of replacing the roof material with tiles was not considered to be extensive, consequently tenders were sought in April 2005 with undertake the repairs with a comparative prices sought for corrugated roof materials or tiles. The tenders are due to be returned on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2005.
15. *Objective (b) - Securing a long-term future.*  
Significant efforts have been made in recent years by SCDC members, the parish council and the St. Denis Local Nature Reserve management Committee to identify an appropriate use for the building. These have included discussion with the Wildlife Trust for Beds & Cambs. Exploration of future use has stalled while the basic repairs are addressed. The intention is that these discussions will continue once the contract to undertake the basic repairs has been let.
16. It is evident that any permanent use will require further investment to restore and convert the building. The estimates from Purcell, Miller Tritton (architects) to make the building habitable (structurally sound with power, water etc.) are in the region of £100,000. Significant external grant funding will, therefore, be required to be secured from organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. The starting point to approach

such funding agencies is to have a viable and robust *Project Plan* founded on a clear vision for the use of the building.

17. It is estimated that it may take some 12 months to prepare such a project plan as it will need to include detailed architectural/business analysis and be subject to wide consultation. The usual time period for consideration of such grant proposals by the Heritage Lottery Fund is around 9 months. Consequently, it is essential that the 'breathing space' to develop a project is created by the implementation of the holding works.
18. To date no work has been undertaken on a project plan. As with all historic buildings the key to securing the long-term future is a viable use. To date a number of options have been considered and discounted at the preliminary stages. However, alternatives will be explored on completion of the immediate holding repairs, as the building will then become a convertible asset, rather than a ruinous drain on resources and public safety hazard.
19. To date works to the value of £15,971.56 have been completed, these include the cost of stripping the ivy, erecting supporting scaffold and security fencing and the architects report. These have been funded from the Council's Conservation Portfolio budget for *Historic Building's Preservation*. These were considered to be essential preliminary works to enable the potential way forward to be considered. A further sum of
20. *Legal Issues.*  
South Cambridgeshire is the owner of the building and therefore responsible for its maintenance and use.
21. Covenants apply to the building restricting its significant alteration or demolition and as it is listed Grade II\* building such consent can only be granted by the Secretary of State. Discussions to date with the Church Commissioners and English Heritage make it clear that such consent would not be granted, particularly in the light of grant support by English Heritage. Consideration would only be given to such a proposal after a public inquiry and evidence that all available alternative uses had been fully explored and found to be impractical or non-viable.
22. *Conclusion*  
It will be clear that any alternative use for the building must have local support and therefore the Parish Council and Local Nature Reserve Management Committee will need to work closely with SCDC to develop a viable project plan for a future use.
23. The target for completion of such a project plan would be need to be Spring 2006 to allow for full consultation, enabling grant submissions to be made during Summer 2006.