

St Bridget's Church and our Community Plan.

On 11th September Yvonne and I went along to the St Bridget's Parochial Council Meeting to explain what we were trying to do with our Community Plan and offer the opportunity to them to interact with the plan, to help inform and engage with our community on Church issues. The most common questions which keep coming up about the Church are "What's happening about the Church (people generally mean St Bridget's Church building when they ask this)?" and "What can we do to help"? The Parochial Council saw the opportunities which the plan and associated website offers them in relation to communications and engagement with villagers and will think how they can use it, we offered to help if we can.

In the interim Yvonne and I thought it would be useful to share our picture on where things stand, it is just our view and may be a little inaccurate or incomplete but it is a reasonably good summary we think. So....

- The Parochial Church Council are responsible for decisions around the operation of our three Churches and have strong historical and emotional links to all of them.
- The physical state of St Bridget's Church has deteriorated to an extent that it has been unsafe to use for a number of years. Services are now held in the Village Hall and occasionally at Ponsonby Church.
- The Church Council would like to repair St Bridget's church so that it can be brought back into use for services but this will cost significantly in excess of £100,000.
- The only identified sources of funding requires support from the Diocese of Carlisle. They are not prepared to provide this support because of a number of reasons, including the size of the congregation, number of other Churches and lack of identified other uses for St Bridget's Church building.
- The Parochial Church Council have struggled to find other uses for the Church building, partly because the village already has a good Village Hall.
- Things are therefore in limbo unless a justification for the provision of funding can be found or the Parochial Church Council declares St Bridget's as a "redundant Church". If they did this the Diocese would then step in and oversee sale or disposal of the Church, but the Parochial Church Council don't yet want to take this step.

The initial way in which we think the Community Plan might help the Church Council is to help them engage with our community to seek bright ideas for additional uses for the Church building, or to explore community views on if, how and when St Bridget's should be declared a redundant church.

We will speak again with the Church Council to see if and how they want to move forward in relation to the community plan.

Best regards

Bob