

12 December 2021

Updated time lapse video shows archaeological excavation

The initial phase of archaeological excavation and investigation on the footprint of the Old Song School building is due to be completed just before Christmas.

The updated video from the time lapse camera shows progress over the last couple of months, from demolition of the Old Song School followed by the archaeological work – you can watch it below.

The next stage, from the beginning of January, will involve ground works including installation of a contiguous piled wall that will define the basement of the new visitor and learning centre extension. Within this, further archaeological excavation and investigation can be then be safely undertaken.

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7 December 2021

A Message from The Very Revd David Monteith, Dean of Leicester

Dear friends and colleagues,

As the *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* project progresses, the last service in the building will be held on Sunday 2 January 2022.

After that, the building will close its doors until autumn 2023, for long awaited major repair and restoration works and the construction of a new visitor and learning centre, to be known as the Chapter House.



The Cathedral congregation and community will retain a base in the city centre, at St Martins House for Sunday morning worship and the nearby St Nicholas Church for weekday services.

On Sunday afternoons, the Cathedral choirs, clergy and members of the community will collaborate with parishes and their worshipping communities throughout Leicester and Leicestershire in a project known as *Together with Leicester Cathedral*. More than 50 local churches have already invited the Cathedral to work with them to plan a service, event or occasion and others that are interested are asked to make an approach. The first of these will be a Choral Evensong at St Dionysius Church in Market Harborough on 16 January. You will

be able to find out more about where the Cathedral will be going on the Cathedral website in 2022.

The Cathedral would usually welcome over 100,000 visitors each year and whilst its website and social media will advertise the building closure and plans for reshaped worship, some tourists and visitors may arrive expecting to enter the building. Signs outside the Cathedral and on the construction site hoardings in Cathedral Gardens will direct them to a Cathedral Welcome Desk in the adjacent St Martins House – within the reception area. Volunteers at the Welcome Desk will explain the closure, provide information about the building, its history and share updates on the *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* project, signpost to the King Richard III Visitor Centre, and also offer chaplaincy services and a prayer space, as appropriate.

The King Richard III Visitor Centre (opposite the Cathedral) will display the coffin pall created for the reburial of the King Richard III, which would normally be on display in the Cathedral, and show video footage of the tomb of King Richard. The Cathedral is pleased that these will continue to be enjoyed during restoration works.

A programme of hard hat tours to look at the archaeology and key aspects of the conservation works, and also view the tomb of King Richard will be arranged during 2022. These will be advertised in advance, dependent on the access available at various stages of building works.

We look forward to seeing you.

The Very Revd David Monteith,
Dean of Leicester

22 October 2021

Grant boost of £198,324 from the Culture Recovery Fund

Leicester Cathedral is among 142 historic sites across England that are receiving grants worth £35 million through the government's Culture Recovery Fund.

Awards totalling just over £6 million have been made to Church of England churches and cathedrals, channelled into programmes of major works undertaken by specialist builders and craftspeople allowing these special places to deal with urgent repair needs and continue to serve their communities.

Our grant of £198,324 will fund urgent repair and restoration of external stonework on the south side of the Cathedral, addressing serious issues with stone defects and weathered stonemasonry and improved safety for the public.

As with the recent north porch repair and restoration work, this will be undertaken as a discrete project within *Leicester Cathedral Revealed*.



We will be able to use all the knowledge gained from a pilot project undertaken in 2018 that carried out external stonework repair and restoration to a section of the western end of the great south aisle wall and the south nave clerestory, with a particular focus on rigorous testing and sampling to determine the best restoration and renewal methods and techniques

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15 October 2021

First time lapse video shows demolition of Old Song School

Works to dismantle the Old Song School building are nearly complete. The first video from the time lapse camera shows progress over the last month – you can watch it below.

The demolition works included salvage of memorial stones, stained-glass features, facing stone, and the landscape finishes and features.

The next stage is ground works including installation of trench sheeting and a contiguous piled wall that will define the basement of the new visitor and learning centre extension. Within this, archaeological excavation can be safely undertaken and this will commence in early part of 2022.

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30 September 2021

Demolition of Old Song School underway

Works to dismantle the Old Song School building began this week and are progressing as planned.

With the *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* project having started in earnest there has been some good local press and media coverage: see

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-58717875>



Demolition work will be followed by careful archaeological excavation to enable the construction of the basement for the new visitor and learning centre extension.

A timelapse camera has been installed and we will be posting regular videos on the Cathedral website to demonstrate progress.

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23 September 2021

We have the green light!

DAI £12.7m has finally been raised for *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* and we can now proceed at pace with the project, knowing that we can fund both the project cost and our cash flow. We have also raised money to support the life of the Cathedral throughout the inevitable disruption caused by works of this scale.

Whilst we all breathe a mighty sigh of relief and continue to give thanks for the wonderful generosity of so many individuals and grant-givers, our eyes turn to focus on the practicalities of what happens next.



Demolition works starting

Our contractors are currently dismantling the Old Song School building in preparation for an archaeological excavation. Work will then begin on constructing a basement as the starting point for our new visitor and learning centre extension. The old is making way for the new.

The Cathedral itself will close in early January 2022 to enable extensive repair and restoration work, with the aim to complete in time for Christmas 2023. The old is being cherished and renewed.

We shall, of course, regularly keep you in touch with progress and look forward to sharing the fruits of our labours with you when all is done.

Let the work begin!

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16 September 2021

Specialist contractors complete pre-commencement work

This week has seen various key tasks undertaken in preparation for the main *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* building works.

Specialist contractors removed two heavy memorial stones from the Old Song School building that will shortly be dismantled. This was a complex operation requiring careful planning and execution using specialised lifting equipment

The largest of these memorials is known as the Tournai Stone – due to being made of dark carboniferous limestone quarried in Tournai, Belgium. This is the oldest incised slab in Leicestershire and has engravings of two effigies of men in early fourteenth century clothing. In 1592 the stone was appropriated to serve as a memorial to R.C. – probably Ralph Chettell, Mayor of Leicester and Churchwarden of St Martin’s, 1565-6



Removal of the Tournai Stone

The smaller stone commemorates John Fenton, who was fatally shot at the Green Dragon Inn at Leicester Market Place in May 1778. The inscription on his memorial stone criticises the “*incompetency of judicial institutions to punish a murderer!*” This caused no little offence and the Ecclesiastical Court ordered its removal. The order, however, was never executed and the stone stood for many years in St Martin’s Churchyard.

Click here to read more about this interesting piece of local history:

<https://news.leicester.gov.uk/news-articles/2020/february/citys-new-market-square-to-be-named-after-medieval-inn/>

Both ledger stones are being safely stored in Leicestershire County Council’s Collections Centre for the duration of building works. They will then be displayed in the ground floor interpretation space within the new visitor and learning centre extension.

Two attractive pieces of stained glass were also removed from the Old Song School and these too are being safely stored before going on display in the new extension.

A memorial plaque dedicated to the employees of T.W. Downing & Co Limited, hosiery manufacturers of Leicester, who lost their lives in the First World War has been relocated to the At Risk War Memorials Collection, located in the Chancel of All Saints Church, Highcross Street Leicester.

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Stained glass window from the Old Song School

9 September 2021

Two weeks to go

When we decided to launch the Cathedral's first ever crowdfunding appeal to raise £41,417 towards our new and imaginative interpretation and displays, we had no idea how things would turn out.

As it turns out, we have raised 80% of the £41,664 needed and we still have two weeks to go!

The ground-floor interpretation space in the new extension will be somewhere visitors will be able to find out about the historical significance of the Cathedral and its role as a gathering place for our diverse communities. It will contain rotating and permanent displays, digital touch screens and audio visual stories.

We thought that we could make these even more special.

A hands-on interactive table, split into three sections, is already in our plans but there is a chance to make this brilliant - with different hand-on activities and puzzles for visitors of all ages to explore and enjoy. A tactile map will enable the visually impaired to understand the layout of the Cathedral.

So many people have been incredibly generous, donating £5, £25, £50, £100 and some giving substantially more.

Here is the link to the crowdfunding page www.spacehive.com/leicestercathedralrevealed - do take a look. It's exciting to visit, not just to make a donation (remember, we have only have two weeks to go...) but to see the activity and support from so many kind people.

It all makes my job even more rewarding when I see how everyone steps up to go that extra distance. Fantastic stuff!

Simon Bentley

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2 September 2021

Works completed to North Porch

Repair and restoration work to the North Porch have been completed by Midland Stone Masonry - a long-standing and trusted contractor for the Cathedral. This has involved renewing the roof coverings to safeguard the impressive and unusual wooden medieval vaulted ceiling, and replacing the damaged lime render pargetted panels either side of the porch.

New and wider gutters were also installed, along with protective weatherings and ventilation gaps. These have been carefully designed to divert rainwater, reduce the risk of water penetration and keep the roof dry and free from condensation.

As these photos demonstrate, the results are impressive – but do go and take a look for yourself if you are able.

At the same time some repair and replacement of high-level masonry and lead flashing on the south façade (Cathedral Gardens side) was carried out to stop serious water ingress.

This was a self-contained repair and restoration project made possible thanks to generous grants from Historic England under the Government's Cultural Recovery Fund, and from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The main building works for *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* will commence in the second half of September with the dismantling of the Old Song School. This will be followed by careful archaeological excavation to enable the construction of the basement for the new visitor and learning centre extension.



North Porch with new roof covering



North Porch showing restored lime render pargetted panel

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25 August 2021 Crowdfunding mini-appeal is launched

This week we launched a Crowdfunding appeal to make our interpretation and displays even more exciting and hands-on for visitors of all ages to explore and enjoy.



Image by Haley Sharpe Design

Our goal is to raise £40,000 in 4 weeks – and we have already raised half of that with a donation from Gordon and Janet Arthur. They have pledged to match £ for £ what we raise up to a maximum of £20,000. Our thanks go to them for their continuing generosity.

This mini-appeal will fund key elements of the interpretation space where visitors will be able to find out about the historical significance of the Cathedral and its role as a gathering place for our diverse communities. The space will include a mixture of rotating and permanent displays, digital touch screens and audio visual stories. A hands-on interactive table will be a central feature - split into three sections containing building blocks to recreate parts of the Cathedral, a stained glass window puzzle, and a cathedral floor plan with iconic cathedral feature puzzle pieces. A tactile map will enable the visually impaired to understand the layout of the Cathedral.

The link to the crowdfunding mini-appeal is [here](#).

And we are still fundraising to support the Cathedral across the two lean years that we will be building, so please do continue to donate to this if you can [here](#).

Thank you for everything you are doing to help us.

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20 August 2021

Introducing Messenger

*Messenger Construction Ltd have been appointed the main contractor for Leicester Cathedral Revealed. **Paul Gibbons, Managing Director**, introduces the company.*

Messenger was formed in April 2011, with the aim of providing a first-class service by people who care about what they do – preserving the past, protecting the future and putting necessary care into every repair.

Although a relatively young company, the individuals that make up the team have a wealth of experience. Messenger are a traditional building contractor, offering a wide range of services connected to the built environment. We benefit from a large direct workforce, very experienced management team and a wealth of specialist knowledge. Our team includes heritage skilled trades people, chartered surveyors, ICON accredited conservators and chartered managers. The whole team at Messenger has a passion for preserving, protecting and enhancing the built environment.

Our values are not unique, but they are at the heart of what we do. First and foremost we aim for the highest of quality in the service we offer, and whilst doing so, ensure that we act with integrity and fairness at all times. We like to encourage everyone to enjoy their work, look after their mental and physical wellbeing and, take pride in the service we offer. Support facilities include our own fitness gym, annual health checks for all staff and mental health awareness ambassadors within the team. We directly employ close to one hundred people, in addition to the many sub-contractors and consultants who regularly work with us. It's a large team and one that can add value to our projects.

Given that a considerable proportion of our work is undertaken on heritage attractions, we are extremely familiar with working in live public environments and providing additional experiences for those in the locality.

The business has two regional offices in Birmingham and Staffordshire and in 2018 completed the construction of its new head office and training centre near Stamford, Lincolnshire.



The Magazine, Leicester



Beverley Minster

Messenger work across the UK and recent projects include:

- Magazine, Leicester – conservation works consisting of repairs and repointing to stonework, drainage improvements and removal of vegetation and accumulated bird droppings.
- Beverley Minster – initial trial phase of roofing works (the Beverley master plan will schedule works to re-roof the whole of the building eventually), masonry works to corresponding elevations, the carving and installation of new stone pinnacles, as well as the paving alterations internally to the North Quire aisle doorway.
- Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk – extensive repairs to the roof, windows, chimneys and medieval gatehouse façade, securing Oxburgh’s future and the collection within. This is the estate’s most ambitious conservation project to date.

We are delighted to be the main contractor for *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* and look forward to working with the Cathedral team to deliver this exciting restoration and renewal project.

6 August 2021

Getting Ready

Leicester Cathedral Revealed is now getting ready for construction work to begin in September.

The very first step is to set-up the construction compound in Cathedral Gardens and this will start in week commencing 9 August.

To lessen the impact, the construction compound has been carefully planned to ensure that the landscaped and seating areas to the south side of Cathedral Gardens will remain available for public use. The St Martins West pedestrian walkway will remain open and unaffected throughout the project, but it will be necessary to close the St Martins East pedestrian walkway for the duration of the building works.

The Cathedral will stay open during initial works and from week commencing 9 August public access will be via the West Door (opposite The Guildhall entrance).

Initial works involve dismantling the Old Song School and are expected to start in September. This will be followed by careful archaeological excavation to enable the construction of the basement for the new visitor and learning centre extension.

The Cathedral will close in early January 2022 to enable extensive repair and restoration work to be undertaken.

Messenger Construction Ltd have been appointed as Main Contractor for the *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* project. The building works, expected to last around 2 years, will be part of the Considerate Constructors Scheme and Messenger will adhere to the scheme guidelines whilst on site.

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28 July 2021

Marking a Milestone – only £138k left to raise

On Saturday 24 July a special ‘Marking a Milestone’ gathering was held in the Cathedral to celebrate the *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* journey so far and thank those who have generously given, many more than once. Dean David said prayers and gave a blessing in readiness for the work ahead.



Dean David giving a blessing

The gathering also provided an opportunity formally to thank Gordon and Janet Arthur and acknowledge their tremendous hard work and efforts in leading the Campaign Panel which has been responsible for the fundraising for *Leicester Cathedral Revealed*.

Recent funding awards from the National Lottery Heritage, Fund, Diocesan Board of Finance, Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council and Garfield Weston Foundation, together with generous support from individual donors and supporters, mean our £12.65m project is almost ready to start. The Cathedral only has £138k left to raise and, because of the continuing support of donors and supporters, the team is confident that work can begin very soon.

The Cathedral will remain open during initial works. These will focus on the Old Song School and Cathedral Gardens rather than the main building.

More information about what can be expected in Cathedral Gardens and timing of other work will be made available over the coming weeks and months.

If you would like to make a donation to help get the project to the fundraising finishing line please click [here](#).



Presentation to Gordon and Janet Arthur

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25 July 2021

Leading the Design

The design team for *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* is led by van Heyningen & Haward Architects (vHH). James McCosh, Principal at vHH, gives some insights and reflections on the journey so far.



In 2008 I responded to an advertisement seeking an architect for the reordering of the Cathedral and its precinct. Our interview pitch was predicated on treating the reordering as a masterplan i.e. a framework for future development, rather than a set of fixed proposals, as timescales and funding opportunities were bound to change.

Our reordering masterplan identified the main functional and liturgical limitations of the Cathedral and its grounds, and suggested key changes and improvements.

The first expression of its recommendations was the creation of Cathedral Gardens, designed by Gillespies landscape architects. This was well underway when a quixotic exploration of the nearby car park delivered the biggest archaeological find of recent years.

The positive identification of Richard III's remains presented a huge opportunity for the Cathedral to proceed with some aspects of reordering. There followed the most intense project of our studio's history to redesign the chancel, design the tomb and new high altar, get the permissions needed and complete all the building works.

The presence of the tomb had a big impact on visitor numbers, bringing a welcome influx to the Cathedral and the city. However, the ten-fold increase amply demonstrated the Cathedral's lack of facilities and its physical limitations. Dean and Chapter thus started the process to complete the reordering, and vHH were appointed to continue our work following an open tender process. This became the *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* (LCR) project.

LCR will completely renew the Cathedral's lighting, electrics and heating, essential given their age, improve the entrances and circulation to remove steps, and provide proper visitor and back-of-house facilities in a new extension.

Our masterplan identified the former Old Song School as the only site for development, and the need to fully use its small footprint to deliver exhibition and learning spaces, verger and volunteer facilities, visitor toilets and baby-change, and storage. The new extension is therefore a four-storey building, with two above and two below ground floors, linked to the historic interior of the Cathedral through a new opening in the Great South Aisle.

Dean and Chapter and vHH share a determination to minimise the environmental footprint of the Cathedral. LCR will improve the comfort and energy efficiency of the old Cathedral as well as maximise the efficiency of the new extension by adopting the passivhaus approach.

The project is extremely complex and has involved numerous challenges, so we are pleased that the Cathedral has reached the stage with a contractor appointed and ready to start work. When they do, almost their first operation will be the demolition of the Old Song School and excavation, by archaeologists, of the substantial hole in its place where the basement for the new extension will sit. The work to the interior of the Cathedral will begin after Christmas.

The project will inevitably be disruptive to the life of the Cathedral community but when complete it will have a transformative effect on the welcome that the Cathedral can give to all its visitors, and the experience of everyone using the building. The works will restore the fabric of the Cathedral, make it easier to appreciate its heritage, and equip the Cathedral to serve City and County for future generations.

For us, after 13 years of work, this will be the culminating chapter. We look forward to delivering the project with the rest of the team.

James McCosh, Principal, van Heyningen & Haward Architects

8 July 2021 **Celebrations and Risks**

Cathedral Chapter have given the go ahead for work to begin on site. This is a cause for great celebration but it doesn't come without risk and challenge.

Chapter were able to make the decision following confirmation of an increased grant of £1.56m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and grants of £350k each from Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council. A number of individual supporters have also made generous donations.



Dean David blessing the site (Will Johnston Photography)

In making the decision, Chapter knew there was a possibility that we would not raise the remaining £264,110 for the £12.7m project. If that does indeed prove to be the case, we will need to draw on Cathedral reserves, making us vulnerable to future challenges.

The alternative was to defer the start date but this presented a different set of risks. The price agreed with the contractor will only hold for a limited period, after which we will have to renegotiate the contract, almost certainly resulting in a rise in costs.

So, in thanks for the confidence of Chapter and trusting in the support to come from all our stakeholders, the Dean blessed the site last week before departing on a well-earned holiday.

If you feel you are able to help the Cathedral you can donate by clicking on this link [here](#).

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25 June 2021

Restoring the North Porch to its former splendour

Behind the hoardings, repair and restoration work to the North Porch is going very well.

The North Porch is a key access point for the Cathedral and is, originally, a predominantly medieval timber structure. We are pleased to have completed the timber preservation and this also involved the repair of a couple of splits in the rafters, caused by knots, which we have reinforced with brackets and plates.



North Porch showing lime render pargeted panels to be restored

We have also installed new and wider gutters, along with protective weatherings and ventilation gaps. These have been carefully designed to divert rainwater, reduce the risk of water penetration and keep the roof dry and free from condensation. The next stage is to renew the roof coverings and replace the damaged lime render pargeted panels either side of the porch.

This is a self-contained repair and restoration project which has been made possible thanks to generous grants from Historic England under the Government's Cultural Recovery Fund, and from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

We anticipate the work will be finished by the end of July, when the North Porch hoardings will come down – just in time for the full site hoardings to go up in preparation for work to begin on *Leicester Cathedral Revealed*!

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7 June 2021

Valuing our Volunteers

Leicester Cathedral has a wonderful team of volunteers who support many aspects of daily operations, mission and ministry. Their valuable work and efforts have been disrupted by the pandemic, so it's great to see a good number of them back in the Cathedral. In the last few weeks they have been busy welcoming people of all ages to the Gaia installation and helping them make the most of their visit.

Volunteers are integral to the success of *Leicester Cathedral Revealed*. When the building works are finished we anticipate the restored Cathedral building and new extension will attract increased visitor numbers. Volunteers will be very much needed to provide a warm welcome and assist with guided tours and other events and activities. Over the next couple of years we will be actively recruiting more volunteers, creating new volunteer roles and providing lots of training and support.

In recognition of the importance of our volunteers, the new extension to the Cathedral will have a special volunteer space, with lockers to store personal belongings and somewhere to relax, have a cuppa and a snack. This is going to be much needed, we are sure, because our brilliant volunteers are going to be very busy!

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1 Volunteer Manager Rebecca Hale, welcoming visitors to Gaia

21 May 2021

A surprising discovery in the North Porch

North Porch showing uncovered medieval oak roof under the later timbers[/caption]

We have started work on the repair and restoration of the North Porch, which will involve replacing the damaged lime render pargetted panels on either side of the porch and repairing the roof. Preliminary work on the roof earlier this week has found the fabric to be dry and in reasonable condition, which is good news.



North Porch showing uncovered medieval oak roof under the later timbers

While we were doing this we made a very interesting discovery. Back in 2016, Cathedral Architect, Ian Salisbury, conducted an inspection and was able to look through a wall panel that had been opened for repair. He surmised that the present roof structure had been built, as part of the extensive Victorian restoration, over an earlier and much deteriorated framework, but he was not able to get a fuller view to validate this. When we opened up the roof this week we found, hidden away, a much older roof structure – almost intact – within the void below. This is very unusual because older architectural features on historic buildings were commonly destroyed or damaged by Victorian restoration / improvement works.

The oak timbers and panels that make up this older roof structure are in a good state of preservation and are being fully recorded and assessed by Cathedral Archaeologist, Professor Philip Dixon. His view is that they date from the early to mid 1400s, with some later repairs, perhaps in 1571. The entry for St. Martin's in John Nichol's *Antiquities of Leicestershire* includes a long transcript of churchwardens records up to 1724, including the following item in 1571 - "Paid for mending the North church porch and the chamber over it, 2s 4d".

The repair work is progressing well. When complete, it will be impossible to discern that, hidden beneath, is an important and far older roof which has been successfully conserved, recorded and protected.

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6 May 2021

Restoration work to begin on North Porch

It won't be long before you will see scaffolding going up around the North Porch. This is to undertake some repair and restoration work which is so urgent we took it out of the *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* main project so we could get started straight away. We have been fortunate to receive generous grants to do this from Historic England under the Government's Cultural Recovery Fund, and from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



North Porch ceiling (image by John Hoogerwerf)

The current roof covering to the North Porch is not adequately ventilated and condensation on the underside of the roof has led to fungal infection of the framing (though fortunately the oak vaulting is so far undamaged). A temporary fix provided insulation over the roof, overwrapping it in polythene to stop condensation on the underside, but a long-term solution has been needed for some time. It is very important that this work is completed before another autumn/winter sets in.

This means that we can safeguard the impressive and unusual wooden medieval vaulted ceiling of the North Porch, replace damaged lime render pargetted panels either side of the porch, and undertake archaeological surveys to record the medieval framing.

Midland Stone Masonry will carry out the repair and restoration work - they are a tried and trusted contractor for the Cathedral and know the building well. At the same time, they will undertake some repair and replacement of high-level masonry and lead flashing on the south façade (Cathedral Gardens side) to stop serious water ingress.

It is exciting to begin some restoration work because it feels like a precursor to the main *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* project, which we hope will be able to make a start on site in high summer.

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29 April 2021

We have a preferred contractor

The complex tender process to procure the main contractor - who will undertake the extensive building works to repair and restore the existing Cathedral building and construct the new extension - has gone well.

Tender returns were received in the middle of February and were carefully reviewed, analysed and assessed by key members of our project team - MDA Consulting (quantity surveyor and cost consultant), Focus Consultants (acting in a project management role) and van Heyningen & Haward (architect and lead designer).

We have now identified a preferred contractor. Detailed discussions and negotiation are currently underway to finalise the timing and phasing of the building works and to agree a contract sum.

We have not entered into any commitments or contract at the current time. This cannot be done until the final programme and contract sum are agreed and all the funding is in place.

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25 March 2021

Going Underground!

A key part of *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* is the construction of a new building – which will be a wonderful space for exhibitions, orientation and learning – on the approximate footprint of the song school.

This whole area has a long history as a sacred site and the earth beneath the song school still has secrets and stories to yield. We need to ensure that these are not lost to us. So, before we start to ‘dig deep’ for the basement construction of the new building, we must commission an archaeological investigation.

A document known as a written scheme of investigation sets out how these works will be carried out and this has been agreed with the local planning authority. The investigation will be undertaken by a specialist archaeological consultancy under the supervision of our cathedral archaeologist, Professor Philip Dixon.



The constraints of the site, proximity to the cathedral walls and need for careful shoring and piling all combine to make this a skilled and careful undertaking. Despite digging some small test pits (sondages) back in 2016 the nature of what the excavation may uncover is uncertain. These complexities make it difficult to predict the cost and duration of the archaeological works, so we have built in strong contingencies.

The upper most level will be stripped by a small mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. Archaeologists will then carefully uncover subsequent layers by hand digging and record and monitor any finds.

The footprint of the song school (and much of what is now Cathedral Gardens) lies within an area that, for many centuries, was part of the cemetery for St Martin’s Church. We know there is at least one tomb in our development site and, since the cemetery level is likely to be 2 to 3 metres deep, a significant number of burials may be encountered. These will be fully recorded and carefully removed for proper reburial at an appropriate consecrated location. It is thought very unlikely that any human remains discovered will postdate the closure of the cemetery in c.1856.

Below the burials will be the medieval layer and beneath this could be Saxon and then Roman strata. The existence of a large Roman building, whose nature is unknown, is suspected from work in 1861 to the north of the cathedral crossing. If preserved floors or foundations are encountered, they will be fully excavated and recorded in drawings and photographs. Under the Roman layers there may be pre-Roman deposits, and then possibly prehistoric material above the natural bedrock/gravel.

It is expected that the lowest basement level of the new building will extend beyond the Roman and prehistoric layers to natural geological levels. So, this excavation may reveal evidence of human activity on a sacred site all the way back to the prehistoric period.

Interest in the excavation is expected to be high and we are planning how best to keep the public informed without compromising the safety or efficiency of the works. Following the excavation work, the archaeological consultancy will undertake full analysis of finds and records and produce a comprehensive report. Once complete, information will be made available for public dissemination.

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10 March 2021 Relocating the Archdeacon's Court

The extensive re-ordering works as part of *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* will involve finding a new home for the assemblage of furniture known as the Archdeacon's Court.

This is currently to be found at the east end of the Great South Aisle. However, this is the location for the internal entrance to the new Heritage Learning Centre so we are in advanced discussions with the Churches Conservation Trust about re-locating the Archdeacon's Court on long-term loan to a local church.



The history of the Archdeacon's Court is most interesting – thank you to Irene Turlington for the following information.

The origins of the English ecclesiastical courts can be traced back to the 10th century. Following the Reformation, every Bishop held his own court, known as the Consistory Court. There were Lesser Courts for each Archdeaconry, and also 'peculiar courts', which exercised their own jurisdiction.

The Archdeacon's Courts heard cases such as disputes over wills, property or marriage, misdemeanours in the parish such as drunkenness, defamation of character and immoral conduct. They were once dubbed the 'bawdy courts' because of the number of cases they heard involving adultery and fornication! They didn't have jurisdiction over cases such as theft or bodily harm.

The courts had few powers of punishment, but could impose fines for small misdemeanours and enforce penances and public humiliations, such as being made to stand in front of the church congregation wearing a white sheet. Men and women were often excommunicated for 'contumacy' or non-appearance at an archdeacon's court.

The representative of the Archdeacon (the official) sat on a raised seat and the ‘register’, who supervised the records, sat in front of him. On either side sat the legal representatives for each party, with the table between them.

The Archdeacon’s Court in Leicester Cathedral probably dates from the 17th century and is no longer complete. Records show it was once located on the north side of the building, when it was the Collegiate Church of St. Martin, Leicester.

The church courts still exist today, although their functions have been much reduced. Apparently, the last time this court was used was in 1968.

Working with the Churches Conservation Trust our aim is to find a new home for the Archdeacon’s Court with good public access, so that this historic assemblage of ecclesiastical furniture can continue to viewed and enjoyed.

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25 February 2021

Stonework repairs and restoration

An important element of *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* will be to undertake significant external stone repairs and restoration to the south façade of the Cathedral – the Cathedral Gardens side.

The 2016 Quinquennial Inspection identified the need for work on large areas of defective stone and in particular to address risks of falling stone in public areas.



In response to these findings, and following careful research and discussion with the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England and our own Fabric Advisory Committee, a pilot project of stonework repair was undertaken in the first half of 2018 with funding from the First World War Centenary Cathedrals Repairs Fund.

The pilot project focused on the western end (south and west walls) of the Great South Aisle and the south nave clerestory façades – an area which included all the anticipated conditions so that methods could be tested and refined. The project concentrated on understanding the causes of stone weathering and decay, as well as the existing construction, in order to determine the best restoration techniques.

Valuable lessons were learnt from the pilot project including:

1. The likely extent of stone replacement;
2. The choice of stones to use for the repair;

3. The mortar specification for repair;
4. The need for some core stability ties;
5. The optimum scaffolding design including sheeting, protection, heating and ventilation

Leicester Cathedral Revealed will use all this learning to undertake further extensive repair, renewal and restoration to the southern façades of the building, addressing stone defect issues and weathered stonemasonry. The works will secure this part of the listed building fabric, improve safety for the public, and be an investment that has long-term visual and cost benefits to the Cathedral.

The 2018 pilot project included the replacement of two badly deteriorated and unstable stone grotesques with new grotesques in the forms of a fox and a tiger. These were modelled by an artist appointed by the Cathedral, Phoebe Cope, who made drawings and scale clay maquettes that were then carved full size by the stonemasons.

Leicester Cathedral Revealed allows for the replacement of two further grotesques and we have started thinking about what form these may take. Watch this space!

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11 February 2021

Talking about the weather!

We've all felt the effects of the 'Beast from the East Two' this week, with snow and ice, plunging temperatures and bitter winds. It's a challenge and expense keeping our own homes warm, let alone a large heritage building such as Leicester Cathedral.



A key element of *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* is to renew and upgrade the heating system, ensuring it is energy efficient and cost effective. This forms an important part of the Cathedral's plans to reduce its carbon footprint and enable sustainable operations into the future.

In the Cathedral itself, the project will give us the benefits of underfloor heating beneath the new, level stone floors. We were preparing for this as far back as 2014/15, when we were partly reordering the Cathedral in readiness for the reinterment of King Richard III. At that time, we installed an underfloor heating infrastructure beneath the Sanctuary and Ambulatory, and this is now ready for connection to a much more energy efficient method of gentle heating from the ground up. We will retain and restore some of the existing radiators around the perimeter walls for a quick temperature boost when the weather is particularly cold, like this week!

In the new Heritage Learning Centre, sustainable principles are incorporated into its 'Passivhaus' design. This is a voluntary standard that results in energy efficient buildings requiring only low levels of space heating or cooling. It is achieved by a high specification of insulation and air tightness.

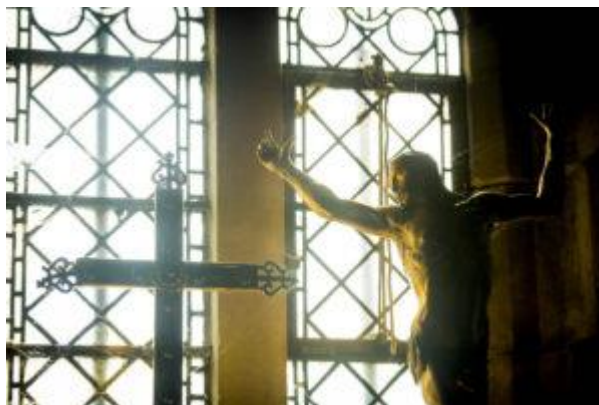
Leicester Cathedral Revealed means we will have no more worries about 'Beasts from the East'! Everyone will be warm. The fabric and fittings will be protected. Our costs will be reduced. And we will be lowering our carbon footprint, thereby playing our part in tackling climate change. A great result!

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28 January 2021

Decant, storage and protection

Removing and protecting the Cathedral's contents and fabric may not seem the most exciting aspect of *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* but it is an important and interesting part of the project. The fact we are talking about it at this moment also shows that we are getting closer to a time when we hope the contractors can start on site.



The Cathedral has a detailed inventory that records all objects of architectural, archaeological, artistic or historic interest and this will be an important tool in planning and then monitoring the decant, storage and protection stages of the project.

Leicester Cathedral Revealed will repair and restore the existing Cathedral building and also construct a new Heritage Learning Centre on the site of the existing Song School. These major and extensive works will require the Cathedral's loose fixtures, fittings, objects and artefacts to be carefully removed and stored for the duration of the building works. Other items will need to be fully protected.

Some of this will involve straightforward general storage for items such as the modern stackable chairs. But we also have precious, delicate and historic items - including the large artworks in the North Transept and the Regimental Standards in St George's Chapel – and these will require professional, specialist assistance.

The Cathedral's organ will need to be fully protected to ensure it is not damaged by building works, particularly from dust and debris. The smaller chamber organ and grand piano will need to be carefully removed and put into appropriate storage.

Other items that will need careful protection *in situ* will be the pulpit along with the numerous monuments and memorial stones throughout the Cathedral.

A key consideration in selecting the principal contractor for the building works will be their experience and track record in carrying out sensitive repair, restoration and new-build construction to listed heritage buildings.

So decant, storage and protection are all part of the important process of conservation and renewal.

Simon Bentley
Project Director for *Leicester Cathedral Revealed*

20 January 2021

Interpretation, planning and design

In parallel with the detailed planning and design work to repair, restore and renew the existing cathedral building and construct a new building alongside which will be a centre for heritage and learning, *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* has been developing interpretative plans and designs. These cover how visitors will experience and enjoy the Cathedral's different sacred spaces, objects and artefacts and learn more about its history and heritage, mission and ministry from ancient times to current day.



Work in this respect has been undertaken with Haley Sharp Design, who are based in Guildhall Lane immediately adjacent to the Cathedral, and is focused on three key themes:

1. The Cathedral at the heart of city and county
2. The Cathedral's heritage through architecture & art
3. The Cathedral as a centre for faith & worship

Within the historic interior of the Cathedral, interpretation will be primarily through guided tours that encourage exploration, enquiry and discovery. These will be delivered face-to-face by our knowledgeable and experienced volunteer guides and through two self-guided options - a new hand-held audio guide and a re-designed leaflet guide.

Two mobile touchscreen kiosks will offer free access to audio-visual content relating to key elements of the Cathedral's heritage and significant people who have featured in its life and development.

The Heritage Learning Centre will provide an opportunity to present to visitors the context of the Cathedral and its long-lasting relationship with city and county. A dynamic audio-visual presentation will draw visitors in and provide an overview of the Cathedral's history and evolving architecture. Flexible display cases will enable the collections of the Cathedral to be displayed alongside co-curated and community content. Activity tables will provide tactile opportunities for families and school groups and a suspended artwork will provide a striking and intriguing overhead feature.

A suite of attractive and informative signs and panels will be located around the exterior of the Cathedral and within Cathedral Gardens to direct visitors and engage passers-by.

Leicester Cathedral Revealed will enable the Cathedral to celebrate its heritage, interpret its significant features and promote its wide-ranging mission and ministry.

Simon Bentley
Project Director for *Leicester Cathedral Revealed*

13 January 2021

The Cathedral's Peregrine Falcons

For the last few years Leicester Cathedral has been delighted to host some special, wild residents – peregrine falcons. These large and powerful birds of prey are among the fastest animals on the planet, reaching speeds of up to 200 miles per hour when 'stooping' - diving down on prey, such as feral pigeons, from a great height and taking them in mid-air.



The breeding strongholds of peregrines in the UK are the uplands of the north and west and rocky seacoasts. Numbers were at a low point in the 1960s due to human persecution and the impact of pesticides in the food chain. However, improved legislation and protection has helped the birds to recover and they have now expanded into many urban areas.

Peregrines are a Schedule 1 listed species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act so the planned forthcoming major building works as part of Leicester Cathedral Revealed will be carefully undertaken to ensure minimal disturbance, particularly during the early part of the breeding season between January and March. This is the time adult peregrines pair, mate and lay eggs. Specialist surveys and advice have been sought in this regard.

The story of the Leicester Cathedral peregrines begins in 2014 when a group of volunteers from Leicestershire & Rutland Ornithological Society started surveying and monitoring a known pair of peregrine falcons in Leicester city centre. It quickly became apparent that they were intent on breeding, but unfortunately the location of their nest on a high building was insecure. So it was decided to erect a number of artificial nest boxes on various other buildings to try and encourage the birds to move to a safer location.

A 5-star nest platform was erected on the east facing side of the Cathedral spire in March 2016. This was speedily adopted by the peregrines, with the first successfully breeding in 2018. Nowadays, peregrines can be seen almost daily, either on the platform or on one of the spire crosses. The coming weeks will see increased activity as the breeding season gets underway. The Leicester Peregrines website www.leicesterperegrines.org.uk provides comprehensive information, regular updates and live webcam footage.

The vision for *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* is to restore the Cathedral building, renew its sacred spaces, and reaffirm the Cathedral's place at the centre of a resurgent city and county. Our magnificent peregrine falcons are a fascinating and cherished part of our Cathedral life and we will continue to ensure they thrive and prosper in the months and years ahead.

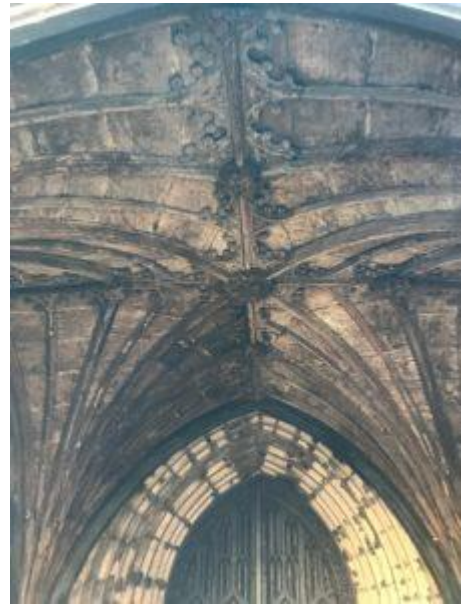
Simon Bentley
Project Director for *Leicester Cathedral Revealed*

5 January 2021

Grant secured from Historic England

Leicester Cathedral has been awarded a grant of £22,000 from Historic England under the Government's Cultural Recovery Fund. This will enable repair and restoration work to the North Porch and high-level masonry on the south façade to begin very soon.

The work is urgent because the current roof covering to the North Porch is not adequately ventilated and condensation on the underside of the roof has led to fungal infection of the framing (though fortunately the oak vaulting is so far undamaged). A temporary fix provided insulation over the roof, overwrapping it in polythene to stop condensation on the underside, but a long-term solution has been needed for some time.



So, we will now be able to safeguard the impressive and unusual wooden medieval vaulted ceiling of the North Porch, replace damaged lime render pargetted panels either side of the porch, and undertake archaeological surveys to record the medieval framing. Meanwhile, repair and replacement of high level masonry and lead flashing on the south façade (Cathedral Gardens side) will stop serious water ingress.

These works form a small but important element of *Leicester Cathedral Revealed* and will be undertaken as a discrete project after Easter, before the main building works commence.

Midland Stone Masonry will carry out the work. They are a tried and trusted contractor for the Cathedral and know the building well.

Simon Bentley
Project Director for *Leicester Cathedral Revealed*