

THE SCRIPT OF ST JOHN'S TREASURER GARY ZOLTIE'S FINAL TOWER UPDATE

(presented at the Vigil and 9.30am Masses last weekend)

If I may I would like to speak for just a few short minutes to update you on our tower project. I'll speak about what work has been completed and then the financial aspects of it, final costs, how we funded it and how much we have left over.

Firstly, the work.

Whilst the main part of the masonry repairs was on the church tower I don't know why we called it the Tower Project because actually the project covered the whole church building. It was more of a full external church renovation. You will have noticed the scaffolding has been fully removed and all of the building materials have now gone.

The project has been a major success mainly down to the fact we chose superb partners to complete the project. We selected Adams Napier Partnership, a firm of conservation surveyors to do the project management for us and this was money well spent. Chris Prentice was on site every week from start to finish checking every inch of work that the contractor had done and ensuring proper and clear communication with us, his client.

LTM (Laing Traditional Masonry from Stirling) were the contractors, and I cannot recommend them highly enough. They are experts in building conservation and work across the whole of Scotland. The quality of workmanship is first class. They also were prepared to be flexible with us when quiet was required for funerals and midweek weddings dealing with these events in a sensitive manner.

So, what was done?

As I said earlier, the whole church was repaired. All of the stonework and pointing was checked, and weathered and loose stonework was repaired or replaced, and large areas of missing and loose mortar were replaced and re-pointed. One of the reasons the stonework was in such bad condition was that in one of the previous renovations, the workmanship was poor, loose stones were literally glued back in place and the contractor penny pinched by using a higher proportion of sand in the mortar mix than is standard practice. Over time, this sandy mortar was literally washed out by the weather and that is why to ensure everybody's safety, we have had to redo it properly.

Other works completed are as follows:

The louvres covering the bell tower are fibreglass and they were cracked and loose. Now repaired and repainted.

The entire roof has been checked. It was in good shape, but any loose slates have been replaced.

The boundary walls have been repointed and the railings all painted.

The wooden doors at the front and side have had the topcoat removed and re-lacquered.

All of the stained-glass window surrounds have been checked and mastic applied where there were any gaps.

We have had the lightning conductors fully inspected and added circuit breakers to the electrical and fire alarm systems.

The fixings for the metal ladder on the north side of the tower had corroded and required to be replaced and the ladder now meets modern safety standards.

And finally...All of the rainwater gutters and downpipes have been cleared to ensure that the water is running away properly, and then repainted.

So, as you can see a lot of work has been done to ensure this beautiful building so many of us love will last another 100 years.

In terms of costs, you may recall we had a total estimated cost of £350,000 + VAT (£420,000). The good news is that we have delivered the project on budget from a cost perspective even though we got a few extra items done that weren't in the original tender.

The big upside though is that we had no need to borrow any money at all from the Archdiocese. This is for a couple of reasons.

We took a prudent view and assumed zero income for grants - however we managed to secure £160,000 from HES Heritage Environment Scotland, £30,000 from the National Churches Trust, and £10,000 from the Wolfson Foundation. That is £200,000 in total.

At this stage I would like to thank you our loyal and generous parishioners, and other friends in the wider community for donating a huge amount £54,300 in donations and collections, £8,700 from fundraising events, and £8,850 from the Tower tombola. A huge total of £71,850 and this was over only a 14-month period which is significantly more than we originally expected.

So, what does this all mean?

The project is complete, the project has been well managed, the workmanship and materials used are of the highest standard. We still have some payments to make, some final grant income still to come in, some of the VAT to reclaim but we are going to end not with a debt of £150,000 owed to the Archdiocese but with around £150,000 left in the bank. A swing of £300,000.

Having said that we still have a long list of other things to do most of which are relatively minor in comparison except for some major work required to replace the heating systems in both the church and the parish house which will consume most of this amount.

So overall the tower project was definitely a job well done and something we should all be proud of. Thank you to all who have played a part in making that happen.

