

(A brief summary of the presentation held on Monday, 25th November)

“The future of Great Elm church is at risk”

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) gave a presentation on Monday, 25th November, on the results gathered from the leaflet “*The Future of St Mary Magdalene Church Is At Risk*” which had been previously distributed throughout the village. The presentation, attended by Fr Clive Fairclough, 5 PCC members and 11 others from the village, was followed by a general discussion.

The leaflet had explained the current situation, pointing out that the Church of England contributes nothing to the upkeep and maintenance of the building and that financial and practical support relied on the generosity and involvement of the people of the parish alone. Residents were asked a few questions and to offer their own thoughts and ideas on how to ensure our church’s future.

Roger Willsher (PCC) explained that the financial shortfall was around £2500 p.a.

Results of the survey - of 68 leaflets issued, 21 were returned (30%) which in marketing terms is a very good response. The main point from the survey was that the church is an important building and has an important role to play in the community, not only as a church but as a social hub.

A general discussion followed – issues raised primarily concerned with finding ways of boosting income and encouraging greater use of the church. Here is a brief summary.

Fundraising to meet present and future needs.

George Chedburn (church architect), author of the recently published Quinquennial report, which outlines maintenance requirements over the next five years, mentioned that for any works that need doing, grants are available from English Heritage, National Churches Trust, Georgian Society, Historic Buildings to name a few, and there are staff at the diocesan office who can provide advice. The church has many selling points and would be a very worthy case for financial assistance if properly presented.

Various uses to raise money were discussed, e.g. Champing (camping in a church), exhibitions, concerts, etc. Most agreed that for these uses, integral toilet/washing/kitchen facilities would be a necessity.

Administrative/Coordination matters.

The village hall is currently making a little money and is leased from the church. It was thought that running the two buildings under one committee might have benefits as well as making good use of people’s time and energy. Also for consideration was further integration with the Parish Council but there are possible issues over legal requirements.

As an alternative, the formation of a “Friends of Great Elm” group was considered a very useful means of involving more villagers (and Jackdaws), one of the aims of which would be fundraising. Others might be to preserve the Village’s heritage, its landmarks and increase its sense of community. More on this will be published in the New Year. It is hoped that other villagers will join “Friends of Great Elm” with equal enthusiasm to that shown at the recent meeting.

Publicity.

A “Friends of Great Elm” Facebook page would be essential to keep in touch within the Village but also with friends outside it. Of course a need for publicity via the well-established Great Elm website (www.greatelm.org) would continue.