



Blackburn Cathedral Trust (the Trust)

Background

The cathedral church of St Mary the Virgin (known as Blackburn Cathedral) is one of the country's oldest places of Christian worship. Founded in around AD596, it became a cathedral in 1926 and is the only Anglican cathedral in Lancashire.

It is an inspiring place of worship and much more. It is renowned as a centre for music, art, education and interfaith and community cohesion work. In addition it is a showcase for significant works of art both old and new. It is open 365 days a year and is a Grade II listed building. Around 45,000 people pass through its doors each year.



Supported by a number of charitable and public funders, the Cathedral Court Project was completed in 2016 and has proved to be the catalyst for the successful regeneration of Blackburn the "capital of east Lancashire". Partnerships forged with local and national government and the private sector were the cornerstone of this

project and showed the commitment of the Church to the physical and spiritual regeneration of an area whose recent history was characterised by economic deprivation and the social problems associated with it. The facilities within Cathedral Court are in constant use by community groups, public agencies, businesses as well as Church organisations and the Cathedral itself.

Moving forward, the Cathedral has produced a **Crypt Redevelopment Project (“the Project”)** to build on the success of Cathedral Court. It envisages the remodelling of the crypt to provide additional exhibition and multiuse spaces for use by all the community.

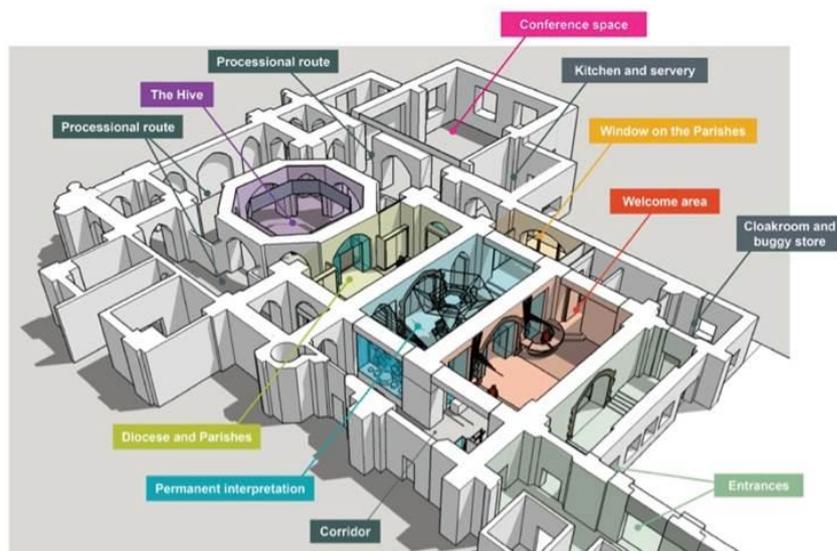
The Trust, chaired by Ann Dean, is charged with fundraising on behalf of the Cathedral to enable this further redevelopment to take place. The project has HLF backing and the Trust is looking to raise £1million in matched funding.

Cathedral Crypt Development

Existing crypt:



Overview of the crypt: exhibition and activity spaces



There are three major strands to the Project:

1. **“Revealing the Hidden Heritage”**

The redevelopment will create exhibition spaces and multiuse facilities to “reveal the hidden heritage” of the Cathedral, the town and the region. Blackburn currently has a limited cultural/heritage offering outside of the local authority run Museum and Art Gallery. The museum is only able to open on Wednesdays to Saturdays from noon to 4:44pm due to funding cuts.

The redevelopment will create space to safely display the Cathedral’s own artefacts as well as those from Blackburn Museum and national exhibitions such as those collated by the V&A. Through inspiring interpretation techniques and an innovative activity programme, new audiences will be engaged including the local Muslim community. Statistics from the Museum demonstrate an appetite for and a keen interest in cultural heritage: 36% of the Museum visitors reside in the most deprived 20% of communities in England and Wales and 12% are of Asian heritage.

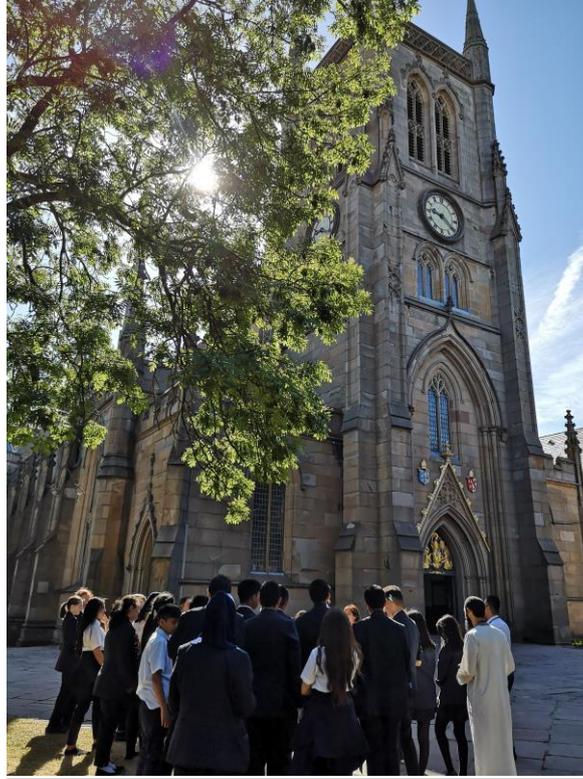
The project will also contribute to the financial sustainability of the Cathedral enabling it to deliver heritage activity programs and act as a vital resource and visitor attraction.

Amongst the vast array of items which can be displayed are:

- Saxon hammer
- The mediaeval pax depicting the Madonna and Child being only one in eight in the country
- Silver chalices from the reigns of Elizabeth I and Charles I

- Manuscripts and icons from amongst 5000 items owned by the Museum (one of the largest and most comprehensive collections in the UK).

2. Education outreach and community cohesion



Blackburn is a town of around 100,000 white British people and 40,000 Asian or British Asian people many of whom are Muslim. Race relations in the town have been underpinned by tension. The Cathedral is at the forefront of interfaith relations locally, regionally and nationally through its pioneering and award-winning education outreach and community cohesion programmes. It was the first Anglican cathedral in the world to employ a Muslim Dialogue Development Officer which has improved race and faith relations in the area and beyond. As a result, its expertise is sought across the nation. The Cathedral also employs a Community Cohesion Officer and there is a strong commitment to serve the marginalised and disadvantaged in practical projects.

Cultural heritage has been shown to have an important role to play in social cohesion. Throughout Europe there are examples of cultural heritage being developed as a base for social cohesion and place attachment which is viewed as having a positive effect on people's lives and well-being. There is a strong link between the historic environment and sense of place. By developing the crypt to enable display of the heritage of the town and area, the Cathedral has the opportunity to engage individuals from all areas and faiths and to develop social cohesion through the delivery of innovative and inspiring heritage facilities and activities.



The Cathedral has significantly developed its education department in spite of limited resources and designated spaces. It offers high-quality educational experiences for all types of schools and a range of adult education opportunities. Whilst the Cathedral building itself is a resource for learning and interpretation, there is a real need for additional “classroom” space which the redeveloped crypt could provide. The current state of the crypt makes it unfit for such purpose.

Educational visits for schools reach all ages, faiths backgrounds and needs. A full day of activities can be offered but logistically this can be complicated. The dedicated classrooms/learning spaces which the developed crypt would provide would enable that programme to be extended.

In spite of current constraints, 1432 pupils from all over Lancashire attended educational sessions in 2017.

The Cathedral offers Mosque/Cathedral days and Christian/Muslim trails in conjunction with a local mosque. This enables children of different faiths to understand each other’s creeds and builds tolerance and community cohesion. The experiences involve drama, music, craft activities and much more.

In 2012, 12 months after the Education Department was created, it was awarded the prestigious Quality Badge by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom recognising it as a provider of quality, safely managed educational experiences for young people. It lasts for two years. It was awarded again in 2014 and 2016. Going forward the Department is keen to offer other opportunities such as confidence sessions and trails in citizenship, architecture and ecology et cetera.

The redeveloped crypt is essential for these activities to grow.

In adult education the Cathedral offers regular lectures and conferences. Themes include interfaith and social issues, urban regeneration, ecology and much more.

Enhancement of the crypt will enable further engagement in such work by providing the space required.

3. Music and Art



The Cathedral is known for the excellence of its music. There are five choirs:

1. Lantern Voices for children aged from 4 to 9years
2. The Cathedral Choir for boys and men
3. The Girls' Choir
4. The Young People's Choir
5. The Renaissance Singers

This brings around 150 people into the Cathedral each week to make music which is performed at services, recorded on CDs, performed in live concerts including on TV and radio and in foreign tours. Posts for six choral scholars and an organ scholar are a permanent part of the musical establishment of the cathedral and there is a full-time Director and Assistant Director of Music.

The Cathedral music department outreach project has been a successful community project since 2013. This year it has engaged:

- 115 schools reaching 5700 children introducing them to secular music of all types regardless of faith
- 145 teachers attending training sessions of the Cathedral
- 8 nights of concerts attended by over 3500 children and 7000 adults
- 5 amateurs, 3 accompanists and 4 scholars in training work on the project

- 120 children singing at a concert with local adult choirs accompanied by the Blackburn and Darwen brass band

The benefits of singing and performing music are well documented not least in improving mental health and general well-being. The reconfigured crypt will give the Department more scope and flexibility to expand the music projects on offer.

The Cathedral contains significant works of contemporary art from the 1960s and beyond. It is anticipated the building upon this contemporary collection, the crypt will provide a unique educational opportunity and visitor destination as part of revealing the unique heritage of the building and the area.

Thus it can be seen that the redevelopment and reconfiguration of the crypt covers a wide range of areas of relevance to the Community of Lancashire:

1. Arts culture and heritage
2. Strong communities
3. Education and Learning
4. Music

For further information please contact Ann Dean – Chair of theTrust

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