



Case Study

St John's Church Preservation Group – Community and Potential Use Consultation

St John the Evangelist Parish Church is situated on the Kates Hill estate in Dudley having been built in 1840 to a William Bourne design. The church building was Grade II listed by English Heritage in 2009 as a 'largely intact Victorian Church'. The Church building was closed in 2002 following concerns from an architects report by Bowles Whittick Young. However a 2008 inspection by Astam GBC stated that:

"In our opinion the building is not a significantly dangerous structure, and can be repaired and brought back into service. At this stage, however the potential for falling stone does remain."

The building has a graveyard featuring a number of well known local people including The Tipton Slasher – William Perry, Marion Richardson, Julia Hanson, family members of Sir Alfred Hickman the founder of Tarmac and first President of Wolverhampton Wanderers football team, and former Mayors of Dudley.



In March 2011 St John's Church Preservation Group engaged Market Research and Community Consultation specialists, Oakham Research to undertake a community consultation and local potential users survey to evaluate public and commercial support for the reopening of the Church Building. The consultation programme took place between July and October 2011 with the report presented to the Steering Group on 4th October 2011. A copy of the presentation is available on the Oakham Research website (<http://www.oakhamresearch.com/presentations>).

The public consultation consisted of a web based survey with the questionnaire developed on behalf of St John's Church Preservation Group (SJCPG) by Oakham Research (OR). The content of the questionnaire was compiled by OR following initial consultations with the SJCPG and a full evaluation of the existing evidence and recent events leading to the present situation. The questions were constructed to determine the range of potential uses of the premises and the public support for such activities. A major part of the brief was to evaluate the potential income streams available to support a reopened church.

The questionnaire consisted of 49 questions split into 4 main topics (Heritage and Preservation, Use of the Building, Worship and Demographics). The opportunity for respondents to make additional comments was provided with the inclusion of 12 open ended questions.

The survey was promoted using a number of channels including traditional media (Express and Star, Black Country Bugle, Dudley Chronicle, Village Voice, Black Country Society Website, BBC Radio WM, Bridge Radio and the Dudley News). Other communication channels included social media with significant use of facebook, twitter and linkedIn to generate interest.

The initial consultation brief was later extended and the results of the study written into a subsequent feasibility study report.

Oakham Research are retained as consultants to SJCPG.

"We (St John's Church Preservation Group) are currently working with Oakham Research for our community consultation survey and potential user survey. We cannot recommend Oakham highly enough as a great company to work with."

Deb Brownlee MBA MCMI

Chair - St John's Church Preservation Group

www.savestjohnschurch.zoomshare.com