

Wimborne Minster becomes a Demonstrator Church

Wimborne Minster is delighted to have been awarded an £18,000 Demonstrator Grant to help it move towards becoming a net zero carbon church. The grant is from the Church of England's Demonstrator Churches project which supports its national programme to help churches reach the ambitious target of being net zero carbon by 2030.

This Stage One grant is for churches to engage specialists to assess different options for reducing carbon from energy use and to work up specific proposals for the chosen works. A key purpose of the grant is for recipients to share details of their journey to the net zero destination with similar churches. These can then benefit from the ideas, learning and experiences as they embark on their own journey.

The rector of Wimborne Minster, The Rev'd Canon Andrew Rowland, says, "We are thrilled that Wimborne Minster has been chosen as a Demonstrator Church. We've already taken major steps to reduce our carbon footprint and have been actively exploring ways of further reducing carbon emissions. The grant will now enable us to get professional advice and to be more confident about which of the new and developing technologies are suitable for the Minster. We've learnt a lot by visiting churches who have already taken the plunge and changed their heating to low carbon, so we know how very helpful peer consultation can be. Now we look forward to being the ones able to share our own experiences with churches similar to us, and to encourage them along the way."

Wimborne Minster is a large, Grade 1 listed church, dating back over 900 years, welcoming many visitors every day of the week. There are frequent musical and other events and its active Christian community is committed to family outreach through frequent activities in and around the church. It needs to be a welcoming and reasonably warm space, safeguarding the church's unique heritage and particular architectural features, while minimising its carbon emissions. It is hoped that the grant will help to find a way to pull these sometimes conflicting priorities together.

Alison Francis, from the Minster Environmental Group, says, "We have been monitoring our energy usage over the years and the Minster has already taken steps to reduce it. For example, we have changed the lighting to LEDs and have lowered the heating thermostat setting. But, net zero carbon would require a radical change from our present gas heating. The grant will enable us to get expert advice to find the best option for our church and to become better stewards of God's precious creation which now faces so many threats."

The grant brings with it advice from the Church of England on technical issues and also advice on fundraising. To qualify for the larger Stage 2 Demonstrator grant towards any capital works, 50% matched funding needs to be raised. But first, Wimborne Minster is celebrating the award of the Stage 1 grant. It knows the destination and has an exciting journey ahead!