

| Replacing the PA, sound, and projection equipment at St Stephen's Canonbury | |
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| Church: | St Stephen's Canonbury, 17 Canonbury Road, London N1 2DF |
| Designation: | Grade II listed and in a conservation area |
| Total project cost: | £42,800 |
| Cloudesley grant: | £38,400 |
| Other funding: | Church funds: £4,400 Largely raised through fundraising concerts and church giving |
| Dates: | <p>October 2015: Initial specification developed, and grant application made</p> <p>November 2015: Cloudesley grant awarded</p> <p>2016: Redefinition of the spec, gathering designs and quotes</p> <p>August 2017: Sound system installed</p> <p>January 2018: Projection system installed</p> |
| Contractors used: | Equipment provided and installed by: Ashdown Audio |
| Background | <p>In 2015, the PCC of St Stephen's Canonbury decided that replacing the PA sound and project equipment was a priority. The existing system was 20 years old and failing, after many years of heavy use. It was a portable system which had to be assembled each time it was used. The sound system had become unreliable and a sound engineer had been called several times to rectify faults. It was an old design of system, with a multi-core, multi-pin loop around the church, that no one made any more. The projection equipment did not produce a good enough picture and was hard to see when the sun was shining. The church's needs had evolved, and the system no longer met them.</p> <p>St Stephen's originally commissioned an audio-visual engineer from the congregation to produce a spec for the new system, which included speakers, monitors, handheld and radio mics, a fixed control desk, a fixed projector and screen in the church, plus WiFi and cabling. In addition, light diffusers over the windows were proposed, to reduce glare.</p> <p>In 2015, the Cloudesley grant was awarded, against this original spec. However, St Stephen's realised they needed to pause and reflect before implementation. They were no longer sure that the original spec was really "future proofed" for the church's needs.</p> <p>During 2016, St Stephen's began a consultation process, talking to the musicians amongst the church users, and getting advice from other churches. They redefined their specification. In 2017 they implemented the new sound system, at which point they needed to pause and do a little more fundraising, before installing the projection system.</p> |
| Benefits: | <p>The main benefit is, quite simply, that it works. It's reliable.</p> <p>There is now a good quality of audio throughout the church, creche and halls. Sound quality is far better, and is good enough that sermons can be recorded and uploaded to the website. They no longer get interference from vehicles outside.</p> <p>The sound system gives far more flexibility, with more microphones and settings. There is a hearing loop, making it more accessible. There is foldback for musicians, meaning they can hear themselves play, which helps them play at a higher quality.</p> <p>The projector is powerful enough to enable worshippers to read the words of the service, even on sunny days.</p> |

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| | <p>The new system is “future-proofed” after careful thought about what the church’s needs might be in years to come.</p> <p>More music groups have started using the building since the sound system improved; both church groups and outside lettings. A drama group rented space for much of last summer, and one of the reasons they chose St Stephen’s was because of the AV system.</p> |
| <p>Challenges:</p> | <p>The main challenge was the time it took.</p> <p>Getting the brief correct was vital and took time; in particular, balancing the long list of possible requirements against the budget. At first, St Stephen’s added in too many things, and had to cut out some of the ‘extras’.</p> <p>Finding a contractor they trusted was key to this; for example, they originally wanted six microphones but the contractor knew this would cost £1,500 more than having only 4 microphones, and recommended that this would be sufficient for their needs.</p> <p>The bright sunshine through the windows was a challenge. Originally, St Stephen’s were recommended to fit light diffusers on the windows, but this was going to be expensive and hard to get a faculty for. The contractor however recommended a different solution; a very high-quality projector, bright enough to work without light diffusers.</p> <p>Finding a solution for the screen was challenging; both because of the very high ceilings and to get a faculty for something that would go in front of the altar painting of this listed church. A screen that came down from the ceiling was agreed upon, but to install this was complicated. Scaffolding was required, to create a safety platform below where the workmen were working in the loft above. They fitted pulleys and chains that raise and lower the screen. The supply and installation of this alone cost St Stephen’s £14,000.</p> |
| <p>Top tips for other churches:</p> | <p>Take time to get the brief right. Consult people, especially the musicians in the congregation. Ask around, get input, use your network.</p> <p>Future-proof the brief. Think hard about what you need both now and in the future. Build in flexibility to meet the needs you think you might have in 5- or 10-years’ time.</p> <p>Find a contractor you really trust, and then work with them on the specification and how to get the best for your budget.</p> <p>Design the system with two modes; a simple mode that any church user can understand, which just gives you microphones and a CD player, and an advanced mode for your music groups to use, who know how to get the most from the system.</p> <p>St Stephen’s think that the Nexo speakers were a great find, giving great sound quality whilst small and unobtrusive. https://nexo-sa.com/application/houses-of-worship/</p> |
| <p>The Cloudesley perspective – why did these projects gain support?</p> | <p>The original grant application was accompanied by an audio-visual renewal specification report which supported the case for a completely new system and included a design for a new configuration and some costings for equipment and installation. Trustees were pleased to see that the specification also included an audio-induction loop (hearing loop).</p> <p>St Stephen’s exceeded the period within which the agreed works should have taken place but, as they had regularly updated Cloudesley with progress and had presented clear reasons why the specification needed to change, trustees were willing to extend the grant award period and in the end were happy to agree to the proposed changes.</p> |



