

## The “Heart of Islington” : an extensive programme of works at St Mary’s Islington



# The Heart of Islington



<b>Church:</b>	St Mary Islington, Upper Street, London N1 2TX																		
<b>Designation:</b>	Grade II listed and in the Upper Street North conservation area. The portico is on the Heritage at Risk register.																		
<b>Total project cost:</b>	c.£1,900,000 over 5 – 6 years (not yet completed). This is net of recoverable VAT.																		
<b>Cloudesley grants:</b>	<p>Apr 2012: £19,000 for portico renewal, repair and investigation</p> <p>Nov 2014: £55,000 to enable the project (feasibility studies, architects, fundraising) of which £50,000 claimed</p> <p>Nov 2015: £9,650 towards repairs to roof hatch door, church entrance; restoration of lectern and stall lights; purchase of loudspeakers; entrance light fittings</p> <p>Apr 2016: £30,650 towards urgent repairs to steeple stonework, weathervane &amp; clock</p> <p>Nov 2016: £50,000 towards repairs to chancel and nave roofs and lift works</p> <p>Apr 2018: £50,000 towards dismantling and rebuilding the portico</p> <p>Nov 2018: £45,000 towards dismantling and rebuilding the portico</p> <p>Mar Nov &amp; Dec 2018: £30,675 for measures to improve energy efficiency</p>																		
<b>Other funding:</b>	<p>The majority of the funding for this major project came from other sources:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Section 106 funds from Islington Square:</td> <td>£744,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Veolia Environmental Trust:</td> <td>£39,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>LPoW Roof Repair Fund:</td> <td>£51,800</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Heritage of London Trust</td> <td>£5,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Allchurches Trust</td> <td>£3,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Congregational fundraising:</td> <td>c.£170,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Church funds:</td> <td>c.£165,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mary’s (church’s sister charity)</td> <td>c £10,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Funding to be raised for next stage:</td> <td>c.£427,000</td> </tr> </table> <p>(Note: The costs above are net of recoverable VAT of around £235k)</p>	Section 106 funds from Islington Square:	£744,000	Veolia Environmental Trust:	£39,500	LPoW Roof Repair Fund:	£51,800	Heritage of London Trust	£5,000	Allchurches Trust	£3,000	Congregational fundraising:	c.£170,000	Church funds:	c.£165,000	Mary’s (church’s sister charity)	c £10,000	Funding to be raised for next stage:	c.£427,000
Section 106 funds from Islington Square:	£744,000																		
Veolia Environmental Trust:	£39,500																		
LPoW Roof Repair Fund:	£51,800																		
Heritage of London Trust	£5,000																		
Allchurches Trust	£3,000																		
Congregational fundraising:	c.£170,000																		
Church funds:	c.£165,000																		
Mary’s (church’s sister charity)	c £10,000																		
Funding to be raised for next stage:	c.£427,000																		
<b>Dates:</b>	<p>Aug 2014: English Heritage adds the portico to its ‘Heritage at Risk’ register.</p> <p>Jul 2015: QI report confirms considerable remedial &amp; preventative works are required</p> <p>2015: Preliminary works &amp; surveys, rainwater goods repaired, trip hazards resolved at church entrance.</p>																		

	<p>2016: Survey and repair to steeple, new sound system, brass eagle restored.</p> <p>2017: Nave &amp; chancel roof repairs, portico investigations, damp issue in crypt resolved, Neighbourhood Centre flat roof insulated and re-covered and windows &amp; doors double-glazed. Two dangerous trees removed.</p> <p>2018: Measures to stop recurring problems with lift to church &amp; crypt, measures to improve energy efficiency, refurbishment of Neighbourhood Centre youth club area and main reception.</p> <p>2019: Portico repairs, nave joinery project, installation of LED lighting in crypt, north gardens restoration project.</p> <p>2019-2020: Refurbishment &amp; redecoration of nave &amp; chancel.</p>
<p><b>Contractors used:</b></p>	<p>QI / architect: <b>Kelly Christ, of A&amp;RMÉ</b></p> <p>Structural engineer: <b>The Morton Partnership</b></p> <p>Quantity surveyor: <b>Synergy Construction &amp; Property Consultants</b></p> <p>Surveys of stonework: <b>Stone Technical Services and Triskele</b></p> <p>Drainage surveys: <b>Turnfords</b></p> <p>Portico repairs: <b>Bakers of Danbury with Chichester Stone</b></p> <p>Church roof repairs: <b>Heartwood</b> (now Warren &amp; Neale)</p> <p>Energy efficient lighting: <b>Treadlighter</b></p> <p>Rainwater goods repairs: <b>D&amp;N Hall</b></p> <p>Landscape architect: <b>Robert Myers Associates</b></p> <p>Neighbourhood Centre:</p> <p>Roof <b>Mendix</b></p> <p>Windows: <b>Southern Windows</b></p> <p>Interior work: <b>M C Construction</b></p>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<p>In 2014, St Mary's were aware of a long list of works, some small some very large, which were required to rejuvenate the church buildings and the garden spaces around the church. The church consulted widely; with the congregation, other users of the buildings, Councillors and Council officers, and the wider community.</p> <p>St Mary's took the decision that, instead of tackling each piece of work separately, they would package them into one coherent programme of works, and the "<b>Heart of Islington</b>" was born. In 2015, the project really began to take shape, when three things came together; the list of works, the prospect of a very substantial Section 106 grant from Islington Council, and the availability of a churchwarden who had recently retired from work and had time to manage the project.</p> <p>Combining all the works into a single, phased project enabled St Mary's to fundraise more effectively, engage their community, and maintain a sense of momentum. The Heart of Islington project gained its name to reflect that the church is located at the historic centre of Islington but also to suggest that Islington holds St Mary's near its heart.</p> <p>The objective of the Heart of Islington project was to carry out vital repairs, and to open up the buildings and spaces. St Mary's wanted the buildings and gardens to be more accessible, welcoming, and useful, for their neighbours and for the wider community. The project had three areas of focus;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 1970 Neighbourhood Centre</li> </ul>

- The church itself
- The north gardens located between the two buildings.

This was always going to be a major project. Initially, in 2014, the total package of works were thought to cost a little over £800k. By 2016, it was expected to be closer to £1.5m. At the time of writing, the total cost is expected to be c.£1.9m of which around £500k has been spent so far.

During 2015-2018 several packages of work were commissioned and implemented. At the time of writing St Mary's have so far completed;

- **A series of surveys:** from weathervane to drains
- **Alterations to the church interior:** a new sound system, restoration to fixtures such as the brass eagle lectern
- **Repairs to the church roof and steeple:** new gutters, new metal roof-work, and urgent repairs to the stonework of the steeple
- **Repairs to the Neighbourhood Centre:** new roof covering with insulation below, new windows, and interior works
- Extensive planning & consultation for **improvements to the gardens:**

Probably the most important part of the whole project started in Feb 2019: the major structural repairs to the portico required to take it off the "Heritage at Risk Register" are now under way. The portico has long been a place of welcome and shelter but severe corrosion to the inner structure has meant it must be taken apart completely and rebuilt and conserved by specialists. This work should be completed by late June 2019.

There is still much more to do: to implement the garden plans and to refurbish and redecorate the church interior.

All of this work has taken extensive fundraising. The church gained significant funding from "Section 106 funds" reserved by the Council from the developers of Islington Square. St Mary's also committed a significant amount of church funds, carried out a lot of congregational fundraising, and applied for grants from Cloudesley, HLF and others. (The wider works on the Neighbourhood Centre and gardens were not eligible for Cloudesley support and have been funded from other sources.)

**Benefits:**

Overall, St Mary's aim is to make the whole site a safer, more welcoming place at the heart of Islington and then renew the focus on their main mission of outreach.

Packaging all the works into a single, large project had benefits: in project management, in fundraising, in communications, and in maintaining momentum. Given the time it takes to get any one particular item sorted (be it trip hazards at the main entrance, damp in one of the crypt rooms or draughts from the organ loft) the church believe it would take far longer to tackle each one of these sequentially rather than as part of a concerted effort on a number of fronts.

In the church itself, the stonework of the spire has been made safe and preserved. A whole host of smaller problems has been fixed, such as leaky gutters and draughty doors. The portico is being taken apart and rebuilt by specialists, to stop water ingress and to conserve the stonework. The church should then be able to be removed from the Heritage at Risk register. After this comes redecoration, to restore the bright interior to its former glory.

The Neighbourhood Centre has become much warmer and more comfortable, now that the flat roof has been re-covered with a thick layer of insulation and the windows double-glazed. The youth club has newly refurbished rooms and the main reception area has been upgraded to provide a much better welcome to the building.

When the work on the gardens has been completed, this will be redesigned and opened

up, creating a new space for open air activities.

### Challenges:

**The main challenges were time, money and energy.** Such a large project needs huge amounts of all three. It has taken longer than expected and cost considerably more than expected. At first, it was thought the project would take perhaps 2 years. So far it has been almost 4 years, and to finish the remaining work may take another couple of years. The church believes that packaging all the work into one overall project has helped; if it had been project after project, it would have been very hard to keep the momentum, and would take far longer to complete the work.

**Understanding the local council's priorities and the pressures they face is not always easy.** A positive partnership was fostered by setting up a joint steering committee for the gardens project, attended by several PCC members and Council staff and chaired by a local Ward Councillor with the church providing the secretariat.

**St Mary's have applied three times to the Heritage Lottery Fund, and have been rejected each time,** which was terribly disheartening. They put considerable effort into responding to feedback but felt that the bar was raised each time. They have reluctantly decided not to try again.

**Getting to the real root cause of some of the problems** has been a challenge, especially with regard to the portico. Having an accredited historic building conservation architect and a similarly qualified surveyor has been critical, as well as having the funds available for specialist investigations.

### Top tips for other churches:

**Find the right officers at the Council** who can help navigate their systems, for example the planning officer responsible for Section 106 agreements if there is a major development taking place in the vicinity (the Islington Square development in this instance).

**Build good relationship with local councillors.** Attend their regular surgeries to gain their support and trust and to ask for their advice.

**Develop a fundraising strategy.** St Mary's had help with this from a fundraising adviser (Graham Collings) who was particularly helpful in advising on how to approach the congregation for donations.

**Form different working groups for different parts of the project;** St Mary's formed a fundraising group, a steering group for the Neighbourhood Centre, a steering group for the gardens, plus the standing committee of the PCC for works to the church. Find experts who can advise the groups where needed.

**Get support on the finance side** because a large project has complex finances. Make sure you stay on top of reclaiming VAT and keeping track of all the invoices.

**Build in time.** St Mary's have benefitted enormously from a church warden who project managed all the work on an unpaid basis, after retiring from work. The project really needed this continuity; one person to see it through. She has spent around 18 hours per week for nearly 4 years so far.

**Carry out surveys and really understand the condition of your building.** St Mary's have surveyed the place from top to bottom, with reassuring results in some cases (e.g. no asbestos) and less so in others (corrosion within the portico stonework). They recommend anyone contemplating a major project like this to find funding for

comprehensive surveys, before commencing work.

**The Cloudesley perspective – why did this project gain support?**

St Mary Islington's decision to package together a large number of separate works into the Heart of Islington mean that the programme had a clear structure from the start. It has also benefitted from the oversight of the voluntary Project Co-ordinator who has committed considerable time to the project, kept meticulous records and made sure that Cloudesley has been kept updated throughout.

St Mary's were realistic about the scale of this programme of works from the start. Recognising that this was going to be a huge task – both in terms of the works themselves but also fundraising for them - in 2014 the church applied for an 'Enabling Major Developments' grant. This 2014 grant has allowed extensive planning and surveying to be undertaken, providing the necessary evidence and support to underpin applications for permissions as well as informing the works themselves.

From the start, St Mary's has provided Cloudesley with regular reports, updating the charity when challenges have emerged and discussing new plans. The church has provided regular financial updates, drawing down funds only when they are needed, and submitting monitoring reports when the works supported by the different grants have been completed. They have also acknowledged Cloudesley's support in a variety of ways, including on noticeboards, hoardings and regularly in their weekly e-newsletters.

It is very unusual for a project to get more than one Cloudesley grant, but in this case St Mary's has undertaken an extensive programme of works containing multiple projects, spread over 6 years. On this basis, Cloudesley has funded different elements, when they fell within our scope. In particular, we helped fund the initial enabling works, vital repairs to the stonework and roof, and the major portico repairs, which should remove St Mary's from the 'Heritage at Risk Register'.

