

St Michael le Belfrey (known as The Belfrey), a thriving Grade 1 listed church in York city centre, has been granted permission (faculty approval) by the Chancellor for the Diocese of York for its building project called Impact.

The first major refurbishment to the church building in more than 150 years, The Belfrey's Impact project will create a welcoming, flexible, accessible and beautiful space, as well as undertaking urgent repairs, to ensure the building is sustainable for generations to come.

In the Consistory Court of the Diocese of York, Chancellor - Lyndsey de Mestre KC - made her judgment that faculty approval should be given to St Michael le Belfrey to carry out its £10.5m building project. She describes The Belfrey as: ". . . a remarkable church. There are many reasons why this is so, but chief amongst them are its original design, its historical legacy, its location in York and the vibrancy of its community."

The Chancellor notes; "The care and depth of thought with which the Petitioners, the parish and their design team have approached this project over many years is evident in every aspect of the proposals and they have demonstrated an impressive degree of responsiveness and collaboration in the development of the plans."

"This is the most exciting news," exclaims Andy Baker, Associate Vicar and Chair of Impact. Andy goes on to explain; "The Impact Project will create a freer, lighter and more accessible space. This not only nurtures our Belfrey congregation but allows us to share our building and facilities with others. We will have tremendous scope to increase the numbers who come to worship and visit, to host events and courses like Alpha and develop our leadership programme, as a Resource church for the Diocese of York."

"I am delighted that The Belfrey can move forward with Impact. It will be a great blessing to the Diocese, to the City and an opportunity to further enhance relationships with York Minster and the wider community," says Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York

Former Vicar of St Michael le Belfrey, and now Bishop of Bolton, Matthew Porter is thrilled. "It is wonderful to see the hard work, prayers and faithfulness of The Belfrey's members rewarded."

The Belfrey would like to extend their thanks to the Chancellor for her interest in our project and the considerable time she has spent in compiling the Judgment. They also particularly want to thank Church Buildings Adviser, Keith Halliday, Archdeacon of York, Sam Rushton and the DAC sub committee including Secretary, Catherine Copp, who have advised, encouraged and prayed with them on the journey.

The proposed two year build project of repairs and renovations is due to start in early 2024 with completion late 2025. The approved works include a new roof as well as repairs to the stonework and medieval stained glass. The design will create two new doorways and level access throughout the church; a contemporary and sensitively designed gallery; an accessible full immersion baptism pool; while the installation of an air source heat pump will provide underfloor heating.

The Belfrey expects the Impact project will deliver numerous outcomes including expansion in their work with children, young people (including school visits and an RE resource) and students. It will facilitate their vision to act as a social action hub resourcing and working in partnership with York based churches and charities. This includes a CAP Debt Advice Centre and proposed counselling service. It will offer a beautiful mid-sized city centre venue and they predict we will double the number of people who visit.

Next month (September 2023) The Belfrey will move to The De Grey Rooms in St Leonard's Place, York. This will be The Belfrey's temporary worship space and offices for the next 2.5 years.



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