

Options for the future of the **SLAINS KIRK BUILDING**

INTRODUCTION

This display and information study comes as a result of two conversation evenings and a number of meetings of the “Slains Kirk Task Group” about how best to use the Slains Kirk building in order to best use the resources available to Ellon Parish Church and to maintain and develop the mission of God throughout the whole parish.

As part of the process “Conversation Evenings” were held in Collieston Community Centre and Ellon Parish Church in November 2015, where fifty to sixty people gathered in each place. From this the Slains Kirk Task

Group, consisting of eleven members of the congregation and office bearers from Ellon Parish Church was set up to consider the future of the Slains Kirk building. Through a process of reviewing the feedback from the Conversation Evenings and discussion, the Task Group identified two potential options for the future of Slains Kirk. The final report was submitted to the Congregational Board and the Kirk Session, who both accepted and agreed the two options. Furthermore, they agreed to present the options to the congregation for a formal vote on which option is preferred.





CURRENT SITUATION

The Slains Kirk building was closed temporarily, following consultation with Presbytery.¹ However, worship continues to take place on the first and third Sundays of the month in the Collieston Community Centre with an attendance of about 30. There is additionally an active chaplaincy through the Ministry Team with Slains Primary School. An ecumenical worship service takes place on the Sunday following the Collieston Gala.

Although the physical building and the work required on the building has been the priority recently, the Ministry Team of Ellon Parish Church are committed to exploring options to develop the work of mission in the Collieston and Slains area. Naturally the work and mission of the church will go on whether there is a physical building or not and there are great benefits to having a physical presence in a community. Nevertheless any decision needs to balance financial cost with the mission of Ellon Parish Church as a whole.

¹ Ellon Parish Church Congregational Board Minutes 18th February 2014 p337

THE OPTIONS

OPTION I

Ellon Parish Church does not retain the building

This option considers the possibility of Ellon Parish Church not retaining the building. This option would ultimately mean that Ellon Parish Church is no longer financially responsible for the Slains Kirk building. The building belongs to the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland, and they would retain any monies from the sale of the building (i.e. **Ellon Parish Church does not benefit financially in any way from the sale of the building**).

Not retaining the building is not as simple as closing the doors and walking away.

If the congregation decided that it was not in the best interests of Ellon Parish Church financially and missionally to have a physical place of worship in this part of the parish there are important factors to be considered. Until such time as the building was sold the Slains building would remain the responsibility of the local congregation to maintain and within that there are two conditions which must be met:

The building must be kept wind and water tight



The building must be insured as an empty building

Both these options require on-going financial input for an uncertain period of time.

In the event of a decision to close a church building the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland are generally keen to sell the building or look at further use by, for example, local communities in the form of a trust set up to maintain or develop a building.

Therefore, it is worth noting that if the building does not sell, or if a community trust cannot be established the congregation would need to retain the building and any financial responsibilities associated with it.

Additionally in the most dire of situations the General Trustees may be able to financially assist churches to avoid the collapse of buildings.

If the building was not retained by Ellon Parish Church the estimated cost to ensure the building was wind and water tight, along with any on going yearly costs would be:

Initial outlay: **£6,000**

Annual ongoing repairs: **£1,000**

Annual Insurance Premium: **£1,800**

Cost to hire Collieston Community Centre: **£5.42 per hour** (*approx. £325 per year*) *The Community Centre is booked for 2 ½ hours twice a month. It is worth bearing in mind this cost may increase if mission work is developed in the area and a building is required for this.*

OPTION 2

Essential works are carried out to bring Slains Kirk up to the required standard meeting current regulations for use by Ellon Parish Church of Scotland on a long-term basis.

This option considers making essential repairs to the Slains Kirk building so that it meets building regulations and the Church of Scotland's standard for a useable church building. This would allow the congregation to return to using the building for Sunday worship, for any ongoing mission work in the

community and to be used for weddings, baptisms, funerals or any other services of worship. From the conversation evenings it would appear there is considerable interest from the community of Collieston and Slains in the repair and re-opening of the Slains Kirk building.



Artist's impression of Option 2 © Karen Taylor

Collieston and Slains is a thriving community with a strong community spirit and a number of very active groups. Naturally the community as a whole has expressed a great sense of loss with the current temporary closing of the church.

At the time of writing the essential and recommended repairs needed to bring the building up to the necessary standard are:

- The building must be wind and watertight
- Internal decoration
- Floor coverings replaced
- Upgraded toilet and kitchen facilities to meet with building regulations
- Lead water piping replaced
- Heating system upgraded

Pews replaced with moveable seating

As with any project sustainability is key and so it is with this option. The money needed to upgrade the building would be substantial and it would be essential that the congregation as a whole would have to ensure that the funds were in place to maintain the building to this standard for a considerable period of time.

Raising funds to secure this is essential. As Ellon Parish Church as a whole is not in a position financially to complete works as described in this option this would require funding through application to potential grant aid awarding bodies, such as Heritage Lottery, National Churches Fund and others. Fundraising by the

congregation of Ellon Parish Church supported by the communities of Ellon, Collieston and surrounding areas would also be required.

Initial minimum outlay to cover the above: **£120,000**

Annual maintenance and insurance: **£5,000**

The estimated cost of this option is:



Artist's impression of option 2 clockwise from the left: view from under the balcony towards pulpit, view from the east gable wall, central view from front door, view towards potential gathering / social / children's area. © Karen Taylor

FINANCE & SUSTAINABILITY

Over a number of years, the Ellon Parish Church Kirk Session has been made aware that the financial situation of Ellon Parish Church is not as secure as in years past.

For a significant period of time overall expenditure has generally exceeded the income. Fundraising for major projects has been successful but this has only been possible due to significant donations by a small number of people. Any fundraising

will have to be in addition to the annual Christian Giving.

The Church Roll is a significant factor. Although we have a large Congregational Roll by Church of Scotland standards, this currently is not reflected in attendance at worship or giving. Although this is not unusual across the country, it is something that needs to be considered. Over the period 2011 – 2015 the Roll has fallen by 9%.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that there is considerable affection for the Slains Kirk building, that the community see it as a key part of their history and heritage, and that the loss of the building would be disappointing for the community.

However, the climate in which the church operates has changed considerably over the last decade. Fewer people routinely attend church, even those who profess a faith and have membership of the church. This puts pressure on the church in both finance and leadership.

The closure of the Slains Kirk building has the potential to relieve some of this pressure and to allow Ellon Parish Church to seek out innovative ways to reach out to the community of Collieston and Slains. Nevertheless, we should not be naïve enough to

think the potential closure of the Slains Kirk building will solve all the financial issues the church currently faces.



Unless the
Lord builds
the house,
those who
build it
labour in
vain.

Psalm 127

Moreover the ongoing mission has great potential to be enhanced considerably by having an attractive, refurbished space to operate out of. Thus by opting to close the building there is a real possibility that the missional potential in the area could be restricted considerably. In addition the ongoing maintenance of the building is likely to be less once the building has been refurbished.

Unfortunately we are not able to see into the future so all we can do is make every effort to balance the financial implications with the potential enhancements or hindrances to the mission of the Church with both options and prayerfully vote accordingly.

Much appreciation and thanks go to Karen Taylor for producing the drawings for option 2. Please note these are an impression and all sizes approximate. They are intended only as a guide to what a refurbished Slains Kirk could look like if Ellon Parish Church undertook option 2.



VOTING PROCEDURE

Having reached this stage individual congregation members have the opportunity to be included in what happens through voting for your preferred option.

Along with this information leaflet there will be a display on view with information and both options. You can view the display at the following times and places:

Collieston Community Centre Sunday, 7th May, 10:45am – 12:30pm (i.e. before and after worship)

Ellon Parish Church Kirk Centre, Monday 8th May – Friday 12th May, all day

Ellon Parish Church Kirk Centre Upper Room, Saturday 13th May, 10am – 12noon

Ellon Parish Church Sunday, 14th May, 9:30am – 11:30am

If you are a member of Ellon Parish Church (i.e. your name is on the Congregational Roll) then you are

eligible to vote for your preferred option. You can vote at the following times and places:

Collieston Community Centre, Sunday 7th May, 10:45am - 11:15am & 12:15pm – 12:30pm (i.e. before and after worship)

Ellon Parish Church Kirk Centre, Saturday 13th May, 10am – 12noon

Ellon Parish Church, Sunday 14th May, 11:15am – 11:30am (i.e. after worship)

Each set of votes from Collieston Community Centre and the Kirk Centre will be kept in a sealed box and stored in the safe in Ellon Parish Church vestry. Following the vote on Sunday 14th May 2017 the box will be unsealed and the votes mixed up before the congregation. The votes will be independently counted and a result declared at that point. In the event of a tie in the number of votes, the Minister will have the casting vote.

Please note: only those whose names appear on the congregational role can vote. Currently, within the Church of Scotland procedure there is no provision for proxy voting.