



St Mary's Church, Cloughton has become the first church in the Diocese of York to host their village Post Office.

The village had been without a Post Office for 19 months after its sub-postmaster resigned and the premises on High Street were no longer available.

Vision/goals

To make the church child friendly and accessible for people with disabilities and following that, also to accommodate a Post Office within the church for the community.

How did you start?

These were two separate projects. Villagers helped to raise £52,000 to build a ramp and toilet at the church and they have improved disabled access not just for users of the post office, but also for church services and Mothers' Union meetings. Revd Kitching said: *"The ramp is very welcome. Two of our ladies who had not been able to get to church are now able to come."*

As for the Post Office, initially Revd Kitching was approached by Burniston and Cloughton Parish Council to see if the church might be able to help before the previous post office closed.

"When we were asked if St Mary's could host the Post Office we said "yes" immediately because the village had been so helpful and generous in helping us to raise the money we needed to make the church child-friendly and accessible for people with disabilities. Hosting the Post Office is something the church can do to help our community in return."

Despite the willingness of the church to help, it was not that easy. A faculty – a licence from the Diocesan Consistory Court - was needed before a telephone line and electric power points could be installed and other work could be carried out.





Who were your main partners in developing and implementing this project?

The PCC, especially the Chair of our fund-raising committee and a member of church who had been a buildings inspector. I asked him to be site-manager.

Also our architect, and diocesan church building officer. We had a lot of support from our Archdeacon who found out which department at Head Office could help.

What was the total cost of the project?

It cost £52,000 for the ramp, toilet and the sunshine room (picture below).



What was the funding strategy?

A committee came together, involving the village from the outset (not just church-goers). There were many events and ideas that were successful in raising money such as race-nights, raffles, pennies in jars, talents, concerts.

How long did it take from start to finish - from initial proposal to the building being completed and opened?

3 years.

What lessons were learnt? What would you have done differently?

The procedure has taken a lot longer than we had anticipated for a variety of reasons. It has been quite time consuming.

I wish I had kept a log of how many phone calls I have had to make to various branches of the post office. There have been three different field advisers, but the post office and ourselves are very excited now that it is here.



Successes:

Has there been an increase in footfall?

Yes, slightly. 2 extra people can now come to our midweek, Mothers' Union communion. As it's also now used as Cloughton village post office more non-church people come in, though not as many as I'd hoped.

To what degree has this project contributed to the sustainability of the building itself?

I can't comment on that, it is too early to say.

Has there been an increase in income?

Yes, the Post Office pays rent.

What management structures are in place for the running of the building?

The sub-postmaster of South Cliff Post Office in Scarborough has been appointed to provide post office services twice a week from the church, which is only about 250 yards away from the previous branch but Revd Kitching and the PCC remain in charge on the whole.

To what degree has this project contributed to the life of the church as church?

The ramp is very welcome. Two of our ladies who had not been able to get to church are now able to come. In terms of outreach it could be huge because the villagers see us as trying to help them.

In terms of being able to welcome a wider range of people, it's useful too: for children and the disabled. And visitors appreciate the toilet (especially wedding parties....who knows why!)





Sustainability of the Project: how are you looking to sustain what you have achieved in the long term?

By publicity for the Post Office. We have had one Farmers' market during post office opening hours and hope to host more of those.

Any future plans for the building?

There is no longer a village shop, and I'd love to open up the church completely on Tuesday mornings and Thursday afternoons so people can sell cake, jams, and things like that.

We hope that maybe if people get used to coming we can start to do more along these lines.

