

Birmingham Catholic Cathedral: High Level Repairs (1 project funded)

Awarded £227,000 in November 2014 towards a £277,000 project

The need

In common with other Catholic cathedrals built in the 19th century, Birmingham St Chad's has been going through the first of the 75 to 100-year cycles of major high-level repair needs like those experienced at medieval cathedrals. A range of urgent work required was identified in a 2011 inspection, including rainwater goods replacement and improvement, repairs to masonry and weather-damaged brickwork, repointing, and remedying water ingress in and around the crypt, inefficient drainage, damage to the statuary, and window defects. The cathedral contributed £50,000 from other fundraising.



Birmingham RC Window Defects. Photo credit: BHB Architects.

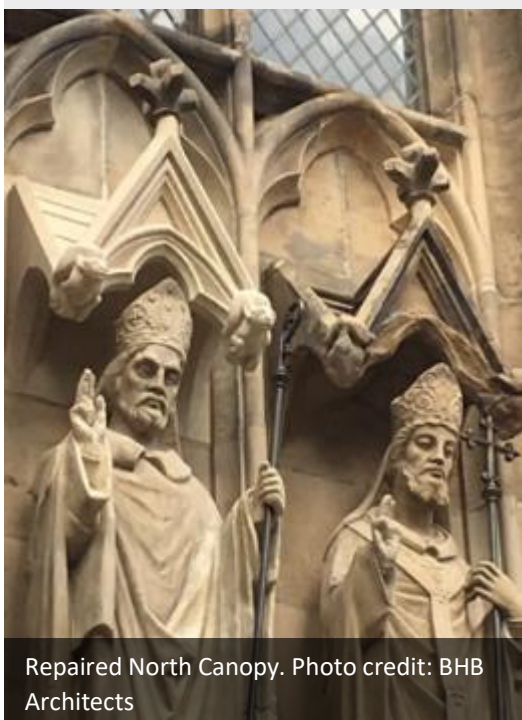
Outcomes

The unsafe stonemasonry at the front of the cathedral has been repaired and no longer poses a risk to passers-by. The front of the cathedral is also said to be restored to some of its former glory now. The underspend on this phase of the work meant that additional works could be carried out, including the addition of an overflow and improved guttering which addressed drainage issues.

Economic and social impact

The project supported a total of 15 full-time equivalent jobs in the traditional building technique of stonemasonry. The core team of four masons were supported by a further 11 who were drafted in for more labour-intensive tasks. One of the masons on site was an apprentice, and the cathedral architect was assisted by a trainee architect.

There has been strong positive feedback from the local community following the restorations; visitors have cited the restoration works as their reason for visiting the cathedral. The increased local interest in the cathedral has brought in more visitors and the improvements have ensured that the cathedral is a safe place to visit and worship.



Repaired North Canopy. Photo credit: BHB Architects

Works completed and timescale

The works commenced in January 2016 and were completed in October 2016. Slight delays were experienced as contractors were required to wait for the local council to grant a scaffolding licence. The repairs included rainwater goods replacement and improvement, repairs to masonry and weather damaged brickwork, and repointing. Further works included drainage improvements and repairs to windows. Savings of £8,000 allowed for additional works to be carried out, including an overflow and improved guttering.

The Cathedral

Birmingham St Chad's was the first Catholic Cathedral erected in Great Britain in 1841 following the Reformation of the 16th Century. It was designed by Gothic Revivalist Augustus Welby Pugin, who was also responsible for the Palace of Westminster. It is home to the Relics of St Chad, which were originally interred in a shrine at Lichfield Cathedral in the year 672AD. St Chad's is built in the style of a brick hall church, in red brick with Bath stone dressings.