

Ely Cathedral: South Transept Repair (1 of 3 projects funded)

Awarded £392,060 in November 2014

The need

This project repaired the lower half of the south and east faces of the south transept, including urgently needed glazing repairs, masonry conservation, and health and safety improvements to internal galleries which visitors access for exhibitions. The need for the work was identified in the 2011 Quinquennial Inspection, with the perilous state of the stained glass having been identified as far back as 2006. No conservation or repair had been undertaken since the 19th century. Fourteen windows required repair and treatment, following a methodology which had been applied around the rest of the cathedral. Two of these were outstanding examples of 19th-century work and were in very poor condition, with their remaining lifespan being estimated in 2006 to be only a further five to ten years.

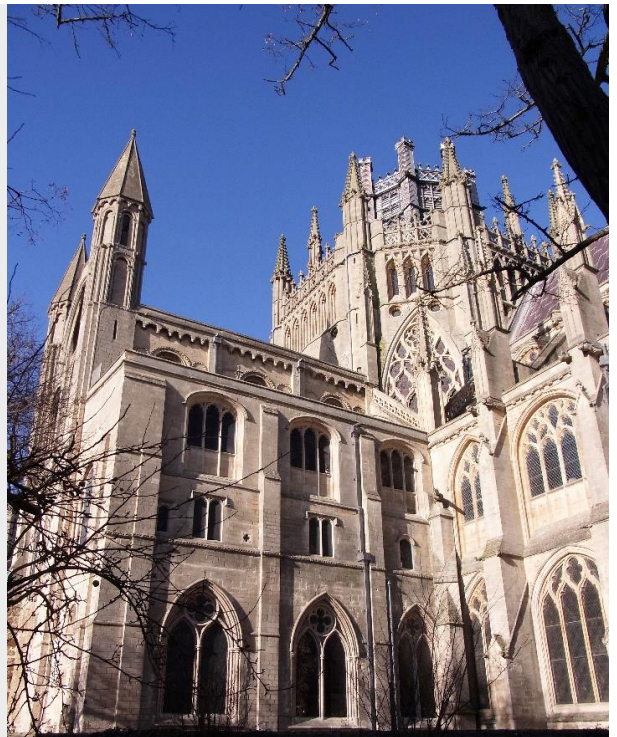
Outcomes

The masonry is now in good order and the glazing in an excellent state of repair. As for all the projects at Ely, the work developed the skills of the Cathedral staff in running large-scale projects and also attracted interest from the community in the building's heritage. The repairs had required urgent attention and will now require just routine maintenance.

Economic and social impact

Local contractors were supported and the project supported skills in stone masonry and in stained glass window re-leading and repair.

The cathedral welcomes over 250,000 visitors a year, including some 10,000 schoolchildren. The Stained Glass Museum, now housed in the south triforium of the cathedral, is reported to have 'had a new lease of life' as a result of the repairs, particularly for educational purposes.



The south transept. Photo credit: Purcell Architects.

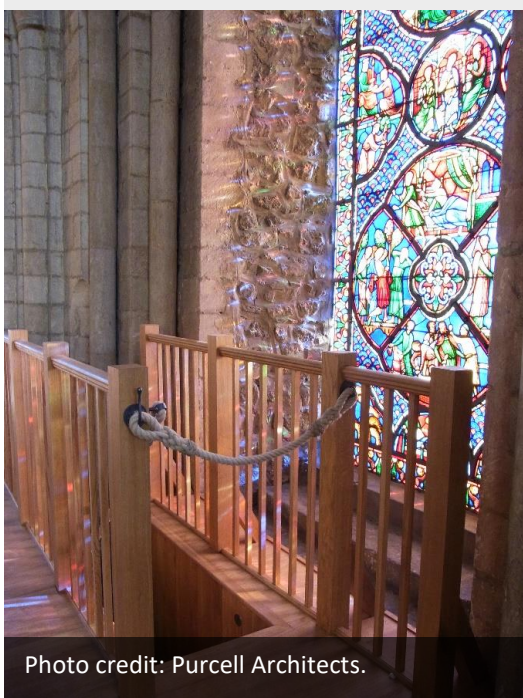


Photo credit: Purcell Architects.

Works completed and timescale

Works were completed to timescales and involved the cleaning, repointing and repair of the external masonry to the lower sections of the transept south and east elevations and also the re-leading and repair of the windows to the transept east aisle and the remaining unrepaired windows to the transept south front.

The Cathedral

Created a cathedral in 1083, Ely can be seen across the flat fens from miles around. The most distinctive feature is the Lantern, built between 1322 and 1340, following the collapse of the crossing tower, with painted wooden vaulting; it is a triumph of medieval engineering and aesthetics. The superlative Lady Chapel was also built in the fourteenth century and is a triumph of the most advanced Decorated Gothic style of architecture.

Ely Cathedral: Emergency Rewiring (2 of 3 projects funded)

Awarded £150,000 in January 2015 and a further £150,000 in July 2016

The need

The work was urgent because there had been significant corrosion of the MICC (mineral insulated copper-clad) cables and there was danger of failure of the electrical system supporting lighting, emergency lighting, fire alarms, lighting and power circuits. These failings became apparent following a complete electrical test of the building completed in 2013 after a series of power cuts and concerns over the electrical systems in the cathedral. As providing lighting and power is a key part of the cathedral's welcome to visitors and worshippers, there would have been a direct impact on that if the cabling had failed entirely. Ultimately, without the safety systems supported by the cabling, parts or all of the cathedral would have needed to be closed to the public.



New high-level cabling. Photo Credit: Purcell Architects.

Outcomes

The rewiring was urgent prior to the work and now will require only routine maintenance.

Economic and social impact

Local contractors were employed and efficiency savings were made by taking the opportunity to upgrading the cathedral lighting at the same time, although this was not part of the grant-aided project. The project has involved upskilling in the architecture profession by giving young architects the opportunity to work on projects such as these.

Works completed and timescale

The work started in 2015 by the electrical contractor V. J. Skerry Limited of Huntingdon. It included the rewiring of the north side of the cathedral within the North Porch, Lady Chapel, North Transept, North Nave Aisle and North Choir Aisle as well as the South Choir Aisle. Further work included the installation of additional mains socket outlets and coaxial cabling to existing and new TV monitor positions along the north and south side of the Nave and Choir. The second phase of the project continued with South Nave Aisle, South Transept, South Porch, West Front and Galilee Porch, together with the Shop and Refectory, to complete the rewiring of the cathedral.



New electrical cabling decorated to blend with the stonework.
Photo Credit: Purcell Architects.

The Cathedral

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Ely Cathedral: South Nave Aisle Roof & High-Level Repairs (3 of 3 projects funded)

Awarded £500,000 in November 2016 towards a £1.35 million project

The need

This application was for re-roofing the leaking South Nave Aisle roof and masonry and glazing repairs to the triforium windows, the first phase of a three-phase project to repair the South Aisle masonry, glazing and roofing. There had been concerns about water coming in onto the nationally important exhibits of the Stained Glass Museum in the triforium: regular leaks had been noticed, requiring a number of patch repairs. The Quinquennial Inspection had identified major problems with the glazing and stonework as well as the roof.

The balance of the funding was raised by the cathedral from its own resources and major donors. The project was not splittable because these works involved major disruption, and there was also an economy of scale on scaffolding from doing the roof and window works together. The cathedral was therefore committed to raising the funds in one go.



The scaffolding in place. Photo credit: Purcell Architects.

Outcomes

As for all the grant-aided projects at Ely, the work develops the skills of the cathedral staff in running large-scale projects and also attracts interest from the community in the building's heritage.

Economic and social impact

Local contractors were used for the project and traditional craft skills in stone masonry were supported. The cathedral welcomes over 250,000 visitors a year, including some 10,000 schoolchildren. The exhibits of the Stained Glass Museum, now housed in the south triforium of the cathedral have been made safe for the public to see. The permanent gallery displays over 125 stained glass panels representing eight hundred years of the history of this ancient art from all over the British Isles. The Museum runs a lively education programme, as well as special events and lectures for adults. It is the only museum in the UK dedicated to stained glass.



Repairing window mullions and tracery.
Photo credit: Purcell Architects.

Works completed and timescale

The funding for this project was secured in November 2016 and work began in August 2017. The project was due to complete in April 2018 but completion was delayed when the main contractor went into administration in May 2018 and was ongoing at the time of writing. The project focused on three key aspects: (i) the re-roofing of the leaking South Nave Aisle roof and replacement of the rainwater goods; (ii) the re-glazing and repair of the quarry-glazed South Nave triforium windows including mullion and tracery repairs; (iii) the cleaning, repointing and repair of the external masonry to the triforium elevation from triforium string course level upwards.

The Cathedral

See previous project summaries.