

Easier Access at St Gwenfaen's, Rhoscolyn

The desire to make St Gwenfaen's Church, Rhoscolyn physically easier to access has dominated the landscape of much of the time since I arrived in the Ministry Area in February 2014.

I am pleased to be able to make the following statement about the plans of St Gwenfaen's Committee and the Ministry Area Council of Bro Cybi (Holy Island). First, it is important to remind ourselves briefly of how we have reached this position.

Prior to my arrival, lots of hard work had already been undertaken by a number of people, including Ian and Alison Walker, to whom again I would like to place on record my thanks. Prospective plans had been drawn up and planning permission from Anglesey County Council had been obtained. Money had also been raised involving a wide number of people.

The Chancellor of Bangor Diocese was however unable to grant a faculty (ecclesiastical planning permission) because the plans involved building on land in front of the church that fell outside of the ownership of the Representative Body of the Church in Wales.

At the same time, a number of members of St Gwenfaen's Congregation and the wider community raised concerns about the design and the amount of money that would be needed to fund the access, although it has to be said that any project designing easier access to a Church in a setting like St Gwenfaen's will require significant fundraising and grant aided money. The Committee took this seriously and wanted to take stock. This resulted reluctantly in a decision not to proceed with plan designed by Ian Walker. The seed money originally invested by Ian and Alison has been returned.

Since this happened, the Committee has been silent. This does not mean inactivity. It has simply been that we have gone about our business quietly. A number of possible interventions have been put before the Committee by our architect, Elinor Gray-Williams of Donald Insalls, including the possibility of a lift at the front of the church, and coming in from behind the Church. The only reasonable solution involved however building an easier access entrance from the side of the Church, which would mean using some of the land owned by the

Rhoscolyn Estate. To that end we held preliminary discussions with the Estate, and then asked Elinor to draw up some plans. These were submitted in March to the Estate, and in the last few days the Estate has agreed we can use some of their land.

Inevitably a legal agreement will be drawn up, which will be looked at by the Representative Body and application for both Planning and Faculty will be made. We will of course as well continue looking at how to raise the money needed to fund the project. Whilst raising monies will involve time, after obtaining the relevant permissions necessary, the Committee remain confident that we will be able to proceed within a comparatively shorter time frame than originally envisaged.

Drawings are on display in St Gwenfaen's Church and St Gwenfaen's Hall, and myself, Edna and Susan are very willing to answer questions.

Kevin Ellis
Vicar, Bro Cybi
24 April 2016