

Hope Church Merthyr Project Proposal

The church occupies a prominent position in the town Centre on Dic Penderyn Square immediately adjacent to the former town hall (now known as the Red House). The building is of substantial architectural and historic interest within the town centre.

The original chapel was opened in 1861 and was known as Hope Mission Calvinistic Chapel.

The chapel was rebuilt in its current form in 1891 at a cost of £4,500. The building is in the gothic style with a gable entry plan, leaded and coloured glass in perpendicular windows and flanking turrets. The construction is of dressed stonework under a slated roof. The windows are of the same style and construction as those found in the adjacent red house which was built at a similar time.

The church has served the community of Merthyr for over 160 years. It was purchased by the current congregation in 2009, at the time it was empty and disused and in danger of becoming dilapidated and an eyesore in the town centre.

Since the purchase Hope has undergone significant upgrading and has sympathetically modernised to serve today's community. New offices, disabled access via a lift, disabled toilet with baby changing and a new catering Kitchen has been installed. This has enabled the church to facilitate etc for local community groups and to expand the churches' role in meeting the needs of the community, particular emphasis being put on our desire to help the needy in society.

Today, while considerable money, time and effort has been spent on providing community facilities, we find that after 160 years the fabric of the building is showing its age. Substantial external renovation and repair works are required to maintain the integrity of the building and to keep it weatherproof.

It is our intention to carry out such works in a sympathetic manner to maintain the building architectural heritage and to allow the building to continue to play the important role in supporting the local community and continue as an historical landmark in the town centre. In particular, the roof, south elevation and the stained-glass windows need urgent attention. The project will concentrate on re-roofing the building reusing as much as possible of the original slate and using additional British slate where needed. It will also provide an opportunity to add insulation to the roof space and subject to Local Authority approval erecting solar panels which result in a much-reduced carbon footprint for the Church.

We would appoint a conservation architect to oversee the works and use the services of local builders for the main roof renovation and any necessary repointing and other building works.

The programme outcomes would be to guarantee the structural and architectural integrity of the building and ensure its continued use as a community hub for many years to come.

It will build in sustainability, not only to the building but also the activities it facilitates. Such as activities include the use of the building by several local organisations. Currently the Covid 19 pandemic has curtailed these activities but are restarting where they are able to within the covid guidelines.

Current users include:

- Barnardo's Young Carers Group – Meeting fortnightly to support young carers and give them a break from their daily routine, while giving them the opportunity to gain new skills.
- CAP life skills – Free 8-week course designed to help people on low income to learn the necessary life skills to manage their day-to-day financial needs and improve their wellbeing.
- Help@Hope – Since the start of the pandemic the church recognised the need to help and support isolated and lonely people in the community. We provide a shopping service, telephone chat lines and counselling. During Covid we have received over 200 referrals for the support. This work in turn identified a need to supplement people's food supply needs, and Hope Panty was formed. Hope Panty is part of Your Local Pantry Network. We partner with Fair Share Cymru along with statutory agencies, third sector and local housing associations. Since its launch in May 2021, we have membership of 102 people, with 384 pantry visits supporting over 1000 people in the community.

Timescale: Estimated 24 months

