



Common Ground in Sacred Sacred Space Project Update – March 2018

At the CGISS Staff Team meeting yesterday we had quite a conversation about the *Common Ground in Sacred Space* Vision– and whether it is clear, short and pithy enough – and Aims.

At present, the Vision is:

“To bring 900 years of history into the 21st century by reviving the medieval role of our unique building as a distinct space for worship, events and activities. The transformed Cathedral will be a dynamic hub for community engagement as well as a special place of prayer and spiritual discovery.”

The Aims which will help to ensure the Vision becomes a reality are:

- To replace the crumbling nave floor, leaking heating pipes and fixed seating to create a stunning, open and flexible space amid an historic backdrop.
- To preserve and interpret the internationally important collection of imperiled ledger stones.
- To create a tranquil garden and accessible and engaging public space for art and activity within the rundown churchyard.
- To enhance the quality of the visitor experience, including the provision of new visitor facilities.
- To provide high quality interpretation which will tell of the history of the Cathedral and the town and its role through the centuries.
- To encourage learning and engagement through a programme of activities and events, which will involve all ages in a journey of discovery.
- To develop a key volunteer project which will provide extra capacity as well as being a resource for organisations working with vulnerable and marginalised people to help build self-confidence and transform lives.
- To improve the profile, boost visits and increase the business community’s use of the Cathedral and all its services through strategic marketing and strengthened partnerships.
- To develop a sustainable business plan for the Cathedral’s operation, ensuring that adequate resources are available to support activity and engagement.

In the end, of course, the Vision and Aims must be set and approved by Chapter, but a realisation we came to in the meeting was that, in fact, the Vision is very short and pithy because it can be summed up in the words ‘COMMON GROUND IN SACRED SPACE’. Maybe we need to make even more of this!

We also wondered about the ‘three asks’ we might suggest to people who we are talking to about the project – and one suggestion was ‘Ponder, Pray and Pledge’. Having said that, we were also aware that people needed to have an interest in the Cathedral and the Project before we could suggest the ‘Three P’s’ – so that the initial ask/suggestion might be ‘Come And See’.

Further thought required!



Other things:

- The Cathedral's Head of Marketing is developing some **pop-up banners** to place around the Cathedral so that people coming into the building can understand, more clearly, what the *Common Ground in Sacred Space* project is all about and what the physical changes will be. These will be paired with a possible leaflet which will tell the same story and a **video**, being made for us by NCJMedia, which will help to increase our online presence and introduce the Cathedral to people who don't know it or who have never been inside.
- **The Community History Project**, which will particularly focus on the ledger stones but other pieces of heritage too, will be launched in the afternoon and evening of Wednesday 2 May in the Cathedral.
- There is to be a further **consultation event** which will focus on the churchyards and which will be managed by HarrisonStevens, our landscape architects. The date is Thursday 19 April. Please do pass the news around. They will be here all day.
- One more **consultation day** which will involve all of our consultants will take place soon after the HLF Gateway Review (which is on Wednesday 9 May) sometime towards the end of May/beginning of June. This will take place inside as well as outside the Cathedral and will include all the aspects of the project.
- We continue to meet with all sorts of different **partners and potential partners**, and there is no doubt that there is a far greater understanding of what is happening and going to be happening at the Cathedral (and even the existence of the Cathedral!) than there was a few years ago.
- A particular line of exploration is the possibility of creating a Newcastle and Gateshead **Heritage Venues partnership** which could result in much more joined up working for all the Newcastle 'Heritage Venues' and benefits on all sides – rather than each of us tending to work in a bubble, as can happen at present.
- **The volunteer project** is being developed into an excellent professional project in which training, particularly in signposting, how to relate to people who are vulnerable or who have mental health issues, first aid, etc. will be offered. There will also be an induction programme offered to new volunteers so they can quickly know about the Cathedral and feel at home here as quickly as possible.
- **Our PhD project** has still not formally started but we are hopeful it will start very soon. In the meantime an idea was floated to have a Northern Cathedrals Loop Cycling Challenge (Newcastle, Durham, and Carlisle). Anyone want to sign up?

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