

PRESS RELEASE

News from THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH

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LOTTERY FUNDING TO TRANSFORM PAULSGROVE CHURCH

A PORTSMOUTH church will be transformed to become an attractive venue for wedding receptions, parties and community activities.

St Michael's Church in Paulsgrove was today (March 6th) awarded more than £400,000 from the Big Lottery Fund to create warm, welcoming spaces within its existing church building.

The award came after the church listened to around 500 local residents, to discover what they wanted to see in Paulsgrove. The feedback from locals was that people wanted better and more attractive facilities, where they could celebrate important events and showcase their community.

The survey was part of the church's three-year 'Proud to be Paulsgrove' campaign, which has included a local photography competition, community hog roasts and superhero activity days.

The £460,000 project will involve the creation of a brand new community Events Co-operative, based at the church, which will manage events held there.

It will also include the creation of three separate community areas within the church building, alongside the main worship area. These will be designed to be flexible and attractive, so they can be used by a variety of different groups during the week. The church could host everything from music performances to cake-baking, from dance classes to toddler groups.

Architecture students from the University of Portsmouth were involved in creating the initial designs for the new church interior as part of their Science Without Borders project. Interior design students will also be involved in finalising the plans.

The £404,000 award from the Big Lottery Fund will be spent alongside around £50,000 invested by St Michael's Church, and the Council for Social Responsibility, a social transformation charity connected to Portsmouth's Church of England diocese.

The vicar of St Michael's, the Rev Ian Newton, who led the bid, said: "We're truly delighted to be receiving this fantastic award.

"At St Michael's we have been working hard to engage with local people and families. Children and celebration have been recurring themes in our shared conversations. With the support that has been generously offered to us we are looking forward to working with as many people as possible to make our shared vision a reality, as we seek to renew St Michael's for the 21st century."

There will be open days and the chance for local people to work together to help finalise the plans.

The work to update the 60-year-old church building should then start in the autumn and should be completed in 2019.

The church has ambitious goals of reaching more than 1,000 residents in the first year, recruiting 100 new volunteers, and inspiring the creation of 10 new community groups.

A grand community ball is being planned as the launch event for the Events Co-operative.

The renewal project is the result of a three-year engagement process supported by the Council of Social Responsibility CSR (a social transformation charity connected to the Diocese of Portsmouth) that has seen the 'Proud to Be Paulsgrove' campaign reach across the community.

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