

Ayton Heritage

Annual General Meeting – 27 October 2021

Chairman's report

In general, it has been a frustrating year with progress being slower than expected. However, we have moved forward in some areas and the trustees are determined to continue in our aim to have St Dionysius preserved.

Building condition report

We got a grant of £2538 from Scottish Borders Council to pay for the report which was written by Adams Napier Partnership after visiting the site. It's quite a detailed document but it's what we need to go forward with grant applications. The estimated preservation cost of around £300,000 is eye watering but that's what is required. It might be possible to make some savings once we get into the detail.

Grant Applications

We applied for grants from Historic Environment Scotland (£122,000), the Heritage Lottery Fund (£93,000), Fallago Environmental (£50,000) and have the Pilgrim Trust (£50,000) on hold. HES turned down our application because we could not prove ownership of the building. More about this later.

HLF turned us down because our application didn't have enough emphasis on involving people in heritage rather than just the practical stone and mortar concerns. We are working with Archaeology Scotland to explore ideas on what we can do to address this issue. We are trying to involve local schools in the project and they seem interested.

Fallago turned us down until we have main funding in place from HES or HLF. It will be reviewed in February.

Pilgrim Trust application is on hold until we get the major funding in place.

Ownership

Scottish Borders Council is the landowner of the cemetery but does not have ownership of any buildings contained within it. This is claimed under the conditions of the Church of Scotland (Property and Endowments) Act 1925 when responsibility for cemeteries was transferred to local authorities. The Church of Scotland also claim to have no ownership.

We are pursuing asset transfer under the Community Empowerment Act of 2015. Discussions are at an early stage with Scottish Borders Council.

Volunteer work

We had two days in May and September when volunteers cut back ivy and undergrowth. Alan Hogarth gave us two hours of his time free of charge in September and he was able to reach some of the higher sections of ivy with his equipment.

Going forward

We will pursue the ownership issue which is a major stumbling block to getting HES funding. Once resolved we will re-apply to HES.

We will resubmit the HLF application after we find ways of increasing the general awareness of heritage.

We will look for other sources of funding.

Any help which can be offered in way of research on the building and the memorial inscriptions will be appreciated.