

Drayton: St Catherine (601147)

Faculty application for the installation of

a “Catherine Wheel” mosaic

Ref 2025-119562

**Response to the consultation response received from the
Church Buildings Council.**

Background - “The wider picture”:

Drayton is a small parish with about 350 residents, of whom 40 are on the Electoral Roll. The church of St Catherine is Listed Grade I and is under the care of the PCC. The parish has been “In Vacancy” since 2020.

The very starting point of this project was the need, as identified in the 2022 Quinquennial survey, to reslate the north slope of the nave roof. The author (I am Chair, Treasurer and Secretary of the PCC, and organist of the church) realised that funding that work was going to take “an awful lot of coffee mornings”, so offered to to the PCC to act on their behalf in the preparation and submission of an application for a Lottery-funded grant from the Heritage Fund to support the project. The PCC readily agreed, and were very supportive then and since.

Bids to the Heritage Fund have to demonstrate that they meet their four principles - “Saving heritage”, “Protecting the environment”, “Inclusion, access and participation” and “Organisational sustainability”. Our bid naturally centred on the replacement of the roof to meet the criterion of “Saving heritage”. Events under the banner of “Protecting the environment” were proposed: the provision, free of charge, of bird boxes and free events in

which members of the public could participate, such as stargazing, bird walks, discovery of the flora and fauna of the churchyard, etc. The flagship event of the “Inclusion, access and participation” section was a two-day exhibition of the “Treasures of St Catherine's” in which the public were invited to come and engage with the historical artefacts held in the church right in the middle of their village, many of which were rarely, if ever, displayed. The final element supporting “Organisational sustainability” is going to be the establishment of the “Friends” or “Guardians” scheme to support the fabric of the church building, supporting the role of the PCC in doing so.

In the preparation of these diverse elements, I felt that it would be appropriate and beneficial to somehow link at least some of them to the reslating of the roof at the heart of the bid. I therefore proposed that as part of the “Protecting the environment” element that we make and distribute fifty birdboxes (as already mentioned) roofed using old slates, providing a long-term reminder for parishioners of the project and giving them something of a talking point for their own home and garden environment.

The Catherine Wheel mosaic is a second proposal.

The offering of the above elements satisfied the criteria of the Heritage Fund, and they awarded the Grant on 8th May 2025.

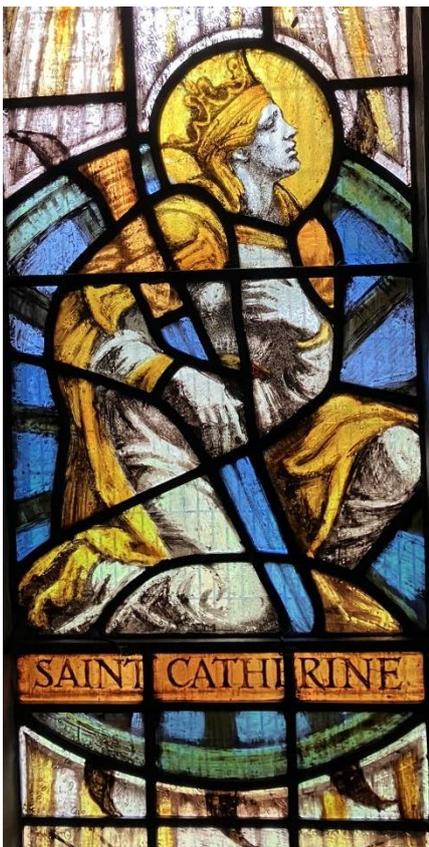
The Catherine Wheel mosaic

- Around the time of the inception of this project (April 2024), a very different art installation - the “Knife Angel” created by artist Alfie Bradley and the British Ironworks Centre based in Oswestry - was displayed in Taunton. Taking inspiration from this I engaged on our project with parish resident and local artist, Nick Durnan. Nick has a first-class reputation in

the restoration and conservation of ecclesiastical stonemasonry having started his working life as an apprentice stonemason at Canterbury Cathedral. He has an exemplary record of providing stone- and mosaicwork in a number of prominent ecclesiastical buildings including Exeter, Canterbury and Peterborough cathedrals, and Buckfast Abbey. For a fuller list of his work and achievements see nicholasdurnan.co.uk.

The original vision was to see if we could build on the idea of the Bradley artwork for Drayton and create a "Slate Angel" - formed from slates recovered from the roof. However, over the course of a number of meetings between Nick and I (with periods of time between for reflection and consideration) it became clear that, for a number of reasons, this was not a viable concept.

After making some observations round the church building, its environs, and taking into account consideration of its history, the solution of a Catherine Wheel floor mosaic presented itself. This could, we decided, be installed in the pathway outside the south porch.



The main reasons for this choice of subject and its location were:

- The church is dedicated to St Catherine of Alexandria. St Catherine's principal attribute is the "breaking wheel" on which she was due to be martyred and with which she is frequently portrayed. The motif features prominently in the church - a section of a window in the north aisle (left) dated 1976 and by Brian Thomas OBE, and below, a section of the east window, a congregation hassock and a section of the communion rail kneeler.



- The west window also portrays, and provides a narrative on, the ring of full-circle-rung bells, and reinforcing the importance of the wheel as a motif around the church.
- The circle is an important and widely seen motif in Christianity - and other religions - and is seen in many forms; for example, the rose window of the mediaeval cathedral, the dome of a temple, church or chapel, or the mystical labyrinth which invites us to take a step on a journey of calm and meditation.
- The proposed location of the mosaic is at the principal entrance of the church. This means that anyone entering will, of necessity, pass over it, being reminded as they do so of the dedication of the church and the terrible fate of its patron saint.

- The proposed materials of the wheel mosaic are all local stone (white and blue lias - from which many local houses are built - and ham stone), and, importantly, segments of slate recovered from the church roof at the reslating. These elements will all provide a permanent link between the mosaic and the local environment and community, and, crucially, to the project of the replacement of the roof itself.

Commissioning the work:

Being a modest project, the commissioning this work was fairly straightforward. The artist virtually presented himself - he is local to the village, is highly respected in his field, and has wide experience of working in the ecclesiastical environment. Working with in conjunction with him, a brief was produced.

Consultation:

At every step the PCC have been consulted, and informed of progress, even if there is none to report. The plans have been shared with them as work has progressed.

Following the award of the Grant on 8th May 2025 the entire village and parish was invited to an official launch of the project at an open meeting in the Village Hall on 7th September 2025. The presentation that evening provided the audience with an update on how the grant had come about and been awarded, and the vision of how the money was to be spent. The design, location and materials of the mosaic were on display and were described and discussed.

Nick presented his drawing and exhibited samples of the stone to be used, which have been displayed in his home studio (below left), and he has also

created a mockup of a small section of the wheel (below right), illustrating clearly how it will look “in real life”.



Feedback received:

The whole project was warmly received by those who attended the open meeting, and the PCC have remained fully supportive throughout. There has been only one suggestion for a change - to resite the mosaic to a point further down the path (between the gate to the churchyard and the porch), but this was not agreed to by the PCC.

Minor changes to the design have taken place since then, but, as before, the PCC are in full support. Our Associate Priest, Revd Scott Patterson, recently wrote that “the mosaic example looked amazing!”

Costs:

From the outset, Nick Durnan provided a quote for costs for all elements of the work (design, purchase of stone and installation) which were applied for as part of the Heritage Fund bid. The Grant therefore covers them in full.

However, it has since transpired that Planning Permission is required. I have instructed our Architect Tomas Griffin of Benjamin and Beauchamp to manage the application for us, the costs of both his fees and the Planning Application being met from an underspend on the roof works themselves.

My understanding is that Listed Building consent is not required, that requirement being met by the Diocesan Faculty.

The future:

Once the necessary permissions are in place, Nick can be instructed to carry out the work. It is likely that he will obtain assistance from other sub-contractors, but he will retain overall responsibility.

When the work is complete, I hope that it would be appropriate for some sort of public commissioning and act of dedication can be made. This is yet to be devised and planned.

Care of the work:

The proposal is that the work is made of hard-wearing stone elements and has been designed to be non slip. No special requirements for care have been specified. However, it will be closely monitored for deterioration and maintained appropriately (as any other surface would be) in the years going forward.

Tim Donaldson

Drayton

20th January 2026.