



**Case
STUDY**

PARTNERSHIP GRANT
**Colonsay Parish Church,
Scotland**

Address:	Church of Scotland, Isle of Colonsay, Argyll, PA61 7YW
Denomination:	Church of Scotland
NCT grant awarded:	NCT Partnership Grant £3,000 April 2015 (works carried out Spring/Summer 2016)
Setting:	Rural
Architect:	Rebecca Cadie BArch DipArch ARIAS RIBA (ARPL Architects)
Contractors:	Rowan Stoneworks
Project cost:	Approximately £60,000
Opening hours:	Open for activities throughout the week, worship 11.30am every Sunday
Visitors in 2016:	The church moved to four regular services a month with an average attendance of 25. The church is well visited in summer months.
Website:	www.colonsaychurches.org



Colonsay Parish Church is a charming white-harled kirk built in 1802 to the design of architect Michael Carmichael. Features include a 'birdcage' belfry which crowns a classical pediment above the semi-circular vestry, the pediment being enhanced by a 'blind' oculus.

With generous support from visitors and friends the local congregation renewed the windows in 2015. However, it was then unexpectedly advised that the 'birdcage' belfry was in a dangerous condition. The weather on Colonsay is such that the belfry could not be left exposed in its parlous state, and the congregation was told that the belfry must be restored otherwise the church would have to close.

The work was split into two phases, with the first to dismantle the belfry before it fell and the second to restore and reinstate the stone belfry and bell, and to replace cast iron gutters to the vestry roof. Due to the urgency of the works the parishioners found £20,000 to fund the first phase of work whilst fundraising £40,000 to enable phase two.

The appeal was launched on St Andrews Day 2015 (30 November) but phase one was delayed due to ferocious weather. The belfry was removed in January 2016 and fundraising continued throughout early 2016. In June 2016 work started on the reinstatement of the belfry and new cast iron gutter work. The project was completed in September.

"This was a daunting project and we have been amazed and humbled by the wonderful response."

Project challenges: The total cost of the project was £60,000, and the church set itself the challenge of raising £20,000 from their own resources – a daunting task in an island of 135 people, almost 90 of whom are pensioners or schoolchildren. The congregation had no expertise in structural conservation and, although the church was listed,

they initially found it difficult to obtain helpful advice or information from the agencies that they turned to.

Impact:

- The building was saved from closing which would have had a negative effect on such a tight-knit community.
- The condition of the building has been improved and secured for the next 200 years! The church bell has been brought back into use.
- Number of church services doubled from two to four services per month.
- Greater public engagement – significant public support from the local community and significant positive media coverage as well as world-wide exposure through the web.
- The church has resolved upon a programme of good stewardship with all future maintenance being positively and timely rather than patching and repairing.

Key lessons learnt: Conservation management skills together with basic project management skills. Church members have learnt to fundraise on a large scale and have become media savvy. Although they did not previously have any structural conservation experience they have now formed good relationships with a number of key partners and are committed to proactive maintenance.

New uses: As well as increasing the number of weekly services the church was also used as an exhibition space for local artists and crafts folk for three months in 2016.

New users: The church continues to be well visited throughout the summer months and the congregation expect this to increase given the connections they have made throughout the world through their fundraising appeal. The church plays a full part in community life, is always open for private prayer or contemplation and is freely available for appropriate secular use.