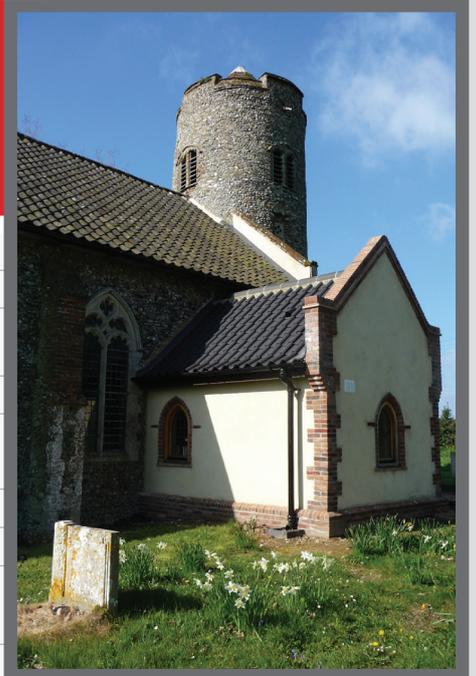




Case STUDY

COMMUNITY GRANT All Saints, Hemblington, Norfolk



Address:	Church Lane, Hemblington, Norfolk NR13 4EF
Designation:	Church of England, Diocese of Norwich (Grade I)
NCT grants awarded:	£10,000 Community Grant, December 2014. Work completed September 2015
Setting:	Index of Multiple Deprivation 54%
Architect:	Ruth Brennan Architects BA BArch DipRSA PgCertPMA MCIAT RIBA AABC EASA
Project cost:	Approximately £90,000
Opening hours:	9.30am until 5pm every day
Visitors in 2015:	1,700 including study groups such as Bure Valley Conservation Group and Norfolk Wildlife Trust
Website:	www.hemblingtonchurch.org.uk

This historic flint cobbled church, which has a round tower dating to 1060-1100, is situated in an isolated position a mile from its small village. The church is decorated with one of the largest and most complete medieval wall paintings in the country depicting the life of St Christopher. The church is on a Norfolk County Council walking route and a Broadland cycle trail, and receives many visitors.

Before the project began, this small rural church was holding weekly services and had a small congregation averaging around 20 people. The parish wanted to do more to build friendships between the church and community. It felt the lack of toilet or kitchen facilities was compromising its ability to attract new worshippers or to encourage its use by, and support of, the community. Equally they were concerned that without the project the church could decline and they risked losing a unique community space and presence in the area.

A community consultation was held to inform proposals and a project developed to provide level access into the church to help those with mobility issues. A small extension was designed around a former north door to accommodate an accessible toilet, and a plumbed in kitchen and small heritage/tourism area was created.

The parish recognises the difficulty of its remote location so works closely with the Heathlands Social Club in Blofield Heath, occasionally holding joint events either at the church or at the Social Club, as well as with colleagues in the two other churches of the benefice to attract people to the church.

“The project was a triumph, and all our aspirations have been met”

Sue Shillain, Churchwarden

Project challenges: Although the project was largely problem free, towards the end an issue arose extending the underground power supply from the road to the church which then impacted on works that required a power supply in order to be completed, thus delaying the end date.

Impact:

- The condition of the building has been enhanced and the building has a sympathetic extension.
- There is increased public engagement with heritage, architecture and history – the new facilities are supporting events for a new audience as well as supporting the parish.
- The project has benefited the congregation by making it easier to hold events.
- New facilities support parishioners who can spend longer at the church.

Key lessons learnt: Although the project team struggled with delays on site, the end result has been a great success. The parish now acts as a valuable case study for other rural churches struggling to see the potential of their isolated buildings. The churchwarden happily shares enthusiasm and experience of project development and fundraising with other churches in the area, and is acting as an example for how rural churches can be sustainable.

New uses: An events committee organises regular events, where possible in partnership with others in the local village of Blofield Heath and the Blofield benefice. These include craft fairs where local people exhibit their wares and the church team sells refreshments, ‘Make and mardle’, wildlife presentations, churchyard watches, architectural study days and visits.

New users: Engaging heritage and environmental interest groups, links with local villagers and villages.