St Chads, Bensham (Gateshead)

- Inner city church
- Area of high deprivation
- High incidence of foreign nationals as asylum seekers
- Church sits in the heart of an extremely challenged community offering support to all its residents
- Church wants to ‘be there for’ the new community and to open itself to the opportunity this brings
St Chads, Bensham

- Built as the ‘Cathedral of the working man’ in 1903
- Astounding but relatively unknown ‘Arts and Crafts’ interior
- Fairly ‘brutal’ reordering in the west end under ‘Faith in the City’
- A mission to the people of Bensham
- Aspiration to establish church as a community and social enterprise hub alongside its role as a place of worship - St Chads – A Safe Haven
From Burden to Opportunity

Presenting Issue or burden

Leaking roof due to time expired materials

1980s reordering significantly detrimental impact on heritage significance

Undervalued arts and crafts interior which community is unlikely to engage with

Under-resourced church with very few volunteers

Opportunity

Roof repair project a focus for new heritage activities. Secure building for 150 + years

Sensitive redesign and refurbish for a new community and social enterprise space to meet community need

Focus on the social heritage in living history sessions telling the stories of the Cathedral of the Working Man

Bensham is being regenerated and a new community being rebuilt around the church
Project Approach

Develop partnership
- St Chads Community Project
- Bensham and Saltwell alive
- Gateshead Council

Consultancy support
- Identifying need
- Options appraisal
- High level business plan
- Community workshops
- Piloting role as Community /Enterprise hub

Funding
- Success with revenue funding to appoint project officer
- £690K required for roof repair – *Mountain 1*
- £600K required for refurbishment of community space *Mountain 2*
- GWF Anniversary Fund – Failed bid but secured faculty
- NLHF Heritage Grant being investigated as major funding source
Successes v Remaining Challenges

Successes
- Church governance strengthened through partnership
- Piloting Safe Haven has really shown the project will work.
- Church can become ‘go to place’ for community support
- Bidding for grants even though unsuccessful has assembled documents needed for success
- Church believes in itself and what it must do

Challenges
- Scale the funding mountains
- Volunteer base remains small
- GBC support vulnerable to service cuts
- Finding ways to make the heritage of St Chad’s meaningful for the community
- Build momentum before IF project support ends
St Chad’s & Heritage

• Open Studios
• Tours – groups and individuals
• Heritage Open Day – how we made more of this
• Recording – stats and pictures
Open the Box

Telling stories in interesting ways