

Name of project/group
Ipswich Hospital Band
Type of project
Social Action
Location
Ipswich, East of England
What was involved
<p>St Peter's Church on Ipswich's waterfront is one of three waterside churches established to serve the town's merchants and mariners. By the 21st century this Grade II listed 15th century church was largely redundant and in need of significant conservation and repair work. The project arose from the partnership working of Ipswich Borough Council, Ipswich Historic Churches Trust and the Ipswich Hospital Band in a bid to save the church, bringing it back in to use. The freeholder, Ipswich Borough Council, granted a long-lease to the Trust that enabled them to sub-let the building to the Ipswich Hospital Band. With a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the church was converted into a music venue and performance space. With the support and expertise of the Council and the Trust, Ipswich Hospital Band has undertaken vital conservation work to secure the building, and has sensitively adapted the interior to create a unique performance space.</p> <p>The project had two main aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To undertake vital conservation works and establish a new use for the redundant historic church. • To create a performance space for the Ipswich Hospital Band and other arts performers.
Achievements
<p>A unique, Grade II listed waterside church was rescued and underwent repair and conservation work that restored its significance, halting further decline. The project redeveloped the site and converted it from a church into a music venue, bringing it back in to use for the local community. This gave an empty historic building a sustainable new use that will enable it to maintain itself into the future.</p> <p>Sensitive adaptations to the church have returned it to its community by providing a new use for one of Ipswich's medieval landmark buildings. Previously inaccessible for much of the year, the church is now open to visitors everyday throughout the summer months, in addition to concert performances. Ipswich Hospital Band has a fully equipped venue in which to rehearse, perform and host other events, increasing their own long-term viability as well as the cultural offer of the town. There is also free live music in St Peter's every Wednesday lunchtime, which attracts new audiences to the church. The inclusion of interpretative displays within the church explaining its heritage helps ensure that all visitors have the opportunity to find out more about the history of the local area.</p>
Future plans
<p>This church is a prominent building on Ipswich's waterfront with visual links to other historic churches close by. Through its sensitive repair and revitalisation, it now makes a positive contribution to the overall regeneration of this historic part of the town. It now has a viable future as a home for a fund-raising charity as well as providing Ipswich with a new music and arts venue.</p>
Lessons Learnt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before making an application it is most beneficial to visit your funder, meet their adviser, explain your project and take their advice. • At a very early stage involve a professional (i.e. an architect or engineer) to advise on your plan.

- Your estimates can often be wrong.
- A properly researched business plan, with projected benefits, is essential even for a small project.
- Don't assume the funder will bend any rules – they will not.
- Structure a project team from your own organisation and select a project leader with the authority to take decisions - there will be many during the contract.
- Contractors' estimates are usually too good to be true- assume you will need a good contingency.
- Make sure you have you have a cushion of finance available to pay contractors - don't fall out with them over bill payment.
- Be prepared for the long haul.
- Keep your enthusiasm for the project and you will prevail!

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