

Treasures of Blanchland Project

General information to accompany all specifications services v1

December 2025



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1 Invitation to tender

Lord Crewe's Charity (LCC) and Blanchland with Hunstanworth Parochial Church Council (PCC) are seeking to recruit a team of experienced heritage and community project professionals to help them deliver the Treasures of Blanchland project:

A Two phase, circa £2.1M, 5 year project using citizen research, academic study, and skilled heritage conservation to unlock and share the mysteries of the Treasures of Blanchland, exploring the rich history of the village, and repairing the fabric of the medieval Blanchland Abbey.

The Treasures of Blanchland project is the latest in a programme of heritage led community regeneration projects which the PCC and Blanchland Community Development Organisation (BCDO) began in 2017.

The Treasures of Blanchland project is in two phases: Development (2026/2027) and Delivery (2027 – 2029), and it is anticipated that most of the contractors will be recruited for both phases, with a break clause in the contract at the end of the Development Phase.

This development phase of the Treasures of Blanchland project is generously funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Lord Crewe's Charity. The total project budget for the development Phase is £282,000 (inc VAT, secured), the expected total cost for the delivery phase is £1,851,000 (inc VAT, unsecured), giving a total expected project cost over the two phases in the region of £2,133,000 (inc VAT).

The tenders being offered for the development phase are:

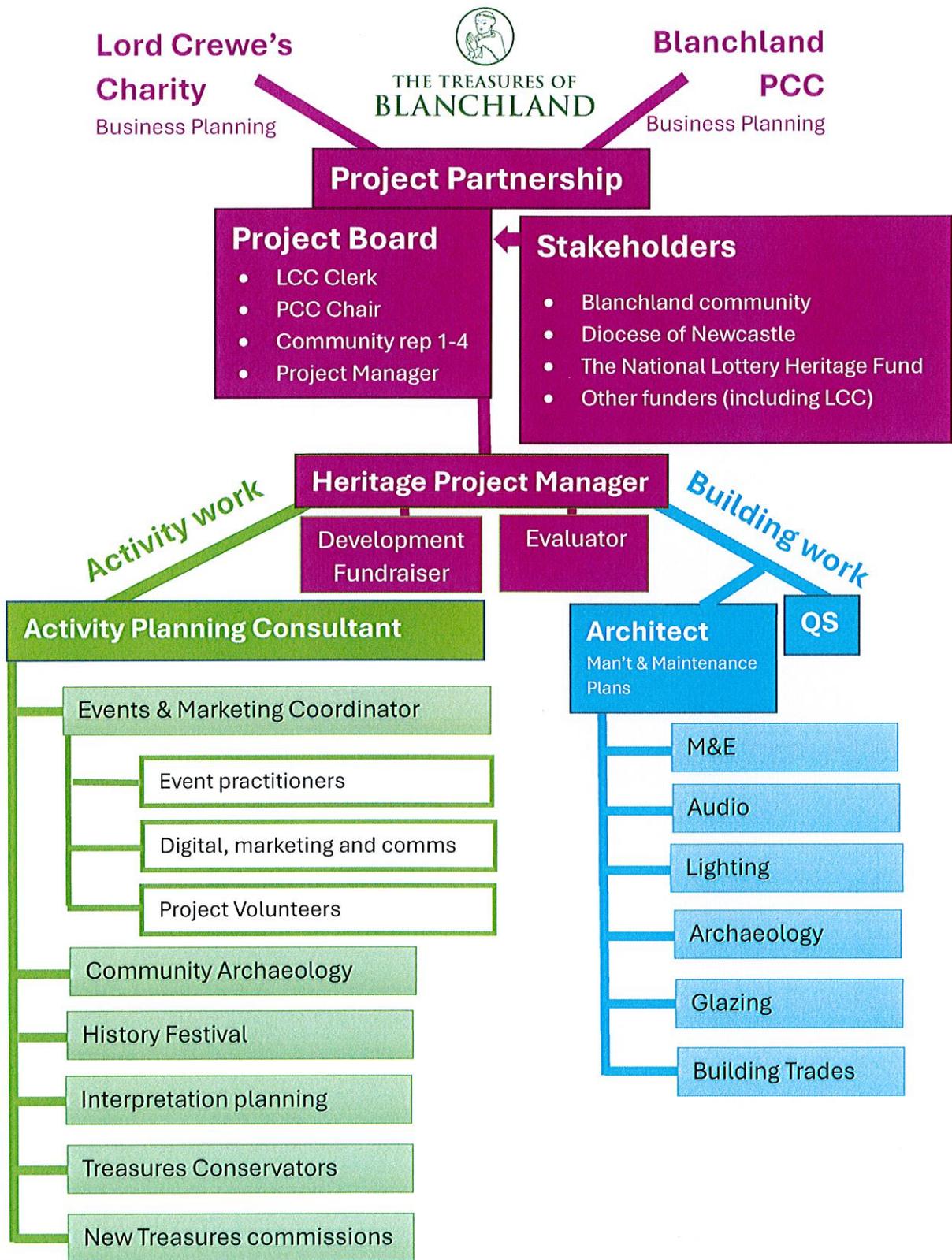
1. Heritage Project Manager (to include delivery phase bid development and activity planning)

Who will then support the project board to recruit such consultants needed for the development phase, which may include:

2. Architect (to include design, and build project management)
3. Quantity Surveyor
4. Fundraiser (development phase only)
5. Activity Planning Consultant
6. Events & Marketing Consultant
7. New Treasures commissions: Historical Embroidery and Nature Stained Glass
8. Heritage Treasures - various specialists as required by emerging conservation reports
9. History Festival Development and Delivery
10. Interpretation Planning (development phase) and design, production and installation (delivery phase)
11. Independent Formative Evaluator (delivery phase only)
12. Evaluation Consultant

NB Community Archaeology activity is a non-commercial volunteer led programme already developed by the project board with volunteers from appropriate local archaeology societies.

Treasures of Blanchland – Project Reporting for Development Phase



3 Approved Purposes

All successful contractors are required to work collaboratively, supporting the project board and stakeholders, to ensure successful delivery of the project's approved purposes.

The purposes of the project's **Development Phase**, as approved by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, are:

1. Procure Architectural Design Team, Project Manager, Community and Events Coordinator, Marketing, Digital and Promotion Contractor, plus other freelance workers and consultants, according to Heritage Fund procurement requirements.
2. Progress capital proposals into RIBA4 (tenders can be invited but a contractor should not be appointed).
3. Progress proposals for activities, interpretation and archaeological research, including delivery of pilot activities.
4. Progress proposals for conservation of objects.
5. Progress proposals for evaluation.
6. Undertake fundraising to secure partnership funding.
7. Develop Delivery Phase application form and supporting documents (see application guidance for full list), which should notably include:
 - a. developed conservation management plans for the building and the objects that will be subject to conservation work;
 - b. RIBA Stage 3 plans and design document
 - c. Cost Plan for the whole project
 - d. An outline cashflow
 - e. Detailed Programme for the delivery phase
 - f. Interpretation Plan & Designs to RIBA 3, with the Conservation Management Plan feeding into it.
 - g. Activity Plan and Action Plan, incorporating area-based elements;
 - h. PCC business plan and updated LCC business plan (both incorporating income and spending forecasts for five years following project completion, featuring costs apportioned to each partner from the Management and Maintenance Plan).
 - i. Management and Maintenance Plan
 - j. Evidence of Fundraising
 - k. Details of Planning and other required consents
 - l. Draft Evaluation Framework for the delivery phase
 - m. Project Management structure for delivery phase
 - n. Risk Registers for capital and post-capital phases

The key points that need to be addressed in the working up of a Delivery Phase application are:

- A. review and fully develop evaluation proposals for both Development and Delivery Rounds, in-line with Heritage Fund's Evaluation Good Practice Guidance;
- B. embed proactive outreach, consultation and research with new audiences, including more diverse and under-served audiences, and ensure this is fully reflected in the Activity Plan;
- C. fully research and develop proposals to ensure the church's long-term sustainable use and financial resilience, ensuring findings and resulting proposals are comprehensively reflected in the Activity Plan and the PCC's Business Plan;



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D. and such other requirements as may be notified to you during the Development Phase.

The anticipated submission date for our delivery phase application is in May 2027 when published here: <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/national-lottery-heritage-grants-250k-10m/deadlines> .

4 Background to Blanchland and the Blanchland Abbey Projects

The Treasures of Blanchland project is centred on **Blanchland village** , nestled in a quiet valley on the banks of the River Derwent, in Northumberland on its border with County Durham. Uniquely its current footprint almost exactly mirrors that of its medieval Abbey founded in 1165. It is a very rural, residential village in the North Pennines National Landscape, within 30 mins drive of Tyneside. The wider Blanchland Estate has been owned by Lord Crewe's Charity since 1721, and contains 11 scheduled monuments, and 46 listed structures. Blanchland's parish population is aging and declining in number, with just 111 households holding 242 people in the 2021 census. This decline of more than 9% since the 2011 census gives a population density of just 9 people per square mile. All but one of the houses in the village are tenanted, and approximately half of the distinctive village square is accommodation for the Lord Crewe Arms Hotel. Tens of thousands of people visit every year, attracted by the history, tranquil countryside, and events such as the regular Artisan Markets, concerts, Agricultural Show, stargazing, and Bonfire Celebration. The village has frequently been used as a setting for film and TV productions, and is valued for its authenticity.

Blanchland Abbey Church, managed by the PCC volunteers, is the only building in the village open to the public, dawn to dusk, every day of the year. This Grade 1 listed building aspires to become more open and sustainable in its welcome and hospitality to everyone, of all faiths or none, whatever their reason for visiting. Sadly the fabric of the building is very damp, has signs of woodworm in the roof, has no heating or facilities, and is inaccessible to many as there are five large steps to enter. Inside are treasures – objects and fixtures dating back through 500 years. These are in need of conservation and interpretation, so they can illuminate the many stories of Blanchland's history, and revive heritage crafts and skills to ensure the Abbey church remains open and sustainable, to serve people into the future.

Lord Crewe's Charity has owned and managed the wider Blanchland estate for the last 300 years. The Treasures of Blanchland project opens up opportunities for archaeological research and community involvement, so that we can all understand the origins of the village and how people have interacted with this landscape over the centuries. Lord Crewe's Charity, in collaboration with Northumberland County Council, is proposing to make public realm improvements to the centre of the village within the timeframe of The Treasures of Blanchland project. Subject to ongoing funding, these may include: replacing tarmac with more sympathetic surfaces; reviewing and improving signage; reviewing and improving public and roadside car parking; and improving drainage. These works are not within the Treasures of Blanchland project and are not funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The **Treasures of Blanchland** is the third phase of The Blanchland Abbey Projects - a community led heritage regeneration programme which the community began developing during 2017. It has been funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Lord Crewe's Charity amongst others. It is viewed by Newcastle Diocese as a trailblazer for their historic church buildings and increasing their relevance to



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contemporary populations, in line with their Rural Churches for Everyone and Church Buildings Support programmes.

Blanchland **Resilient Heritage Project** took place just before Covid lockdowns, and succeeded in developing a sense of community spirit, sustainability and commitment to the future development of the Abbey to provide a more resilient future for the building and to strengthen its role within the village. For a summation of the Blanchland Resilience Project (2020) please view: youtu.be/lqQOahkWNEk

The **6As of Blanchland Project** investigated the Archaeology, Acoustics, and Archives, and developed plans for Artisans, Audiences and the Abbey. Its evaluation concluded that that outcomes of the project have been substantially achieved, and the time is now right to move to the next stage – capital works to re-order the Abbey. This investment is now necessary if the BCDO/PCC and volunteers are going make further progress in achieving the outcomes for the benefit for those who live, work and visit Blanchland. Such progress will generate further economic, social, cultural heritage and environmental benefits.

Evaluation Reports for the Resilient Heritage and 6As of Blanchland Projects are available online. More information can be found at lordcrewescharity.org.uk and blanchland.org/blanchland-abbey-project/

5 The Treasures of Blanchland Project

The **Treasures of Blanchland Project** evolves this earlier success of the PCC and BCDO volunteers, with the new LCC and PCC partnership recognising their entwined heritage assets. It energises the development of social capital amongst parishioners and neighbours, whilst stimulating the local economy. The Treasures of Blanchland project is key to continuing the long 860-year life of this deeply rural village, its viability underpinned by its ecclesiastical heritage cared for together by the community, their church and Lord Crewe's Charity.

We are planning for The Treasures of Blanchland project to:

- RESCUE historic fabric of the Grade 1 Abbey church, preventing further deterioration from damp and improving adaptability to climate change;
- REMODEL interior and access creating a warm, collaborative, and accessible community-owned building, meeting the CofE Net zero carbon commitment;
- CONSERVE, study, and safely redisplay the Abbey's Treasures which date from the C15th in collaboration with researchers from Durham University;
- INVESTIGATE the Abbey and village archaeology;
- CONNECT people and nature, with new walks and events;
- CELEBRATE the history of this unique medieval village, from the Normans to the Victorians;
- INVOLVE more people with the heritage of the Abbey and village through public events, a new history festival, and heritage craft workshops;
- PIONEER strategic approach to managing church buildings within Newcastle Diocese, by embodying the 'Seeking, Sharing, Sending' orientation from the new Bishop of Newcastle;
- COLLABORATE with local businesses and organisations to support the hyperlocal tourism economy.



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As part of our research we asked visitors “What are the treasures of Blanchland?” They said:



Revd Dr Helen Savage, now retired Priest in Charge of Blanchland, writing in 2022:

“I firmly believe that when we look upon our neighbours as a gift, and when we reach out to one another in love, we will discover truths that transform our view of the world and set us free to become more truly ourselves. But we must do this together.

This process is richly fulfilling. It gives meaning to life. Christians claim that such an experience of immersion in love and truth is so overwhelming, so much greater than any one of us, that it surely must be evidence of God.

*...It's the conviction that also urges me to make the best possible use of the other gifts we have, especially **our wonderful and sometimes creaky buildings**. They are, I believe, a means through which we can build up community, serve those in need and, together, discover more about the love of God; more about each other - more about truth.*

*They are there to meet people's real needs – not only affording us a place to worship God together and to reflect on any greater realities that we struggle to understand and relate to, but **they are given to us to meet peoples' simple practical needs** too.*

*And because we, as Christians, understand the value of story, **we delight in the stories that our buildings also tell – the stories of how we have related to one another in the past, which inevitably carry clues as to how we might do so in the future. But, above all, we treasure these buildings as gifts to be used and enjoyed, shared and celebrated.***



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2019: BLANCHLAND ABBEY RESILIENCE PROJECT
 Developed community capacity, plus strategies for the future use and management of our Scheduled Grade 1 parish church

2022: RURAL CHURCHES FOR EVERYONE
 Strategic co-creation of grassroots toolkit for Newcastle Diocese PCCs to assess, prioritise and plan an 'Open and Sustainable' future for the church buildings in their care.

2021: TRICENTENARY OF LORD CREWE'S CHARITY
 Public realm enhancement of Blanchland village and its environs: discreet parking, drainage repairs, tree planting, reinstating traditional surfaces and signage

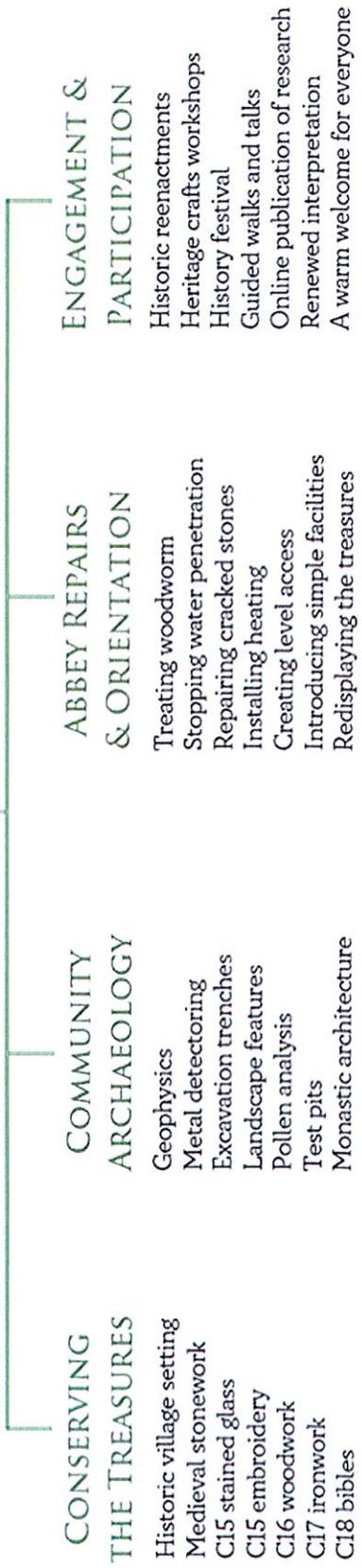


2024: THE 6 AS OF BLANCHLAND
 Archaeology, Acoustics, Archives, Artisans, and Audiences in an Abbey. Research to understand the risks and needs of this dearly treasured heritage



THE TREASURES OF BLANCHLAND

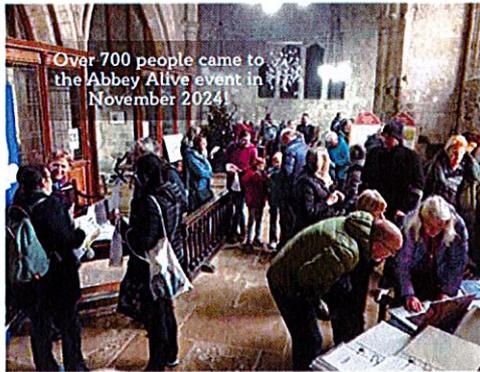
2026: DEVELOPMENT PHASE — 2027-2029: DELIVERY PHASE



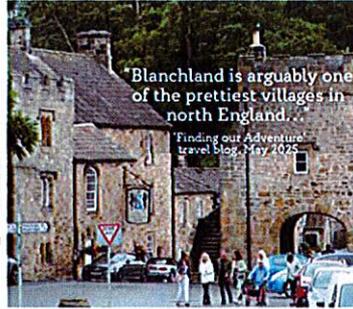


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PEOPLE VALUE BLANCHLAND' RICH HERITAGE AND AUTHENTICITY



Over 700 people came to the Abbey Alive event in November 2024



"Blanchland is arguably one of the prettiest villages in north England."

Finding our Adventure
Travel Blog, May 2025

"Blanchland is a village like no other – a place steeped in history, nestled within breathtaking landscape, and kept alive by the spirit of its community..."

The Abbey Church ... is a living, breathing symbol of our shared heritage and a gathering place for residents and visitors alike."



Volunteers helping on an archaeological dig



Teamwork – filling in our questionnaire!



Children having a go at embroidery

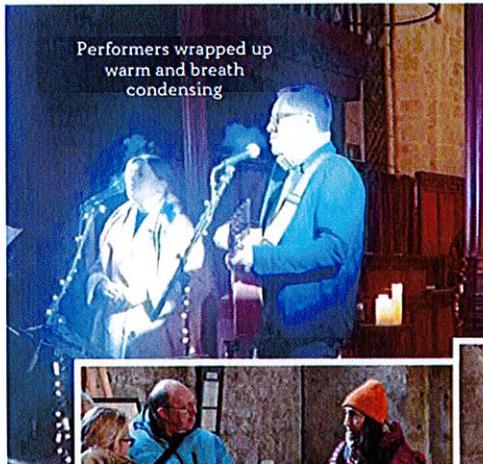
"[this project] is rooted in care, vision, and a love for Blanchland that we see every day in those who live here and those who return time and again."

(All quotations from a husband and wife who are local residents and business owners)

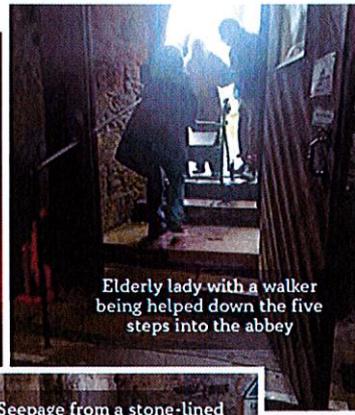


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THE TREASURES ARE HARD TO GET TO: THE ABBEY IS VERY COLD, DAMP AND INACCESSIBLE



Performers wrapped up warm and breath condensing

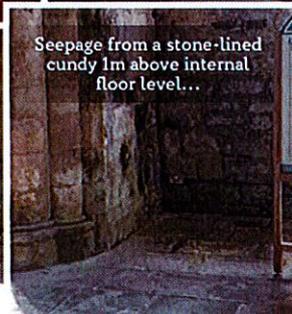


Elderly lady with a walker being helped down the five steps into the abbey

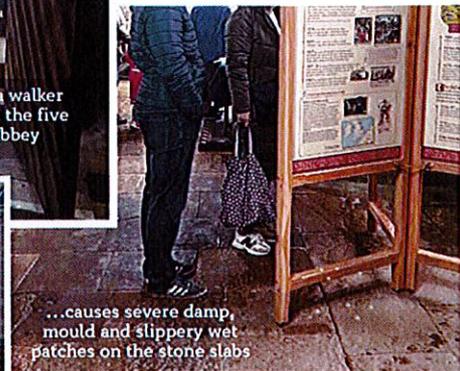
With large steps to get into the Abbey, and the bone chilling damp and cold, many people say they can't bear to stay inside as long as they'd like.



The church often feels colder than outside!



Seepage from a stone-lined cundy 1m above internal floor level...



...causes severe damp, mould and slippery wet patches on the stone slabs

"Will be great to gather in the warmth"

(Comment from public consultation)



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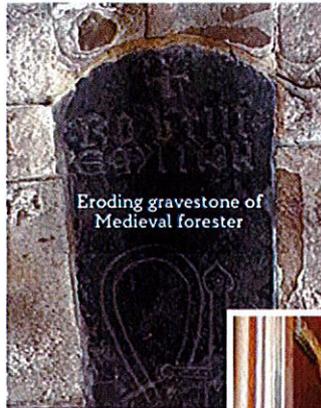


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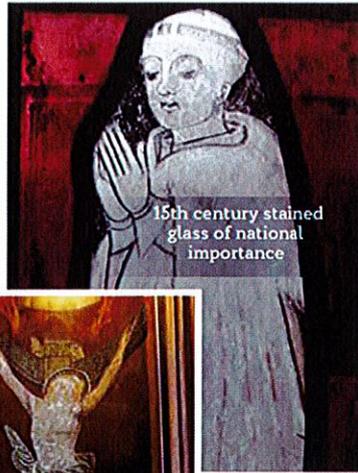


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BLANCHLAND'S TREASURES ARE AT RISK



Eroding gravestone of Medieval forester



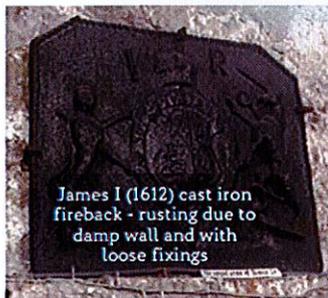
15th century stained glass of national importance

The cold, damp conditions within the Abbey Church are damaging its important treasures.

Their significance only recently recognised, Blanchland's treasures need research and conservation to survive and share their stories.



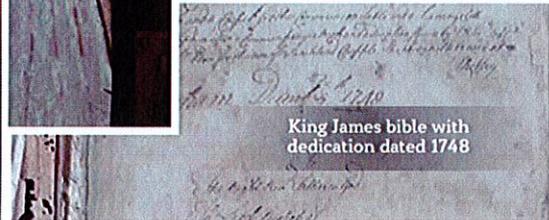
Tudor oak carving with the initials of the last abbot before the dissolution



James I (1612) cast iron fireback - rusting due to damp wall and with loose fixings



Late medieval goldwork embroidery - nationally important - but fragile and vulnerable



King James bible with dedication dated 1748

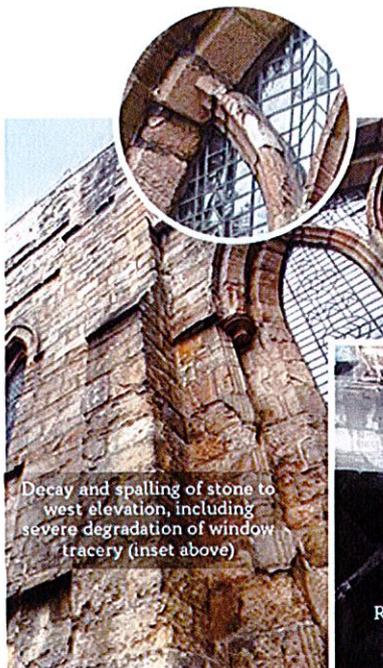
"...it's important to preserve our history and culture. To be able to tell a story for future generations..."

(Comment from public consultation)

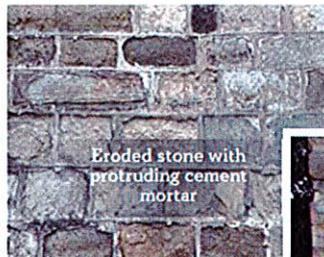


THE TREASURES OF BLANCHLAND

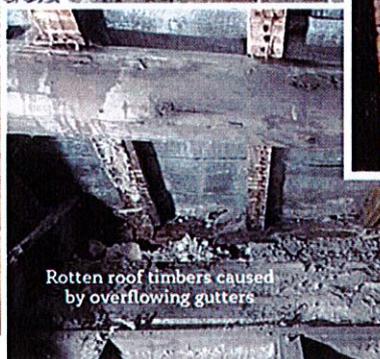
THE FABRIC OF THE GRADE I LISTED ABBEY IS DETERIORATING



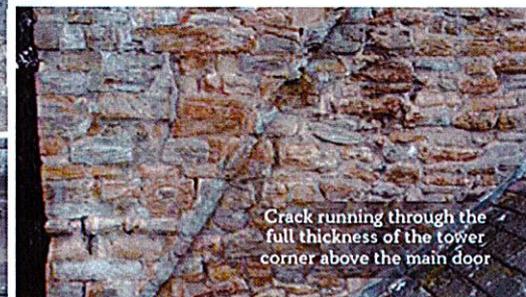
Decay and spalling of stone to west elevation, including severe degradation of window tracery (inset above)



Eroded stone with protruding cement mortar



Rotten roof timbers caused by overflowing gutters



Crack running through the full thickness of the tower corner above the main door

The Abbey suffers from significant water ingress through walls, floor and windows. There are rotten timbers and woodworm in the attic, and cement pointing is causing the stone walls to crumble.

"None of the problems will get better, only worse, if they're not repaired"

(Comment from public consultation)



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6 General conditions of contracts

Contracts over £10,000 in value will require three quotes, contracts over £50,000 will have a fully advertised open tender process, as required by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The partnership will obtain at least three competitive quotes for any services, goods or works over £10,000 (excluding VAT) across the development and delivery phases. For services, goods or works over £50,000 (excluding VAT) across the development and delivery phases, we will seek tenders by open advertising on portals such as Museum Insider, the Leicester Museums Desk, AIM website, the Diocesan and church websites, Heritage Alliance, using LinkedIn, and approaching companies that have been recommended to us by other churches and cathedrals within our Diocese.

Funding for all of these contracts is currently only secured for the Development Phase which is due to end in 2027. All contracts are awarded with the expectation that the successful tenderer will fulfil both the Development phase (through 2026/2027), and the Delivery Phase (expected to run 2027 – 2029), with the condition that the required match funding is secured before the start of the Delivery Phase. There will be a break clause in any contract to secure this arrangement and an agreed period of notice and dispute resolution procedure will be agreed on each side. However there is no obligation to re-employ consultants after the development phase.

The contracts will be managed by the Treasures of Blanchland Partnership, which is between Lord Crewe's Charity (LCC) and Blanchland with Hunstanworth Parochial Church Council (PCC). The Lead Partner is LCC who administer the financial side of the project. There is a project board into which the Project Manager and other senior contractors report at the regular meetings.

The purpose of the tender response is to enable the partnership to evaluate your understanding of our requirements, the suitability of your proposed approach and experience and skills of your team.

All contractors should follow the relevant [Heritage Fund Good Practice Guidance](#) as a minimum

All contractors should be aware of the milestones and deadlines within the attached project plan, including the permission deadlines for Newcastle Diocese DAC <https://www.newcastle.anglican.org/dac/> and permitting authorities' response times for scheduled monument consent, listed building consent, planning permission, etc. as necessary to the works.

Tender submissions – please read carefully

All contractors are expected to collaborate effectively to support the PCC and LCC in delivering the Treasures of Blanchland project, and to take into consideration the needs, opinions and convenience of the village's residents, businesses, voluntary organisations, and visitors.

Potential tenders should also take into account the local population demographics, land uses, existing local events, and the opening hours and capacity of local businesses and facilities. This is a small, deep rural community, and many of the findings in Newcastle University's [Rural Lives study report](#) apply. The foundation of the Blanchland Abbey Projects is heritage-led, sustainable rural development.

Blanchland is a small, remote, rural community that relies heavily on agriculture and tourism. Anyone considering tendering should first familiarise themselves with its winter weather, facilities, accessibility, transportation, and WiFi/mobile connectivity, prior to considering their own ability to fulfil the contract whilst being regularly present in the village.

Potential tenderers are strongly encouraged to visit Blanchland in person before formulating their tender response. Blanchland Abbey Church is open every day during daylight hours.

<https://www.blanchland.org/visit-blanchland/explore/>

Your submission:

Your submission should consist of the following:

1. A written response to the evaluation criteria in each brief.
 - a. Ensure your responses relate to the project brief. Do not include generic information. Any general marketing material about your company or additional appendices that have not been requested will not be considered.
 - b. If you are tendering for more than one Lot ensure each response is a separate document.
2. A priced offer in the format requested.
 - a. It is the Tenderer's responsibility to ensure all fees, rates and prices quoted are correct. Tenderers will be required to hold these or withdraw their tender in the event of errors being identified after the submission of tenders.
 - b. If a Tenderer fails to provide fully for the requirements of the specification in the tender it must either absorb the costs of meeting the full requirements of the specification within its tendered price or withdraw the tender.

Each tender will have an agreed split between quality; experience; methodology and/or price. Individual tenders will ask for specific information to be included in submissions and will be scored against those criteria.

No tender will be considered which is late, for whatever reason nor will changes be permitted after the closing date.

All tenderers shall keep their respective Forms of Tender valid and open for acceptance by the PCC for 90 days from receipt.

Signatures of appropriately authorised individuals e.g., where the tender is a Limited Company, by a Director; where it is a Partnership, by two authorised partners or by an individual if they are a sole trader. Signatures can be scanned.

Evidence of appropriate insurances to the level required in the individual briefs. All consultants should have Public and Professional Liability, plus Companies Employer's Liability if they have employees.

Evaluation

Tenders will be assessed by representatives from the project board and existing contractors with direct line management responsibilities. This may include an in person or online interview to clarify our

understanding of your submission and suitability. Submissions will be evaluated according to the criteria in the individual contract briefs.

The partnership will assess Tenderers' responses according to these criteria and will award points up to the maximum shown against each heading in the Quality evaluation assessment table below. Failure to achieve a rating of satisfactory (i.e. a minimum unweighted score of 3 or above) in any one or more categories may result in the bid being disqualified at the partnership's discretion.

Assessment Criteria	Score
Unacceptable: either no answer is provided, or the answer fails to demonstrate that any of the key requirements in the area being measured will be delivered.	0
Poor: fails to demonstrate how the basic requirements in the area being measured will be addressed, giving rise to serious concerns that acceptable outcomes would not be delivered against the project brief.	1
Weak: barely demonstrates how the basic requirements in the area being measured will be addressed, giving rise to concerns whether acceptable outcomes would be delivered against the project brief.	2
Satisfactory: demonstrates how the basic requirements in the area being measured will be addressed to deliver acceptable outcomes against the project brief.	3
Good: demonstrates how most of the requirements in the area being measured will be addressed to deliver good outcomes against the project brief.	4
Excellent: demonstrates clearly how all the requirements in the area being measured will be fully addressed to deliver excellent outcomes against the project brief.	5

Please note the following:

The tenderer who submits the lowest overall price will receive the full % score available for the financial evaluation. Remaining bids will be awarded a score proportionate to the lowest priced bid according to the following formula:

$$\text{Score} = (\text{lowest bid received} / \text{bid price}) \times \%$$

Abnormally low or high bids distort evaluation of tenders and where the PCC feels that a bid falls into one of these categories the tender will be asked to explain or clarify their bid. This includes the discounting of daily rates.

Please note the following:

Preparation of Tender

Tenderers are responsible for obtaining all information necessary for the preparation of their response; and all costs, expenses and liabilities incurred in connection with the preparation and submission of the Tender and attending any interviews will be borne by the Tenderer.



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The Tenderer is expected to have carried out all research, investigations and enquiries which can reasonably be carried out and to have satisfied itself as to the nature, extent, and character of the requirements of the Contract (in the context of and as it is described in the Specification), the extent of the materials and equipment which may be required and any other matter which may affect its Form of Tender.

Tenderers may seek clarification on any of the points contained in the tender documents at any time **prior to seven working days** before the date for receipt of tenders. This will allow time to prepare a response to all tenderers by five days before the tender deadline and for all tenderers to incorporate the clarification prior to the tender deadline.

Non-consideration of Form of Tender

The partnership reserve the right not to award the contract to the highest scoring, lowest priced or to any tenderer; and reserve also the right to accept any of the same in whole or in part. The partnership may also refrain from considering any Form of Tender if it is not in accordance with the Form and Conditions of Tender, or the Tenderer does not provide all the information required or attempts to make variation or alterations to the Form of Tender, Conditions of Contract, or the Specification.

Tenderer's Warranties

In submitting a Tender, the Tenderer warrants that:

- It has not done any of the acts on the Non-Consideration of Form or Tender,
- It can fully deliver the tender within the maximum budget stated in the tender brief
- all information provided is true, complete, and accurate in all respects including details of previous projects being presented as examples,
- it has full power and authority to enter into the Contract.
- it is of sound financial standing, and
- its partners, directors and employees are not aware of any circumstances that may adversely affect such financial standing in the future.

Confidentiality

The Form of Tender, the Conditions of Contract, the Specification, and all other documentation or information issued by the Directors relating to the Tender shall be treated by the Tenderer as private and confidential for use only in connection with the Tender and any resulting contract and shall not be disclosed in whole or in part to any third party without the prior written consent of the partnership.

The documents which constitute the project and all copies thereof are and shall remain the property of the partnership and must not be copied or reproduced in whole or in part and must be returned to the partnership upon their request. All information provided by tenderers as part of a tender return will be treated as confidential.



Freedom of Information

Information in relation to this tender may be made available on demand in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Tenderers should state if any information supplied by them is confidential or commercially sensitive or should not be disclosed in response to a request for information under the Act and should state why they consider the information to be confidential or commercially sensitive.

This will not guarantee that the information will not be disclosed but will be examined in the list of the exemptions provided in the Act.



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