

Phase 5 of the restoration of Newport Minster and initial work on reordering the interior

A Grants for Places of Worship Project (GP-13-13622)

Evaluation report



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Cover image: *The new interpretation board in the new welcome area created inside the main door of the church in this project.*

Executive Summary

Newport Minster enjoys a rich cultural heritage most obviously seen through its Grade 1 listed building but also within the interior, that houses many treasures. This phase of repair and restoration reflects an ongoing commitment to share the treasures of the Minster with our community and the many tourists who cross our door.

At the heart of our thinking has been the desire to ensure that the building is structurally sound, water tight and able to be of service over the coming century without encountering major problems. The cultural heritage that we have inherited has needed real vision and work to share it among the community.

The exterior work of this project has concentrated on the east and southeast corner of the church. The cleaning of stonework, pointing and re-roofing ensure the future life of the building but the renovation of major stained glass windows has had a major impact on all of our visitors. They now provide a stunning focal point.

The interior of the Minster has never fulfilled its potential for sharing a rich cultural heritage. This phase of work has started a program of renewal within the interior of the church. The new floor, the interpretation board and the guide booklet in several languages begins a process of making the interior a treasure for church, community and tourist.

The feedback that we have received shows a diverse impact speaking to the need of a modern society. Our footfall has widened the ranges of religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. It shows a wider spread in age ranges using the Minster.

However, we need to be aware of the needs of the community and they have strongly indicated that we need to move further, particularly through the provision of toilet facilities.

Revd Kevin Arkell
Vicar of Newport

What we wanted to do

Newport Minster is the principal Anglican Church in the county town of Newport, Isle of Wight, and serves the local parish and the whole Island. The original church (built around 1180) was rebuilt in 1854 with support from Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. It is a Grade 1 listed building but the soft Caen stone the church is built from is badly weathered. The church is also in need of internal reordering to meet the increasing demands for it to be used as a community space as well as worship.

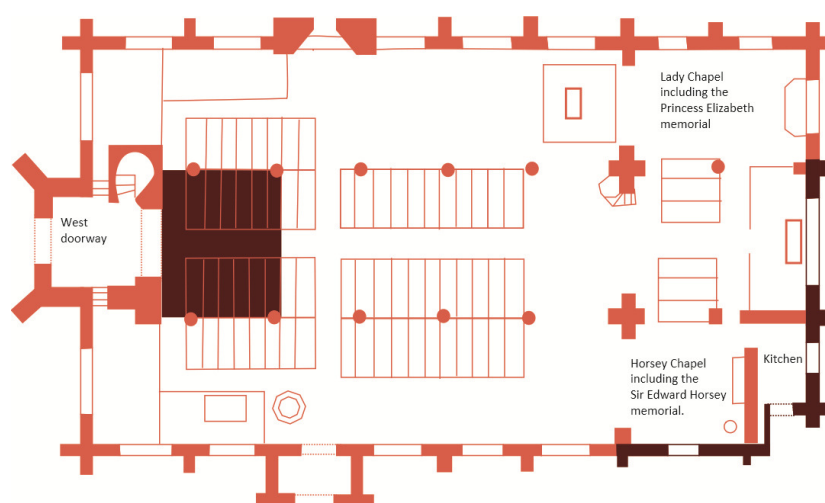
In 2006 a programme of external restoration was agreed with English Heritage and four of the eight stages were carried out by 2011. The change from English Heritage grants to a Grant for Places of Worship from the Heritage Lottery Fund gave the opportunity to start the reordering of the interior of the church with the fifth stage of the external restoration.

This project set out to restore the east end and southeast corner of the church and reorder the inside of the church near the main door to create a welcome area with new interpretation boards.

The external work covered the east side of the church, the kitchen and Horsey chapel, in the southeast corner, with the exception of the Princess Elizabeth chapel (restored in the first phase). All the stonework, roofs and windows in these areas were included in this project, including three significant stained glass windows.

Internally the aim was to create an open space inside the main west door which would look attractive, where visitors could be greeted and find information about the church, events and services. This involved removing the pews beneath the organ gallery and reflooring the area in light coloured stone, creating new interpretation boards and visitors guide and training stewards on their use.

The plan below shows the areas of the church involved in this project.



Plan of Newport Minster showing the areas covered by this project (dark).

What the project did

Project development and delivery

As the fifth phase of an eight phase programme of restoration this project benefited from the experience and knowledge gained in the previous phases. The architect and Vicar of Newport Minster had both been involved in a previous phase and a large part of the building restoration was very similar to the work that had gone before. As a result, the development of the project relating to the exterior of the church was relatively simple.

The internal work was the first of its kind in the Minster and required more work. Time was spent working out the requirements and what could be done within the constraints of the Grants for Places of Worship funding before the project was implemented.

The whole project was developed and delivered by a small team headed by the architect, Mr Gary Seymour, with support from the Vicar, staff and volunteers at the Minster.

The external work started in January 2017 and finished in June 2017, three weeks after the scheduled end date but before the grant completion date. Internally the work was completed on time except for the interpretation board, which was not delivered until July 2017.

A survey of visitors was carried out during December 2015, before the project began, to provide baseline data for the evaluation. Another survey was carried out once all the work was completed to monitor the immediate effects. Details can be found in the Appendix.

As a result of this project a significant part of Newport Minster is in much better condition than before the project began. Together with the work on the Princess Elizabeth Chapel in 2007 this completes the restoration of the east end of the church, making it structurally sound and weather tight.



The east end of the church after the work was completed showing the cleaned, restored stonework.

Outputs

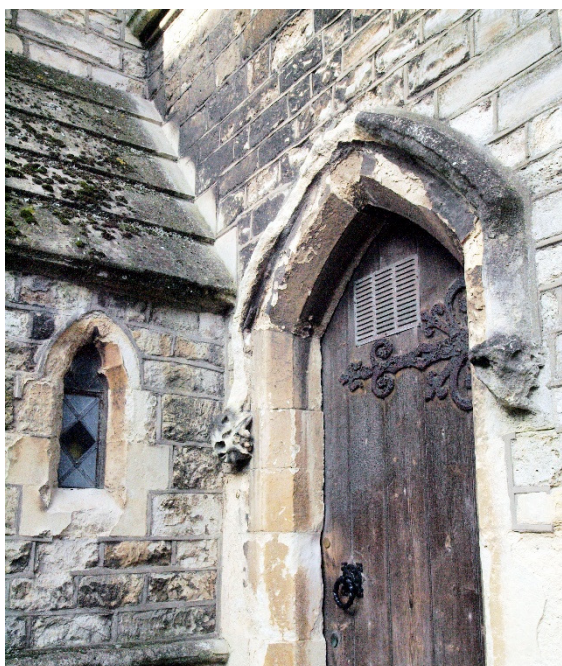
Stonework

The work started in January 2017 and finished in June 2017. The masonry work and repointing began once the scaffolding was up and continued for the duration of the project, ending on time.

The upper levels of the stonework could not be inspected closely until the scaffolding was in place and then it was obvious that more work was needed than had been anticipated. This included the east Chancel window tracery, south Chancel window hoodmold and Horsey window tracery.

The decision was taken to carry out the restoration on the high level stonework while the scaffolding was in place and it could be reached easily although this would increase the costs. Fortunately, the weather was mild and dry during the winter months so work could continue outside for the whole project giving the time needed to do the extra work within the original plan.

Some low level stonework in the original specification was omitted to help with costs. These stones can be reached without scaffolding and will be restored at a later date. Despite this a larger amount of stonework needed restoration than originally specified resulting in significantly higher costs for this part of the work.



The stonework around the kitchen door before and after the work.



Roofs and gutters

The south Chancel roof, kitchen roof and Horsey Chapel roof were all reslated and the kitchen door was repaired. Dry weather enabled the roofing work to start in January and continue throughout the project.

Enough slates were recovered to reslate the north pitch of the Horsey Chapel roof. All other roofs were reslated with new slates. The quarry could not provide the 12-inch slates ordered so 10-inch slates were used instead, causing a slight delay in the work.

A further delay occurred when the workman doing the reslating fell ill. Despite these setbacks, the roofs were all completed by the end of May 2017.

During the roofing work the gutters were renewed and a secret gutter installed at the join of the kitchen roof with the south side of the nave and Horsey Chapel.



The secret gutter installed at the join of the kitchen roof with the south side of the nave and Horsey Chapel.

Windows

Once the scaffolding was in place the large east Chancel window, the main lights of the Horsey Chapel east window and one light of the Masons window were sent to a specialist contractor off-site for major repairs. The rest of the stained glass windows were repaired on-site and new windows were installed in the kitchen and toilet.

Due to a misunderstanding between the main contractor and sub-contractor the project timetable did not include the time to remove and replace the windows restored off-site. As a result, the scaffolding had to stay up after the stonework and roofs were completed so the windows could be reinstalled in the church.



The east Chancel window with all panes removed



Replacing a repaired light in the Masons' window.

Welcome area

Inside the main west door of the church the box pews and pew platforms were removed to create a welcome area beneath the organ gallery and the area was re-floored in light coloured stone.

The work began early in January and finished in June 2017. This was some time after the estimated completion date due to several issues.

The box pews and wooden pew platform were removed in January and the underlying surface prepared for re-flooring. During this work one of the gallery supports fell out as there was no housing at the top and the stonework it was resting on was badly decayed. Immediately a supporting framework of scaffolding was installed and all six posts provided with good foundation bases. The work on the floor was halted while the posts were made safe.

The contractors had expected the weather to prevent them working on the exterior of the church for some of January and February and they planned to work on the new welcome area then. However, the weather was unexpectedly mild and dry so they were able to work continuously on the exterior. This meant the work on the interior was not completed to schedule.

Once the building work on the welcome area was completed the model church was moved into the area together with a new interpretation board on the history of Newport Minster.



Additional supporting scaffolding installed under the gallery after one of the posts fell out.

Interpretation board

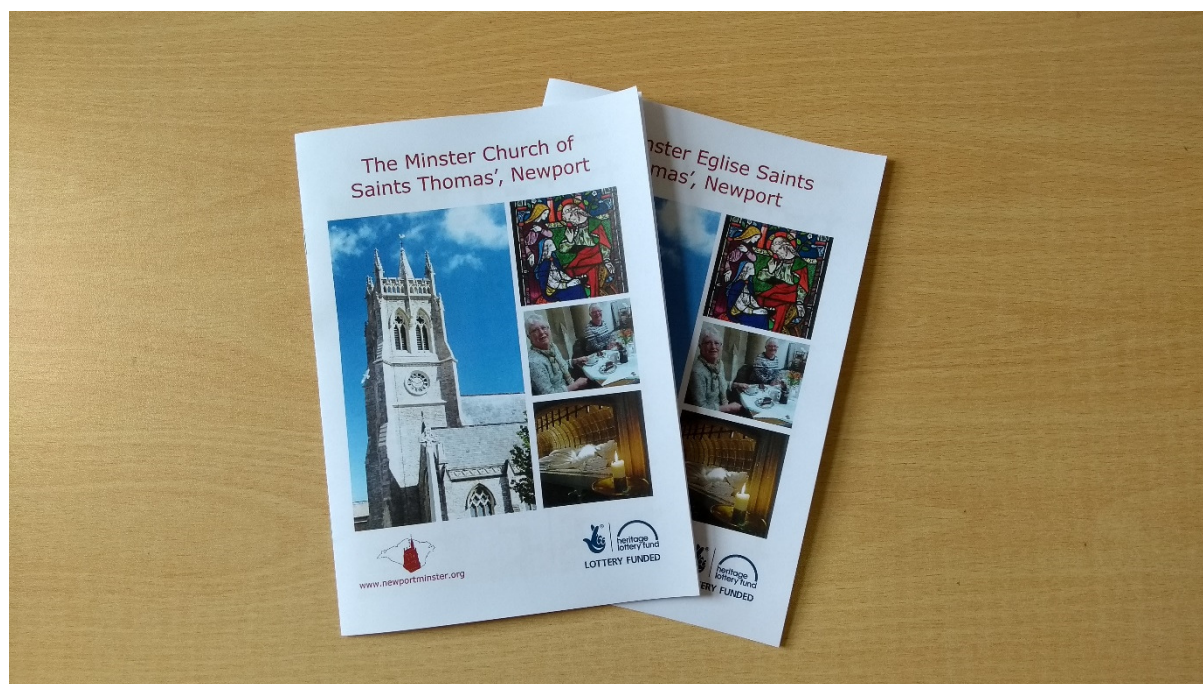
Two interpretation boards were specified but after consultation with English Heritage about suitable styles there were only sufficient funds for one good quality board. This shows a 'Brief History of Newport Minster' using objects in the church to help visitors get an overview of its history.

The board can be moved to allow the space to be used for exhibitions or gatherings of a number of people in the area.

New leaflet including foreign language version

A new Guide booklet complements the new interpretation board and replaces a simple gatefold leaflet. Comments made by visitors and staff about the earlier leaflet were taken into consideration when it was designed.

The Parish office prints the booklet on demand to keep costs down and minimise waste. French, Italian and Spanish versions of the guide have also been produced.



Outcomes

Heritage outcomes

As a result of this project a significant part of Newport Minster is in much better condition than before the project began. Together with the work on the Elizabeth Chapel in 2007, the restoration of the east side is now complete, making this part of the church structurally sound and watertight.

In addition the south east corner of the church is now also in much better condition, including the kitchen and Horsey Chapel.



The base of the large east window before and after the work showing the restored and cleaned stonework.

Community outcomes

This part of the project incorporated a number of different aspects, which are all part of the Activity Plan.

A survey of visitors was carried out to assess the impact of the project after it was completed and the results compared with the baseline survey. Relevant comments from the final survey are included under some headings below and details of these surveys can be found in the Appendix.

The surveys showed that wider range of people visited the Minster after the work had been done.

New welcome area

Opening up the main entrance has changed the feel of the main entrance to the church from dark and forbidding to light and welcoming and this encourages people to enter. Replacing the dark pews with light stone floor has also lightened the back of the whole church, making it less forbidding and more hospitable.

The level floor was appreciated by number of visitors, most of whom contrasted it favourably with the rest of the church.

This area provides much needed space to greet visitors and provide them with information about the church and any services or events they may be attending in it.

Comment

'Bright and fresh feel.'

Uneven flooring except in the new entrance.



The new welcome area before and after the work showing the difference it has made inside the main west door (on the right in both pictures).

New Interpretation board

The new interpretation board and guide booklet have been designed to complement each other and provide an introduction to the heritage of the Minster for visitors.

The board is designed to be placed near the entrance and give a quick introduction to the story of the Minster using items in the church to encourage visitors to explore further. It's current position in the new welcome area means that visitors see it as they enter and most stop to read it before going further.

Guide booklet

The guide booklet gives more detail about the most important heritage items in the church and fills in some of the history. It splits the church into four areas and can be used to explore any one independently or, by following a numbering system, guides people round the whole building. French, Italian and Spanish versions of the guide booklet are also available.

Improved signage

The A4 interpretation signs round the church were updated to link to the new Guide Booklet and a new sign was produced to go outside the church when it is open showing that the church is wheelchair accessible and welcomes dogs.

The survey showed that the new interpretation board, Guide Booklet and signage are appreciated by visitors with most giving them a score of 4 or 5 out of 5.

Comments

'Information much improved, excellent time-line, clear booklet.'

'Very friendly people with lots of info.'



Visitors to the Minster using the new welcome area into the church and taking photos of the clean, restored east window.

Volunteer training for new and existing stewards

All the stewards, both new and existing, attended an evening training session in the church on June 21st 2017. The training covered the new Minster booklet and interpretation board as well as how to greet and help people. Talks were given on a number of aspects of the Minster that enabled the stewards to increase their knowledge of its heritage. These were very well received and it is planned that this will become an annual event in the future.

One particular aspect covered was how to assist visually impaired people, including how to guide them and help them access the heritage.

The Volunteer stewards have been trained to use both the interpretation board and guide booklet to help visitors as well as learning more of the heritage to be able to answer more detailed questions.

The surveys showed that visitors enjoy a warm welcome at the Minster and most would return for another visit when they are in the area. The biggest barrier was the distance involved for many visitors.

Comments

'A very warm welcome.'

'It was a great pleasure for us to be welcomed at the Minster.'

'If in the area I would definitely visit again.'

Review

What worked well

This project was able to deliver most of the outputs and outcomes, including the most urgent ones defined at the beginning despite facing a number of challenges.

Stonework

All the masonry work in the area covered by the project was restored apart from some low level work which can be done easily in the future. In addition extra work discovered once the high level stonework could be assessed properly was all completed.

Roofs and gutters

All the roofs and gutters in the area covered by the project were restored according to plan apart from a change in the size of the slates because the quarry were unable to supply the size originally specified. Despite this and because the weather was dry and mild throughout the work the roofs and gutters were finished on time.

Windows

The east Chancel window and Horsey Chapel window (main lights) were scheduled to be taken out and sent to a specialist workshop for repair and cleaning. On inspection of the windows from the scaffolding extra lights from the Horsey Chapel window and the Masons window were also sent for repair.

All these windows were repaired off-site then returned to be replaced at the time expected from the revised schedule.



The cleaned and restored east window.

New welcome area

The new welcome area under the organ gallery was completed successfully despite some setbacks (detailed in the next section). The new interpretation board and model church were installed once the builders had finished their work.

Interpretation board

The new interpretation board was designed in-house by existing staff and successfully produced by a local sign company. The Minster has growing links with English Heritage through another project and their help was given during the design of the board. This ensured it was of high quality and good construction.

Guide booklet and interpretation signs

The new guide booklet was designed in-house by an existing member of staff and can be printed on-demand. This saves a considerable outlay on printing costs compared to printing it externally. It also means that only the numbers required are printed which is more environmentally friendly as there is very little wastage.

Updated interpretation signs round the church link with the new guide booklet.

Challenges faced

More stone was needed for the restoration than anticipated

The discovery of extra high level masonry work and the decision to do it while scaffolding was in place meant that more stone was needed than anticipated. This led to an overspend on stone and stonework and the project overall. Some of the lower level stonework and an access ladder were omitted from the project to keep the costs down.

Timing

The specialist subcontractor who restored the windows off site supplied a quote with timings that were assumed by the main contractor to include the time to take the windows out and replace them. However, the quote was only for the off-site work. This meant the windows were not ready to be replaced when expected and the scaffolding had to stay up for longer than planned to allow the windows to be replaced. This increased the scaffolding costs and delayed completion of the project.

Roof slates

The quarry could not supply the slates ordered (12 inches wide) and after consultation an order was placed for 10 inch wide slates. This caused a delay in the slates arriving at the church.

Once the slates had arrived the work was delayed further by the workman doing the slating being off sick for a while.

Gallery supports

The gallery support posts were resting on badly decayed stone blocks that were only revealed when the floor beneath the gallery was removed. During the work to restore the bases one of the posts dropped out and a supporting framework of scaffolding had to be installed immediately before work could continue. This



Replacing lights in the south window of the Horsey chapel later than anticipated due to a misunderstanding on timings between the contractor and specialist glass sub-contractor.

increased the costs of this aspect of the work and slowed the work on the new welcome area.

Lack of information and costings

Initial reporting of the progress of the work to the parish was good but this became increasingly infrequent. Interim certificates and invoices were not issued when expected despite frequent requests for them and for information about the work from the parish. The project manager was the Architect and there was a lack of liaison between him, the contractors and the parish.

In May, towards the end of the work, the parish was informed that the project was over budget by £20,000 due to the extra stonework. This was the first time the parish had been informed of the extra work and overspend.

A long period of consultation and negotiation followed that prolonged the project for several months after the building work was completed. Agreement was finally reached in August 2017 at a figure £12,500 over the project cost.

Recruit young people as volunteers for the Minster

Recruiting young people proved difficult. Initially schools were approached but they were very stretched and unable to help.

Other ways to recruit young people will be sought in the future with possibilities including the Isle of Wight College, the Sixth Form College and Air Cadets.

Conclusion

Phase 5 of the restoration of Newport Minster was a successful project. On completion the building is in better condition than before the project with the whole of the east end cleaned, restored and weather-tight. The only exception being some low stonework which can be restored easily in the future.

In addition the Minster is attracting a wider range of people as visitors and they are engaging with the heritage more easily.

A number of issues arose during the project. Those directly relating to the building work were successfully overcome in a short time but more serious issues arose over the project management. The Minster team have learnt valuable lessons in this area, particularly about the need for a dedicated project manager, which will help with later projects.



The Horsey Chapel while work was underway on the roof and windows.

Appendix

Initial Questionnaire and Baseline Evaluation

December 2015

The Initial Questionnaire and Baseline Evaluation was carried out during December 2015 using a questionnaire developed by the Church Wardens and Office Manager of the Minster. The volunteer stewards gave this questionnaire to as many visitors as possible each day the church was open during this period.

There were 108 responses in total, though not everyone completed every question. The questionnaire was available online but no responses were received electronically. Most people who attended services did not fill in a questionnaire.

Completion Questionnaire

Mid August to mid September 2017

The Completion Questionnaire was carried out for one month from mid-August to mid-September 2017 once the Interpretation Board and Model Church were in place. The Questionnaire was developed by the Campaign Officer and Office Manager and as far as possible reflected the Initial Questionnaire so that the results could be compared easily.

There were 78 responses in total as not all visitors were asked to complete the questionnaire. No electronic version was made available as no one had used it for the previous questionnaire. Visitors were asked to complete the questionnaire before they left the church if possible and the majority did this. Others returned the questionnaire to the Parish Office.

Comparison of results

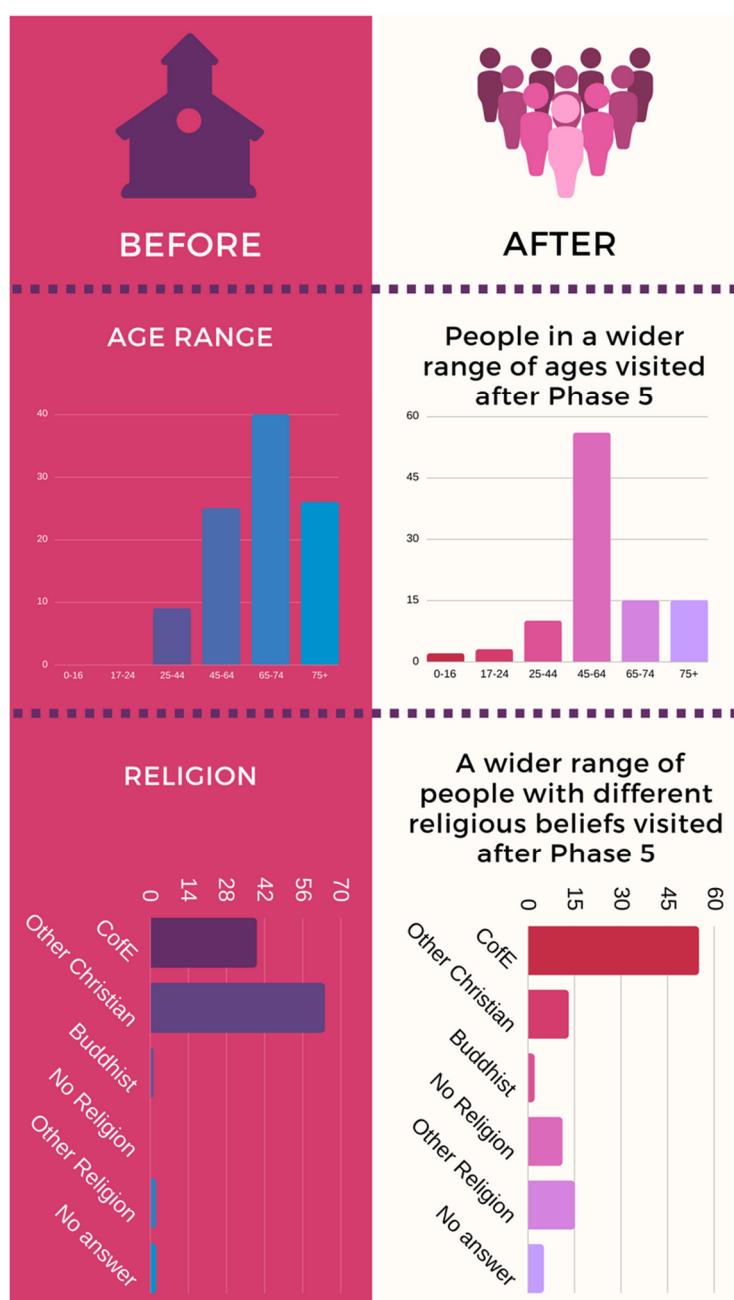
The following pages contain an infographic showing the main results of the questionnaires with a few extra notes of explanation.

The questionnaires were carried out a different times of the year but both included school term and holiday time. Both are times when there are normally a good number of visitors to the Minster for services, events and for other reasons.

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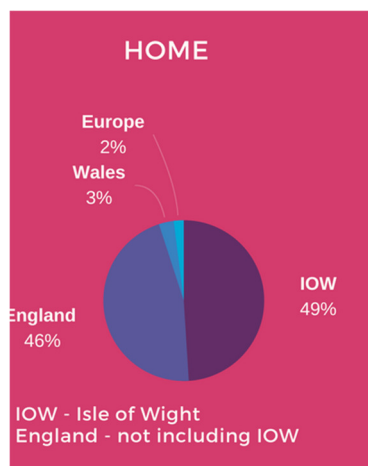
PHASE 5

EVALUATION

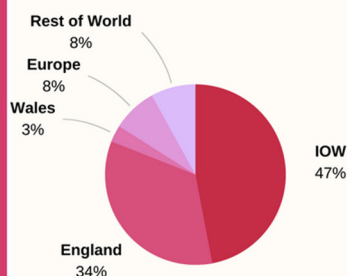


More younger people visited the Minster after Phase 5 was completed than had before, despite there being a lot of activities for children and families during the period of the first questionnaire.

A larger number of people who followed religions other than Christianity visited after Phase 5 was completed, increasing the diversity of visitors to the church.

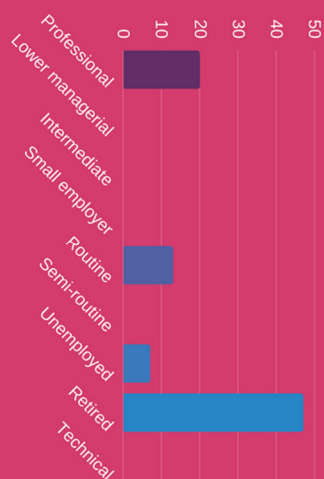


People from more parts of the world visited after Phase 5

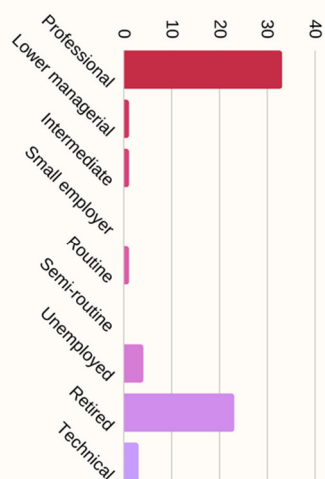


The Isle of Wight is situated off the south coast of England and access is by expensive ferries so the majority of visitors are local. Coach trips run regularly during the summer and Christmas periods. Visitors other than from the Isle of Wight are generally visiting the Island on holiday.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS

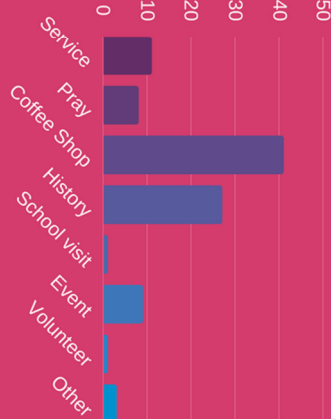


People from a wider range of socio-economic groups visited after Phase 5

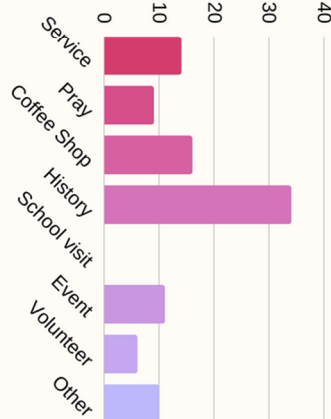


The range of socio-economic groups represented by the visitors increased after Phase 5. This may be because more people in work are able to visit during the summer.

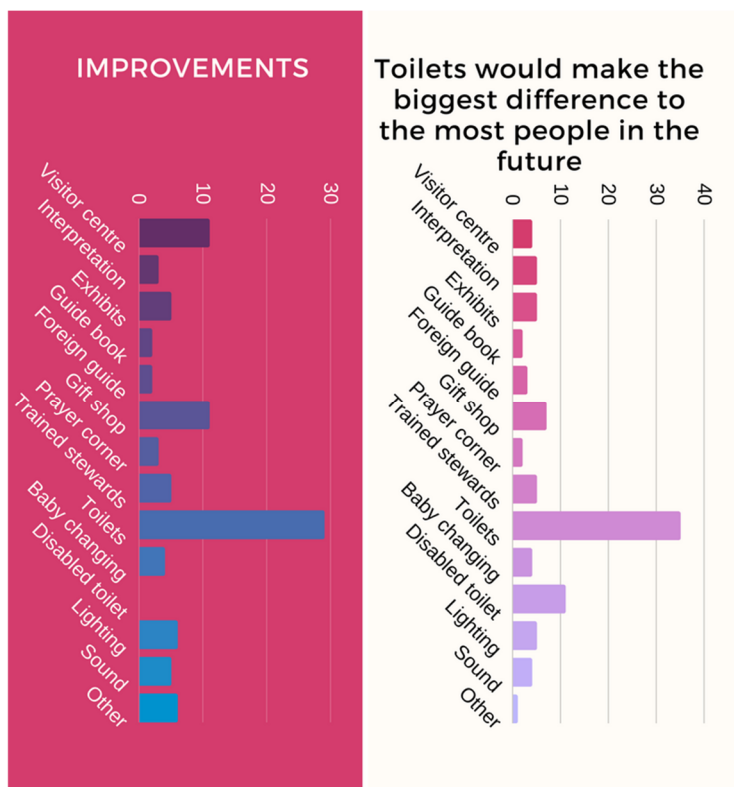
REASON FOR VISIT



More people visited for the heritage after Phase 5



Visitors came to the Minster for a range of reasons during both questionnaires. However, more people visited because of the history after Phase 5.



This question was included to help the Minster plan for the future. Toilets would make the biggest difference to the most people in both surveys.