

Lozells Methodist Community Centre – Lead Theft and Fabric Repairs



Lozells Methodist Community Center first started life as Lozells Methodist Church. Built in the late 19th Century it has been open to the community ever since!

At the beginning of the 21st Century the premises were redeveloped and in February 2011 Lozells Methodist Community Centre opened its doors to the community for worship and outreach. It is a warm and vibrant church at the heart of the community with many activities taking place throughout the week. <https://www.lozellsmc.co.uk/>. It is also a Grade II listed building.

Following a recent Quinquennial inspection it was clear that the historic building required urgent fabric repairs. So the trustees, acting as good custodians, set about finding a suitable professional to assist them. He duly wrote a schedule of works and once all the consents were recorded on the Methodist Church's online systems the works commenced. This included some external redecoration, brickwork repointing, brickwork repairs, concrete lintel repairs, replacement of rainwater goods and the removal of some protective grilles (see image below). The total cost of the works was approximately £120,000.



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Unfortunately, during the works thieves climbed the scaffolding and stole the lead cupola covering. This was discovered by the builders as they resumed the works after the weekend. The matter was reported to the police and a crime officer visited the property but unfortunately, no arrests were made and the thieves

were never caught. Extensive damage was caused as shown in the images below:



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This left the trustees in an unenviable position, especially as their insurers would not cover the claim because the Smartwater marking system had not been applied to the lead work prior to the theft. This was despite the fitting of a scaffold alarm and netting during the work, measures which the thieves had managed to circumnavigate. Approximately 50% of the lead sheeting to the cupola along with supporting boarding were stripped, 40% of the lower lead flashing/capping to the projecting parapet were forcibly removed, and a further 10% of supporting boarding to the cupola was damaged, along with damage to the sandstone string course and the now exposed brickwork where sections had become loose or missing.

The Cupola had to be removed for the repairs to be completed. Following this it was lowered and fixed in one operation onto the tower roof by crane and flashed/weatherproofed in position. The replacement lead cost the church a further £20,000. The impressive photographs below show this work in progress.



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The church, with its repointed brickwork and repainted windows, now looks welcoming and bright, and fit for 21st Century use.





Despite the lead theft the church is excited about continuing and expanding its worship and missional work here in this important location in the Birmingham District. We have to commend the trustees on their perseverance and their continued commitment to sustaining this nationally significant historic place of worship. The trustees would not have been able to have done any of the work without the support of the Birmingham Circuit, both through the work of Jayne Snape, Property and Facilities Officer and the Circuit Property Steward and without the financial support of the Circuit.

Whilst this isn't a showcase missional project is it essential maintenance, which in itself can make our churches more welcoming and inviting and will keep the building's users warm and dry as they carry out their important works of mission and outreach. The story is also a warning on the importance of using the Smartwater system on all leadworking, particularly when scaffolding is required for high level works.

With thanks to all those who contributed, especially Revd Alison Richards and Richard Budd, Associate Director at Orbit Facilities Management.