

Sheffield Catholic Cathedral: Tower and Spire Repairs

(1 project funded in 2 phases)

Awarded a total of £459,528 in two phases, November 2014 and July 2016

The need

In 2011 an abseil inspection was undertaken after a piece of stone fell from the tower. At the time the steeplejacks removed loose stone and identified defects that required further attention. These included areas of loose/poor pointing, open joints, delaminating and eroding stone and some corroding ferrous metal fixings that were causing cracks in the stone. Subsequent investigations revealed the spire to be leaning due to metal corrosion.

Outcomes

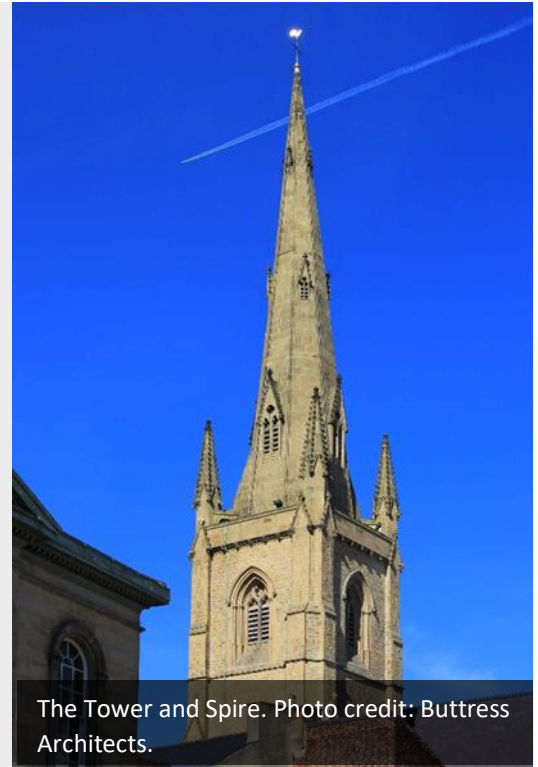
The repairs have helped to ensure public safety, as the spire overlooked a pedestrianised street. The external repointing of the tower has also vastly improved its appearance.

Economic and social impact

The repair works across both phases have helped to support jobs and apprenticeships in traditional building methods including stonemasonry. They have contributed to the development of skills within the local area. The grant led to more First World War commemoration events taking place. This included an exhibition about local servicemen who gave their lives for their country, a mass for those who died in the Battle of the Somme, and several concerts.

Works completed and timescale

The works are fully complete and included replacing iron cramps and dowels with new stainless-steel variants, repointing of the spire with lime mortar, pinnacle repairs and re-gilding of the weather vane. The second phase of repair works was complete by June 2016. They included dismantling and rebuilding the upper six metres of the tower to enable the holding-down rod and cross tree to be replaced in stainless steel. The scaffolding proved exceptionally complex and meant the first phase of the project was overspent; the second grant was needed to complete the work.



The Tower and Spire. Photo credit: Buttress Architects.



The scaffolding was exceptionally complex. Photo credit: Buttress Architects.

The Cathedral

St Marie's, designed by local architect Matthew Ellison Hadfield, opened in 1850 and became a Cathedral in 1980. The Munster Lady Chapel and Sacristy were added in 1878, replacing an earlier structure. The cathedral was damaged during WWII and then re-ordered in 1970. An extensive programme of renovations was completed in 2012, including underfloor heating, a new sound and lighting system and furnishings. In 2014 St Marie's Cathedral was awarded a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a three-year project to conserve historic interior features, increase awareness of and knowledge about the history of the cathedral and the stories of people associated with it, broaden volunteering and engagement opportunities and provide interpretation for a wide variety of audiences.