



St Mary the Virgin  
Ashford

## Shared space a revelation at St Mary's, Ashford 10 October 2011

This unashamedly contemporary scheme at a major Grade 1 listed Church in Ashford is in response to the community's need for 'shared space' and to host a much needed arts provision.

The church has undergone a £1.8m revamp (funded by £1.3m Government growth area funding, Ashford Borough Council and the Church) to improve its long-standing offer as an arts venue and its new arts programme, Revelation St Mary's, supported by the Council, aims to establish a centre of excellence for the arts.

The architectural focus has been to create a flexible building which can accommodate the 'shared space' requirements; first and foremost to improve and facilitate the delivery of religious sermons and ceremonies; and secondly to host music, drama and arts events. So far public reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. The successful realisation of this 'shared space' initiative - which includes an enlarged seating area in the nave for up to 350 people, state of the art lighting and audio visual systems as well as a fully DDA compliant ground floor and enhanced community facilities - will be the central plank of the Church family's mission, and act as the social "glue" that can bring people from across the age and social spectrum together in shared, creative activities, where diversity will be valued. The project has also take the once in a century opportunity to shrink the Church's carbon footprint. Awarded European Union funding through the Green Renovation Cluster programme (Greenov) a ground source heat pump (GSHP) and rainwater harvesting system have been installed.

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