

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL



The north face of Lichfield Cathedral will be covered by scaffolding for the rest of the year. (CS170409-3814LM)



Cathedral architect Robert Kilgour points out areas of decay on one of the flying buttresses. (CS170409-3987LM)



Sir Christopher Wren's statue, surrounded by scaffolding. (CS170409-3012LM)

Awe-inspired as windows on history are restored

WHEN the nine great 16th century stained glass windows are removed from Lichfield Cathedral in the summer, it will be the best part of five years before we see them again.

That gives just an inkling of the vast project underway to conserve the only three-spired Medieval cathedral in Europe.

Lichfield InSpire was launched by the Duke of Gloucester on April 30 last year, helped along by massive grants from the Wolfson Foundation and English Heritage.

Phase two started last week – and phase three will swiftly follow.

“Having repaired the buttresses on the south side last year, we have to have do the ones on the north side for fairly obvious

by Alex
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engineering reasons,” said chief officer Timothy Pain.

“Phase two will restore the upper levels of the cathedral’s north side.”

Aldridge-based masonry contractor Midlands Conservation Ltd has been appointed for phase two.

Work on the north side will be completed to mirror the masonry of phase one, which saw damage caused by pollution, acid rain and even masonry bees, repaired.

Phase two will involve scaffolding, hoardings, work compounds and a viewing platform erected alongside the iconic building, with work ongoing until January.

By then, phase three will be well underway.

Hot on the heels of work on the north face, next month will see scaffolding cover the entire Lady Chapel on the east side.

And then there is the giant task of cleaning, conserving and restoring the 16th century windows.

“It is easier to roll these phases together,” explained Mr Pain.

“It will be mid-2011 before the Lady Chapel is complete and 2014 before the windows come back.

“They will be directly replaced by special clear glass – then when they come back they will be re-hung inside, almost like pictures.

“The effect will be the same but the windows will be safe from pollution outside.”

A once-in-a-century project, Lichfield InSpire is a bold, long-term undertaking.

“After these latest two phases are completed, the north side will be OK for 100 years,” added Mr Pain.

“But we’re hoping for 300 years – that’s the scale we’re working on.”

Access to the cathedral will not be limited by the work during phase two and visitors can still get inside to marvel at the landmark.

And, as was the case during phase one, visitors will be able to learn some ancient skills with a series of masonry demonstrations onsite.

“Last year, when we were working on the south side, people were fascinated to see the stone masons at work,” said the Very Reverend Adrian Dorber, Dean of Lichfield.

“We hope our visitors will be just as interested in this year’s programme of stone repairs.”

The Dean described the next phase of repairs to the cathedral as ‘crucial’.

“It will maintain the building’s structural integrity – if we had not begun this work, we would be compromising the cathedral’s future,” he added.

“We are very grateful indeed to the Wolfson Foundation and to English Heritage for giving the cathedral nearly £250,000 towards this vital project.”

Contractors Midlands Conservation Ltd formed in 2007 and already has completed a series of mainly conservation and restoration work, including projects for English Heritage and the National Trust.

“We look forward to working with the cathedral and its staff and forming a strong relationship with the cathedral,” said ‘delighted’ director Andrew Cornwell.

For information about InSpire workshops, email marketing@lichfield-cathedral.org to be included on the mailing list.



From left: Cathedral architect Robert Kilgour, James Attridge of Attridge Scaffolding and the cathedral’s chief officer Tim Pain. (CS170409-3804LM)



The second phase of Lichfield InSpire has begun on the north face of the cathedral. (CS170409-3802LM)



Workmen assemble scaffolding. (CS170409-3910LM)