Three phase / electric boiler progress report

It's now January 2026 and we still don't have sufficient heat in the church. This is not for want of trying, so let me tell you a story:

Having lived through one winter without heating at the church, it was felt we need to look at the heating part of the refurbishment plan and find a way to bring heat into the church sooner than was originally intended. This involved discussing our options with the diocese, architect, our Mechanical & Electrical partners and a selection of heating companies. After this extensive consultation a plan for a hybrid heating system was developed, the first stage of which will be the installation of a 100kv electric boiler connected to the existing radiators. (For a more comprehensive explanation on the hybrid system, see the separate section below.)

Permissions were sought from the diocese Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) to change the heating plan to a hybrid system and was granted under a schedule B, a full faculty not required only oversight by the church inspecting architect. We were also able to fund the purchase of the electric boiler mostly via a grant from the Church of England (CofE) boiler hardship grant, subsequently an order was placed with Edward Bays heating engineers and it will be installed on the 7th January.

We elected to manage some of the work required to install three phase ourselves to help reduce costs. This involved digging a 42 meter trench from the gate at the west boundary wall up to the church wall just to the east of the south door, providing access to three phase power to the existing church electrical system now reconfigured to take the new three phase system,

funding from Waylands Charity contributed to this work.

We had to remove the old oil fired boiler to make room and as this was encapsulated with asbestos (the worst kind) a licensed specialist was required. The company were from Cardiff and after many set backs they completed the job after four weeks. The original contract time was seven days! The setbacks including a boiler room flood which prevented a final laboratory check until the contaminated water was removed and taken off site. The final task was to level the floor where the old boiler had stood.

A date from SSE to start working had been delayed partially due to a lack of response from a private company who owned a very small part of the pedestrian pathway between Heberden House and the church West wall. This impasse was cleared with the help of Nick Dye who was able to provide a direct contact and also arranged a teams meeting with all parties concerned, this started the ball rolling and help find a resolution, well done Nick.

Since then we have had a successful site visit from SSE's contractor to view the requirements for the remaining excavation and to approve the work we had carried out already (the laying of the ducting in the rear churchyard and the electrical connection inside the church). We have received a provisional start date of the 21 January 2026. We still await confirmation but I'm hopeful they will honour this date.

I now estimate to have the new boiler working by the end of January 2026, however given the many services that the excavation has to avoid(Telecoms, Thames water, Gas and drains) we need to expect even though it is estimated the work will take a week, it might take a little longer. Please join me in praying that this is not the case.

Installing an electric water boiler at St Sampson's Church Cricklade (Our rationale for permission from the diocese)

The water boiler will run heat to our current radiators. Compared to our inefficient Victorian boiler which ran at about 45% efficiency, the Church will feel warmer than it did previously.

We would expect to use the new boilers on demand as we did the old oil boiler, in this way we can control the cost.

Last winter without heating, we closed the church and held our weekly services in the school. Some smaller gatherings were held in the Widhill Aisle which has under-pew heaters but they are very old and expensive to run. That was only a very short-term solution.

The rationale for installing the electric boiler now is:

- We are seeing a negative effect of not using the church in winter on the congregation – many people miss worshipping in the church. It is too perishing for many to endure the cold without heating. Relocating to the school was acceptable for one winter, but not for many winters as we work on our wider refurbishment.
- The wider community must endure freezing at Christmas services, school concerts and assemblies, which is not at all welcoming and reflects badly on the church.
- We struggle to host funerals in the church over the winter because of the cold, which is particularly hard for the families of beloved church members who have worshipped here for decades.
- No heating can cause deterioration to the building.

- Using the school instead of the church sends the wrong message to the local community about the value we put on the church and could hinder fundraising for the wider project.
- Taking positive steps to improve the heating shows progress to donors and the local community who have attended fundraising events, given donations and have been so supportive of our appeal to date.
- The electric water boilers will be part of our future heating system, even if we install ASHPs later because we are likely to have underfloor heating in the Nave but radiators in other areas of the church.