

Redlingfield sets £200k goal after celebrating land purchase and church revival



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Redlingfield has set its sights on a major £200,000 programme of community improvements, after celebrating the acquisition of two acres of community land.

The north Suffolk village held a celebratory service for official re-opening of St Andrew's Church on Sunday, to mark the recent community purchase of a plot between the church and the Doorstep Green, funded with the help of £35,000 from local donors.

The event, led by Reverend Martin Seeley, Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, also commemorated the restoration work to the church's roof, which was completed following more than a year of work, at the cost of £94,000.

Drew Abbott, Redlingfield Parish Council chairman, said: "I think it's difficult sometimes for people to understand what it's like living in a small rural village with no shop or pub or village hall or even pavements.

"Before the village got together some 12 years ago and created the existing Doorstep Green, kids used to play football and skateboard on the main road. It was terribly dangerous.

"What we didn't realise was how popular it was going to become. It was just far too small, so we are delighted that we've been able to make it three times bigger. Everyone in the village has helped in one way or another."

The service on Saturday was the first time a bishop had visited Redlingfield in 500 years, and local rector, the Reverend Michael Womack, said he was "delighted" Bishop Martin was able to attend.

"The church was absolutely packed, it seems like the entire village has turned out for this and the just sun kept shining, so it was a wonderful occasion," said Rev Womack.

A fundraising drive has now been launched to integrate the newly-bought land with the current recreation area, by improving road access and parking, adding play and sports facilities, and installing wildlife gardens.

At the same time, the village is seeking funds in order to conduct additional repairs at the church, including fixes to the walls and masonry to make them water-tight, as well as the introduction of a kitchen, toilets, running water and heating.

Janet Norman-Philips, the parish clerk, said: "We think all of this is going to cost around £200,000,

"So raising all of that is going to be a big job for everyone. Luckily we don't have to do everything at once."

The parish council added it was hopeful these enhancements to both the Doorstep Green and the church, an Anglo Saxon building mentioned in the Domesday Book, would allow for future events in Redlingfield, such as car boot sales.

For further details, see www.redlingfield.suffolk.gov.uk

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