

Parochial Church Council Meeting
Monday 24 August 2026 18:30-20.40 RIBA 3
remote
Congregational Report

An additional online meeting of the PCC was called for a specific purpose; to discuss and consent to some aspects of detail regarding Wren Project RIBA 3. The PCC's discussion was important in order to keep to the programmed timetable for the Wren Project, going out to tender for a contractor and moving out of St James's after Holy Week and Easter next year.

The RIBA 3 process had identified some work needed or desired that required PCC sign off. A combination of H and S surveys, inflation, fire safety surveys has amounted to a collection of work that requires a further £1.7m. One significant element is air conditioning/cooling system for the Piccadilly and Jermyn Street buildings. The PCC considered its role as a good employer and discussed the need for suitable living (for rectors in the future) and working (for all paid staff) environments, given the location of St James's in a noisy, light and hot city that, after this summer, is only getting hotter. It was recognised that adding air-conditioning at a later stage would involve considerable extra cost. The Design Team has been tasked with putting forward various options such as zoning, some places having full air-conditioning installed and others with mobile units and all to include the ongoing repair and maintenance costs. These options will then be put to a resumed meeting of the PCC in the near future for a final decision. With other items there will be an effort to find other sources of funding for them and it was recognised that some items involving health & safety and fire regulations are essential and must be done. This work includes tighter fire restrictions for the Piccadilly building and works to the historic bulging wall on the Jermyn Street site. The terms of the delegated authority from the PCC (ultimately responsible) to the Wren Project Board which meets quarterly was agreed. The PCC also agreed for SJP to register for VAT (even though our commercial activity is currently below the compulsory level for registration) in order to be able to recover some £2m on the construction costs which, without registering, we should have to find in extra fundraising. Questions of SJP maybe setting up a trading arm in the future were flagged for further discussion later on.

The timeline for what will happen was set out clearly. The 'spade in the ground' start is July/August 2027 (although the site is handed over to the contractor some months before that) with completion September 2029. RIBA 4 (detailed design and procurement) starts now until December 2026. We shall then go out to tender March 2027 with returns in May; contract signing will be in July and staff will return to the site in November 2029.

Although, thanks to the indefatigable efforts of our Development and Fundraising Team led by Brian Willetts we have achieved a phenomenal success in gaining donations for our original plans, as with everything we have not been able to include all that was included in the original design. For example, sadly there has not yet been a donor coming forward to support our proposed pavilion with thatched roof in the Southwood Garden. We are trying to have sufficient groundwork completed in the present construction so that, if a donor comes forward, we could add the pavilion at a later stage but, in the meantime, it cannot be included in the present works.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish for any clarification on the above.

Keith Best
PCC Secretary
27/08/2026