

## Press Release

North Tawton Town Council is delighted to announce that the Jubilee Clock Tower and St. Peter's Church Lych Gate Appeal which was launched only three months ago has reached its fundraising target.

The Queen Victoria Jubilee Clock was erected by public subscription to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887. 136 years later on Friday 9 September 2022 disaster struck, then the lower canopy roof collapsed at the south-west corner.

Two surveys by a Chartered Structural and Conservation Accredited Engineer revealed that despite regular maintenance, and the basic structure being in a good state of repair, hidden internal rot and an inherent design flaw, combined with high winds caused the collapse of one of the roof struts.

Councillor Colin Lee the Chairman of North Tawton Town Council said, "Some residents have speculated that the damage was caused by a Gregory's Distribution lorry, a Bus and even our local children. This simply is not true. Furthermore, I can confirm that insurance cover was in place, but this did not cover structural failure due to internal rot.

In October 2022, sixteen building contractors were invited to tender having been supplied with the Structural Report and Schedule of Works.

The majority failed to respond to the invitation with only three providing quotes. Some contractors indicated that the requirements of the Conservation Officer to splice areas of old wood with new wood was beyond their expertise. One contractor shone out having provided a detailed costings breakdown and was awarded the contract to not only replace the damaged roof but undertake a sympathetic restoration of the tower. The work will also deal with the design flaw identified in the surveys.

Responsibility for the Church Lych Gate passed to North Tawton Town Council in 1940 at the request of the parochial council since the church yard closed to burials in 1902. Like all wooden structures they decay over time. Whilst the Lych Gate is safe, it had already been identified as needing renovation work some time ago.

The Town Council found funds to cover most of the works totaling £29,000 but there was a shortfall of £11,000. The shortfall was addressed by local resident and Appeal Coordinator Grahame Flynn.

Grahame, who runs Devon's sight loss charity Devon in Sight encouraged us to fundraise for the Lych Gate at the same time as the Clock Tower as he felt running two appeals in quick succession might be too much for some people to stomach in the current economic crisis.

Grahame produced an appeal booklet in response to the undercurrent of myths, misinformation, and conspiracy theories that grew during the tender process. He started a JustGiving Crowd Funding Campaign, distributed appeal posters with local Councillor Alec Ranford but also reached out to numerous business leaders and residents. He may have only moved to the town last year, but his passion, steely determination and boundless energy have galvanized support. He gave his services on a voluntary basis for our town.

Despite some very negative social media posts we have been moved by the amazing generosity of local residents and business owners who felt able to support the appeal during the current economic crisis.

Work has already started on the Clock Tower and once completed, work will commence on the Lych Gate.