

## **Statement of Significance and Need**

### **St Mary's Church – Internal Reordering**

St Mary's Church is a valued historic and spiritual landmark, serving as a place of worship and one of the few remaining shared public spaces within a dispersed rural community. Its traditional internal arrangement, including fixed pews, choir stalls, stepped aisle, and chancel, reflects long-standing liturgical practice and contributes to the character of the building.

However, the current layout significantly limits accessibility, flexibility of use, and wider community engagement. Fixed seating, uneven floor levels, and the presence of a defunct, non-operational organ restrict circulation, prevent inclusive access, and reduce the building's ability to support worship, pastoral activity, and community use throughout the week.

The proposed internal reordering seeks to address these constraints in a proportionate and sensitive manner. Fixed pews will be removed to create a flexible open space, with some adapted for re-use on lockable castors alongside loose seating. The non-functional organ, assessed as having no significant historic value, will be removed to release usable space. The central aisle will be raised to provide a level floor, improving accessibility and safety. A Café area with moveable tables and seating will be positioned at the main entrance. Choir stalls will be removed and the chancel raised to form a clearly defined sanctuary within the open-plan space, maintaining a dignified focus for worship while increasing visual and relational connection with the nave.

No external alterations are proposed, and key architectural features will be retained. The proposals respect the historic and liturgical character of the church while enabling it to remain viable, welcoming, and adaptable.

The reordering will allow the church to host worship, pastoral activities, and a range of community uses, strengthening its mission and presence locally. Increased weekday use will support long-term sustainability and the continued care of this important heritage asset.