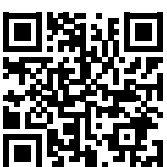


Annual Review

2024-2025



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Meeting the heritage challenge

Two years ago we said that the future of church buildings is the greatest heritage challenge facing the UK.

It still is.

In 2024, the number of churches, chapels and meeting houses on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register increased by 55 to 959, with others at risk in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The backlog for repairs remains staggeringly large, with the Church of England's churches alone facing an annual repair bill of £150 million. And the number of church closures has been rising sharply in Scotland and Wales.

Our Annual Report provides the key details about what we are doing to meet this challenge.

In 2024 this included awarding 314 grants, 63 more than in 2023, with our total funding to churches increasing by £622,750 to almost £3 million. Keeping church buildings in good repair and with modern facilities is essential for their future.

Our three year Cherish programme, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, came into its full stride in 2024. We now have four support officers based in Wales, Scotland and the North West of England. Their work helps churches secure funding for repairs and provides expert advice on how to attract new visitors and volunteers.

Most important buildings

Churches make up nearly half of Britain's most important historic buildings. What is inside these buildings is just as amazing: the nation's biggest collection of sculpture, stained glass, and applied art.

Churches are also Britain's biggest base for voluntary action, sustaining millions of local people in tens of thousands of communities: food banks, youth clubs, choirs and orchestras, addiction support, and dozens of other activities are based in churches.

The social and economic value of churches to the UK is at least £55 billion a year, and all of this depends on local people, congregations and volunteers. With so much good provided by churches, their benefit to society should be recognised by all. Unfortunately that is not always the case, so our advocacy is vital.



Sir Philip Rutnam, Chair



Claire Walker, Chief Executive

As the national charity for church buildings, we made the case to the Government about the future of the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme (LPWGS), which refunds VAT on essential repairs. We did this on behalf of all the UK's churches, joining forces with denominations, heritage bodies and many individual churches.

We made sure every MP was aware of the threat to local churches should this scheme be abolished. Thanks to the campaign and the many letters sent by other organisations, churches and individuals, a partial reprieve was announced in early 2025.

The scheme was extended but only by one year, to March 2026, and a new cap was placed on the amount of VAT churches can reclaim. This has created massive uncertainty and cost for churches in all parts of the UK. It means local people will often now need to raise funds not just for repairs but to pay VAT to the Treasury.

Case for support

So our campaign will emphatically continue, building on the links we have made with MPs from all the major parties. We will continue to do all we can to convince the Government of the many benefits in supporting church buildings.

We were very encouraged that in 2024 the number of people supporting our work as Friends increased to 5,400. There is huge potential to increase this number and for more people to enjoy and help safeguard our wonderful heritage of churches.

Whether you already support us, or are reading about our work for the first time, our message to you is the same. In 2025 and beyond, thanks to the dedication and hard work of our staff, volunteers and trustees, we will continue to make every effort to keep the UK's churches open and in good condition for the benefit of all, both now and in generations to come. Your support is vital in helping us to achieve this.

Sir Philip Rutnam, Chair

Claire Walker, Chief Executive

The UK's Cathedrals – architecture, community and faith

By Janet Gough

Cathedrals are the UK's most important historic buildings still being used for their original purpose. The presence of a bishop's "cathedra" (throne) makes a cathedral the primary church of a diocese. This distinguishes it from an abbey (including Westminster, a monastic church), although half of England's cathedrals were once run by monastic foundations.

A very small number of cathedrals, such as York, are minsters, which was the historical term for a church that was a centre of mission, but not all minsters are cathedrals.

For Christmas 2024, the Royal Mail gave cathedrals their stamp of approval, celebrating five from all round the UK.

- Liverpool Cathedral, the UK's largest, designed by Giles Gilbert Scott which marked the centenary of its consecration in 2024
- Bangor Cathedral, which in 2025 celebrates 1,500 years since its founding by St Deiniol in 525
- St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral in ancient ecclesiastical Armagh
- St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in Edinburgh
- Westminster Cathedral, seat of the Catholic Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

But as well as these and other cathedrals popular with visitors, there are many others which remain relatively unknown. In total there are some 110 Anglican, Catholic and Orthodox cathedrals across the UK.



© Royal Mail

The Dean, Fr Slawomir Witon, holding the Royal Mail £2.80 international 2024 Christmas stamp featuring and in front of Westminster Cathedral



© Tourism Ireland by Gardiner Mitchell

St Columba's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Derry, Northern Ireland, built in 1633 with its tower and spire added in the nineteenth century

The Church of England is responsible for the largest number of 42 cathedrals, followed by the Catholic Church in England and Wales which has 21 to look after. In Northern Ireland, St Patrick's Catholic Cathedral, Armagh, is, like its Anglican counterpart, the ecclesiastical centre of its denomination for all Ireland. In total, there are four Catholic cathedrals in Northern Ireland and eight Anglican ones. One of the best known is St Columba's in Derry, the first non-Catholic cathedral to be built in the British Isles after the Reformation. In Wales, in addition to Bangor Cathedral, the Church in Wales has a further five.

Many cathedrals are centuries old. Christianity arrived with the Romans, and some cathedrals trace their origins to sites associated with the Celtic saints of post-Roman Britain. St Augustine, sent by Pope Gregory the Great, brought new energy establishing Canterbury Cathedral in AD 597.

By the end of the seventh century there were cathedrals across Britain: each the seat of the bishop and the diocesan powerbase, a system based on cities that reflected Roman secular government. In Ireland cathedrals

were introduced later, as the Celtic church operated on a more monastic basis.

Cathedrals and the Reformation

The 16th century Reformation could have meant the end of cathedrals, but in England and Wales Henry VIII chose to retain cathedrals when he broke with Rome in 1534. Indeed, the king converted six former monasteries into new cathedrals. Other reformed churches, including the Church of Scotland, chose to dispense with cathedrals. Nevertheless, King Charles I attempted to grant cathedral status to St Giles on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh in an unsuccessful effort to align the Church of Scotland with the Church of England.

Today, Scotland has nine former Church of Scotland cathedrals, called High Kirks. In addition, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Catholic Church in Scotland both have eight. The Orthodox churches have two, including St Luke's Greek Orthodox Cathedral, housed in Belhaven Church, originally built for the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1877.



© Grant Rooney/Alamy Stock Photo

Inside Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece, St Paul's Cathedral

Catholic emancipation

Following the Reformation, Catholic worship was prohibited. However, towards the end of the 18th century the restrictions on Catholics began to be lifted and the Catholic Relief Act of 1791 allowed Catholics to build public places of worship once again.

Full Catholic emancipation followed in 1829 but it was not until 1850 that the Catholic hierarchy of bishops was re-established in England and Wales and new dioceses were created, though it was stipulated by government that these should be named after different cities from existing Anglican cathedrals.

Some existing Catholic churches built in the 1840s became cathedrals in 1850, for example Nottingham and Salford. Work on Westminster Cathedral began in 1895 and was completed in 1903. In the post war period, the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King in Liverpool (1962-67), recently upgraded to a Grade I listed building by Historic England, and Clifton Cathedral in Bristol

(1969-73) were constructed, both assertively modernist. Brentwood Cathedral followed in 1989-92 in a restrained Italianate classical style.

The most recent Catholic cathedral, is St Alphonsa's, in Preston, designated the cathedral of the Catholic Syro Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain in 2016 to serve the fast expanding Catholic community from southern India.

England's Anglican Cathedrals

Most of England's cathedral fabric dates from after 1066, because of William the Conqueror's policy of rebuilding cathedrals in grander Romanesque style. Supporting the Church was a justification for the Norman Conquest. Unusually, compared with Europe, half England's eighteen medieval cathedrals were monastic foundations run by an abbot and monks. All this changed after Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1534 since when all Anglican cathedrals have been run by deans or dean equivalents and lay canons.

St Paul's was the first new English cathedral to be built after the Reformation and following the Great Fire of London in 1662. Christopher Wren built his masterpiece in Classical indeed Baroque style with its iconic dome, surprising perhaps when the Church was emphasising its Protestant credentials. In the later 19th and 20th centuries, the number of Anglican cathedrals doubled with new dioceses created in response to demographic changes following the Industrial Revolution.

Several new Anglican cathedrals were converted from major parish churches, while others were newly built, such as Basil Spence's Coventry Cathedral, built after the medieval cathedral was bombed during World War II, and Edward Maufe's Guildford Cathedral.

Cathedral treasures

Cathedrals not only boast remarkable architecture and history but also house significant treasures. I am sure we all have our favourites, but mine include the Anglo-Saxon St Chad Gospels at Lichfield Cathedral, early copies of Magna Carta, and Pre-Raphaelite Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Seed of David oil-painted triptych in Llandaff Cathedral.

Many also have outstanding stained glass. One of the earliest examples is the remarkable *The Sower among Thorns and on Good Ground* panel from Canterbury Cathedral's Bible widows, completed shortly after the infamous murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket in 1170. Despite narrative glass being new to England, the design of this 1180s panel is highly sophisticated with the Sower depicted in contrapposto.



© The Chapter, Canterbury Cathedral

The Sower among Thorns and on Good Ground (1180), stained glass panel from one of two (originally twelve) Bible windows in the north choir aisle of Canterbury Cathedral



© Aaron Law

The Baptistry Window (1962), Coventry Cathedral, 198 colourful textured abstract panes occupying the full height of the bowed baptistry, designed by John Piper and made by Patrick Reyntiens

More modern examples include Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris's four masterpieces in glass in Birmingham Cathedral and the glass at Coventry Cathedral by John Piper, Patrick Reyntiens, Lawrence Lee and his pupils, perhaps the twentieth century Sainte-Chapelle of England.

Today the Church of England's 42 cathedrals receive about 11.5 million visitors annually, including students and tourists. In addition to admission fees (which can be now be very high, but are often the main source of income to fund repairs and maintenance) the total expenditure generated by these visitors is estimated to be in the order of £128 million to the local economies concerned.

Showcase for history and mission

For all denominations, cathedrals are open year-round for worship from magnificent liturgical pageants with their exquisite music to early morning prayer. They are not just a showcase for the history of Christianity but places where anyone can enter and find out more about the church, its mission and role in contemporary society, or where visitors can say a prayer or find a moment of respite away from the pace of modern life.

Not all cathedrals are on the tourist trail and these in particular find it a real struggle to pay for repairs. The Catholic cathedral in Wrexham currently has part of the nave floor cordoned off due to subsidence (possibly caused by historic mining in the area) while the cathedral parish tries hard to raise funds for repairs. It is an uphill struggle given the lack of grant support.

Church of England churches and cathedrals constitute 45% of England's Grade I Listed buildings but, as with other places of worship receive no direct funding from the state. The recent cap of £25,000 on VAT rebates from the Listed Places of Worship Grants scheme, coupled with no certainty of its continuation beyond March 2026, means that cathedrals will have to find even more money to carry out repair projects.

That's why it is encouraging that the National Churches Trust has recently extended its remit to include cathedrals, allowing it to make the case for these vitally important buildings, although financial support, at least initially, is likely to be modest.

As Philip Rutnam, Chair of the Trust, said: "It's often not appreciated that many cathedrals face funding challenges that are not so different from those of parish churches. Alongside very famous cathedrals such as Lincoln and Salisbury, there are many less well-known Anglican, Catholic and Orthodox cathedrals in all parts of the UK. Many are of great historic and social importance and unable to afford full-time fundraising teams."

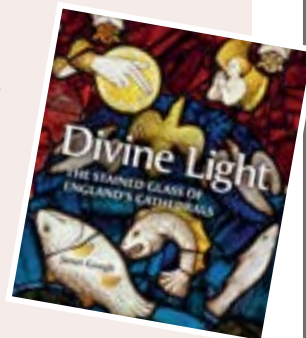
Without more support, many cathedrals, which are among the United Kingdom's finest, most significant heritage buildings, face major challenges maintaining and presenting their significant architecture and treasures. Let's hope that they continue to shine as examples of everything that is best in terms of architecture, community and faith for many centuries to come.



Formerly Director of Cathedrals and Church Buildings for the Church of England, Janet Gough works to conserve and develop historic church buildings, and writes and lectures regularly on ecclesiastical subjects.

SPECIAL OFFER

Janet's latest book, *Divine Light, the Stained Glass of England's Cathedrals*, will be published by Kulturalis on 2 October 2025 at £14.95. You can pre-order the book from Church House Bookshop at a specially reduced price of £13.45, a 10% saving. To reserve a copy please email bookshop@chbookshop.co.uk



The shock of the new

Town churches of the Victorian era were among the most innovative, symbolic and conspicuous architectural monuments of a progressive age, as Nicholas Olsberg shows us in the work of William Butterfield, a master builder of that time. But, as he notes, a distressing number of the finest examples have been lost, making it imperative to find the means to conserve the ones that remain.

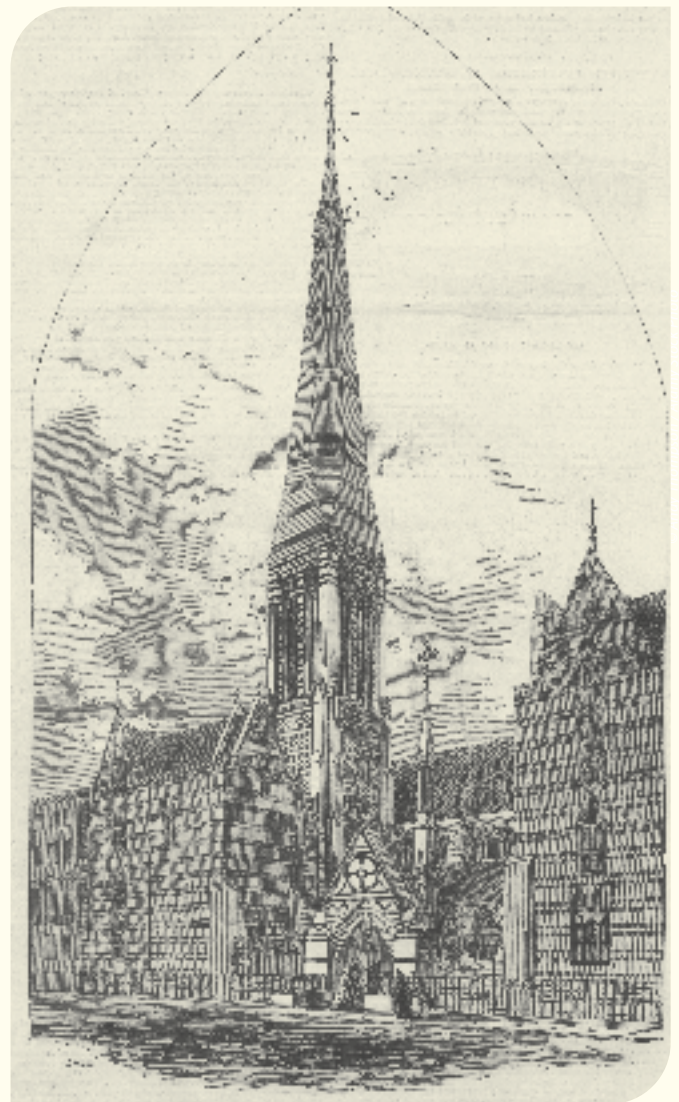
By Nicholas Olsberg

In 1852, on an awkwardly tiny plot in the middle of one of the meaner streets in the shabby northern fringes of a fast growing metropolis, Londoners could watch a strange new precinct of ecclesiastical buildings arise. Erected to the designs of William Butterfield (1814-1900), it fulfilled the dream of a small band of laymen to whom he belonged, for a great metropolitan temple to the Anglican church revival that would speak in a new aesthetic language fit to its times.

Sheer walls of red brick – the shocking tones of a dockland warehouse – were deployed throughout. Two tall buildings lightly trimmed in blue-black fell flush to the street, while at the centre of a high railed boundary wall between them sat a large arched and gabled gateway. Folded behind was a quiet precinct set apart from the dust and noise of the city, within which rose a parish cross, shaped like a needle of sculptured stone; and in the western corner lay the enormous base of a great tower, carrying high above the city streets a boldly windowed belfry and a cambered steeple tapering 200 feet above the urban skyline.

Polished, patterned polychrome

The church itself, All Saints, Margaret Street, filled the entire rear edge of the lot, its roof stepped up to cover the raised section of sanctuary, which disappeared into a blank east wall. Visitors were drawn to it from far and wide to find within its walls a sensuously turned and coloured feast of liliated metal, marbled arcades, and surfaces of polished patterned polychrome, rendering spatial and axial grandeur out of a small rectangular volume.



View of All Saints Margaret Street, Illustrated London News 24 March 1855

The illustrated magazines of the time were quick to run engraved perspectives, and what seemed at first sight “odd and original in the extreme,” began to assert itself as “a London church, built with London bricks, with a regular London street front,” boldly true to its time and place, yet – to John Ruskin – bearing “fearless comparison with the noblest work of any time.”



Interior of All Saints, Margaret Street, The Builder June 1859

After a long and rather obscure apprenticeship Butterfield had burst upon the scene in 1843, when, nearly 30 years old, he suddenly appeared as the favoured architect of the Ecclesiological Society and the Oxford Architectural Society, both of which were attempting to restore and fit for congregational use the often cluttered, truncated and half-derelict medieval churches scattered across the rural landscape, and to establish models for new chapels and other buildings that would extend the mission of the church to the myriad isolated rural communities that had grown up to satisfy the insatiable needs for minerals, lumber, and foodstuffs of a nation's burgeoning towns.

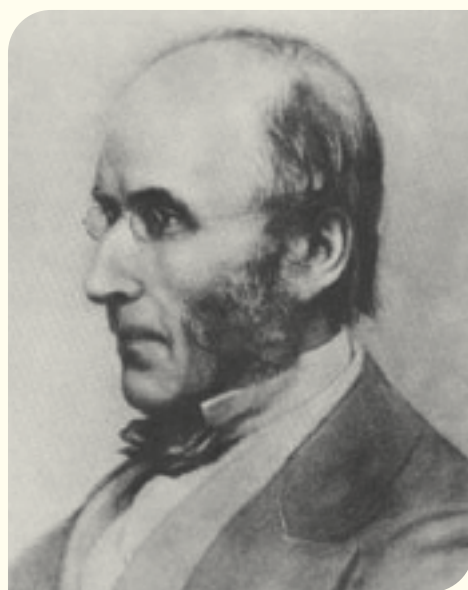
Imaginative genius

Butterfield was then engaged across the country, both of inventing new models of parish chapels, schools, parsonages, teachers' and workers' cottages, and to restore and rebuild historic village churches. This commitment to the modest work of sustaining the country parish continued to the end of his working life in the early 1890s, drawing on Butterfield's rare imaginative and scientific genius to continually reinvent the built future of the countryside and to protect and make useful the remains of its past.

Shortly after his first works in the countryside, his fame was vastly increased by the College of St Augustine in Canterbury, opening to great fanfare in 1848 – in which a modern college is sympathetically wedded to a largely ruined medieval abbey; and Butterfield then turned to commissions for the first sisterhoods of the Anglican church, in London and Plymouth, and for a religious college on the isle of Cumbrae.

These four critical works anticipate Butterfield's most important course of work, in which he responded with modern means and a modern aesthetic to the new and very modern scale of Victorian institutions.

They culminate two decades later, in a climactic series of sanitary and educational complexes—more than twenty in all – whose major landmarks begin in 1868 with the astonishingly modern and efficient Royal Hampshire Infirmary, continue from 1870 through 1885 with the works at Keble College and Rugby School, establish an impressive utilitarian suburban model for a large grammar school at Exeter (1878-86), and lay out the first modern sanitarium in England (1878-82) as a generous and gentle country estate near Cheddar. The principal works close near the end of his working life in a Home for the 'Gordon Boys' (1887-92) a residential vocational school for the lost children of Britain's city streets and wharfs, in which Butterfield realised an ideal, almost elegiac vision of a country town in the sand hills of Surrey.



William Butterfield

© Historic Collection / Alamy Stock Photo

While Keble College and Rugby Chapel became the essential works, along with the Margaret Street church, by which Butterfield's later reputation was established and often contested, much of that core of institutional works went and remains largely unnoticed. Some (like the two great brick courts at Winchester College of 1870, his ingenious expression of the London 'board school' at Margaret Street that same year, or his magical symphony in flint for the theological school at Salisbury, 1874-81), still lie deeply and surprisingly under the radar.



St Matthias, Stoke Newington: Perspective c. 1851 from T. Francis Bumpus, An Historical London Church, London 1913

Urban and suburban church

A similar fate has met the enormously important series of urban and suburban churches which Butterfield undertook from first appearing on the national scene to the raising of the great tower at the parish church of St Andrew in Rugby in 1896, as he ended his practice. Unlike Margaret Street, which served a metropolitan agenda and an ideological polemic, they are largely local works with a local and social purpose.

They are buildings particularly responsive to the shift in the scale of life, and each is tuned in shape, palette and material to the specifics of place and community that they serve, expressing within the crowded town or sprawling suburb a new sobriety, integrity, and commonality in urban life. They played a central part in the lives of many communities, especially for those growing up in the shadows of these great churches with their sports clubs, choral festivals, bellringers, scouting groups, bicycle clubs, bible classes, and ramblers.

They continue to stand – where they do, for so many have been lost, and where their fabric and decoration has been respected, as so many have not -- bearers in their architecture itself of spiritual ideas and knowledge quite as eloquent and powerful as any text or scripture.

Butterfield's first exercises in the town church began just before the design of Margaret Street, with two wonderful Gothic romances in stone. St John, Birkby, is laid on a platform along the moorland edge of Huddersfield with a spire of immense height, so that it is bathed with light inside, and can serve from its eastern profile as a towering sentinel to the distant town below; while the rugged cathedral of St. Ninian, the first to be built in Great Britain since the Reformation, lent a sense of the sturdy, ancient, and everlasting to a transitory, casual townscape of factory, warehouse, barracks, and alley on the perimeter of Perth.

At the same time, a great, highly economical, spiritual drama was raised in common brick at St Thomas, Leeds, where high clerestories and gables were used to find the light of the sky above the dark brick dwelling courts, bottling plants and breweries of the Leylands.

In London itself a church even odder than Margaret Street arose at the same time as it. St Matthias, Stoke Newington was initially laid out amid hedgerows and fields but completed there as the white collar terraces of the 'poets' roads' emerged. Nothing like its saddleback tower, wafer-thin chancel, or divided west window – most of it in London yellow stock brick -- had been seen in England before and drew astonished sightseers from far and wide. Left as a shell after a fire-bombing in the blitz, the church was quite faithfully reconstructed, and is now listed Grade I.

Church for the poor

Equally startling was St Alban, Holborn, the great church for the poor begun in 1859 and completed in 1862 amid the 'Thieves Kitchen', whose uniquely gabled west front stood like a sentinel behind the squalid 'common lodgings' of day labourers, washhouses and sex workers to the west, while a north courtyard with a fresh water pump for the community offered welcome through a grand raised entry proudly labelled 'for Christ's poor' to a magnificent narthex as a place of meeting and repose. Famous for its support of nascent trade unions and its service to the needy of its parish, and infamous for its extravagant liturgy, the church was left by the blitz without a choir and nave, and while the rebuilding followed a very different aesthetic, the majesty of its great west end remains.

These two London experiments assured Butterfield's place for a time as a master of the odd and eccentric, overshadowing equally inventive exercises in establishing practical but uplifting norms for the town church as an essential feature of urban life and its townscapes.



St Alban the Martyr, Holborn: Illustration by Orland Jewitt, from Charles Eastlake, History of the Gothic Revival, London 1872

First was the church of St John the Evangelist in a semi-rural sector of Newbury, designed in 1856 and eventually lost to the Luftwaffe, which thrust a marvelously impressive sheer west end and a carefully walled precinct of tranquility into a lively crossroads of taverns and waggoners. It developed many of the ideas, from the exposed timber roof to the simple belfry, for economical ways in which a simple brick church could be made to suggest scale and soar.

That feeling of stripped-down restraint within a larger scale and sense of proportion was followed at the same time at St John the Evangelist in Hammersmith, set within a garden enclave to evoke a sense of order in what was then a chaotic land of squatters and casual development. By the time the tall but simple tower went up to complete it in the 1880s, the church – with a congregation soon outstripping its already large confines – had done much to lend the character of a ‘sober suburb’ to the terraced streets that grew up around it. The building still stands although the church was closed in 2005.

This movement toward the plain-spoken was quickly followed in two remarkable churches, at Penarth in stone and at Clayton near Manchester in brick, conceived in the early 1860s, and each translating the familiar materials and structural techniques of their vernacular surroundings into works of great force within the landscape and spiritual grandeur within their walls.

Shortly after came two of Butterfield’s better-known town churches -- All Saints Church in Babbacombe near Torquay and St Augustine in London’s Queen’s Gate, which were furnished with a much richer palette of symbolic colour and decoration. Although carried out with modest materials, their polychrome and textured patterns were again met with surprise.

Sobriety and restraint

But from 1872 onwards, when his neat and compact church of St Barnabas, for a dock-labourer community in Rotherhithe appeared, sobriety and restraint marked the exterior of all Butterfield’s town and suburban churches, while the interior decoration shifted largely to symbolic geometries in manufactured tile and to banded stone columns. The climate of taste had changed, and the works now proved shocking not from eccentric vivacity but from what was seen as a brutal severity – a temperament that would later be christened (and admired) by John Summerson as the ‘glory of ugliness.’

This late great corpus of restrained town churches appeared in Belfast, Rugby, Clevedon, Portsmouth, Bournemouth, Adelaide, Melbourne and – especially -- in the orbit of London, where they served populations at once displaced and dispersed by the expansion of the railways. Some are grafted on to the scant remains of existing fabric: at Barnet in flint, at Tottenham in brick, and (completing one of his own country works) in what had become the middle-class suburb of Harrow Weald, in rough ragstone and render.



St. Barnabas, Rotherhithe. Illustrated London News 6 January 1872

Five were new brick churches, in Weybridge and Caterham at small scale, and in a line of three – growing in dimensions as they moved north – from City Road (lost in the blitz) through Dartmouth Park to Edmonton, ending in a triumphant late symphony of stone at St Mary Magdalene, Enfield, which stands serenely apart among white collar villas along the Ridgeway. The full case for these late masterworks is hard to provide, since so few of them survive and the visual record is often scant.

Portsmouth, Weybridge and Edmonton, like Rotherhithe, were demolished to make way for urban improvements in the decades after the Second War; while Dartmouth Park was only partially completed (some of that by another hand) and Caterham has a questionable new life as a skate park. Only the eastern portion of his cathedral at Adelaide followed Butterfield’s design and even that has now been sadly changed; while the master narrative at Queens Gate fell victim to the gaudy neo-Baroque taste for church sanctuaries in the 1920s, and its glorious Butterfield pews quite recently sold off as garden benches.

Late town masterworks

Nevertheless, the argument for the importance of the late town churches in Butterfield’s oeuvre – and in the social and architectural history of the nations – can comfortably rest on the handful that are still largely with us.

These are the great cathedral of Melbourne, even though not realised entirely to his design; the staggeringly powerful church of St Andrew, Rugby, into which Butterfield quietly folded the crude tower and nave of the little medieval parish church, to retain in a town grown up so fast around the railways ‘a memory of our village life’; the rugged familiarity of Mendip stone walls and tower at St John, Clevedon, set in a garden of evergreen as it straddles the slope between working town and villa suburb in order artfully to bring the two populations together; the farewell work of St Augustin at Bournemouth, a loving, ground-hugging translation into modern terms and scale of the stone village churches which he had worked so long to revive; and, perhaps most emphatically, the emphatic presence of St Mark’s, Dundela in Belfast.



St Mark's, Dundela: Photograph by Robert John Welch, c. 1880, before the construction of the chancel.

© Museums of Northern Ireland

This is perhaps the signal example of force through restraint, its double axis, its austere polychrome decoration and its mosaic of laid stone courses all still magnificently intact. Built in two short phases (1875-76 and 1889-90) St Mark's Church arose among the then leafy eastern suburbs of Belfast, in banded red and white sandstones from the local hills. Its two porches rest like haunches under the great tower that shines like a beacon on to the lands and lough below, set so clearly apart and rightly earning the popular name of the 'lion on the hill'. The church at Dundela, supported with grants of ££27,000 by the National Churches Trust, shows perhaps most clearly the essential character of its maker.

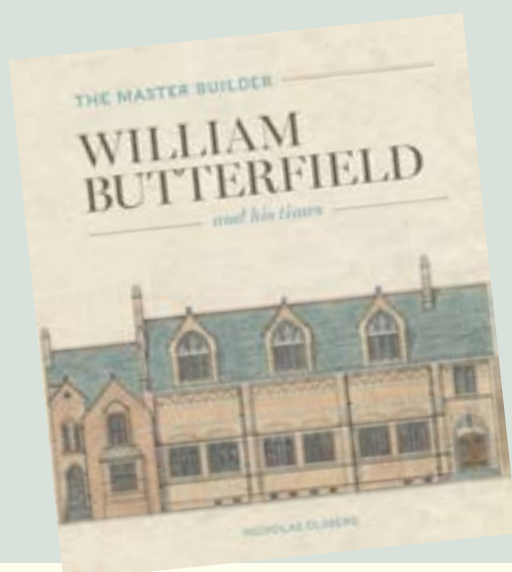
Butterfield wrote little and said less. He was – increasingly as these late churches develop -- a solitary figure, wedded firmly to his own sense of the rightness of things. He lives in his works, as indeed he lived by them, drawing his designs day and night – rarely in sketch or perspective and almost always in the orthography of the builder – as he sought a way to express his faith in the making of space as an expression of faith itself: the master builder.



Nicholas Olsberg was Director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal and founding Head of Special Collections at the Getty Research Institute. He holds an honours degree in Modern History from Oxford University and a doctorate in Nineteenth Century History from the University of South Carolina. He has written books on the work of Herzog DeMeuron, Carlo Scarpa, John Lautner, Cliff May and Arthur Erickson and been a columnist for the Architectural Review and Building Design.

The Master Builder – William Butterfield and His Times

By Nicholas Olsberg



Lavishly illustrated with 150 of Butterfield's drawings and 100 specially commissioned photographs, as well as around 150 postcards and other illustrations from Butterfield's time, this is an insightful survey of Butterfield's architecture and a compelling portrait of the Victorian era in which they appeared.

"Olsberg illustrates his book with 'a wealth of original drawings and newly commissioned photographs, showing off the master's work in a glorious compendium of colourful visual delights.'" – James Stevens Curl, *The Critic*

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Use code **NCT20** at checkout at www.lundhumphries.com to get 20% off *The Master Builder: William Butterfield and His Times* by Nicholas Olsberg, valid until the end of October 2025.



All illustrations, unless otherwise stated, from *The Master Builder – William Butterfield and His Times*

*All Saints, Margaret
Street Church, London
by William Butterfield*



2024

Our Year in Review



“Churches have an amazing story to tell. They are some of our most beautiful and historically important places – they literally hold the history of this country. Just as importantly they are there day-in day-out, providing vital help to local people and communities and are available whenever they are needed.”

Canon Ann Easter

In 2024 our
grants helped
to save

93,500

years of
church
history

314

grants awarded to
churches and chapels
throughout the UK

5,400

people support our work
as Friends of the National
Churches Trust

£8.4bn

of health support
provided by churches

* The House of Good: Health

44%

of grants awarded to
churches in the most
deprived areas (IMD 1-4)

94.6%

respondents rated our
training as Good, Very Good
or Excellent

106

grants awarded to Grade I
and Grade A churches



In May 2024 we were delighted that His Majesty King Charles III accepted Patronage of the National Churches Trust. This follows on from the late Queen Elizabeth II, who served as Patron of the National Churches Trust from 1953 until 2022.

Our National Church Awards

In 2024, our National Church Awards celebrated the people who care for the UK's wonderful church buildings.

Whether it is keeping a church, chapel or meeting house well maintained, opening it up for visitors or running a community project, our Awards shone a spotlight on the many ways churches make a positive difference to people's lives.



Sarah Crossland is our Head of Stakeholder Engagement:

“The winners were announced at a ceremony held before a specially invited audience of church and heritage supporters in the magnificent Chapter House of Lincoln Cathedral on 22 October 2024.

From 173 nominations, 51 made it to the final judging. 21 awards were given to 13 churches and six individuals.

As well as an overall UK-wide winner in each of the four main categories, separate awards were also given to churches in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The awards were presented, with warmth and brilliant humour by Canon Ann Easter, former Chaplain to Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth, and the new Dean of Lincoln, The Very Revd Dr Simon Jones.

The 2024 awards were inspired by the work and legacy of Lord Patrick Cormack. It was fitting to hold the event in Lincoln Cathedral, probably Lord Cormack's favourite building, in his beloved home city.

Our Architecture Awards, run in association with the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association, were presented in 2025 at St Mellitus Church in west London.”

Church of the Year –2024



Representatives from St James the Great with the Dean of Lincoln, The Very Revd Simon Jones (left) and Canon Ann Easter (second from right)

St James the Great, Aslackby, near Sleaford, Lincolnshire

St James the Great is Grade I listed, and is significant for its historic association with the Knights Templar. Today, it remains a spiritual centre and is also used by a wide range of people as a community hub.

The church has recently completed a National Lottery Heritage Fund supported project, creating a vibrant and open space. They also worked with volunteers and people living with dementia to research, write and voice a new audio trail and other heritage interpretation.

Richard and Charles Cormack joined Sir Philip Rutnam, Chair of the National Churches Trust, to present the award. Sir Philip said: “The judges really loved the inclusiveness and celebration of their community. They seem to have embraced being a hub for the community and they look like they have fun! The activities with the dementia club are fabulous.”



Care & Conservation Award

Church of the Immaculate Conception, Strabane, County Tyrone – Overall Winner

Judges were impressed with the methodical approach to maintenance. The carbon literacy of the church (pictured left) is excellent, as is the training of volunteers.

Church & Community Volunteers Award

Redeemer Central, Belfast – Overall Winner

In January 2023, in response to the cost-of-living crisis and the impact of Covid-19 on mental health, the church established The Long Table. Every Friday night a team of volunteers prepare a nutritious meal and eat with people who come to enjoy the community. The majority of food served is part of a reduce waste campaign.



Stephanie Wilson from Redeemer Central Church



The Book of Remembrance at Tundergarth Church

The nose cone of the airplane landed just across the road, and the church is a place of pilgrimage for many people from around the world.

Open for Visitors Award

Tundergarth Parish Church, near Lockerbie, Dumfries & Galloway – Overall Winner

What makes Tundergarth Church unique is its connection to the Pan Am 103 tragedy in 1988. The

Lifetime Achievement Award

Trevor Cooper and Rebecca Payne were the national recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Award for their outstanding work to save church buildings.

Husband and wife team, Anne and Mike Powell, were honoured with the local Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of the time, skill, love and dedication they have given to Shillingstone parish, North Dorset for over 30 years.



Lord Cormack Award for Public Service

In memory of Lord Cormack and his dedication to public service, we commended Sir Stephen Timms MP and Lord Parkinson. Stephen Timms was recognised for his work in introducing the Listed Places of Worship

Grants Scheme in 2001 and Lord Parkinson for the Cultural Recovery Fund, which supported 165 church projects.

Friends of the National Churches Trust Vote

Each year we invite churches that have already received a grant to let us know if they still need additional funding. Our Friends vote for their favourite. In 2024, the winning church was St Mary, Withersfield in Suffolk.



St Mary's Church received a special £10,000 repair grant

Architecture Awards

St Peter & St Paul Church in Blandford Forum, Dorset, restored by Benjamin+Beauchamp architects, won The King of Prussia Gold Medal.

The Lighthouse Church in Heswall, on the Wirral, Merseyside, a new church building designed by shedkm architects that maximises energy efficiency, won the Presidents' Award.



The Young Church Architect or Surveyor of the Year was Tom Griffin from Benjamin + Beauchamp

Thank you to Eric Parry Architects for sponsoring the National Church Awards and to the Marsh Charitable Trust for supporting the Church & Community Volunteers Award.

Our Grants and Support

Churches, chapels and meeting houses are our most important heritage.

There are almost 20,000 listed churches, chapels and meeting houses in the UK that are open for worship. In England, nearly half of the Grade I listed buildings are churches.



Catherine Townsend is our Director of Church Engagement:

“In 2024 we continued to support churches, chapels and meeting houses with funding for maintenance, repair, project development and the installation of kitchens and loos. There was a big increase in

demand for our grants, with 713 applications received, up from 487 in 2023.

Thanks to the support of our funders and partners, we were able to award 314 grants, 63 more than in 2023. Our funding was worth £2,898,687, £622,750 more than the total of £2,275,937 in 2023.

The work of our Church Engagement team centres on helping to keep church buildings in good repair so that their heritage is safe for the future and ensuring they have modern facilities, so that they can be used for community activities.

Support throughout the UK

In 2024, our funding of churches and chapels in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland increased for the second year running, both in terms of the number of grants and the total amount awarded. 79 grants, totalling £1,099,632, were awarded to churches outside England.

London and the North East of England received a low proportion of our funding, despite being identified as priority areas. We encourage churches in these parts of England to find out how we can support the future of their buildings.

Making the right choices

Our Grants Committee has the challenging task of deciding which of the many projects applying for funding we should support. All are important; determining the balance between funding repair projects and new community facilities is never straightforward.

Fixing leaking roofs and structural repairs are vital to the future of a church building and to safeguard heritage. But

without a loo or a kitchen, churches can be underused and find it difficult to attract visitors or to generate income from hosting events.

Our primary focus is on churches that are listed for their architectural importance, however we are one of very few funders that provide grants to churches that do not have statutory listed status. These make up almost half of the UK's 38,500 churches. They often serve deprived areas and have limited access to funding.



Music is a key part of the life of many churches, including St Mary the Immaculate Conception in Failsworth, Greater Manchester, supported by us in 2024

Training and tourism

To help the volunteers who look after church buildings, in 2024 we substantially expanded our training. This included full day events and online webinars.

Our free 'Creating the Perfect Welcome' is one of our most popular training courses. It provides expert advice on how to look after visitors, explains what people are most interested in seeing when they visit a church or chapel and shows how best to make history and architecture come alive for people new to churches.

In 2024 we delivered 70 training sessions to 2,941 attendees (34 sessions and 800 attendees in 2023). These included 35 training events at sessions run together with partner organisations.”

Our Grant funding in 2024

Number of grants in 2024

Area	Number
East Midlands	21
East of England	29
London	9
North East	8
North West	48
Northern Ireland	23
Scotland	34
South East	34
South West	42
Wales	22
West Midlands	20
Yorkshire	24

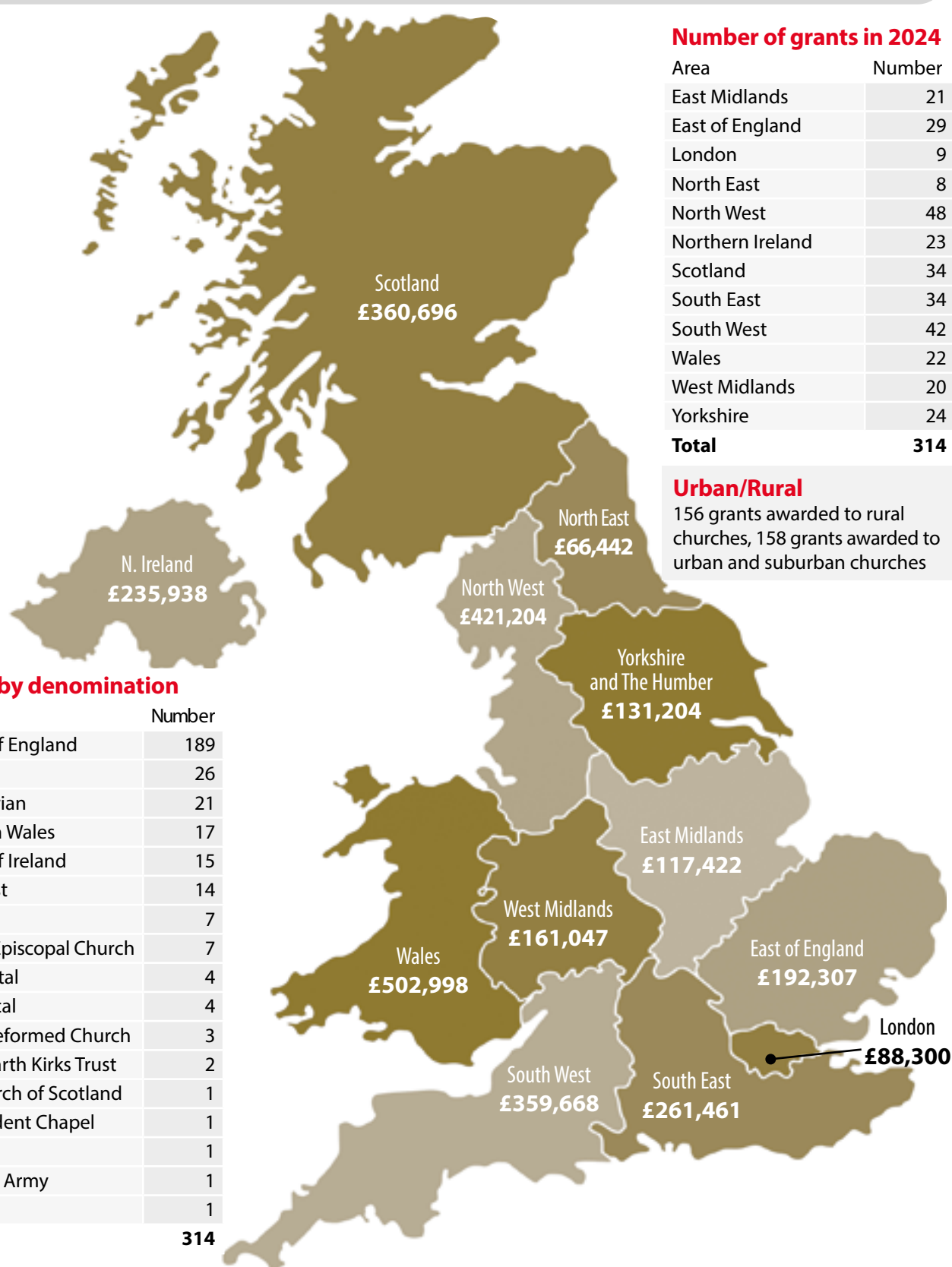
Total **314**

Urban/Rural

156 grants awarded to rural churches, 158 grants awarded to urban and suburban churches

Grants by denomination

	Number
Church of England	189
Catholic	26
Presbyterian	21
Church in Wales	17
Church of Ireland	15
Methodist	14
Baptist	7
Scottish Episcopal Church	7
Pentecostal	4
Evangelical	4
United Reformed Church	3
Tundergarth Kirks Trust	2
Free Church of Scotland	1
Independent Chapel	1
Quakers	1
Salvation Army	1
Unitarian	1
Total	314



We give particular thanks to The Wolfson Foundation, The Headley Trust and The National Lottery Heritage Fund for their continuing support of our work.

We awarded or recommended **314** awards

Aberdeen City

Aberdeen: St Andrew's Church (formerly Cathedral) £10,000, £8,000

Aberdeen: St James Episcopal Church £10,000



Our Lady Star of the Sea, Amlwch, Anglesey/Ynys Môn

Anglesey / Ynys Môn

Amlwch: Our Lady Star of the Sea & St Winefride £3,615

Angus

Brechin: Brechin and Farnell Parish Church £2,060

Dundee: City Church Dundee £20,000

Dundee, Lochee: St Mary the Immaculate Conception £12,792, £9,318

Antrim

Antrim: All Saints £15,703

Belfast: First Presbyterian (Non-Subscribing) Church £10,000, £10,000

Belfast: Sinclair Seaman's Presbyterian Church £50,000, £10,000

Carrickfergus: St Nicholas £10,000

Cushendall: St Mary's Church £1,782

Gartree: Gartree Parish Church £10,000, £9,000

Glarryford: Killymurris Presbyterian Church £10,000

Stoneyford: St John's Parish £4,500

Armagh

Grange: St Aidan £10,000

Keady: St Matthew £9,000

Portadown: St Mark's Parish Church £5,000

Ayrshire

Ayr: Holy Trinity £10,000

Bedfordshire

Blunham: St Edmund or St James £10,000, £5,000

Old Warden: St Leonard £5,000

Berkshire

Marlston: St Mary (Magdalene) £4,605

Bristol

Bristol: St Nicholas £3,120

Buckinghamshire

Great Brickhill: St Mary £13,726

Caerphilly / Caerffili

Crosskeys: Hope Baptist Church £6,500

Machen: St John the Baptist £3,070

Risca: St Mary the Virgin £50,000

Cambridgeshire

Girton: St Andrew £2,000

Little Paxton: St James £3,300

Lode: St James £5,000

Northborough: St Andrew £10,000, £5,000, £5,000

St Ives: St Ives Methodist Church £4,363

Cardiff / Caerdydd

Cardiff: Trinity Centre £41,245

Rhiwbina: Bethesda Cardiff £50,000

Carmarthenshire / Sir Gaerfyrddin

Burry Port: Jerusalem Independent Chapel £10,000

Llanelli: St Elli £50,000

Cheshire

Cheadle: St Mary £1,000

Chester: St Peter £40,000

Macclesfield: St Michael & All Angels £10,366, £6,541

City of Edinburgh

Edinburgh: Life Church £3,100

Edinburgh: Marchmont St Giles Parish Church £5,000

Clackmannanshire

Alva: Alva Parish Church £5,000

Conwy

Penmachno: St Tudclud £10,000

Cornwall

Grade: St Grada & Holy Cross £30,000, £10,000, £5,000

Mousehole: Mousehole Methodist Church £40,000, £10,000

Probus: St Probus & St Grace £3,430

St Ewe: All Saints £3,500

South Hill: St Sampson £5,037, £5,000, £4,000

Truro: Come-to-Good Quaker Meeting House £35,000

Cumbria

Bewcastle: St Cuthbert £10,000

Dalton-in-Furness: St Mary £10,000

Grange-over-Sands: Grange Methodist Church £20,000

Holme Cultram: St Cuthbert £6,553

Kirkby Lonsdale: St Mary the Virgin £10,000, £10,000

Penrith: St Andrew £8,280

St Bees: St Mary & St Bega £8,797

Workington: Our Lady Star of the Sea and St Michael £1,400

Denbighshire / Sir Ddinbych

Henllan: St Sadwrn £10,000

St Asaph: Eglwys Sant Asa, St Asaph Parish Church £2,511

roads in 2024, totalling **£2.90 million**

Derbyshire

Bonsall: St James Apostle **£15,000**
Chellaston: St Peter **£3,680**
Derby: St John the Evangelist **£4,500**
Hartshorne: St Peter **£4,573**
Hathersage: St Michael & All Angels **£5,000**

Devon

Abbotsham: St Helen **£15,703**
Bridgerule: St Bridget **£10,000, £8,000**
Egg Buckland: St Edward **£5,000, £5,000**
Horrabridge: St John the Baptist **£1,312**
Sheepstor: St Leonard **£5,459, £4,000**
Totnes: St Mary **£40,000, £10,000**

Dorset

Ibberton: St Eustace **£10,000, £4,000**
Melbury Abbas: St Thomas **£4,500**
Salway Ash: Holy Trinity **£5,000**
Stoke Abbott: St Mary **£3,500, £3,000**
Weymouth: Holy Trinity **£3,368**
Worth Matravers: St Nicholas **£10,000**

Down

Annalong: Kilhorne Parish Church **£5,000**
Ballyphilip: St James **£10,000**

Dumfries and Galloway

Tundergarth: Tundergarth Kirks Trust **£30,000, £10,000**

Durham

Muggleswick: All Saints **£18,986**
West Rainton: St Mary **£10,000, £10,000**

East Riding of Yorkshire

Elloughton: St Mary **£5,865**
Hornsea: Hornsea United Reformed Church **£5,500**

East Sussex

Arlington: St Pancras **£5,000**
Brighton: St Peter **£10,000, £5,000**
Hastings: All Saints **£3,000, £3,000**
Ore: Christ Church **£5,000**
Wadhurst: St Peter & St Paul **£5,000, £4,806**

Essex

Great Bromley: St George **£10,000, £5,000**
Theydon Garnon: All Saints **£10,000**
Wickford: St Catherine **£1,275**

Fermanagh

Castle Archdale: St Patrick **£8,000**
Montiagh: St Patrick **£2,250**

Fife

Auchtermuchty: Edenshead Parish Church **£10,000, £10,000**
Dunfermline: RCCG Covenant Restoration Assembly
£10,000, £6,150
Limekilns: Limekilns Parish Church **£5,000**

Gloucestershire

Kelmscot: St George **£4,500**
Little Barrington: St Peter **£5,000**
Redbrook: St Saviour **£2,925**
Tidenham: St Mary **£10,000**
Wormington: St Katharine **£4,500**



St Nicholas, Chiswick, Greater London

Greater London

Barnsbury: St Andrew **£5,000**
Bermondsey: St Mary Magdalen Ss Olave, John & Luke **£5,000**
Chiswick: St Nicholas, **£10,000**
Marble Arch: The Annunciation **£6,500**
Peckham: Our Lady of Sorrows **£40,000**
Shoreditch: St Leonard **£4,000**
Walworth: St Peter **£1,800**
Wandsworth: All Saints **£10,000, £6,000**

Greater Manchester

Alkrington: St Thomas More **£21,901**
Atherton: Chowbent Unitarian Chapel **£5,119**
Failsworth: St Mary the Immaculate Conception **£20,000**
Hindley Green: St John **£10,000**
Manchester: Holy Name Church **£10,000**
Manchester, Mulberry Street: St Mary (Hidden Gem) **£5,000**
Oldham: Limeside Methodist Church **£7,000**
Prestwich: St Margaret Holyrood **£10,000, £8,000**
Swinton: St Charles **£6,500**
Whitefield: Whitefield Methodist Church **£1,729**

Gwynedd

Tywyn: St Cadfan **£10,000, £8,000**

Hampshire

Idsworth: St Hubert **£8,000, £8,000**
Southsea: St Simon **£10,000, £5,000**

Herefordshire

Leominster: St Peter & St Paul **£8,831**

Hertfordshire

Tewin: St Peter **£5,000**

Kent

Canterbury: All Saints **£10,000**

Coxheath: Holy Trinity **£2,787**

Dunkirk & Hernhill: St Michael **£5,000**

Gillingham: St Mary Magdalene **£10,000, £5,000**

Iwade: All Saints **£4,000**

Maidstone: Maidstone United Reformed Church **£9,000**

Ramsgate: St George **£4,250**

Shipbourne: St Giles **£7,113**

Staplehurst: All Saints **£10,000, £10,000, £5,000, £5,000**

Lanarkshire

Motherwell: St Mary **£500**

Lancashire

Altham: St James **£10,000, £10,000, £7,000**

Ashton-on-Ribble: St Michael & All Angels **£4,440, £500**

Blackburn: St Silas **£2,300**

Blackpool: St Stephen-on-the-Cliffs **£22,442**

Burnley: Padiham Road Methodist Church **£4,000**

Clitheroe: St Michael & St John **£5,000**

Dobcross: Holy Trinity **£10,000**

Fence: Wheatley Lane Methodist Church **£10,000**

Fleetwood: Emmanuel Church **£4,724, £3,785**

Horwich: Holy Trinity **£20,000**

Lytham St Annes, Ansdell: The Well Baptist Church **£9,568, £8,239, £8,000, £5,000**

Pleasington Priory: St Mary and St John **£1,618**

Preston: St Francis Hill Chapel **£5,194**

Rawtenstall: St James the Less **£4,000**

Samlesbury: St Mary and St John Southworth **£3,208**

Thornley, Lee House: Church of St William of York **£9,000**

Leicestershire

Horninghold: St Peter **£10,000, £10,000, £5,000**

Shepshed: St Botolph **£3,000**

Lincolnshire

Hackthorn: St Michael and All Angels **£10,000**

Threekingham: St Peter ad Vincula **£3,000, £2,000**

Londonderry

Aghadowey: St Guaire **£10,000**

Merseyside

Speke: All Saints **£5,000**

Merthyr Tydfil

Dowlais: St Illtyd **£100,000**

Midlothian

Carrick Knowe: St David **£1,650**

Edinburgh: Greenbank Church **£525**

Edinburgh, Portobello: St Mark **£44,884**

Monmouthshire / Sir Fynwy

Bettws Newydd: St Aeddan **£11,700**

Chepstow: St Mary's Priory **£5,104**

Mathern: St Tewdric **£50,000, £10,000, £5,000**

Moray

Burghead: Burghead Free Church of Scotland **£10,000**

Norfolk

Billingford: St Leonard **£1,750**

Burgh Parva: St Mary **£1,500**

Larling: St Ethelbert **£5,000**

Norwich: Oak Grove Community Church **£837**

Pentney: St Mary Magdalene **£5,000**

Runhall: All Saints **£6,086, £4,000**

North Yorkshire

Appleton Wiske: Appleton Wiske Methodist Church **£2,500**

Bishop Monkton: St John the Baptist **£6,000**

Dalton: St John the Evangelist **£3,500**

East Ayton: St John the Baptist **£1,300**

Edstone: St Michael **£2,171**

Grosmont: St Matthew **£2,213**

Pannal: St Robert of Knaresborough **£4,254**

Raskelf: St Mary **£3,000**

Scotton: St Thomas **£3,000**

Snape: Snape Methodist Church **£1,947**

South Otterington: St Andrew **£15,000**

Thirkleby: All Saints **£3,381**

Thirsk: St Mary **£2,400**

Yarm: St Mary Magdalene **£5,456**

Northamptonshire

Brackley: St Peter w St James **£7,245**

Croughton: All Saints **£5,000, £4,000, £4,000**

Spratton: St Andrew **£903, £681**

Weston Favell: St Peter **£4,500**



St Aidan, Bamburgh, Northumberland

Northumberland

Bamburgh: St Aidan **£10,000**

Warden: St Michael & All Angels **£7,000, £3,000**

Nottinghamshire

Newark: St Mary Magdalene **£10,000, £8,991**

Nottingham: St Saviour **£3,594**

Orkney**Kirkwall:** Salvation Army Corps **£20,000****Oxfordshire****Wallingford:** St Mary le More & All Hallows **£5,000, £3,000****Perthshire****Blairgowrie:** Blairgowrie Parish Church **£600****Bridge of Earn:** Dunbarney and Forgandenny Parish Church **£10,000****Dunblane:** St Blane **£2,987****Perth:** Kinnoull Parish Church **£1,000****Renfrewshire****Paisley:** Paisley Abbey **£50,000, £10,000****Shropshire****Loppington:** St Michael & All Angels **£4,200****Telford, St George's:** St George **£4,000****Somerset****Babcart:** Holy Cross **£5,000****South Cadbury:** St Thomas a Becket **£5,000, £3,000****Stanton Drew:** St Mary the Virgin **£5,625****South Lanarkshire****Lanark:** St Mary's R C Church **£10,000****South Yorkshire****Sheffield:** Cemetery Road Baptist Church **£4,125****Staffordshire****Alton:** St John the Baptist **£8,500, £5,000****Cheadle:** St Giles **£10,000, £5,000****Stirling****Stirling:** Holy Trinity **£10,000****Stirling:** Stirling Methodist Church **£10,000****Suffolk****Borley:** Borley Church **£4,787****Little Thurlow:** St Peter **£10,000, £4,500****Shelley:** All Saints **£4,500, £3,000****Stoke-by-Nayland:** St Mary **£45,409****Withersfield:** St Mary **£10,000****Surrey****Shepperton:** St Nicholas **£16,724****Weybridge:** St James **£3,362****Sussex****Bexhill:** St Barnabas **£43,089****New Shoreham:** St Mary de Haura **£8,000, £5,000****Tyne and Wear****Whorlton:** St John **£2,000****Tyrone****Fivemiletown:** St John **£5,000, £5,000****Newmills:** Tullaniskien Parish Church **£10,000****Strabane:** Church of the Immaculate Conception **£15,703****Vale of Glamorgan / Bro Morgannwg****Dinas Powys:** St Peter **£10,000****Llantrithyd:** St Illtyd **£6,253****Warwickshire****Attleborough:** Holy Trinity **£29,148****Southam:** St James **£5,724****West Lothian****South Queensferry:** South Queensferry Parish Church **£2,130****West Midlands****Birmingham:** Lodge Road United Reformed Church **£5,000****Coventry:** St John Baptist **£10,000, £10,000****Stirchley:** Stirchley Community Church **£3,000****Walsall:** Central Hall Methodist Church **£1,584****Walsall:** St Matthew **£5,000****West Yorkshire****Barwick-in-Elmet:** Barwick-in-Elmet Methodist Church **£3,000****Clayton West w High Hoyland:** All Saints **£5,000****King Cross:** St Paul **£10,000, £5,000****Leeds, Chapeltown:** Holy Rosary **£8,977****Rippondon:** Stones Methodist Church **£13,465****Thurstonland:** St Thomas **£16,606****Wortley De Leeds:** St John the Evangelist **£3,000****Wiltshire****Heytesbury:** St Peter & St Paul **£7,634****Rodbourn Cheney:** St Mary **£2,800****Sherston Magna:** Holy Cross **£5,000****Trowbridge:** Bethesda Baptist Church **£1,255****Worcestershire****Bromsgrove:** St John the Baptist **£19,315, £10,000****Colwall:** St James the Great **£5,000****Wrexham / Wrecsam****Minera, St. Mary's** **£50,000****2024 Grants awarded or recommended**

Scheme	Total Awards	£
• Large	46	990,000
• Friends	1	10,000
• Medium	41	205,000
• Large (Wolfson)	26	228,000
• Medium (Wolfson)	30	194,086
• Large (Headley)	6	38,000
• Medium (Headley)	11	52,000
• Small	71	271,847
• Cecil King	8	55,000
• Treasure Ireland	12	95,500
• Cherish	44	292,072
• Last Chance Churches	18	467,182
Totals	314	2,898,687

Our Grants – Supporting churches in 2024

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Elizabeth Cromwell, buried in the Claypole Chapel of the church

St Andrew, Northborough, Cambridgeshire

The Church of St Andrew in Northborough, near Peterborough, was awarded a £5,000 National Churches Trust grant alongside a £10,000 Wolfson Fabric Repair grant from the Wolfson Foundation and a £5,000 Headley Trust grant to pay for urgent repairs.

The Grade I listed church where Elizabeth Cromwell, Oliver Cromwell's widow, was buried, is on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register as being in a "very bad" condition after its lead chancel roof failed.

The Revd Keir Dow said: "This historic building is not just a place for Sunday services; it is a cornerstone of our village's heritage, standing as a symbol of faith and continuity. The grants will enable us to repair and protect the building, ensuring it remains safe, accessible and inspiring."

St Grada & Holy Cross Church, Cornwall

St Grada & Holy Cross Church, located on the Lizard Peninsula in Cornwall, was awarded three grants totalling £45,000 to help fund urgent roof repairs. It dates back to the Norman era and – according to local legend – part of the cross that Jesus was crucified on is buried in this church.

The church is on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register. The roof at this Grade I listed church is close to falling in. Storm damage in January 2025 dealt another blow to the church.

The church had almost raised all the money needed for their repair project, thanks to heroic local fundraising efforts from volunteers and grants. But changes to the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme in early 2025 (which allows churches to reclaim VAT) means that it now needs to find even more money. We will continue to support the church and hope that extra money now needed can be found for their roof project.



© NorthScape / Alamy Stock Photo

St Grada & Holy Cross Church, Cornwall

St Illtyd Church, Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil

St Illtyd Church is a Grade II listed church, built originally in 1844 and funded by Dowlais Iron works and local miners. The older part of the church is built from rubble stone with Bath stone dressings, the later additions in red brick with terracotta dressings.

It has a beautiful ornate high altar inside and is blessed with stained glass windows from several different time periods. The artwork in the church includes a recent work by Kevin Sinnott, a well-known Welsh painter, and depicts the growth of the Church in the Valleys.

The church had been forced to close a quarter of the building, as the falling debris from the roof posed a significant health and safety risk. The water was also causing mould and infestation. A £200,000 grant from our Last Chance Churches appeal funded a new roof for this historic church.

Canon Barry English, parish priest said: "We are so grateful to our generous funders. Were it not for their support I don't know how we would have kept the building open."





Kim Walsh, David Alderdice and Des McKeown from the church with June Butler (right), Chair of the Places of Worship Forum NI and member of our Treasure Ireland Grant committee

First Presbyterian (Non-Subscribing) Church, Rosemary Street, Belfast

As Belfast's oldest surviving place of worship, First Presbyterian Church, Rosemary Street stands as a cornerstone of the city's religious, social, and political history. Built in 1783 for the Unitarian congregation of Dr. Crombie, the church's roots trace back even further, with the congregation having been established in 1644.

The church remains open daily thanks to the dedication of Raymond O'Regan, best-selling author of *Hidden Belfast* and *The Little Book of Belfast*. Raymond has welcomed thousands of visitors, sharing the church's remarkable history with warmth and passion.

The National Churches Trust, through our Treasure Ireland Project, supported urgent repairs to the church's cast-iron rainwater goods. Additional funding from the Wolfson Foundation ensures the vital conservation work will continue. Total funding provided was £20,000.



The modern interior of St Thomas More Church

© Melanie Plumley

St Thomas More Church, Alkington, Manchester

A £22,000 grant from the National Churches Trust has enabled this unlisted church to repair the roof and replace the window frames within the sacristy, making it watertight, weatherproof and safe to use again. The new insulated roof will also help the church on its journey to Net Zero by reducing energy bills.

Welcoming the grant, a spokesperson for the Diocese of Salford, speaking on behalf of St Thomas More Church, said: "The funding helps us secure the building and allows us to continue to welcome parishioners and visitors to our fantastic parish, ensuring the church remains a much-loved and active part of the Alkington community for generations to come."



St Illtyd Church Dowlais, one of our Last Chance Churches

Our Public Affairs

As the national churches charity for church buildings, our message to government and key opinion formers is that churches are the most important part of the UK's heritage, are vital community hubs and are much-needed places for worship and reflection.



Karl Newton is our Deputy Chief Executive

“We have been vocal supporters of the Listed Places of Worship Grants scheme (LPWGS), which allows listed churches throughout the UK to reclaim the VAT on church repairs. This scheme was introduced

in 2001 and, since then, it has been renewed by every government.

We lobbied hard for the scheme to be renewed in the 2024 Autumn budget. But with no mention of the scheme in Rachel Reeve's first budget, and also a reduction in funding to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, alarm bells started to ring. We moved fast to launch a campaign to save the scheme.

This included encouraging churches and our supporters to write to their MPs, lobbying Lisa Nandy MP, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and running a media campaign to alert the public to the threat to national heritage. We also wrote directly to

“All those who have worked campaigning in relation to the LPWGS are to be thanked greatly for their work. The MPs' awareness of the contribution that churches make to various aspects of the nation's life has been heightened as a result of the representations that were made by parishes. I hope that the National Churches Trust team will continue and use the progress that has been achieved to push government to make the scheme permanent.” Peter Tottman, PCC Secretary, St Christopher's, Willingale, Essex

every MP about the importance of the scheme and the threat to heritage and community life should it not be renewed.

Without the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme, safeguarding the heritage of historic churches would be made much harder – 20% harder in fact! This could tip churches unable to pay for repairs into closure and jeopardise the community support they provide.

In January 2025 we learned that the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme had been extended, but for one year only and capped at £23 million. Individual places of worship are now only eligible for a maximum of £25,000, thereby making the funding of larger repair schemes much harder.



St Mary's Church, Totnes (left) and St Mary Magdalene Church, Newark-upon-Trent, Nottinghamshire, both of which received grants from the National Churches Trust in 2024

© Maurice Savage / Alamy Stock Photo



Rachael Adams, Sir Philip Rutnam, Claire Walker and Karl Newton launching *The House of Good: Health* report

The House of Good: Health

In 2020, the National Churches Trust published *The House of Good*, a pioneering study which for the first time quantified the wellbeing value of church buildings to the UK.

In our new research study, *The House of Good: Health*, published in 2024, we looked at the economic value the UK's churches, chapels and meeting houses make to improving the nation's mental and physical health. Much of this is preventative health care and support, which reduces the cost burdens on the National Health Service.

Our new study estimates this to be worth £8.4 billion every year. This is equivalent to nearly 4% of UK health spending, or the cost of employing 230,000 nurses.

The House of Good: Health calculated the economic value of four activities provided by churches: youth clubs, drug and alcohol addiction support, mental health counselling, and food banks. Additionally, we included a value for church volunteers, who experience a wellbeing boost from enabling these services.

Of course, many other activities that help improve people's health and wellbeing occur in church buildings daily; the total value of cost relief to the NHS is therefore likely to be much higher.



© wonderlandstock / Alamy Stock Photo

The House of Good: Health shows that by investing in church buildings and integrating churches into local health service provision, pressures on healthcare budgets can be alleviated and immense benefits can flow to individuals and communities across the UK. 🙏



The Welsh language version of *Every Church Counts*

Every Church Counts

Our manifesto for church buildings was published in November 2023. Setting out six key actions needed to help keep the UK's churches, chapels and meeting houses open, in good repair and at the centre of local communities, 'Every Church Counts' was a key part of all our campaigning work in 2024.

The House of Good: Local

Our work in 2024 also included completing work on *The House of Good: Local*, a digital calculator which allows churches to measure their social and economic value and show how this helps support local people and the community. The calculator became available in Spring 2025. We are grateful for the generous support of Benefact for *The House of Good: Local* and to State of Life, data and economic analysts, for their development of the calculator.

The National Churches Survey

We also started planning a new National Survey of church buildings. This 'census' of churches will include questions about the condition of buildings, their use, funding and how they are maintained and supported. We last ran a similar survey in 2010 and the new evidence gathered will be of great value to all those who run and support church buildings in the UK.

To take part, visit:
www.nationalchurchestrust.org/survey

Our Cherish Project

A growing number of churches, chapels and meeting houses are at serious risk of closure. Our Cherish project, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, is helping us to target support to areas where the threat of losing priceless church heritage is particularly severe.



Jon Hodges is our Cherish Project Manager:
“Our Cherish project was launched in May 2023, with the financial backing of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, to deal with critical challenges faced by historic places of worship in Scotland, Wales/

Cymru, and North West England (Greater Manchester, Cumbria and Lancashire).

At the end of 2024 we had four local support officers based in the three Cherish areas. They provide clergy and lay people with advice and training on grants and maintenance so they can safeguard vitally important local heritage. Also high up on their agenda is providing advice and inspiration on how to attract new visitors and tourists.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund wants to ensure that Cherish can help all sectors of the community so our advice and training is also available to places of worship belonging to other faiths. We also help churches that are no longer run by faith organisations and are now owned by the local community.

Knowledge and information

Giving the people who look after church buildings, most of whom are volunteers, knowledge and information is an important part of Cherish. This gives them confidence in the work they are doing. More than 400 people have attended training sessions on topics including heritage conservation, maintenance, and fundraising. 97% of survey respondents report increased knowledge and skills.

Making it easier for churches to find new people to help care for buildings is a priority. Our volunteer recruitment training has helped churches show that looking after buildings is a rewarding role that helps not just the church but the wider local community. We were delighted that as a result of this training one church successfully recruited 12 new volunteers.

Cherish is also creating a resource bank of digital assets, including maintenance guides and funding resources. This is helping to upskill volunteers and others looking after places of worship.

Repairs and maintenance

A key part of Cherish is a grants programme for small repairs and maintenance. This helps to keep churches in good condition and prevent expensive repairs. Since the project began, 43 grants between £500 and £10,000, totalling £294,087, have been awarded.

North West England	£168,929	(25 grants)
Wales/Cymru	£67,483	(9 grants)
Scotland	£57,675	(9 grants)

Cherish is a first in the church heritage sector. While challenges remain, the project is laying a strong foundation for sustainable church heritage conservation and community resilience. Cherish will leave a lasting legacy, safeguarding historic churches and other places of worship for future generations.”



“Places of worship are some of the UK’s most historic buildings, often at the heart of communities. We are delighted to be supporting the Cherish programme and we are looking forward to working with other organisations across the UK to develop their own strategic interventions for places of worship and tackle the problems they face.” Eilish McGuinness, Chief Executive of The National Lottery Heritage Fund.



Gareth Simpson, our Cherish Support Officer for Wales, with Canon Barry English at St Illtyd Church, Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil

Cherish in the North West of England

Queen's Hall, Wigan

April 1908 marked the opening of Queen's Hall as the permanent home of the Wigan Wesleyan Mission, which had been set up to bring hope and practical help to a town with very high levels of poverty and deprivation.

But now the church's eye-catching dome is in desperate need of repair. Engineers have said that the dome, which has a tree growing out of it, is safe for now. But if nothing is done, the building would eventually have to close. Grade II listed, the building was added to Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register in 2024.

Matthew Maries, Cherish Support Officer for the North West of England, worked closely with the church. He said: "In 2024 I worked with their fundraiser in developing a £1 million funding project and have also helped Queen's Hall with a Maintenance Plan and a letter of support for their Lottery application. With Wigan town centre set to be re-developed over the next few years, including many new homes, there will be many opportunities for the church to continue to serve and support local people."



Dave Williams and John Parker, part of the Queen's Hall, Wigan, restoration project team

© Queen's Hall

Cherish in Wales/Cymru

St Mary's Priory, Chepstow

St Mary's Priory, Grade I listed, dates from the late 11th century. The church is open every day but, as with many churches, new ways of attracting visitors are always needed.

Gareth Simpson, our Cherish Support Officer in Wales/Cymru, said: "Combining walking with visiting churches is a simple yet effective way of increasing visitor numbers and helping to keep churches open and being used. In 2024 I supported St Mary's Priory Church Friends Group in making a successful application for a Cherish grant to help fund the upkeep of the building. I was then able to connect them with the organisers of the Chepstow Walking Festival as a promotional activity to reach out to a new audience. They readily accepted and hosted a church tour. This was such a success that it will take place again in 2025."



© Image Professionals GmbH / Alamy Stock Photo

The interior of St Mary's Priory Church

Cherish in Scotland

Building Sustainable Futures for Scottish Churches

Building Sustainable Futures for Scottish Churches, a one-day conference held at the historic Paisley Abbey in November 2024, saw over 280 people from across Scotland gather to hear inspiring talks about fundraising, community ownership of churches, marketing and creating a sustainable income.



Jon Hodges, National Churches Trust (left) with Jess Pepper, Climate Cafe, Jamie MacNamara, Church of Scotland, and Stephen Curran, Eco-Congregation Scotland

Jon Hodges, Cherish Project Manager, said: "Events like this help churches connect to funders, but also show them innovative and creative ways to keep their church open and in use, inspiring and encouraging volunteers. This event was the first of its kind, but with great collaboration happening across the heritage, community, faith, tourism and climate sectors in Scotland, more events and opportunities are planned for 2025."

Cherish is being delivered thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Lottery players.

Our Friends and Fundraising

At the end of 2024 the National Churches Trust had 5,400 Friends. We're pleased that this community of support for the charity continues to grow. This shows that many people recognise the crisis our churches face. In two years, well over 1,000 new people have joined us as Friends.



Ben Sims is our Head of Fundraising and Public Affairs:

“Friends enjoyed some fabulous events in 2024, including a private, candlelight tour of Westminster Abbey, a stained glass tour of St Mark's church in Belfast including windows given by CS Lewis to honour his father, a visit to the

Catholic and Anglican cathedrals in Liverpool and our colourful Carols by Candlelight concert at the Grosvenor Chapel.



The Duke of Gloucester, Vice Patron of the National Churches Trust, meets members of the audience at our 2024 Carols by Candlelight concert

In 2025 we will have three seasons of online talks, which will be on a range of church and architectural topics and include some renowned speakers and writers. Do keep an eye out for these on our website and in our newsletters.

Though we already have a range of Friends events away from London and the South East, our 2025 online lecture series will mean all our supporters in far-flung places (from Japan to Switzerland to California) can join us live online, or watch the recordings later. As champions of the UK's church buildings, we want people across the world to see our rich architectural inheritance.

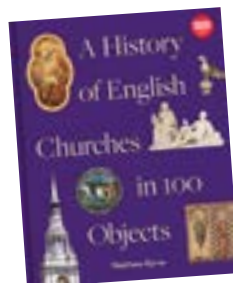
High profile

The National Churches Trust and our predecessors, the Historic Churches Preservation Trust, and the Incorporated Church Building Society, have had some prominent friends in our long history. Among these are several Prime Ministers, not least Winston Churchill and Clement Attlee.



Tim Vine, Katie Derham and Sir Michael Palin, at our Carols by Candlelight concert

Sir John Betjeman was a supporter, as were many of the major architectural historians of the twentieth century. We are now honoured by high-profile celebrity friends – such as Sir Michael Palin, Bill Bryson, Tim Vine, Katie Derham, and Alexander Armstrong. They all give their time freely and we owe them our thanks.



We encourage you to spread the word and invite new people to support us. We now have 5,400 Friends and the more we have the stronger our voice. New Friends receive a special welcome pack, with our magazine and a complimentary hardback book about 100 Church Treasures, with some stunning photographs by Dr Matthew Byrne.

Joining as a Friend costs as little as £40 a year, though we have increasingly seen a trend of people joining for life at £500. I would like to encourage anyone reading this to consider giving a Gift Membership to friends or family; I myself received one many years ago, my interest was piqued, and I am now an employee!

Fundraising and the future

Our 2024 winter appeal honouring our late Vice President, Lord Patrick Cormack, succeeded in raising £60,000 against our target of £52,000 - £1,000 for each of the 52 years Lord Cormack served us as a volunteer. Thank you to all of those who made this campaign such a success. 100% of the donations will go towards our work helping churches.

The Last Chance Churches appeal to save 18 churches across the UK came to a successful conclusion in 2024. Thanks to your support we raised £500,000 to match the £500,000 given by an anonymous philanthropist. The philanthropist was so pleased that he gave us a further £750,000 in 2024. Thank you!



The thatched Quaker meeting house at Come-to-Good, Cornwall, supported by a grant from the National Churches Trust in 2024

We gave 314 grants to churches in 2024, 25% more than in 2023. This is a testament to the generosity of our Friends and donors. But we received 713 applications for funding, meaning we had to turn down more than half of all requests. So, we are looking at new ways to increase our funding.

American Friends

We are beginning an American Friends programme. More American Friends will also increase our profile and reach. We would love to hear from you if you know of any potential supporters of the National Churches Trust in the United States and Canada. Recently some Americans and Canadians have left us portions of their estates, which has been surprising, generous, and most welcome.

We would also like to have more corporate sponsors and partners. Please do let us know if you have any links in the business world which could be helpful. Corporate partnership could allow us to help more churches, either directly with funding or by practical help looking after buildings or even with project and fundraising appeal planning.

With a considerable amount of our income being restricted to specific purposes, we are keen to receive more unrestricted donations. Restricted donations are, of course, welcome, but unrestricted donations give us the ability to respond quickly to where need is greatest at any particular time. For example, one year we may find that Scottish churches are more in need than Welsh churches.

£565,965 left to us in Wills in 2024

Legacy giving is often unrestricted, and last year we were immensely grateful for £565,965 left to us in Wills. The recent restoration after the devastating fire at Notre Dame in Paris cost around €700 million. This money was raised in ten days. Love for church buildings is widespread – I only hope it doesn't take more tragedies to save them. 🙏

**DON'T JUST LOVE IT.
HELP SAVE IT.**

Plague, war, fire. Churches have stood through it all. But they won't survive the next five years without you.

Become a Friend of the National Churches Trust and save our precious church heritage. Just £45 a year can protect breathtaking art, architecture and stories that span centuries.

BECOME A FRIEND TODAY

VISIT nationalchurchestrust.org/friends
CALL 020 7222 0605

Receive a FREE book

A History of English Churches in 100 Objects (RRP £18.99) can be yours when you become a Friend. This beautiful hardback book of photographs will be posted to you.



SCAN the QR code

You can save £5 by becoming a Friend online via annual Direct Debit. Or return the form below with your cheque for £45.



All Saints, Faldingworth, Lincolnshire © Push Creativity

Complete and return this form, with your cheque, which is payable to: National Churches Trust, 7 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3QB

TITLE	FULL NAME
ADDRESS	
POSTCODE	
EMAIL	TELEPHONE

Registered Charity Number: 1119845 VAT number: 450 748 780

Please note your membership donation is inclusive of VAT. Your information will be treated as private and kept securely. We will never make public, swap or sell your details. Read more at nationalchurchestrust.org/privacy-policy



We'd like to keep you up to date about our work helping the UK's churches and the difference your support makes. This includes sending news, appeals and invitations to events.

Please only supply your phone number if you are happy to be called (we do not make fundraising calls).

Please send me this information by email ☐

If you would rather NOT receive this information by post, tick here ☐



Yours For Good

CODE

Our Communications

Church buildings play a vital role in society. But their importance isn't always covered by the media. So throughout 2024 we worked hard to secure national and local coverage about our work in what is a very competitive media environment.



Rachael Adams is our Head of Communications

“In 2024, we had three rounds of grant awards. After each round, we partnered with churches to promote our work in the media and also to tell the story of their building, its heritage and history and the benefit of our grants to

the congregation and the wider local community.

After our July grants, when we helped 58 churches across the UK with funding, we were able to reach many millions of people with our good news. Churches told us that the media coverage, a mix of local press, BBC online news and radio and tv interviews, was a real boost to their congregation. It also helped attract new donors and encouraged more people to come and visit their church.

More broadly, through our communications, we aim to be the voice for the UK's church buildings and their amazing heritage and community support. This helps our profile and also makes opinion formers and the public more aware of the many challenges facing church buildings and how we can help.



© Craig Walton / Alamy Stock Photo

Join us online

It's not just the press and media that are important. Social media and websites are how many people get their news and information. Thank you if you're already part of our online community. If not, we would love you to join us. Our communication strategy means that we post slightly different stories or photographs on each platform; but our goal is the same: to shine a spotlight on the wonders of the UK's church heritage and build a community of people who are passionate about saving it for the future.”

Find us on social media and online				
X (Twitter)	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Website
Natchurchtrust	National Churches Trust	National Churches Trust	National Churches Trust	Nationalchurchestrust.org
13,919 followers	16,971 followers	10,345 followers	2,188 followers	382,000 users
Where we share our thoughts on the latest news affecting church heritage.	Stories of churches saved, thanks to our grants, events you can attend and information about churches to visit.	From stunning stained glass to wonderful wall paintings, Instagram is where we share photos of UK churches.	Where you will find details of our grants and training, as well as breaking news and job adverts.	Information about grants, training and support, our latest news and blogs. You can also easily sign up for our events and donate.

Our Values

Our strategy 'For Churches', launched in 2023, sets out what we want to achieve, and highlights four values that shape how we go about our work: Be Straightforward, Provide Support, Join Forces, Drive Change. These values provide a statement of what we stand for, and they also direct our behaviours and actions.



Sarah Stewart is one of our Trustees

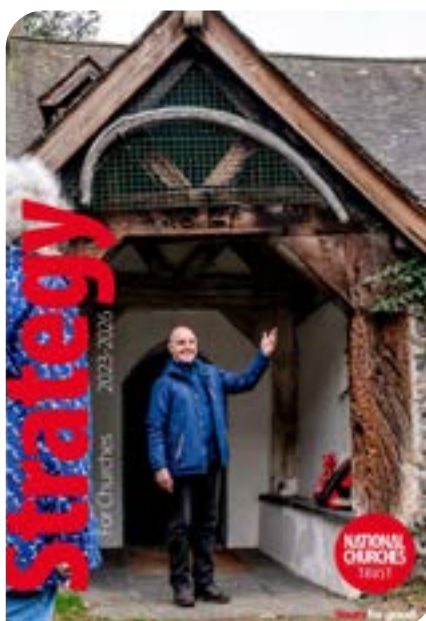
“The four values are realistic and relevant to us now, and also challenging and ambitious as we develop and grow. They are frequently referenced in staff meetings and monthly and annual appraisals. They were also the focus of our annual staff awayday in July 2024, helping ensure they are put into practice.”

How our values underpin our work

1

Be straightforward – in responding to others' needs.

This means being candid and transparent in a way that makes it easy for churches and other organisations to work with us and providing solutions which work for those we support. Making sure our processes are straightforward also helps us work efficiently. Our grants programme is at the heart of our work and ensuring that it continues to meet the needs of churches is a key part of a review of that programme which started towards the end of 2024.



'For Churches', our strategy document

3

Join forces – to achieve greater impact.

This value prompts us to work collaboratively with partners in the church and heritage sectors. In 2024 this included joining forces with partners in the sector to persuade The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to continue to fund the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme. It also allows us to deliver major events such as Building Sustainable Futures for Scottish Churches at Paisley Abbey in November 2024.

2

Provide support – that makes a difference!

If we are to provide support that works, we need to listen to the needs of churches and respond constructively. Our Church Engagement team are expanding their work to meet the needs of churches over and above the provision of grants. This includes online training courses covering everything from fundraising to making the most of your website, from project management to archaeology – all topics that churches have requested.

4

Drive change – that will achieve our vision.

We have a reputation for having a proactive, can-do attitude and bold, innovative ideas. There is no better example of this than our trailblazing The House of Good research. In 2024 our new The House of Good: Health research showed that the UK's churches take an immense amount of pressure off the NHS and provide essential support that would otherwise cost an extra £8.4 billion a year to deliver.

Financial summary 2024



In 2024 we were pleased to award and recommend 314 grants to churches, chapels and meeting houses totalling approximately £2.9 million, up from 251 grants totalling £2.2 million in 2023, while continuing to promote the value of church buildings and provide advice.

As expected, The National Churches Trust incurred a deficit for the year, though lower than budgeted, reflecting expenditure on the Cherish Project. The National Lottery Heritage Fund awarded a £1.9 million grant for this project which was accounted for in 2023, while the expenditure is over a three year period.

Total income in 2024 amounted to £3.8 million compared to £5.1 million in 2023 when The National Lottery Heritage Fund grant for the Cherish Project was awarded. Income in 2024 included £750,000 from a major donor and £0.3 million match funding for grant giving in England and Wales; the continuation of the 'Last Chance Churches' appeal into the first quarter of 2024 raised an additional £0.2 million.

Legacies are an important source of income for the charity but can fluctuate considerably from year to year. In 2024 the Trust accounted for 15 new legacy notifications generously providing funding of £0.6 million (compared to 12 new notifications totalling £0.3 million in 2023).

Net expenditure before gains on investments amounted to £0.7 million (2023: net income of £1.5 million). Net expenditure after investment gains was £0.5 million (2023: £2.1 million net income after investment gains), comprising a decrease in unrestricted funds of £0.2 million, a decrease in restricted funds of £0.5 million and an increase of £0.2 million in endowment funds. The decrease in restricted funds resulted principally from expenditure on the Cherish Project.

At 31 December 2024, total funds amounted to £7.5 million, comprising £2.9 million of endowment funds, £2.8 million restricted reserves and £1.8 million unrestricted reserves.

Henry Stanford, ACA, Treasurer

Donors and support

We are grateful to the many Trusts, Foundations and Donors who generously support us, including those listed here, and others who prefer to remain anonymous.

Trusts, Foundations and Donors

Bartleet Family Fund
Beatrice Laing Trust
Benefact Trust
Cadw
CCLA
Department for Communities,
Northern Ireland
Dorinda Lady Dunleath Charitable
Trust
Hodge Foundation
Lady Elliotts Charitable Trust
LJC Fund Ltd
Malcolm Caporn
Marsh Charitable Trust
N Smith Charitable Settlement
P F Charitable Trust
Paravicini Dyer Charitable Trust
Paypal Giving Fund
Richard Broyd CBE
The Antelope Trust
The Atlas Fund
The Basil Brown Charitable Trust
The Cedars Trust

The Dulverton Trust
The Earl Mawby Trust
The Edinburgh Trust No 2
The England Charitable Trust
The Englefield Charitable Trust
The Esme Mitchell Trust
The Eversley Charitable Trust
The G M Morrison Charitable Trust
The Golden Bottle Trust
The Headley Trust
The Health Foundation
The Ian Askew Charitable Trust
The John Booth Charitable
Foundation
The Kettle Memorial Trust Fund
The McCorquodale Charitable Trust
The Mill Garden Trust
The Moneybury Charitable Trust
The Monkswold Trust
The Moondance Foundation
The O J Colman Charitable Trust
The Oakley Charitable Trust
The Oldcastle Charity
The Pilgrim Trust
The Privy Purse Charitable Trust
The Rhododendron Trust

The Roger & Douglas Turner
Charitable Trust
The Viccarage Trust
The Volvox Trust
The W E Dunn Charitable Trust
The Wolfson Foundation
Ursula Gunnery Charitable Trust
William R Aldwinckle

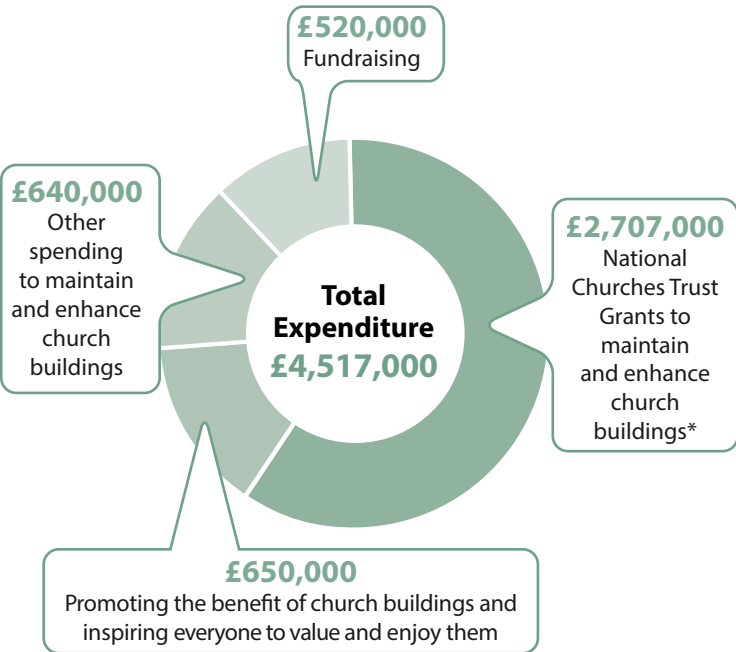
Legacies

Lucy Donnelly
Bernard Eyre
Roma Kellaway
Sylvia Kirkbride
Sidney Letch
Sheila McLeod
Sheila Moore
Alfred Pagan
Canon John Ruscoe
Grenfell Shaw
Anthony Simcox
Valerie Smith
Christopher Thomas
David Turner
Michael Wauchope

Expenditure and income in 2024

Expenditure

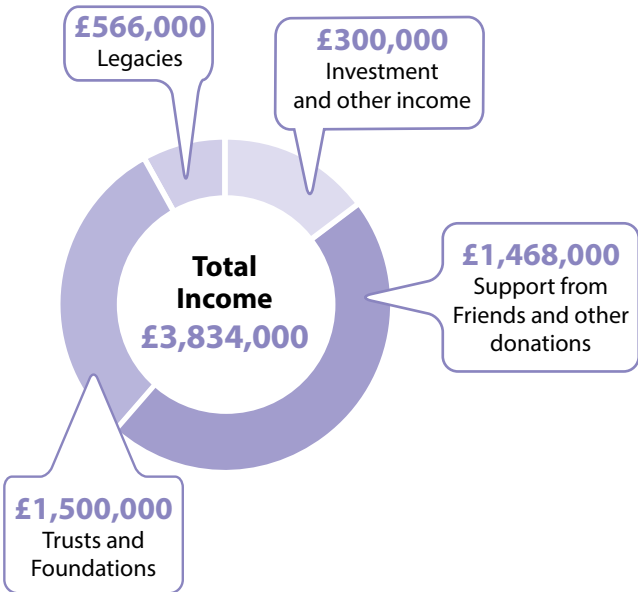
The Trust awarded over £2.8 million in grants in 2024. Non-grant expenditure increased by £344,000, reflecting an increase principally due to an increase in staff costs, with extra staff recruited and funded via the Cherish Project, and additional project cost expenditure.



*Grants awarded during 2024 less previous awards not claimed of £137,000. In addition the Trust recommended grants of £55,000 awarded by other charities.

Where the money came from

Total income before gains on investments in 2024 largely came from Trusts and Foundations and from Friends and other donations, including a major donor. Legacies also provided a significant contribution.



Unrealised gains on investments amounted to £143,000.

Financial resources

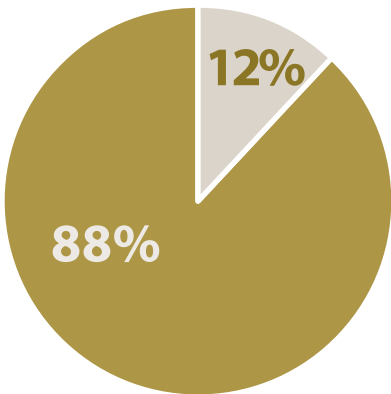
Excluding endowments, the funds of the National Churches Trust amounted to £4.6 million at the end of 2024. Of this, £1.8 million can be used without restriction on any of the Trust’s activities and objectives.

Unrestricted reserves are important as they provide flexibility to maintain activities in the event of fluctuations in income.

The restricted funds of the Trust, totalling £2.8 million, are to be used for the purposes given, for example for the Cherish Project or for churches in specified regions or for particular types of grants.

The Financial Summary above does not comprise the full statutory accounts of the National Churches Trust. Our full Financial Statements for 2024 are available on request. Please email: info@nationalchurchestrust.org

Charitable expenditure



Of every £1 we spent in 2024, 88p was spent directly on our work of supporting church buildings, 12p was invested in generating funds.

Medieval Churches of Scotland

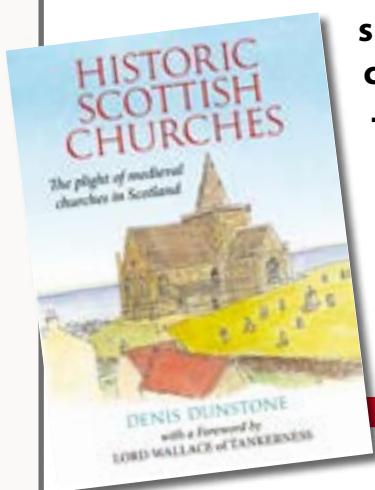
A new book by Denis Dunstone



Previous books by Denis Dunstone have covered medieval churches in England and Wales.

His latest book, with a foreword by Lord Wallace of Tankerness, picks up the thread and covers surviving medieval churches in Scotland.

This book, like its predecessor on English churches, is confined to the period leading up to the Reformation in the 16th century.



Even before the Reformation, church buildings in Scotland appear to have been vulnerable to dispute and war, mainly with England. A smaller proportion of these have survived intact because the Reformation in Scotland was more intense and led eventually to a complete abandonment of Catholicism in favour of a more communal and less ritualistic style of worship.

In England the Protestant successor was expressly Catholic, though independent from Rome. Consequently although the monasteries suffered, its churches remained largely intact. Non conformism grew independently and not as part of the national church.

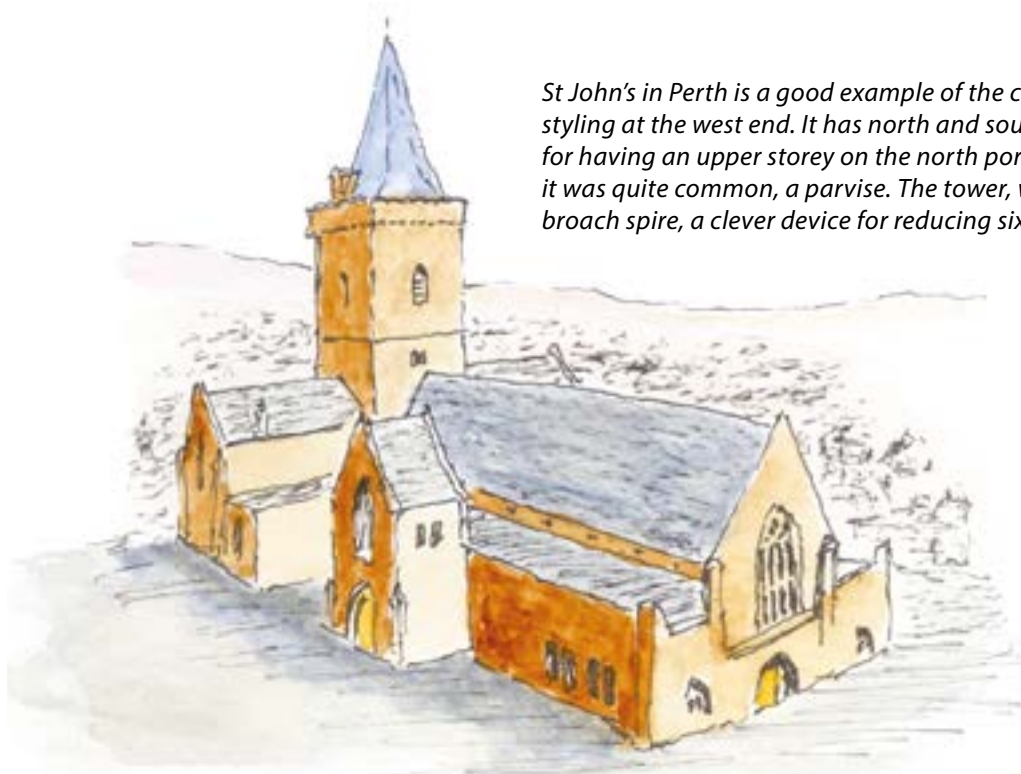
The consequence is that compared with England and Wales, Scotland has far fewer Medieval churches surviving. In England there are about 8,000, of which most have received alterations over time, especially in the 19th century. In Wales there are nearly 1,000, the majority of which have been rebuilt in the 19th century. In Scotland there are barely 50.



The oldest church in Edinburgh is St Margaret Chapel in Edinburgh Castle. It is built of stone and has round-topped Norman windows as found in England already in the 11th century.



The west end of Brechin Cathedral is a fine example of Gothic style. Built in the 13th century, it stands beside the second of the Scottish towers. The future of this building is uncertain as it has recently been closed for worship.



St John's in Perth is a good example of the cruciform layout with unique styling at the west end. It has north and south aisles. It is also remarkable for having an upper storey on the north porch called in England, where it was quite common, a parvise. The tower, while typically Scottish, has a broach spire, a clever device for reducing six sides to four to fit the tower.

Ladykirk Church near Coldstream and the River Tweed owes its quality of design and construction to King James IV on whose orders it was built. It is rare in having a stone roof and polygonal transepts, besides a similar-shaped apse, and buttresses topped with pinnacles. The tower is unusual.



The two largest Romanesque Norman churches in Scotland are at Kirkwall in Orkney and Dunfermline in Fife. St Magnus Kirkwall is a cathedral and almost complete, apart from the loss of its apse when the chancel was extended in the 13th century. Even the style of the original typically Scottish spire was replicated in the 20th century.



Historic Scottish Churches is published by Umbria Press. You can buy a copy from our online shop <https://national-churches-trust.myshopify.com/>

Saving churches at risk

By Catherine Pepinster

If the Government needs any persuading just how big a crisis is facing church buildings, it need only look at the official statistics.

Each year Historic England, the public body which looks after England's historic environment, produces the Heritage at Risk Register. This identifies the listed buildings most threatened by decay, lack of repair and inappropriate development – and the type of building way above any other at risk is the church. Similar At Risk registers exist in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all of which include church buildings that are a cause for concern.

In England's 2024 Heritage at Risk Register had 959 entries for churches. That's 33 more than five years ago and 81 more than ten years ago when there were 888 places of worship listed. There are way more churches than industrial sites, parks and gardens, shipwrecks and battlefields.

What is more, as well as the number of churches on the register growing, fewer are being removed. Last year only 23 were taken off the register, the lowest number in the last ten years.

So why does such a register matter? After all, it has existed for 27 years and despite shining an effective spotlight on our threatened ecclesiastical heritage, more churches keep being added to it.

Historic England says that the register allows it to monitor the condition of places of worship and that it includes places which are in bad condition but also those that are not yet in disrepair but have a specific problem, as well as those for which a solution has been found.

Evidence based case

The register also helps Historic England it to make an evidence based case for providing grants to denominations to enable them to employ Support Officers to work with churches. Since 2008, over 40 such posts have been created throughout England. These officers can then help congregations to apply for grants, such as those from the National Lottery Heritage Fund grants programme or the National Churches Trust's own programme, to help these remarkable buildings.

And remarkable they are, from the 300 year old Grade I listed Friends' Meeting House at Come-to-Good, Cornwall, added to the register in 2024 and now undergoing repairs to its thatched roof, but that still needs work on fragile timbers, to the success story that is St Pancras Old Church in the heart of London, mostly a 19th century building.

St Pancras Old Church is both of significant historic interest – the composer Johann Christian Bach is buried in the churchyard where there is also a memorial to Frankenstein author Mary Shelley and her parents, the political philosophers William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft – but also important for the local community.



St Pancras Old Church

© Jeffrey Blackler / Alamy Stock Photo



© Russell Rook

Sir Keir Starmer in St Martin's Church, Gospel Oak, in his constituency of Holborn and St Pancras

Structural repairs

But the contribution it made to its neighbourhood was put at risk because the building had significant cracking and needed structural repairs, which led it to being placed on the register. Funding for those repairs – including £30,000 from the National Churches Trust and £69,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund – meant it could be removed from the Heritage at Risk Register in 2024.

Coming off the register can take years. Each entry is given a priority for action, ranging from A: "immediate risk of further rapid deterioration/loss of fabric and no solution agreed", to F: "repair scheme in progress (and where applicable) end user found", so a church may move through the different priority areas according to the work done.

But the St Pancras success story highlights how the register can help to get something actually done about the buildings, for inclusion on it can validate an application for funds as it shows that the threat to the building's existence has been objectively assessed, rather than just being a claim made by those wanting some money.

Another good reason for using the register is to find the connection between Members of Parliament and churches at risk, enabling people to lobby MPs about the plight of buildings in their very own 'patch'. Last year the National Churches Trust created an interactive version of the register, mapping where churches at risk were in different constituencies.

It revealed that more than 60 per cent of all the MPs in England – 336 MPs – have a church, chapel, meeting house or cathedral on the Historic England Heritage at Risk register in their constituency. They include the leaders of the main political parties – the Labour Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch and the Liberal Democrats' Ed Davey.

Take Sir Keir's constituency of Holborn and St Pancras, which includes St Pancras Old Church. The Trust's version of the register reveals that there are 10 churches in danger in the Prime Minister's neighbourhood, including the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of St Andrew in Hampstead, the Pentecostals' Christ Apostolic Church in Kentish Town, and St George's Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral in St Pancras – the last one in such bad condition that it is permanently closed.

Others are Church of England buildings, built mostly in the nineteenth century, and reflecting a desire at the time to serve people, including the poorest, in one of the fastest growing parts of London. One such church is St Mary the Virgin in Eversholt Street, Somers Town, first built in the early nineteenth century and then extended in 1888.

Finding a solution

In 2022, parishioners were shocked when the Church of England's Diocese of London suggested that St Mary the Virgin was in such disrepair – the bill to fix it was estimated at £1.7 million – that there would be a measure to close it and then it might even be demolished.

It would have meant not only the building ending up as rubble but the destruction of notable history: in the 1920s its vicar, Fr Basil Jellicoe, helped create the St Pancras Housing Association to provide homes for people who had been enduring slum housing.

Finding a solution was not only urgent because of the threat hanging over St Mary's but because it was bleeding money. Botched repairs from 50 years ago when stonework was touched up with cement meant that masonry was falling, risking severe injury to passers-by on its busy street. A crashdeck had to be erected to avoid this but it was costing £6,000 a month. At one point the risk was so high that the building had to be closed.

The church held an extraordinary meeting in February last year, attended by parishioners but also interested organisations, including the Victorian Society and Historic England, where the strength of feeling about demolition was clearly so strong, the Diocese of London's advisory committee agreed to put the measure in abeyance.

And there is hope at last that a means of saving St Mary's can be found, thanks to a special fund – Historic England's Heritage at Risk Capital Fund. It's a one off, one year fund of £15 million to give grants to heritage at risk in the most deprived communities. St Mary's got through the expression of interest phase and is now waiting to hear the outcome of its full application for funds to repair its stonework. The roof also needs replacing.

Historic England says places of worship will only be eligible for this fund "in exceptional circumstances", and that the building must be "at serious and immediate risk".

Slaney Devlin, of St Mary's Parochial Church Council, says that St Mary's situation is indeed exceptional. "Somers Town is a deprived community and there is no way that the congregation could raise the money for repairs themselves. But the church remains vital to Somers Town, providing all kinds of services to the local community".

"We just couldn't continue, flushing £6,000 a month away for the crashdeck. Being on the Heritage at Risk Register highlighted how important this building is".

The threat of closure and even demolition also galvanised support for the church, and a new charity, the Friends of St Mary's Somers Town, was set up to try and raise funds for the church and publicise it. "We know the community needs to do its part too," says Slaney.

Churches in danger

While the story of St Mary's, with the threat of demolition once hanging over it, is a particularly dramatic one, the number of churches at risk in Starmer's constituency are as nothing compared to that of Stuart Anderson, MP for South Shropshire, which has the biggest number of church buildings in danger in one constituency – 19.

Several of them on the Heritage at Risk Register – St Mary's, Bedstone, St George's, Clun, St Giles', Barrow, St John the Baptist, Nash, and St Michael, Silvington Wheathill – are medieval, from the 11th to 13th centuries and are on the radar of the National Churches Trust.



© Andrew Abbott

St Mary's Church, Somers Town, London

Checking them on the Heritage at Risk Register makes for depressing reading. The majority of them are recorded as in poor condition, suffering from slow decay and with no solution agreed. Then there are one or two where studying the description is frustrating: solution agreed, it says, but then "not yet implemented".

There is some good news, however, about St John the Baptist, Nash, in that last year it secured an initial grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to progress plans for repairs to the tower, spire and roof.

According to the Revd Mark Inglis, Team Vicar of the Tenbury Team Ministry (which includes the parish of Nash and Boraston): "The poor condition of the tower, spire and south nave roof has been a cause for concern for many years. The biggest issue is the spire which, because of its age and height and the church's exposed location, make it vulnerable to storm damage."

Churchwarden Bobbie Matulja added, "In my view, being on the Heritage at Risk Register does make a difference when you apply for grants. We have been liaising with Historic England about the scope of the project, and when the rebuilding work is finished, our church will be wind and watertight and we will have the spire rebuilt. The Development Phase is nearing completion and the Heritage Fund have recently indicated that they are happy with progress to date, so the PCC has been given leave to apply for our full grant of c£495,000 to complete the restoration of the church".

The Heritage Fund's dedicated strategic initiative for places of worship is seeing a greater focus on both individual heritage projects (where it hopes to distribute £85million by 2027) and tackling issues facing the sector at scale.

A spokesman for the Lottery Fund confirmed that it does pay significant attention to being listed on the register.



© Bobbie Matulla

Inspecting the spire at St John the Baptist Church, Nash

"According to our application guidelines, places of worship should demonstrate they are saving heritage at risk of loss, decline or damage as one of four factors that guide the organisation's funding decisions. Being on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register is one of many ways to demonstrate the need for funding. Removing it from a formal register can sometimes – as with St John the Baptist's project – form a specific objective of a project."

Heritage at risk is not just a problem, of course, affecting churches in small villages; larger buildings in bigger settlements are also at risk. Nine years ago, when Peter Broad got married in St Stephen's, the Norman mother church of Launceston, one of Cornwall's larger towns, the nave was full of buckets collecting rainwater. It took huge effort on the part of the parish and clergy to secure funds to tackle the cause: the need for a new roof.

Top of the pile

Their funds were boosted first by a £20,000 Covid recovery grant and then an Historic England, Heritage Stimulus Fund Grant, via the National Churches Trust, for £301,098. After being closed for repairs for 11 months, the church was able to re-open in October 2022, with its brand new lead roof.

Broad, now treasurer of St Stephen's says that the parish believes that being on the Heritage at Risk register helped their cause in securing such a large grant. "We felt it helped us get to the top of the pile of applications", he says.

For St Stephen's, with its small congregation of about 25, but its commitment to its community, the need to raise money is never-ending. Next on their list is work on the church porch, repairs to the vestry and the toilets and an improved kitchen. While being on the register helped St Stephen's in the past, their pride in what they have achieved means they would like to come off it. "It's time we are no longer on it. We are a success story!", says Broad.

But just seven miles west is another church which is not yet on the Heritage at Risk Register – and its parish think being on it could help guarantee its future. The church of St Winwaloe is Cornwall's smallest parish church – its nave is just 12 feet wide. With the huge expanse of Bodmin Moor nearby and the Atlantic to its north, wind and rain regularly batter the 12th century church with its roof, last replaced in 1902, particularly taking a hammering. It has got to the stage, says churchwarden and PCC secretary Caroline Stone, that patching the roof with yet more repairs does not make sense.

Keeping the church going

"It's a lovely church", says Stone. "We can't actually lock it- there's an old lock but no key – and visitors love to come in to be quiet and to pray. We have three regular services a month".

But with the congregation most Sundays being no more than nine people, keeping the church going is a struggle. While utility bills are low – there is no water supply, and no electricity in the gas-lit church – the lack of electricity means they can't provide contactless for visitors to offer donations. And people are out of the habit of carrying cash, nor do they make much use of the QR code for donations.

So paying £90 a month for insurance, and £2,000 a year for parish share as well as all the other expenses, means grants will be vital to cover the new roof. Architects have advised that they should try and get grade one listed St Winwaloe's on the register. "They say it will help us emphasise the need to save our church", says Stone.

The architect appears to have given sound advice. The National Churches Trust is one of the grant-givers that take inclusion on the register very seriously. As Chief Executive Claire Walker says: 'Each of our grant applications is assessed against a number of criteria such as heritage value, case for investment, risk management etc. Whether a building is featured on a Heritage at Risk register is taken into account during this process and a church on the register is likely to carry a higher case for investment score.'



© Slapster / Alamy Stock Photo

St Stephen's Church, Launceston, Cornwall



Heritage at Risk

Assessing sites for Heritage at Risk (HAR) helps us understand the overall state of England's historic sites. The process identifies sites that are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development.

Every year Historic England updates the Heritage at Risk Register. The end result is a dynamic picture of the sites most at risk and most in need of safeguarding for the future.

historicengland.org.uk/listing/heritage-at-risk/



Catherine Pepinster is a journalist, broadcaster and author. She is a Trustee of the National Churches Trust.

She was the first woman editor of the Catholic weekly, *The Tablet*, where she worked from 2003 to 2016. She now writes for a variety of publications including *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday*

Times, mostly on religion, and commentates regularly on TV and radio.

Temples of conviction – Welsh churches and chapels

By Abigail Frymann Rouch

Cynddaredd balch Napoleon
A losgai'n dan tryw'r byd...
Cans Arall lais a glywsant,
Ar Arall 'roedd eu trem,
Ac mewn ufudd-dod Iddo Y daeth Jerusalem,
Diaddurn deml o grefftwaith plaen,
Ond argyhoeddiad ymhob maen.

In contempt of proud Napoleon,
Who spread fire throughout the world...
But another voice did they all hear,
And to the Other they set great store,
And in allegiance to Him Jerusalem ensued,
A temple built of humble craftwork,
But with conviction in every stone.



Jerusalem Independent Chapel

Thus did The Reverend Herman Jones pay tribute – originally in Welsh – to the builders of the Jerusalem Independent Chapel in Carmarthenshire, which dates back to 1812. Hundreds of worshippers filled its pews and balconies during the Industrial Revolution, when nearby Burry Port grew as it exported coal as far as the US and Chile.

But now, says deacon John Thomas, the cost of maintenance borne by the Welsh-speaking congregation of 40 (including recently a new roof, new windows, new front doors and a new organ) means that money “is going out all the time”. Two other chapels remain locally: one now a chapel of rest, the other running one service a month.

© John Thomas



Bryn Sion Baptist Fellowship Chapel, Aberdare

Each chapel and church offers their chapter in the Welsh-told story of their nation. But the decades-long decline in religious observance has forced many congregations to rethink how they relate to their building and the community around them.

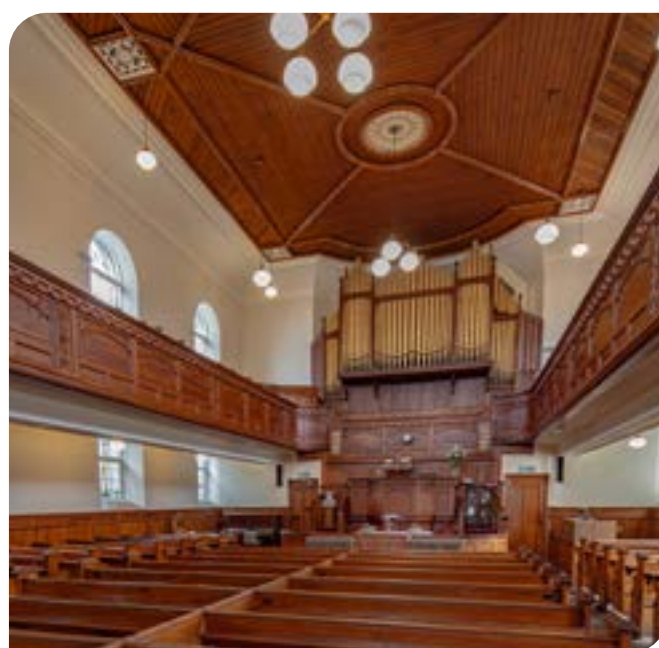
300 churches to close

Wales is home to 3,500 Christian places of worship – independent, Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, United Reformed, Quaker and some new Evangelical churches. Yet nearly 200 churches have closed since 2015, and at least 300 more are predicted to close in the next decade. Redundant chapels and churches are sometimes sold to a new congregation, but more often they are sold off for redevelopment, their role in the community lost and any interior craftsmanship hidden from public view or stripped out.

“It’s the biggest crisis since the Dissolution of the Monasteries in terms of the potential loss of this massive, extended collection of architecture and art, from stained glass and textiles to sculptural art and monuments,” says Chris Catling, Chief Executive of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.

In addition, congregations not at imminent risk of closure may still need help to maintain an ageing building, especially as climate change brings wetter

winters. Access to grants for repairs has been squeezed, notably by the scaling back this year of the UK Government’s Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, and deep cuts to the Welsh Government’s 2024-25 culture budget.



Interior of Jerusalem Independent Chapel

© J John Thomas

Halting the loss of Wales' built religious heritage requires imaginative thinking. With £1.9m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, in 2023 the National Churches Trust launched its three year Cherish project which covers Wales, as well as Scotland and the North West of England. The project offers grants, advice and ideas to churches and chapels in Wales and encourages them to increase their visibility by opening their doors to visitors.

To date the Cherish project has supported 18 churches and chapels to carry out repairs and project development. The Trust also provides funding for work in Wales through its other funds and through support from other trusts and individuals particularly invested in the nation's ecclesiastical built heritage. This has included a grant of £30,000 to Bryn Sion Baptist Fellowship Chapel in Aberdare, Wales, which is set to re-open after having been forced to close due to structural problems.

Promoting heritage

Gareth Simpson, the Trust's Welsh-speaking Cherish Support Officer, is on hand to offer advice and ideas, visiting applicants on site and connecting them to specialist

architects. He also attends events and meetings discussing urban regeneration, to promote the heritage offer of churches as part of the town and high street landscape.

"Buildings need people, whether of faith or not, to thrive," he stresses. He notes that many places of worship host food banks and warm spaces and make spaces available for community hire. He also helps them consider avenues such as social enterprise or permanent commercial tenants for any underused premises.

At Jerusalem Independent Chapel, a £10,000 Cherish grant paid for new rendering and the strengthening of the arches that top its tall windows. Now the work is complete, they are planning to open their doors to visitors, such as those who come to pay their respects to Mary Poppins star Glynis Johns, whose ashes are interred in the cemetery.

The grant also left the congregation able to afford to fund repairs to the vestry that enabled them to welcome in more paying local groups. The chapel teamed up with a new heritage group to put on a local history evening. This attracted 100 people and raised £250, and the group is planning a new walking tour that will include Burry Port's three chapels.



Gareth Simpson



© Joan Gravell / Alamy Stock Photo

St Seiriol's Holy Well Sacred Spring, Penmon, Anglesey

Bastions of Welsh

Most grant applications come from the (Anglican) Church in Wales, which has the most churches, many of them listed; increasingly, Methodist churches are reaching out; by contrast the majority of Catholic dioceses have development teams that manage the needs of their church buildings well.

The independent non-conformist chapels are under-represented among applications – but could not have greater cultural significance, Gareth Simpson says. These chapels “are the nation’s built heritage,” he explains; they became “bastions” of the Welsh language during the Victorian era, when Westminster officials insisted on education in English. “It’s down to chapel culture, arguably, that we still have the language today.”

The National Churches Trust also encourages churches to open their doors to tourists. and more than 500 Welsh churches, chapels and cathedrals are signed up to its Explore Churches webpages.

In 2021 the Trust teamed up with Visit Wales for the Experiencing Sacred Wales project to highlight some of the country’s most stunning and under-celebrated places of worship: from rugged coastal chapels founded by fifth-century saints, to ornately carved cathedral interiors to tree-covered holy wells – and St Trillo, Rhos on Sea, a six-seater church believed to be Britain’s smallest.

Churches and chapels opening their doors to visitors is “absolutely vital”, says Catling. Where chapels have done so, they “have been surprised by the warmth of the reaction of local people who’ve passed the building every day of their lives.” Some have also received members of the Welsh diaspora studying their family history, he adds.

Claire Walker, Chief Executive of the National Churches Trust sees the future of the churches and chapels of Wales as a real opportunity that is there for the taking: “We’re asking people to embrace the fantastic heritage that’s part of the DNA of Wales. The churches belong to us all. There’s something for everybody, whether they’re of any religion or none, as a space for visiting, a nice day out, contemplation, solace, meeting friends, worship if you want – and anything in between, as long as the door is open.”



Abigail Frymann Rouch is a religious affairs journalist and regularly writes for *The Times*, *the Church Times* and *The Tablet*, where she was foreign editor, then online editor. She has also written for *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Critic*, *BBC Music Magazine*, *Commonweal* and *Deutsche Welle* among others.

The House of Good



By Will Watt

Over the past five years, using pioneering economic research, the National Churches Trust's The House of Good project has enabled us all to see the value that churches bring to society. This work is some of the best and most rewarding that our company, State of Life, has ever done.

The findings of the research have been mentioned in Parliament, used by a range of church and heritage organisations to make the case for church buildings and have also boosted the morale of many individual churches throughout the UK.

While religious belief can at times divide people, in our research we wanted to demonstrate the extent of the benefit to society of the social care, health and wellbeing that happens in the UK's 39,500 church buildings. This benefit happens regardless of the heritage value of a building and in churches that are listed and unlisted.

Wellbeing economics

At State of Life, we want to make it easy to understand social and economic impact. In particular we seek to show how organisations improve people's lives.

At the heart of this is the use of wellbeing economics, a growing area of research and evaluation and which today forms part of HM Treasury's Green Book.

You do wellbeing economics every day when you ask your colleagues and friends 'How are you?'

The answer people give is made up of all sorts of factors but it is, essentially, their wellbeing or in particular their overall satisfaction with their life at the moment - this is known as 'Life Satisfaction'.

Now, simply imagine if you asked your friends to give you a score out of 10 for how they are doing. An answer of 'I've been better' might be a 4 or 5; 'not bad' may be a 6 and a 'really good thanks' might be an 8.



Thousands of churches run or are part of a Foodbank scheme - South Belfast Foodbank

© LFT Charitable Trust



HM Treasury building on Whitehall, London

This score is what makes up the WELLBY - a *Wellbeing-adjusted Life Year*. A WELLBY represents a one-point improvement in an individual's life satisfaction (on a 0-10 scale) for one year. The UK government values a WELLBY at £15,300 (as of 2024).

Developed by the London School of Economics, the WELLBY valuation method is the first time HM Treasury have given an economic value to life satisfaction and welfare.

In the HM Treasury Green Book, which stipulates how policy is to be measured and appraised by Government, social and public value is described as follows:

"Social or public value...includes all significant costs and benefits that affect the welfare and wellbeing of the population, not just market effects."

This use of wellbeing by HM Treasury means that it is important for policy makers to see churches, and the costs of looking after them, in the context of their social and public value and the impact they make on the wellbeing of the national and local population.

World leading data

It is possible to measure wellbeing value effectively in the UK because we have the world's leading data sets that ask the key life satisfaction question alongside almost all the other things that matter to our wellbeing such as what we earn, what we do, how old, healthy, active we are and pretty much everything that makes up our everyday life. Through analysis of this data and new surveys we now know what contributes to our wellbeing.

The House of Good research has been the first in the UK to use the WELLBY measure to value social benefit. It is made up of three elements.

1. The original study was published in 2020 and then updated with the publication of the HM Treasury Green Book Supplementary Guidance on Wellbeing in 2021.

It highlighted the crucial role church buildings play as a network providing essential community services such as drug and alcohol support, financial advice, youth clubs, and food banks. All of these areas of community and social care improve our wellbeing or mitigate against even lower wellbeing. They have a public and social value.

FUNDING CHURCH BUILDINGS IS A FANTASTIC INVESTMENT



When you invest
£1
in church buildings...



2020 research showed a return of **£3.74**



...but HM Treasury Green Book calculations now show a return of over **£16**

The initial research estimated the social value generated by church buildings in the UK to be at least £12.4 billion annually. But by 2021 we were able to update the 2020 figures to show that:

- churches are providing approximately £55 billion in economic value - almost twice the social care budget of the UK
- for every £1 invested churches were returning an exceptional £16 in social value (a good return is £3)
- the average church has a social and public value of £1.3 million

These findings are remarkable and demonstrate the immense value of churches to us all, regardless of religious belief.

The House of Good: Health

2. In July 2025, the Health Secretary Wes Streeting launched a new 10 year strategy describing radical shifts from 'hospital to community' and 'sickness to prevention' and delivery through 'neighbourhood health centres'. This is a job that churches have been doing for hundreds of years.

Last year we released The House of Good: Health, an evolution of the original report. In the first, we placed a direct wellbeing value on the individuals benefiting from church activities. Our report did not, however, consider the indirect cost relief to the NHS. This provides a different perspective on the financial value of wellbeing.



The House of Good: Local allows individual churches to estimate their social and economic value

We therefore translated the WELLBY value of churches into NHS Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALY), the key measure used to assess the cost-effectiveness of treatments. This valuation shows that churches are already providing substantial community based healthcare the government wants to see. In doing so they relieve the burden on the NHS by £8.4billion - or around 4% of the massive NHS budget. This is the equivalent of employing 230,000 nurses.

Now, Wes Streeting, policy stakeholders and commissioners can understand the value and cost effectiveness of church-run programmes in direct comparison with other healthcare services. For example, our work highlighted church-based activities like counselling, addiction recovery, and social support that complement NHS-funded services – but at a fraction of the cost.

What about my local church?

3. Building on the valuation methods of these two reports, we have now created The House of Good Local. This user-friendly tool allows individual churches (as well as mosques, gurdwaras, and other community buildings) to estimate their social and economic value. The calculator works this out by using information including the range of community support activities that take place in a church building and values these using the WELLBY measure described above.

Three point plan

What The House of Good clearly shows is that church buildings are one of the cornerstones of national wellbeing and social care. Yet churches, and other places of worship, are ignored in most policy and investment strategies.

Today we have a long term social care crisis in the UK and the saying goes to 'never waste a crisis'. So here are three personal suggestions for the future:

- start to fund church buildings as providers of social care and from NHS and council budgets as part of the new 'neighbourhood health centres' the NHS strategy is due to create
- every church to have a board outside that lists the community services provided inside to show the public their value and help us all understand their role in the community beyond Sunday worship
- bring together all faiths to recognise the public good and social care they all provide and let this become a new religion of kindness and care for our neighbours



Will Watt

Will Watt is the founder of State of Life. State of Life launched in 2020 with the help of none other than GOD himself (that being Lord Gus O'Donnell) the former Chief Cabinet Secretary and economist.

It develops online tools and services to help organisations in both the public and private sectors measure and demonstrate

their social and economic value, focusing on improving people's health and wellbeing.



Find out more about The House of Good at nationalchurchestrust.org/houseofgood-local



Specialist Skills Directory Showcase



Our Specialist Skills Directory showcases some of the expert and talented craftspeople working to preserve the nation's churches and heritage buildings. Whether you need a blacksmith or an embroiderer, a steeplejack or a stained glass restorer, our Specialist Skills Directory, with over 120 members around the UK, is there to help you find the right person for the job. Visit our website for full details about each member. You can also search by their expertise or category of skills nationalchurchestrust.org/specialistskills or contact Ben Sims at ben.sims@nationalchurchestrust.org



We are grateful for the support of all the members of our Specialist Skills Directory, who are listed below. We also thank members who are supporting the publication of our Annual Review by advertising in this special Specialist Skills Directory advertising section. If you contact them, please do tell them that you saw their advertisement in the National Churches Trust Annual Review.

The use of trade, firm or business names in the Specialist Skills Directory is for the information and convenience of the reader. Such use does not constitute an endorsement or approval by the National Churches Trust of any product or service to the exclusion of others that may be suitable.



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Anthony J Smith (Gloucester) Ltd
Apex Access Group
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B

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BJN Roofing (Contractors) Ltd
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BN Thermic
Bonsers (Nottingham) Ltd
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C

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D

Devlin Plummer Stained Glass Ltd
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DNG Stained Glass
Doohan, Mark
DR Nolans & Co Ltd

E

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Envirograf
ESP Projects Ltd

F

Falconbridge Site Security Ltd
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Fogarty High Level Maintenance
Frost, Mr Ben
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G

Gillett & Johnston Ltd
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H

Hammick, Linda
Harrison Thompson & Co Ltd (Yeoman Rainguard)
Hetreed Ross Architects
Highlife Rope Access
Hirst Conservation Ltd
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I

Investigations Ltd
ICM UK
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J

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John Taylor & Co
John Williams & Company Ltd
Jones & Fraser Ltd
Jones, Toby
Juhasz, Val
Jupiter Heating Systems Ltd

K

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Martin Goetze and Dominic Gwynn Ltd
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N

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P

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Pearson, Joanne
Philip Hughes Associates
Pierce, John
Precision Glass Ltd
Proudfoot, Lewis

R

Recclesia & Recclesia Stained Glass
Red Electrical Services Ltd
Rodell, Alexander
Rosewood Ltd
Rupert Harris Conservation Ltd

S

Scene Architects Limited
Shelley Signs Ltd
SK Conservation Limited
Smith of Derby Ltd
Stamford Stone Company Ltd
Swords, Michael

T

TH Developments UK Ltd
The Church Notice Board Company Ltd
The Cumbria Clock Company Ltd
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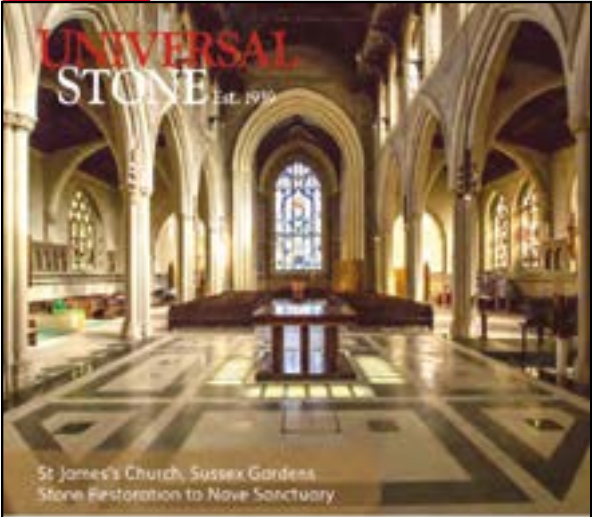
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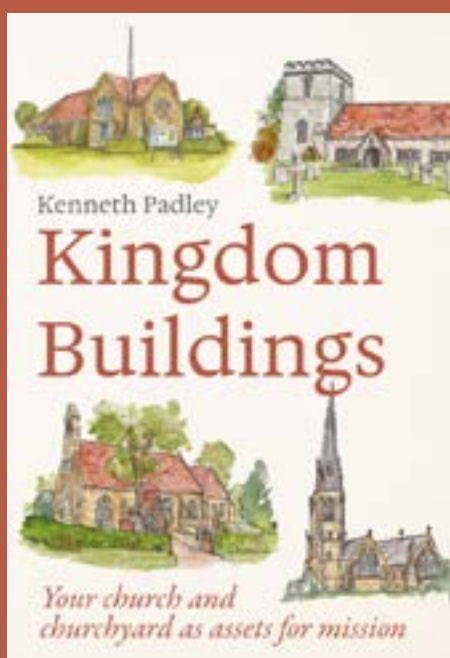
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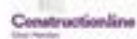
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Published by The National Churches Trust ©2025
Company registered in England Registration number 06265201
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