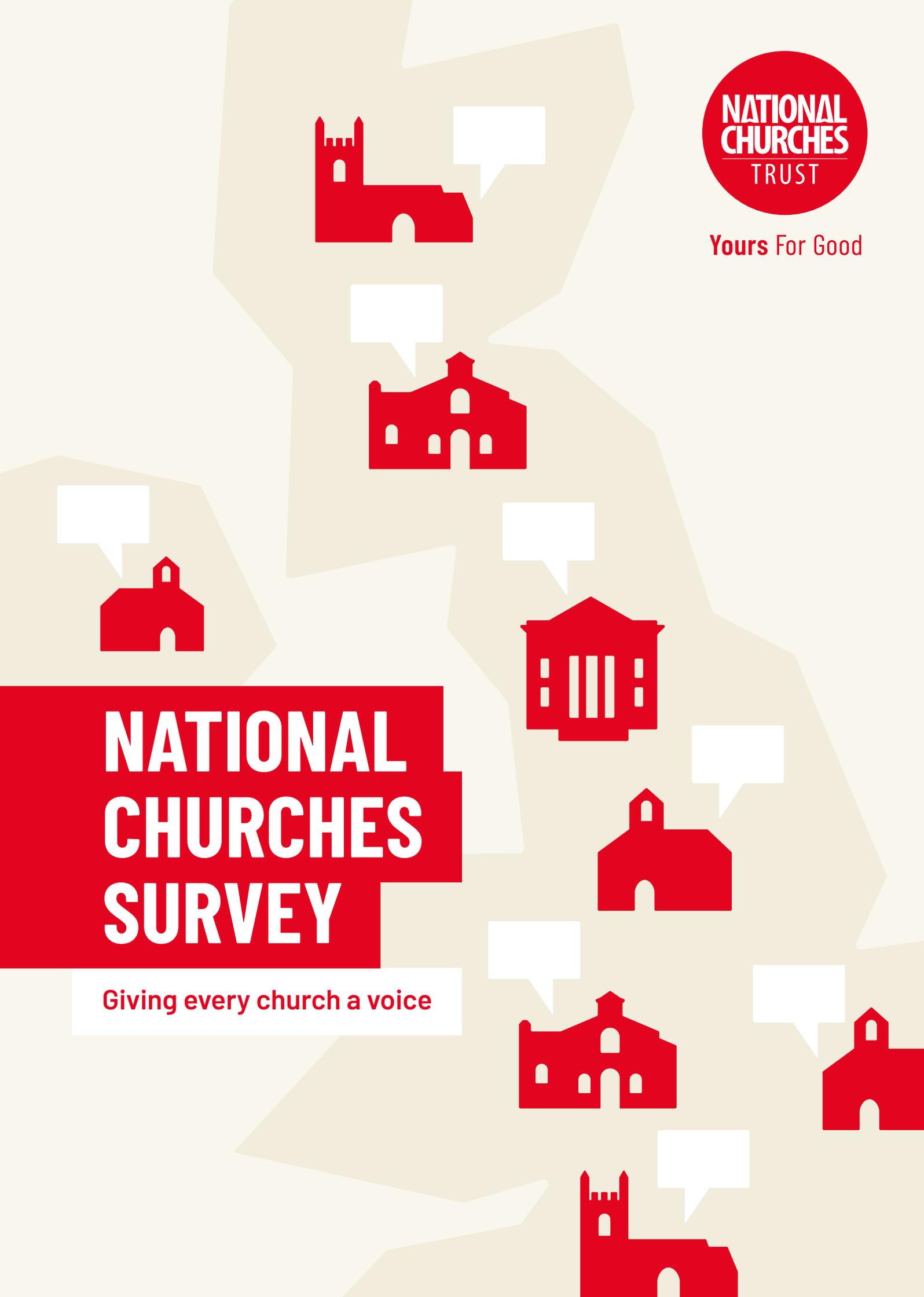




Yours For Good

NATIONAL CHURCHES SURVEY

Giving every church a voice



Methodology

A total of 3,628 churches took part in the survey, with responses received broadly representative of the UK in terms of denomination, attendance and building age and location. Results were then weighted by denomination, UK nation, rurality, and listed status.



To read the survey in full, scan the QR code.

About



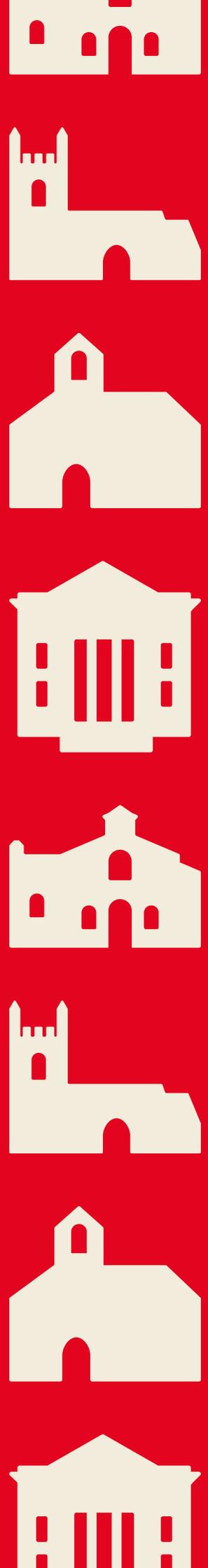
National Churches Trust

An independent charity working on the ground in all four nations and supporting churches of all denominations so that church buildings across the UK are well maintained, open to everyone, sustainable and valued.

WHITESTONE

Whitestone

A research consultancy with a particular specialism in faith issues and audiences, seeking to support clients with insight that supports public policy, reputation management and communications.



NOW IS THE MOMENT TO ACT

This report shows both the scale of what is at stake and the hope that continues to shine through. Churches are not passive relics of the past; they are active, living places, powered by volunteers and sustained by communities who depend on them. They embody resilience in its truest form – adapting to changing needs, welcoming the vulnerable, and safeguarding treasures for future generations. What emerges here is not only a portrait of struggle but also one of remarkable strength, and a reminder that these places deserve our continued commitment.

The National Churches Survey sets out clearly the challenges that churches are facing, and also the opportunities for renewal, if we act together.

Without intervention the risks are high – we risk losing these buildings and all they embody – for good. Let us rise to that call, so that churches, chapels and meeting houses continue to stand as beacons of hope in the United Kingdom now and for many generations to come.

Sir Philip Rutnam

Chair, National Churches Trust



There are an estimated 38,500 churches, chapels, and meeting houses in the UK, approximately half of which are listed buildings.

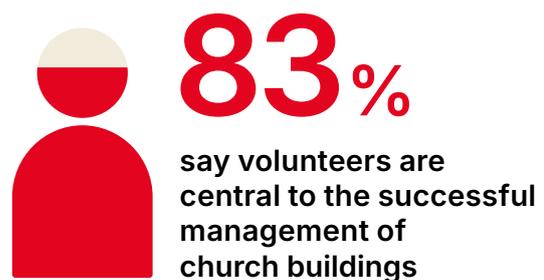
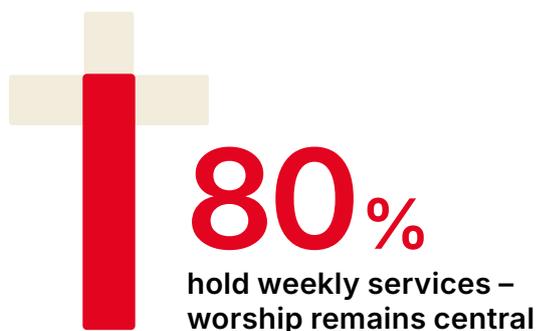
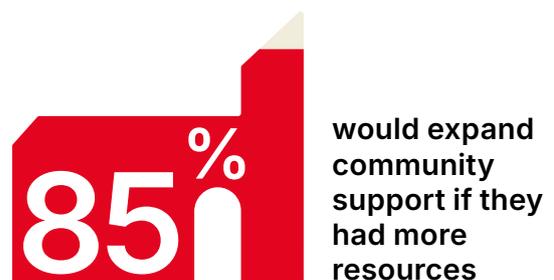


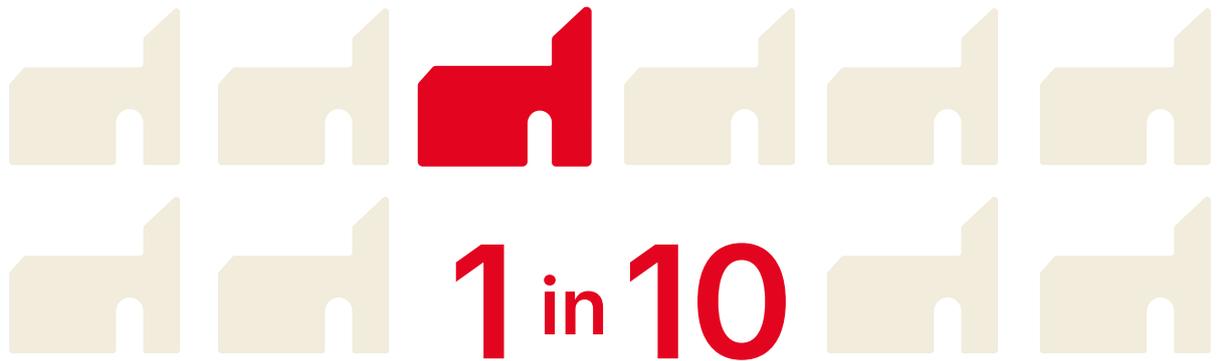
AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITY



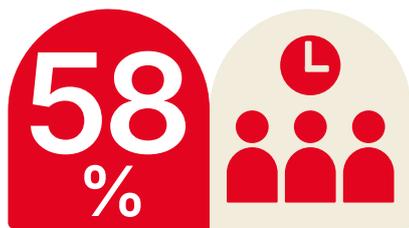
Why we need churches

Churches provide unique social hubs in villages, towns and cities. They are open to all, rooted in local identity and trusted by communities.





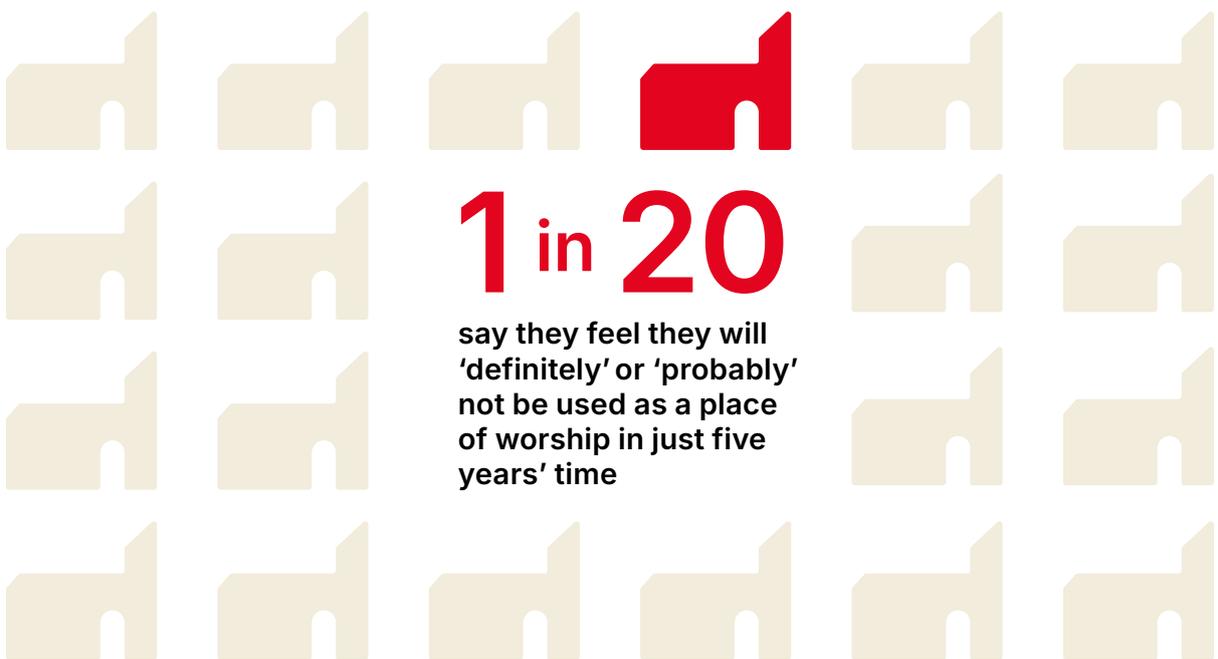
say roofs and guttering/drains will need urgent repairs in the next 12 months



of churches are open to the public beyond services



of churches are open daily



Frontline of social care

Churches are the UK's 'hidden welfare network', hosting vital services such as foodbanks, debt advice, addiction support, mental health groups, youth clubs, choirs and warm spaces – often where no other services exist.

56% 56% involved in food distribution such as foodbanks, with 37% offering it weekly

34% 34% provide support for people struggling with anxiety, depression or isolation

49% 49% host youth groups, a third of which meet weekly

Strong appetite to do more

Churches are clear on what resources they need to do more and meet the demands of their local community. 70% say they need more volunteers, 62% say financial support and 39% say better facilities in order to make that happen.



To read this section in full, scan the QR code.

Challenges with building conditions

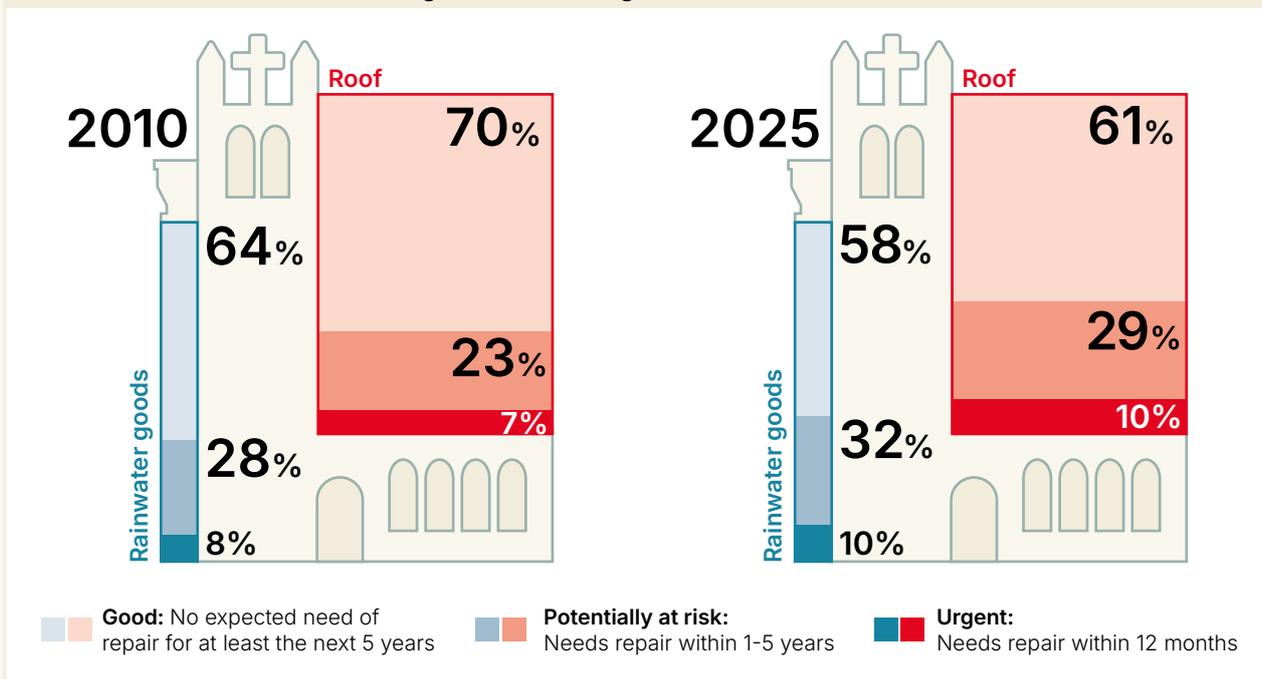
Roof repairs, guttering/drains and heating are the most urgent needs, with 28% of budgets spent on repairs and maintenance in the past three years.

- The condition of church roofs has deteriorated over the last 15 years.
- Although 61% are reported to be in good condition, this is down significantly since 2010 (70%).
- 39% now say their roof is at risk or in urgent need of repair, compared with just 30% in 2010



To read this section in full, scan the QR code.

Current condition of church building and surrounding areas (2010 and 2025)





The roof was already failing – and then a storm hit

St Grada and Holy Cross is a Grade I listed remote rural church in the Lizard Peninsula in Cornwall. It can be seen for miles around and attracts thousands of visitors through its beauty and history.

But urgent roof and tower repairs are desperately needed and are estimated to cost around £450,000. Water often floods into the building during periods of heavy rainfall and plants are growing in between the stones and gaps in the walls. Many community groups want to use the building – but only when it is safe and dry enough to do so

The church has applied for many grants and has found innovative ways to fundraise, including hosting an annual sea shanty concert. But there is still a shortfall, made worse by changes to the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme.

Winter storms can be dangerous for old buildings and last winter proved to be the case for St Grada and Holy Cross. Tiles were blown off and the church was left with a hole in the roof. Areas of the church were forced to be closed off for safety reasons.

“We have got to save the church. It has stood here for hundreds and hundreds of years. It is not going to fall on our watch,” says Wendy Elliott, long-time supporter of the church.



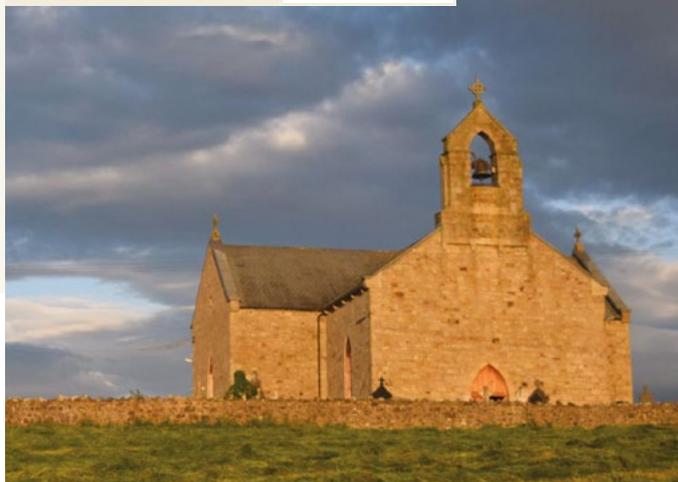
St Grada & Holy Cross
Grade, Cornwall



Custodians of Cultural Treasures

Our churches stand as extraordinary witnesses to history. Heritage is not just preserved here, it's lived: stained glass, memorials, and parish records remain in everyday use, connecting generations.

To read this section in full, scan the QR code.



Passing art onto the next generation

St Macartan's (Forth Chapel) just outside Augher in County Tyrone has turned itself into a tourist destination. People come from all over the world, as far away as New Zealand, to see the heritage inside this small rural church. And it all began from the church commissioning an architectural survey and making the necessary repairs – made possible by local fundraising and grant applications – to their mid-19th century building to protect the stained glass windows.

The church is home to four stunning Clarke Studio windows. Following their restoration, the church now works with local tourism bodies to promote tours around St Macartan's. They also continue to work with nearby schools to share about the local heritage and history. They even ran a stained glass art competition with a local school and held an exhibition of the artwork for the children and their families to attend.

Canon McGahan, Parish Priest at St Macartan's shares why this is so important:

"It was a tremendous opportunity in relation to the whole Harry Clarke stained glass windows, creating an awareness of the history attached to those windows, the history attached to the local church and the history attached to the local community.

"And when we reflected on the church, when we think of that, the people in the past gave us a tremendous legacy – they worked so hard to give us a building, a church which is so much part of the community.

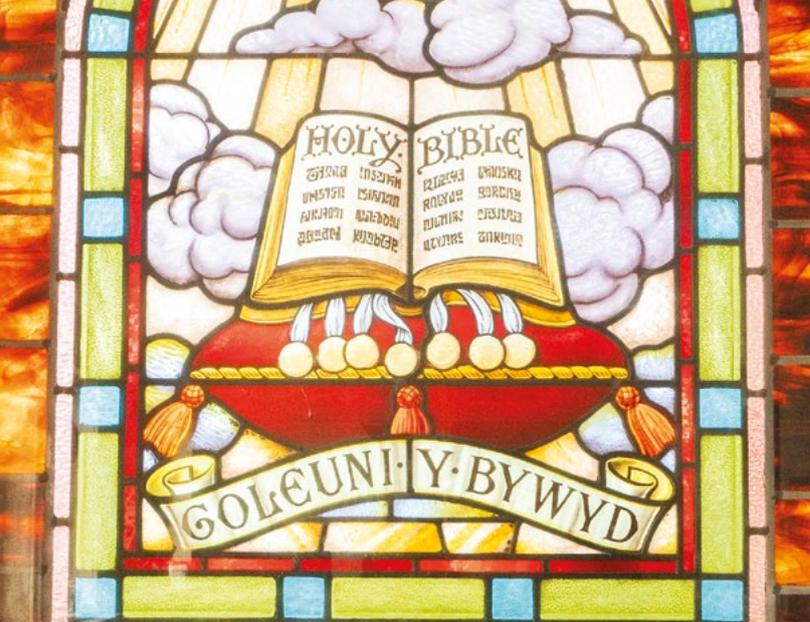
"And bringing the present into the future – this was the vision, this was the hope, and this is what we continue to do.

"That is why we involved so many young people from our local primary schools in the art exhibition competition... we want these windows to be in good condition to pass them on, not only to the present generation but the generations to come."



**St Macartan's
(Forth Chapel)**
Augher, County Tyrone





Going, going, gone. What's at stake for the future of Welsh heritage

In Wales, when the official language of education and the workplace became English, it was the Welsh 'capel' (chapel) that allowed much of the Welsh population to still meet and live part of their lives in Welsh. It is the capel that has ensured the survival of the Welsh language to this day.

Chapels are a defining feature of the Welsh landscape. But for how much longer? As chapels are converted, sold, or demolished, much of Wales's cultural memory is in danger of being forgotten.



15%
of churches in Wales offer
bilingual worship and an
additional 12% use Welsh
as the primary language.

The heart of Welsh life

By Huw Powell-Davies

Capel Bethesda has a prominent place in the story of promoting the Welsh language here on the border and throughout Wales.

The church benefited from the contribution of writers, hymn writers, theologians and journalists who worked through the medium of Welsh from the beginning – people like Thomas Jones, Denbigh, Jane Owen, Roger Edwards and Daniel Owen who received encouragement at Bethesda and material for stories and novels in the characters and life of the chapel.

Welsh was the language of the Sunday school from the start, in 1806. Later in the middle of the 20th Century, a Welsh class was established here which eventually developed into two Welsh schools in the town.

The chapel has been at the heart of the Welsh life throughout the years, interweaving faith and culture and it continues to play its part in that work.



Capel Bethesda
Mold, Flintshire



Financial strain at the grassroots

Congregations and local people remain the bedrock of philanthropic support for churches. 77% of churches rely on local giving and 54% on local fundraising. More than half of churches (65%) have covered 76–100% of repair costs from their own funds in the last 5 years.



To read this section in full, scan the QR code.



77% of churches rely on local giving

Applying for a grant from a church's perspective

By Dr Phil Simpson, Session Clerk

Our church building, the only church for many miles, has to be kept open and maintained to modern day standards. Conservation, standard repairs and improvements to the building are essential and depend on a huge amount of work that may or may not bring in a grant.

The time to do this is squeezed from the volunteers who are already carrying the larger part of service delivery; it is they who are closer to the vision of the church being a beacon in the community.

The next part of our fundraising programme is to raise £250,000 to restore our windows. To achieve this will take many hours of identifying and applying to a lot of grantmaking charitable trusts – and not always successfully.



Volunteers giving their own time and money are the backbone of our church and seeking grants is essential: the sums involved are otherwise too big for a small though vibrant congregation.

In the meantime, a volunteer's routine service is left with things postponed. We often think that if the fundraising effort could be channelled into the core purposes of what we do the impact would be huge.



**Killin & Ardeonaig
Parish Church**
Killin, Perthshire



THIS IS A KEY MOMENT

The survey shows that churches want to do more – to expand cultural programmes, deepen social care and strengthen their environmental action. But without intervention, the risks are stark. If churches close, the impacts will multiply: a loss of heritage, a loss of social care, and a loss of spaces for solace and belonging. It would signal not only neglect of our cultural inheritance, but also a failure to care for communities at their most vulnerable.

A national response is needed that matches the energy that churches have to keep their building open with real support. Denominations must strengthen their backing, heritage organisations must align their expertise and advocacy, and local authorities must play their part. Above all, the UK Government must step forward with a strategic and consistent framework of funding that is simple to access and available to every church, regardless of size or denomination.

The choice is clear. These buildings, and the communities they sustain, are part of our shared inheritance and our shared responsibility.

Now is the moment to act.



Acknowledgements

The National Churches Survey, created by the National Churches Trust, was made possible by the thousands of volunteers, staff and clergy who participated. Thank you for your time, care, and resolve in ensuring that your church's voice was heard.

We gratefully acknowledge the kind and generous support of Yeomans, Ecclesiastical Insurance, and the University of York which enabled the Survey to take place.



About the National Churches Trust

Churches, chapels and meeting houses aren't just places of worship. They're the heart of our communities, the glue that binds people together. Filled with food banks, parent and toddler groups, mental health services and warm spaces, churches everywhere serve local people and boost the wellbeing of our nation.

But churches are at risk. Many are falling into disrepair. And once the doors close, they rarely reopen. As a society we can't afford to lose churches. We need leaders like you to join with the National Churches Trust, to speak up for churches, preserve our precious heritage and help these vital community spaces survive.

- **We Speak Up**
Church buildings are valued and supported
- **We Build Up**
Churches are well maintained, adaptable and in good repair
- **We Open Up**
Churches are sustainable, open and welcoming



Yours For Good

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