

CHURCH BUILDINGS MATTER

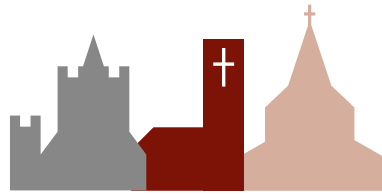


A MANIFESTO FOR CHURCH BUILDINGS

2019 GENERAL ELECTION



For people who love church buildings



CHURCH BUILDINGS MATTER

A Manifesto for Church Buildings for the 2019 General Election

The UK's 42,000 churches, chapels and meeting houses are renowned for their history, architecture and sheer variety, unmatched anywhere else in the world. However, their future is not guaranteed.

The last ten years have seen many positive changes in how the UK's church buildings are supported. There have been much closer partnerships between those involved in looking after church buildings at the national, denominational and local level – which means that best practice and new ideas are shared more effectively.

But looking ahead, much remains to be done and there are some real challenges.

Despite excellent work undertaken by many churches around the country, there is still a backlog of repairs. Much more can also be done to make churches a valuable and valued resource for local communities.



Organising this work and raising the necessary funds falls on congregations which in many places are growing smaller, particularly in rural areas. The care of these buildings often falls to a small number of volunteers belonging to a church. In many areas there are too few volunteers. If these important buildings are to be kept open and in good repair, it is important that the wider local community is able to play a part in looking after them.

Churches are greatly loved by the public. A 2016 ComRes opinion poll showed that more than four in five Britons (83%) agreed that the UK's churches, chapels and meeting houses are an important part of the UK's heritage and history. The poll also showed that 57% of British adults believe it is the government's responsibility to help fund repairs.



At a time of debate about national priorities, church buildings stand as symbols of continuity, providing us with a deep connection to previous generations. They are also places where people can meet, work together and build community.

The National Churches Trust is dedicated to supporting places of worship of historic, architectural and community value used by Christian denominations throughout the UK and ensuring they stay open to benefit local people.

That's why we are asking all the main political parties standing in the December 2019 General Election to support our five point Church Buildings Matters Manifesto.

These are a mix of administrative, legislative and financial measures, designed to be delivered over a full five-year term Parliament.

- 1. Establish a new Urgent Repair and Maintenance Grant Scheme.**
- 2. Ensure that parish and town councils have the legal powers to fund church buildings.**
- 3. Help more churches to become community hubs through the installation of toilets and kitchens.**
- 4. Stronger measures to stop heritage crime and lead theft.**
- 5. Keep church repairs free of VAT.**

1. Establish a new Urgent Repair and Maintenance Grant Scheme.

The poor condition of many historic church buildings remains a source of great concern. Historic England's 2019 'Heritage at Risk Register' includes over 900 listed places of worship that are in a particularly parlous state.



The changing climate is also having an impact on churches as existing gutters and downpipes can be overwhelmed by heavy rainfall. The State of the UK Climate Report, published by the Met Office,¹ shows that the amount of rain from extremely wet days has increased by 17% in the most recent decade (2008-2017) compared to 1961-1990.

More needs to be done to safeguard the UK's church heritage. This can be done through providing funding for urgent repairs and for proactive maintenance to, in particular, ensure that church buildings are windproof and watertight.

In 2018, the National Churches Trust received a record 593 applications for grants with its funding. Since 2007, the Trust has helped over 2,000 UK churches and chapels with grants.

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Repair funding

Following the decision by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) in 2017 to end its ring-fenced Grants to Places of Worship scheme, and the ending of the Government supported Listed Places of Worship Roof Repair Fund in 2017 it has been harder for places of worship to obtain the funding they need to carry out major repairs.

¹ https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/understanding-climate/uk-extreme-events-_heavy-rainfall-and-floods

The Listed Places of Worship Roof Repair Fund was a Government funded scheme which aimed to make the UK's listed places of worship weathertight, thus ensuring the heritage significance of the building is preserved.



Two rounds were operated in 2015 and 2016: over 1,900 applications were received in Round 1 with the combined value of the grant requests totalling over £105 million; and over 1,500 applications were received in Round 2 with the combined grant requests valued at £88 million. A total of 502 Listed Places of Worship were successful in the first round of funding with £26.4m in total grants being awarded; and 401 were successful in the second round of funding with grants of nearly £23 million awarded.²

The Historic Religious Buildings Alliance has stated that, looking at Church of England buildings alone, 1,100 CofE churches were disappointed applicants to the Roof Fund, and they would probably have been applying for grants totalling about £65m.³

Maintenance funding

Timely maintenance can prevent the need for major repairs, and therefore means less money needs to be spent by churches, as has been shown in a recent study by Historic England.⁴ This showed that by not attending to repairs when they are first identified, repairs costs rise by 25% due to consequential damage from delaying.

Small repairs and maintenance have been supported in two pilot projects set up as part of the Taylor Review with £500,000 being made available over two years with maximum grants paid of up to £10,000 for a maximum of 90% grant funds towards projects under £12,000 in value (including VAT).⁵

In 2019, the National Churches Trust has seen a 34% increase in applications for its maintenance grants. 97 grants were awarded, totalling £342,800 ranging from £200 to £10,000.

A mixed economy of funding

Congregations remain key to raising funds to pay for repairs and maintenance. But in many cases it is impossible for them to raise the money themselves. That is why in recent years the UK's mixed economy of local funding, national philanthropy from trusts and foundations and Governmental heritage body grants has proved so essential and effective in safeguarding the heritage of many churches, chapels and meeting houses.

Carrying out church repairs and maintenance is a boon to local economies as this work often involves local contractors and makes use of an incredible range of heritage craft skills at which the UK excels.

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² http://www.nhmf.org.uk/sites/default/files/RRF%20Project%20Evaluation%20Final%20Report%20May%202017_0.pdf

³ <http://www.hrballiance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/churches-funding-gap-final.pdf>

⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/value-of-maintenance/value-of-maintenance-report/>

⁵ <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/6-april/news/uk/new-18-million-pilot-scheme-help-churches-cathedrals-mission-repairs-taylor-review>

The National Churches Trust asks that the next Government examine how best to establish a new Listed Places of Worship Urgent Repair and Maintenance Fund which would administer an annual £10 million funding scheme to run from 2020 – 2025.

2. Ensure that parish and town councils have the legal powers to fund church buildings.

The funding of church buildings in the United Kingdom brings together a broad coalition of parties. The primary responsibility for obtaining funding rightly rests with congregations and not with the state. However, it is sometimes impossible for a small congregation to raise enough money from their own resources.



Parish councils could be a source of funding for church buildings. But at present it is not clear whether they have the legal power to provide such funding.

The 2017 report of the Taylor Review into the Sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals⁶ recommended that the Government clarify the legal powers of parish and town councils to fund church buildings.

The problem that needs to be resolved is whether the 1972 Local Government Act supersedes the Local Government Act 1894. The 1894 Act is still perceived as a barrier, preventing investment in church buildings by local authorities.

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The National Churches Trust asks the next Government to clarify the position on whether it is legal for parish councils to fund churches.

This could be done by repealing section 8 of the 1894 Act, or by the issue of guidance to clarify that local authorities can invest in church buildings in accordance with Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Additionally, repeal or the issue of guidance should clarify that certain parish councils are also able to fund church buildings using powers contained in the Localism Act 2011.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-taylor-review-sustainability-of-english-churches-and-cathedrals>

3. Help more churches to become community hubs through the installation of toilets and kitchens.

Church buildings provide a vital public service by providing a place where people can meet, collaborate and build community. Many are already used as community hubs for activities including playgroups and nurseries for children, drop-in centres and lunch clubs for older people and venues for concerts, exhibitions and public celebrations for the whole community.



Use of church buildings for community activities, in addition to worship, increases their long-term viability. Additional uses bring in new people who then have a stake in the future of the building. It can also generate much needed revenue.

According to the Church of England's 2016 Statistics for Mission, churches and cathedrals collectively run some 33,000 social action projects and contribute £22m a year to the UK economy.

However, many church buildings cannot be used to their full potential as they lack basic facilities such as toilets and kitchens. The Church of England estimated in 2017 that only half of its churches have a kitchen and one third lack toilet facilities.⁷ The situation is likely to be similar, if not worse, in buildings belonging to other denominations.

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The National Churches Trust consistently receives many more applications for enhancements to churches than it is able to award. With a focus on projects that install kitchens and toilets, as these have the greatest impact upon the wider and more sustainable use of the building, in 2019 the Trust awarded 23 grants for projects that included these facilities totalling £280,000 but had to turn down 120 other suitable projects.

To celebrate HM Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee in 2022, the National Churches Trust ask that the new Government institutes a one year Churches Community Facilities Grant Programme.

This would be a £10 million capital-only grant scheme. Grants would be made available for the physical improvement of churches by the installation of toilets or kitchens up to a total of £20,000. If the maximum amount were to be claimed for every grant, a £10 million fund could help pay for the installation of 500 toilets or kitchens – a match-funding scheme could help pay for 1,000.

⁷ <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/Statistics%20for%20Mission%202015.pdf>

4. Stronger measures to stop heritage crime and lead theft.

The Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 was introduced to tackle rising levels of metal theft. The purpose of the Act was to reverse the upward trend in levels of metal theft through stricter regulation of the metal recycling sector to make it more difficult to dispose of stolen metal.



Despite the introduction of the Act, partly due to the involvement of organised crime and also because of increases in the price of some metals, over the last few years there has been a marked rise in the incidence of the theft of metal, and in particular lead, from church roofs.

According to the Office of National Statistics, metal theft offences increased by 25% in the year ending March 2018.⁸ A survey conducted by VPS Security Services found thousands of reports of church roofs being stripped of lead in the 12 months leading up to April 2019, averaging 37 incidents a month.⁹

The effect of lead theft on churches can be devastating. One striking example was when 20 tonnes of lead – the entire roof – was stolen from All Saints’ Church in Houghton Conquest, Bedfordshire in October 2018. It is estimated that this crime might bring the thieves £25,000 but it will cost the church £400,000 to replace the roof, with only a small proportion of these costs covered by insurance.

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In 2017, the Home Office published a review of the The Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013.¹⁰

The National Churches Trust asks that the new Government commits to legislation to put into force some of the review’s key recommendations.

These include:

- 1. Creating a new offence of selling scrap metal to a dealer for cash, alongside the existing offence of buying for cash.**
- 2. Increased penalties for those who break the law.**
- 3. Further restrictions on the methods of payment for scrap metal.**

An additional measure to help prevent metal theft could be to extend the Home Office Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme to include funding to deal with heritage crime security, such as the provision of roof alarms which are effective in deterring metal theft.

⁸ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018>

⁹ <https://www.vpsgroup.com/news/metal-theft-is-threatening-britains-heritage>

¹⁰ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/666162/CCS207_CCS1217555036-1_Cm_9552_BASE_8-12_Web_Accessible__1_.pdf

5. Keep church repairs free of VAT.

The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme gives grants that cover the VAT incurred in making repairs to listed buildings in use as places of worship.

Although churches and cathedrals are responsible for fundraising for their own repairs, the scheme pays grants to cover the VAT incurred on urgent structural work and new roofs and reduces the burden on congregations to raise funds.

The scheme covers repairs to the fabric of the building, along with associated professional fees, plus repairs to turret clocks, pews, bells and pipe organs and has been of great help in keeping church heritage in good repair.

Without it, a church would have to add 20% onto the cost of a repair project, a substantial increase in costs.

The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme has paid out £296m since its inception and assisted over 13,000 buildings.

In October 2019 it was announced that the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme is to be extended by the Treasury for a further year until March 2021.

The National Churches Trusts asks that the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme funding be guaranteed for the next five years, until March 2025, to provide certainty for churches undertaking repair projects.



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About The National Churches Trust

The National Churches Trust is the charity for people who love church buildings.

Our work is dedicated to supporting churches, chapels and meeting houses open for worship of historic, architectural and community value used by all Christian denominations throughout the UK.

We do this by providing grants for urgent repairs and community facilities, helping places of worship keep their buildings in good repair through our MaintenanceBooker service and on our ExploreChurches website making it easy for everyone to discover the wonder of the UK's sacred heritage.

The Trust is the successor to two older charities, the Historic Churches Preservation Trust, founded in 1953 and the Incorporated Church Building Society, founded in 1818.

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