

# National Churches Trust

## Grants Stakeholder Consultation Summary

The National Churches Trust is the leading national charity promoting and supporting churches of historic, architectural and community value across the UK. It advocates:

- The use of church buildings by congregations and the wider community not just as places of worship but as venues for social, cultural and educational activities.
- The conservation of places of worship of historic value for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

The Trust, which is independent of government and church authorities:

- Provides grants for the restoration and modernisation of church buildings.
- Supports projects that integrate churches into their local communities and enable buildings to be kept open.
- Collaborates closely with the County Churches Trusts and local volunteer networks across the UK in their support for local churches.
- Encourages good management and regular maintenance of church buildings by providing practical advice, support and information. From 2016, the National Churches Trust will also pilot giving small grants for preventative maintenance projects in Yorkshire.
- Works to increase awareness by the public and among decision-makers and opinion formers of the value of places of worship.

For more information, see [www.nationalchurchestrust.org](http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org) or follow the Trust on Facebook and on Twitter @NatChurchTrust

This report is available on the Trust's website. Enquiries about the consultation can be made to Catherine Townsend at [catherine.townsend@nationalchurchestrust.org](mailto:catherine.townsend@nationalchurchestrust.org)

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## Foreword



The last few years have seen a significant increase in the level of funding being awarded in support of cathedral and church conservation projects. The government's commitment of £55 million to the Listed Places of Worship Roof Repair Fund and £40 million to the First World War Centenary Cathedral Repairs Fund, together with the £30 million annual Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) commitment through its Grants for Places of Worship programme, have made this a unique era for church conservation. It is believed that churches now are generally in the best condition for generations.

So, is there an ongoing need for the £1.2-£1.5 million in grants that the National Churches Trust (NCT) awards, and if so, how can we best target these funds to help churches make the greatest impact with our support?

To answer these questions, the NCT's Church Support Team undertook a grants consultation in April 2016. We wanted to get feedback from our grantees and stakeholders on what the NCT does well, and what we could do better. We also sought feedback on where we should prioritise our funding. The findings of the consultation highlight the ongoing demand for financial support for church buildings across the UK. The results show that the NCT is a valued and trusted contributor to the sustainability of our historic religious buildings, as a match-funder for HLF grants, and as a provider of funding for work that the HLF does not fund.

The responses give us clarity on the funding issues faced by churches. As a result of the survey and feedback from our supporters, we will be making some adjustments to our grants programmes over the next few years. The goal is to make it easier for churches to develop projects and apply for grants, to provide funding for maintenance, and to continue to fund the vital repairs and facilities needed to help make churches more sustainable in the future. These buildings remain vital to local heritage and community engagement. Without the churches in the midst of communities across the UK, the country would be a poorer place, socially, culturally and architecturally.

**Luke March**  
**Chairman**  
August 2016

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## Introduction

A 12 question survey was open for responses on Survey Monkey throughout April. There were 140 participants. Responses were sought from grantee churches, through the monthly E-Newsletter to subscribers, and amongst the wider church and heritage sector.

The level of participation was good, and there was good engagement throughout the questionnaire. We do not know from which denominations or regions the responders were associated with. Some were from particular churches, others were clearly representatives of larger agencies. The results have not presented any great surprises, but do support some of the initiatives the NCT has already begun to implement or have built into our work plans for the coming year. There were, however, some points that are worthy of further consideration and consultation, such as strengthening eligibility requirements linked to opening times and maintenance. NCT staff and Trustees will also be reviewing feedback on the scope of grant eligibility and the size of grant awards over the course of 2016 to enhance guidance used by our Grants Committee in making decisions on applications.

The current NCT Plan includes a commitment to maintain our current grant programmes until 2017. Whilst our grant programmes are unlikely to change significantly in 2016/17, we will take into consideration the responses to the survey to make incremental improvements to our core Repair and Community programmes, and to our Partnership Grants delivered through the county church trusts. The NCT will seek to address gaps in funding for churches, and address need and demand for targeted support identified through the survey, as evidenced by the launch of our Project Viability and Development Grants programme this year.

Demand for our grants continues to outpace our grants budget, with the success rate for the core Repair and Community programmes maintaining a level of about 25%. There is a clear and ongoing need for grants for capital grants to support churches, which the NCT is committed to continue to address.

## Background

The National Churches Trust is the national charity dedicated to supporting and promoting places of worship of historic, architectural and community value used by Christian denominations throughout the UK. We support and promote churches, chapels and meeting houses of all Christian denominations through fundraising, advice and grant-giving. We believe that places of worship are an integral part of our nation's architectural heritage and play a vital part in building and sustaining local communities.

## Grants programmes

We award grants towards **urgent structural repairs, the introduction of facilities and project development**, in line with the main aims of the National Churches Trust:

- To help **maintain** the UK's heritage of church buildings and to **enhance** their ability to serve local communities
- To **promote** the benefit to communities of church buildings and to **inspire** everyone to value and enjoy them



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There are now four programmes: Repair, Community, Partnership and Project Viability and Development.

Between 2013 and 2015 we received 778 applications for repair and/or community grants; 170 were successful, an overall success rate of 23% or roughly 1 in 4. Broken down, the repair grants had a 31% success rate and community grants a 15% success rate.

In 2015, 67 of 280 applications were successful (24%). 42 repair grants were awarded totalling £752,000 and 25 community grants were awarded totalling £265,000.

The average grant sum has been £10,015 for community grants and £18,856 for repairs. Over the last three years, it has been most common to award £10,000 to grantees.

## Grants programmes in more detail

Our **Repair Grants** programme usually offers grants of £10,000 to £40,000 towards the cost of urgent and essential structural repair projects, i.e. essential works to the fabric of the building. Projects must have an estimated cost of at least £100,000 (including VAT and fees) to qualify. A limited number of £40,000 'Cornerstone' grants are available. [www.nationalchurchestrust.org/our-grants/repair-grants](http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/our-grants/repair-grants)

Our **Community Grants** programme offers grants usually of £10,000 to £20,000 towards the cost of capital works such as additions and extensions and the introduction of facilities, such as toilets and catering facilities. Projects must have an estimated cost of at least £25,000 (including VAT and fees) to qualify.

This year we are able to offer **National Churches Trust Micro-Grants in Partnership with the Cinnamon Network**, to offer an additional £2,000 to churches interested in setting up a social action project in partnership with the Cinnamon Network – applicants must be successful in their repair or community application to be eligible. [www.nationalchurchestrust.org/our-grants/community-grants](http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/our-grants/community-grants)

Our **Partnership Grants** programme offers grants of up to £10,000 to projects costing under £100,000 (including VAT and fees) in partnership with 26 participating county church trusts who make recommendations to us. Awards are made quarterly. [www.nationalchurchestrust.org/our-grants/partnership-grants](http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/our-grants/partnership-grants)

Our **Project Viability and Development Grants** programme launched in June 2016 after the close of the consultation. The programme offers awards of between £3,000 and £10,000 to support churches to become more sustainable through the diagnosis of issues affecting the church, by testing the viability of proposed solutions to improve sustainability, and through development of guiding policies and plans that will be implemented through an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund or other large church heritage funder. [www.nationalchurchestrust.org/project-viability-and-project-development-grants](http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/project-viability-and-project-development-grants)

## Eligibility for Repair and Community Grants

The programmes are open to listed and unlisted churches, chapels and meeting houses in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland which are open for

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worship and which are part of a denomination belonging to Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. Applicants need to show that 50% of the project cost has already been raised and the project needs to be taking place within the building or as an extension to it, but not to a separate building. It also needs to have been built as a place of worship. Applications must be made to us before works start.

Unfortunately we have limited funds available meaning we can only support a proportion of the many deserving projects we receive applications for. We consider each submission alongside a range of criteria (revised by the Trustees and Grants Committee each year) and against other applications at the time of applying. These are as follows:

- **Heritage** – the architectural significance of the building
- **Case for investment** - e.g. urgency of the project and level of need
- **Heritage impact** – e.g. level of improvement to the condition of the building
- **Community impact** – how the project will benefit the wider community and/or allow people to engage with the architecture and history
- **Risk management** - level of planning undertaken related to consents, fundraising, project management, and sustainability
- **Deprivation** – rating according to the Multiple Indices of Deprivation
- **Priority area** – area or denomination of relative National Churches Trust underspend (see below)
- **Heritage at risk status** – if the building is on a heritage register, and if it is identified as fair /poor etc.

## Priorities and preferences for repair and community grants

The Committee is interested in understanding:

- the degree of need and urgency for the proposals,
- the benefit to the building and people of the works,
- the importance and benefits to the National Churches Trust of funding a project in terms of value for money and impact.

The Committee prefers applications for projects that:

- allow a greater number of people to benefit from the place of worship,
- open regularly for public access,
- demonstrate local people have been consulted and the need for the project and its benefit have been identified,
- show an improvement to an area of need or that falls within an identified priority area,
- show evidence of ongoing maintenance,
- have funding in place and where the National Churches Trust grant will make a noticeable difference to the shortfall.

For 2016 the National Churches Trust is encouraging applications from churches in the North East (excluding Yorkshire), Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, Baptist and Presbyterian churches. These have been identified as relative areas of underspend in recent years. In the past, applications to address, for example, rainwater goods and gutters as well as roofs have also been prioritised.

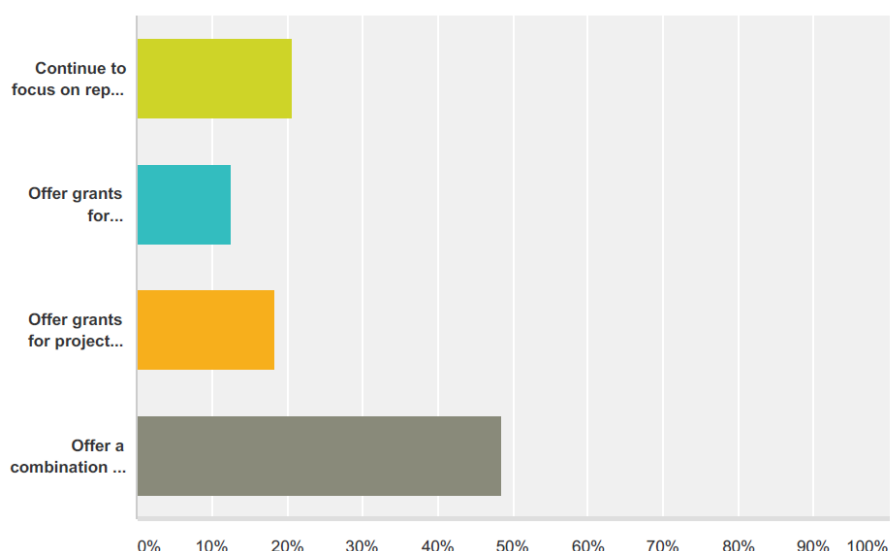
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## Key Findings

The findings in this report are based on the responses to the survey.

**Question 1:** *The National Churches Trust currently focuses its grant programmes on repairs and enhancing the community use of churches, chapels and meeting houses. We are interested to know if we should continue to fund in the same way or change the emphasis of our grants? Do you think that we should (please select one):*

- *Continue to focus on repair and community grants only*
- *Offer grants for preventative maintenance in addition to repair and community grants, e.g. fund gutter clearance*
- *Offer grants for project development support in addition to repair and community grants e.g. costs towards planning a development project or investigating structural issues*
- *Offer a combination of repair, community, maintenance and project development grants*



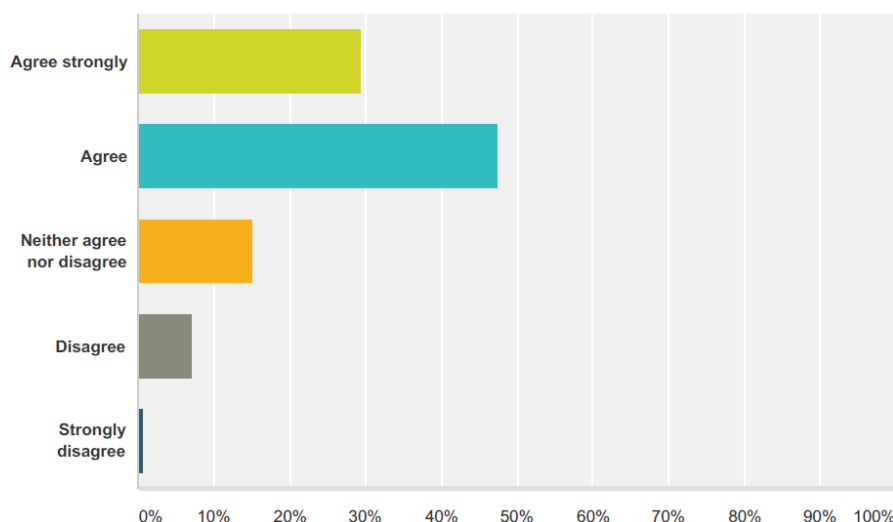
- Almost 50% of respondents supported a combination of grants to support repair, community, maintenance and project development. This reflects the NCT's current plans for the year and the pilot Project Viability and Development programme launched in June. In addition, after an award from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the NCT will launch a pilot preventative maintenance grant programme in Yorkshire later in 2016. Only 20% of respondents felt that the NCT should focus only on repair and community grants.

**Question 2:** *To what extent do you think that the National Churches Trust should have a single grants pot but with greater flexibility in the type of project that churches approach us for (please select one)?*

- *Agree strongly*

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- *Agree*
- *Neither agree nor disagree*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly disagree*



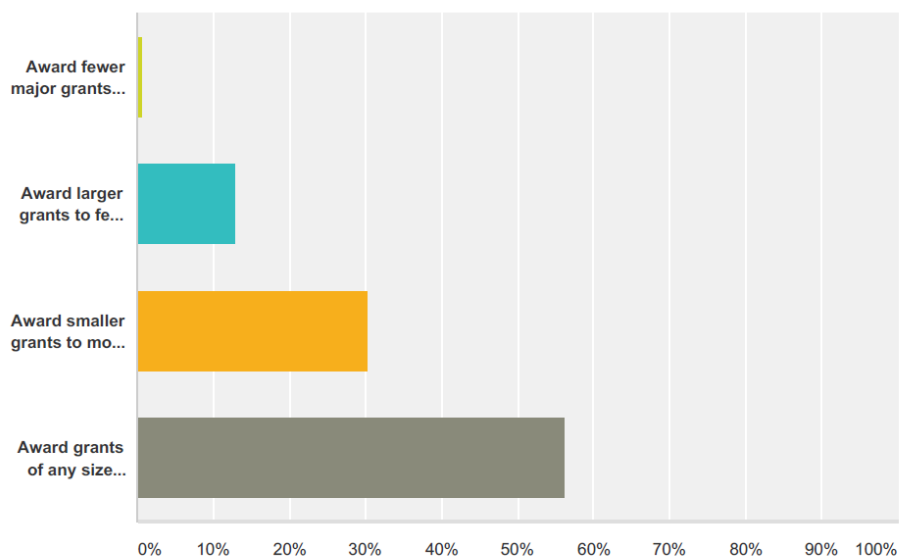
- Almost 80% of respondents supported a single grants pot with greater flexibility in the type of project that churches could approach us for (e.g. remove criteria restricting certain types of works). The NCT will pilot this approach through our Partnership Grants in 2016/17, allowing local church trusts to award grants for repair, community, project development or preventative/proactive maintenance projects.

A more flexible approach would likely result in a much higher number of applications, and an increased difficulty in managing demand. This potentially would require more applications to be considered by the assessing staff and committee, with more resources required. In order to maintain applications at a manageable level for staff and committee, the NCT will retain restrictions on what it can fund broadly in line with current or planned programmes focused on the following areas: repairs, community use, project development, and maintenance.

**Question 3:** *In your view, should the National Churches Trust (please select one):*

- *Award fewer major grants annually (e.g. 7-10 awards of £100,000)*
- *Award larger grants to fewer projects (e.g. 20-40 grants of £20,000 - £40,000)*
- *Award smaller grants to more projects (e.g. 40-60 grants for under £20,000)*
- *Award grants of any size from £10,000 - £100,000*

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- 56% indicated a preference for grants of any size from £10,000 to £100,000. This year we have introduced a question asking how much funding applicants were requesting from the NCT. The shortlisted applicants for the June 2016 Grants Committee all ranged between £10,000 and £40,000 (some unsuccessful applicants did request much higher grants), already showing a more flexible approach. However, with a limited grants budget, it is difficult for the NCT to award larger grants (over £50,000) without there being a significant impact on the current success rate of 25%.

The responses also alerted us to a demand for smaller grants for smaller projects. We did not ask about the project cost size boundaries (repair applicants must have total project costs of over £100,000 and community applicants must be over £25,000). To accommodate the demand for smaller projects, the NCT is considering introducing flexibility in the range of grants that our local churches trust partners can award, reducing the lowest grant level from £2,500 to £1,000, with a 50% match funding requirement. We hope that this flexibility will allow local churches trusts to support smaller proactive repair projects to encourage churches fund smaller repairs. Failure to address small problems often results in larger projects and greater loss of historic fabric.

**Question 4:** Which areas of church heritage do you consider to be most in need of funding (please select your top 3)?

- Access works (e.g. ramps)
- Adaptation for energy efficiency and sustainable energy
- Church halls
- Churchyards
- Conservation of contents (incl. bells, pews, organs, artworks etc.)
- Extensions
- Heating, lighting, sound
- Heritage Interpretation
- Installation of toilets and kitchens
- Maintenance



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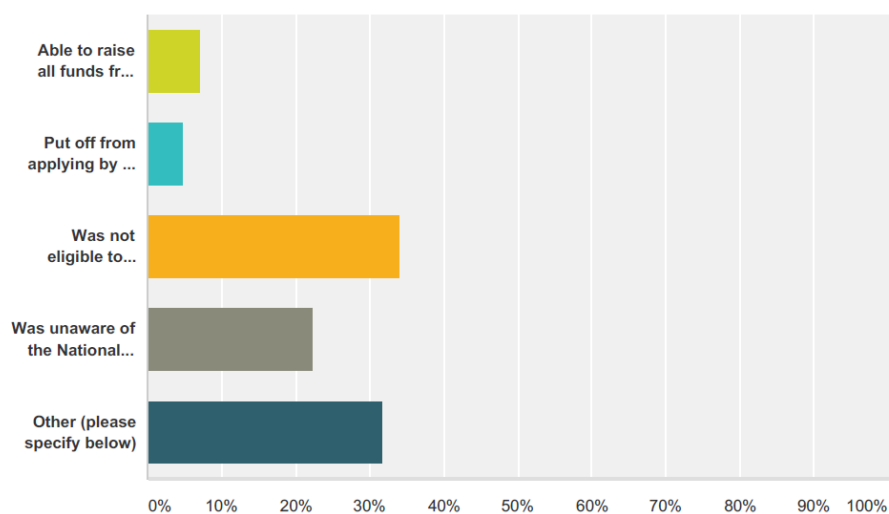
- *New buildings*
  - *Project development*
  - *Repair work*
  - *Reordering*
  - *Roof alarms*
  - *Unlisted church buildings*
- Respondents indicated that the areas most in need of funding are:
    - i. *Repairs*
    - ii. *Toilets & kitchens*
    - iii. *Maintenance*
    - iv. *Contents*
    - v. *Heating/lighting/sound.*

Although the NCT receives a lot of enquiries about access, it is interesting that access did not receive particularly high support.

The NCT will make it clear through our guidance and assessments that repair and communities programmes allow grants to include costs associated with enhancing building maintenance (e.g. ladders, access hatches), and heating/lighting/sound when suitable kitchen/toilet facilities are already in place, and the building is sufficiently wind and water tight. However, for our Community Grants programme, we will continue to prioritise funding on kitchen and toilet facilities in churches that do not have such facilities.

**Question 5:** *If you have not previously applied to the National Churches Trust for a grant, please tell us why not? (please select one)*

- *Able to raise all funds from alternative sources*
- *Put off from applying by the application process*
- *Was not eligible to apply (e.g. project cost too low, did not have 50% funds in place, not part of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland etc.)*
- *Was unaware of the National Churches Trust grants programmes*
- *Other (please specify below)*

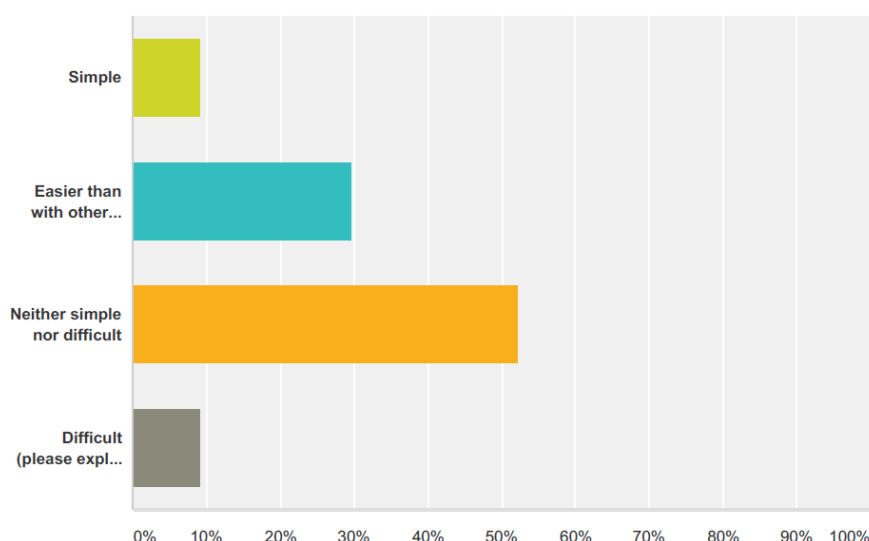


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- The reasons for churches not applying to the NCT for support were varied. The largest group of respondents (34%) said that they haven't previously applied to NCT because they were not eligible for our grant schemes (e.g. project cost too low, did not have 50% funds in place). It is reassuring to know that our grant application process does not deter applicants. However 22% were not aware of our grants programmes, and written responses expressed a misunderstanding of our eligibility, for instance believing we did not fund unlisted buildings. The confusion suggests clearer communication and better publicity may be required.

**Question 6:** *If you have applied to the National Churches Trust for a grant, what was your experience of the process (please select one)?*

- *Simple*
- *Easier than with other grant bodies*
- *Neither simple nor difficult*
- *Difficult (please explain below)*



- 52% think that our grants application process is neither simple nor difficult, and only 10% found it difficult. The current application system appears to be pitched at the appropriate level to ensure access to NCT funding.

**Question 7:** *The National Churches Trust has identified geographical and denominational priorities for 2016 where we have previously received fewer applications. These include Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, North East England, Baptist and Presbyterian churches.*

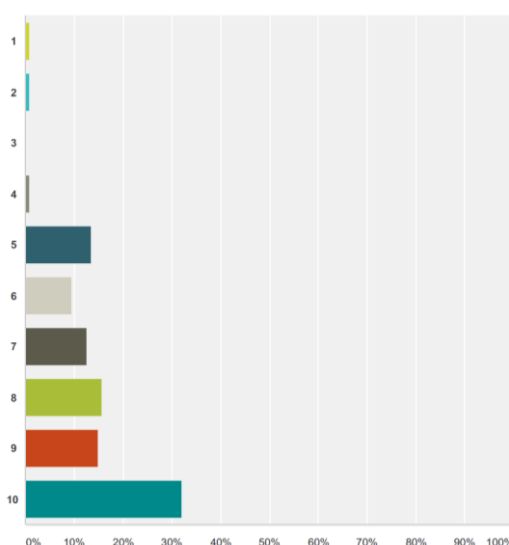
- *Do you agree that the National Churches Trust should prioritise in this way when deciding on applications? Yes / No / Don't Know*
- *Do you think we have identified the right priorities? Yes / No / Don't Know*

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- There was low support for the geographical and denominational priority areas we introduced in 2016. A high number of written comments outline a general opinion that judgements should be based on need, although various counties and denominations and rural churches/inner city deprived areas are mentioned in the comments too as areas in need of additional support. Comments highlight the need to boost communication about the need for priority support, and our continued commitment to quality of applications as the primary factor in making award decisions.

Our Grants and Development Officers will be looking at regional fundraising streams as one of their initial tasks that will support grants applicants. The team is already committed to improve cross-denominational links and regional links, and plans are in place for events to be held in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, whilst a series of presentations with the Baptist church are also being discussed.

**Question 8:** How important do you think it is that the National Churches Trust require applicants to consider community access and wider community use and involvement when developing projects? Rate on a scale of 1 (not very important) to 10 (very important).

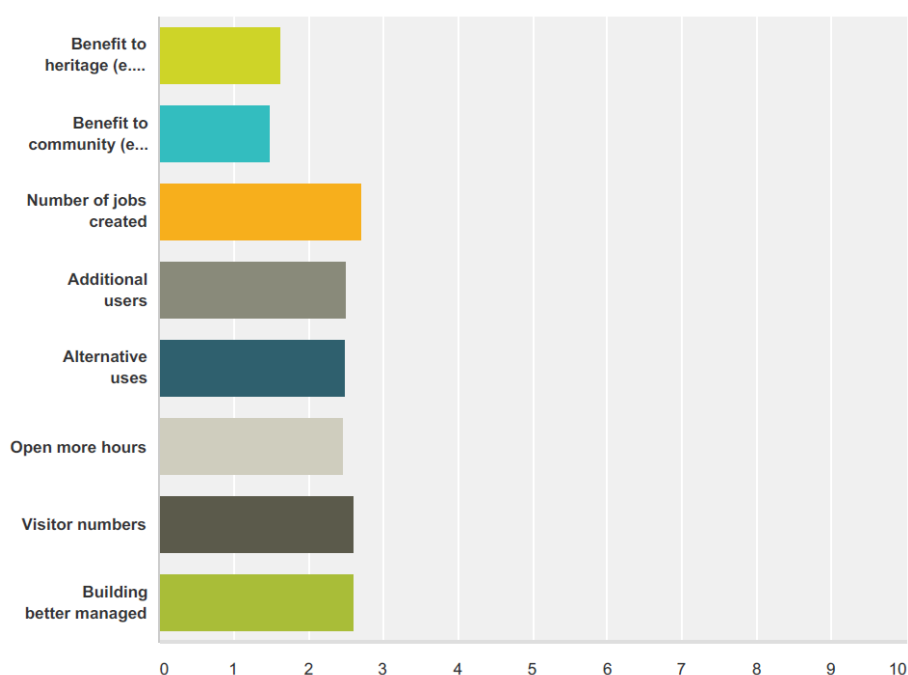


- 75% of respondents agreed that community access and wider community use were highly important factors in awarding projects. As a result of these findings, the NCT will make its National Churches Trust Micro-Grants in Partnership with the Cinnamon Network (up to £2,000 of additional funding for churches to launch a Cinnamon Network social action project) available for both Repair and Community grants applicants, rather than the previous policy of limiting access to only Community grants projects.

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**Question 9:** What key impact measures do you think the National Churches Trust ought to prioritise? (Please rate the top 3)

- Benefit to heritage (e.g. building in better condition, better interpretation)
- Benefit to community (e.g. more people will engage with the building, the local area will be better equipped)
- Number of jobs created
- Additional users
- Alternative uses
- Open more hours
- Visitor numbers
- Building better managed



- The results showed that key measures of impact are/should be:
  - i. benefit to heritage,
  - ii. benefit to community,
  - iii. building being better managed (i.e. maintenance).

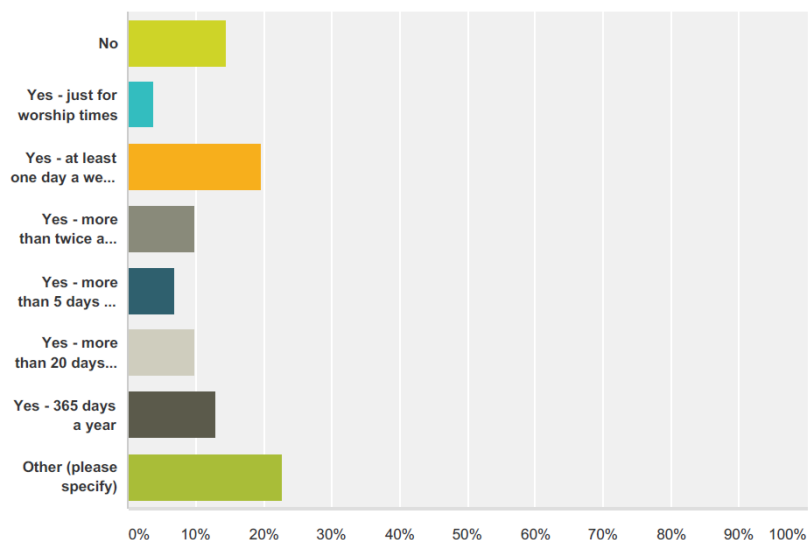
In our revised repair and community grant applications this year we have structured questions around benefit to heritage and to community that will enable the NCT to better monitor impact after project completion. We currently request maintenance plans if they are available at the application stage and again at grant payment stage. The NCT trustees are considering whether to make maintenance plans a requirement of our grant offer for Repair and Community grants from 2017.

**Question 10:** Should the National Churches Trust request a mandatory minimum number of days that a grantee church is open in addition to worship use? If yes what is a suitable number of days (please select one)?

- No

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- *Yes - just for worship times*
- *Yes - at least one day a week beyond worship times*
- *Yes - more than twice a week beyond worship times*
- *Yes - more than 5 days a month beyond worship times*
- *Yes - more than 20 days a month beyond worship times*
- *Yes - 365 days a year*
- *Other (please specify)*



- There was a broad range of answers to the question regarding opening times. Almost 15% do not think there should be a mandatory minimum, whilst almost 20% think at least one day a week is reasonable. There are however a lot of comments asking for a flexible approach.

NCT Trustees are considering options for a minimum opening times requirement to be set in 2017. Options under consideration are 104 days to align with WREN, or 40 days to align with the HLF. Churches would have flexibility on when these days occurred, allowing increased access in busier holiday or festival periods. A decision on opening times criteria is expected from Trustees in September 2016, to be applied to grants from 2017.

**Question 11:** *We are interested to know if what the National Churches Trust currently does and does not fund is reasonable, or if it should be reviewed. (Please select Yes/No/NA and/or enter other text)*

- *We currently prioritise applications to our community grant schemes which install kitchen and toilets, should we continue in this manner?*
- *We do not currently fund work for new build structures that are separate to the church regardless of historic building conservation arguments, should this exclusion be continued?*
- *We do not currently fund works to church halls that are not attached to the church, should this exclusion be continued?*
- *We do consider applications to church halls that are attached to the church, should this inclusion be continued?*

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- *We currently consider unlisted buildings. Should this funding be continued?*
  - *We currently fund Christian places of worship. Should we support non-Christian denominations?*
  - *We currently require applicant churches to be members of 'Churches Together in Britain and Ireland' either directly or through an umbrella body. Should this be continued?*
  - *Should we require applicants to demonstrate how they have considered climate change through the introduction of energy efficient changes and sustainably sourced materials?*
- There was broad support for keeping our existing eligibility and/or exceptions as they are:
    - Prioritising applications for kitchen and toilets (73%)
    - Excluding separate structures or new builds (67%)
    - Funding attached church halls (68%)
    - Funding unlisted buildings (81%)
    - Asking applicants to demonstrate how they have considered climate change and energy efficiency (68%).

Consultees also showed support for our requirement that denominations are members of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) - 64%.

Most current eligibility requirements will be retained. However, Trustees have decided to remove the requirement for CTBI membership in 2017 to allow the NCT the option of funding smaller and newer churches that may not be CTBI members, but which occupy historic church buildings.

## **Question 12:** *How could the National Churches Trust help promote ongoing maintenance and greater community access in grantee churches? (Free text)*

- We asked how the NCT could help promote ongoing maintenance and greater community access. Suggestions included:
  - Forming partnerships (with Local Planning Authorities, DACs, churchwardens, Archdeacons, Local Church Trusts, CVTA etc.),
  - Developing or funding maintenance schemes,
  - Training/workshops/support/advice on maintenance,
  - Requiring or funding maintenance plans,
  - Better publicity and newsletters focused on maintenance,
  - Mentoring schemes between churches,
  - Including a criteria for annual reporting on maintenance for 3-5 years post project completion.

As outlined above, the NCT's Trustees are considering whether maintenance plans ought to be made mandatory of a grant offer. We are introducing post grant monitoring through site visits, using staff, Trustees, committee members and perhaps Friends to undertake the visits.

The NCT has also been awarded a grant from the HLF to undertake a maintenance pilot in Yorkshire in 2016/17. This will include developing maintenance booking systems, focusing initially on gutter management. To help churches join the scheme, the NCT and the Pilgrim Trust will offer small

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preventative maintenance grants in Yorkshire. We will use this pilot to test approaches to supporting maintenance which may then be rolled out across a larger geographic area.

