



HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
ADVISORY COUNCIL
for SCOTLAND

**Report with recommendations on
the long-term conservation of the
ecclesiastical heritage in a time of
demographic change**

Presented to Michael Russell, MSP
Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is submitted by HEACS, the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland, which provided Scottish Ministers with strategic advice on issues affecting the historic environment.

In its second term HEACS was asked by Scottish Ministers: *To provide advice to Scottish Ministers on how best to secure the long-term conservation of Scotland's rich and diverse ecclesiastical heritage in a time of demographic change.*

In its approach to the Minister's request, HEACS has defined the ecclesiastical heritage broadly. It includes, for instance, early Christian and medieval ecclesiastical sites, post-Reformation churches and meeting houses of all denominations; synagogues, mosques, shrines and temples of non-Christian faiths; ruined structures, churchyards, mausolea and burial grounds; and the interiors, fixtures, fittings, decoration and furnishings.

Evidence was gathered covering a wide range of issues. In this report HEACS has concentrated on those issues which it considers to be of greatest relevance at the present time.

This report does not consider ecclesiastical buildings and sites which are no longer church-owned and are now in secular use.

Significance of the ecclesiastical heritage

Scotland's ecclesiastical heritage is, as elsewhere in Europe, a significant component of the nation's built and cultural heritage. Churches and churchyards make an exceptional contribution to our understanding of place, the meaning of place, and the distinctiveness which enables us to identify with particular landscapes and features of memory. They are often of particular value

to local communities: many people who are not active church-goers attach considerable value to Scotland's churches. The value and significance of interiors, fixtures and fittings, and other special features of historic churches should be emphasised.

The ecclesiastical heritage comprises those structures and buildings which are held to have cultural value, whether they have been statutorily designated or not. It is, however, surprisingly difficult to quantify the ecclesiastical heritage in Scotland. One indication of its significance in numerical terms is that over 3,500 ecclesiastical buildings are listed, and this includes 15% of all Category A-listed buildings.

Management of the ecclesiastical heritage in use

The Church of Scotland owns a very high percentage of the total number of ecclesiastical buildings. Indeed, it may be assumed that the Church of Scotland has responsibility for the most substantial built heritage estate, or portfolio of built heritage assets, in Scotland – more extensive in number than those cared for by Historic Scotland and the National Trust for Scotland combined, and more widely distributed.

Ecclesiastical history and the impact of demographic change

To put it briefly, the ecclesiastical history of Scotland has created an historic over-provision of churches by competing Presbyterian denominations. Associated with this inescapable factor are the effects of demographic change, manifested through population change and, more dramatically, changes in the nature of religious adherence within society. Diminishing congregations have put particular pressures on those who have responsibility for the management of

church property. Many churches have become redundant and have been disposed of.

In addition there are changing attitudes to church buildings, including their decoration and furnishing, associated with changing fashions of liturgy and worship.

The information base

The lack of systematic information on the ecclesiastical heritage poses particular problems for those involved in its management. The compilation by religious groups of an accurate listing of their holdings of historic places of worship would be a useful first step. HEACS recommends that, in the longer term, an audit should be undertaken of all ecclesiastical sites. This might be undertaken by the RCAHMS. The engagement of volunteers in recording is to be welcomed.

Sound basis for property management

HEACS recognises that efforts are being made to promote better maintenance and that the condition of places of worship has improved over the last forty or so years. HEACS considers, however, that the arrangements for preventive maintenance and repair are still insufficiently systematic and professionally guided. Professionally prepared conservation statements, or conservation plans for more complex sites, should be the basis for all decision making, including proposed alterations.

State funding of repair

Government funding of repairs to places of worship is considered to have been a major factor in improving the general condition of church buildings. However, HEACS does not consider the current scheme, Repair Grants for Places of Worship in Scotland, to be satisfactory. In particular, it discourages a proper strategic and holistic view of the heritage estate as a whole, and at the same time does not best meet the conservation needs of particular churches.

The ecclesiastical exemption

Although subject to planning permission, works at ecclesiastical buildings in use lie outwith the scope of listed building and conservation area control. A voluntary scheme of internal control is currently in operation by the main denominations and deals with proposals which might affect the exteriors of churches in ecclesiastical use.

HEACS does not accept that the current arrangements for dealing with changes to the interiors and exteriors of ecclesiastical buildings in use are sufficiently professional and independent of church interests to be wholly satisfactory. Comparisons are made with the way the exemption is operated in England. It is recommended that the exemption should continue but subject to stringent conditions. In particular the exemption should be enjoyed only by those religious groups which have a demonstrably robust internal control system. Historic Scotland should be made responsible for determining that the internal systems are indeed robust.

Mixed use

From a conservation perspective it is preferable for places of worship to remain in ecclesiastical use. There is a growing recognition of the value of churches for community and other purposes and there are good examples of churches being utilised in this way. However, HEACS considers that there is a need for greater understanding of the contribution which churches can make as community assets. There is a need for guidance and encouragement on adapting churches to accommodate new facilities and new uses similar in intent to the English Heritage campaign *Inspired!*.

Redundant places of worship

Not all churches will be capable of being modified to suit multiple uses and there will be cases where religious groups will have to

declare buildings redundant. Over the last 50 years or so, a significant number of churches have been made redundant, and while new uses have been found for many, and a few have been taken into care, many have been demolished. The extent of the cumulative loss to the heritage over an extended period of time is likely to have been considerable.

HEACS's examination of the issue suggests that redundancy is at present mainly a Church of Scotland phenomenon. Predicting the future is difficult but it may be that the Church of Scotland will have to dispose of between 400 and 500 more churches. At current rates this might take 30 to 40 years. However, there are some signs that the process of disposal is quickening.

While there is general agreement that there is not a crisis, it is likely that future years will see a number of churches of considerable architectural and historical importance made redundant. These churches, if demolished, or even if converted to another use, would represent a significant loss to Scotland's heritage.

Managed reduction of the total number of churches in a balanced and strategic way requires an overall strategic approach to redundant churches. HEACS welcomes the efforts currently being made by religious groups to put in place forward planning systems, and appreciates that governance arrangements can make this challenging. However, the lack of long-term strategic planning by some religious groups is a cause for concern.

HEACS is concerned over the internal nature of the redundancy process currently in train in the Church of Scotland, which appears to lack genuine consultation with local communities and may not have sufficient regard for the heritage, local or national. There is a need for more independent advice and wider pre-redundancy consultation. There is often strong community interest in redundant churches:

many of the buildings inherited by the Church of Scotland are testimony to a long history of local stewardship and care over the centuries.

In HEACS's view, there is a need for more formal guidance on the processes of conversion to multiple and/or secular use. Though many new uses have been found for redundant churches, and there have been some highly appropriate and successful conversions, some have been less successful. Too often, churches have been sold off before a new use was found and the buildings have deteriorated.

There may always be a small number of outstanding places of worship which cannot be retained in ecclesiastical use, but which are of such heritage importance that they should not be altered and converted for any alternative use. In such cases, to prevent places of worship of outstanding architectural or historic interest falling into a ruinous condition, the state should be ready to intervene until a solution can be found.

The main means of care for outstanding redundant churches should be provided by the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust. The Trust's role should be developed and its funding enhanced to enable it to operate in the same manner and as effectively as comparable bodies in England. This is essential if a more strategic approach to the issue of redundancy is to be adopted. It would also enable the Trust to advise and work with more local groups.

Graveyards

Graveyards are often of considerable heritage value. They help to 'people' the past and can also be important for recreational purposes. The care and maintenance of graveyards by local authorities is a significant issue. Some local authorities have undertaken or are engaged in worthwhile projects to conserve and interpret their historic graveyards, but many graveyards are neither protected nor in good condition.

Local authorities should accord greater priority to their historic graveyards and adopt a more strategic approach to their management, based on an audit to identify those of significance and the production of conservation statements or conservation plans, as appropriate. The work of local groups to undertake surveys should be encouraged and co-ordinated.

A strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage in use

A proper strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage in use is required to balance the interests of religious groups with those of communities and of the heritage, local and national. The prime object of such an approach should be to ensure that the best long-term choices are made and a structured approach taken to long-term change. It would allow the various needs to be prioritised and resources targeted more effectively; it should also provide an indication of the overall need for financial assistance from the state.

The approach should, in the main, be developed by religious groups, informed by independent expert and professional advice, and assisted by Historic Scotland and local authorities.

There should be greater recognition by Scottish Ministers of the role of religious groups in the management of the ecclesiastical heritage and greater partnership working between Historic Scotland and religious groups.

Such an approach will almost certainly require a greater commitment on the part of Government to the funding of churches in care, particularly the funding of the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust.

The management of the ecclesiastical heritage by religious groups should be embedded within the context of good asset management. This would enable them to take more account of the ecclesiastical heritage in their role as

owners and managers and would be part of the strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage.

Joint Agreements should be negotiated between Historic Scotland and the various individual denominations or religious groups. Joint Agreements and accompanying Action Plans should cover areas such as: the adoption of a strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage; the availability of funding for repairs; the operation of the ecclesiastical exemption; and the standard of repair and maintenance.

Staff should be employed at corporate level within the Church of Scotland to provide professional advice and guidance to those responsible for church buildings and to increase understanding within the Church of the heritage value and significance of its buildings. These posts should be funded by Historic Scotland in the first instance, possibly on a three-year pump-priming basis.

There should be more co-ordination between religious groups over the sharing of good conservation practice and closer working with other stakeholders including the voluntary sector. Arrangements should be made for the professional staff employed within the Church of Scotland also to be available to other denominations.

Recommendations

A strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage in use

A strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage in use is required to balance the interests of religious groups, with those of communities and of the heritage, local and national.

There should be greater recognition by Scottish Ministers of the role of religious groups in the management of the

ecclesiastical heritage and more effective partnership between Historic Scotland and religious groups.

The management of the ecclesiastical heritage by religious groups should be embedded within the context of good asset management.

Joint Agreements should be negotiated between Historic Scotland and the various individual denominations or religious groups. These Joint Agreements and accompanying Action Plans should cover:

- the adoption of a strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage. The approach should not rely solely on the input of Historic Scotland but should also take account of local authority and community interests;
- the recognition by denominations of their responsibilities to local communities and to the heritage, national and local;
- identification and assessment by denominations of the places of worship in their ownership;
- the availability of funding for repairs;
- the operation and review of the ecclesiastical exemption;
- the sharing of information, for instance from the impact of demographic change, to technical information;
- regular meetings between Historic Scotland and the religious group;
- the standards of repair and maintenance; and
- regular review of the Joint Agreement and Action Plan.

Appropriate professional staff should be employed at corporate level within the Church of Scotland. HEACS suggests that these should include a conservation architect, an architectural historian with knowledge of ecclesiastical history, and an archaeologist.

Such posts should be funded by Historic Scotland in the first instance, possibly on a three-year pump-priming basis.

There would be advantages if there was closer co-ordination between religious groups over conservation of the ecclesiastical heritage. Arrangements should be made for the professional staff employed within the Church of Scotland also to be available to other denominations.

Good conservation practice should be disseminated through publications, seminars and conferences.

The information base

Where denominations do not already have the information, they should be required to compile, with the assistance of Historic Scotland, accurate lists of ecclesiastical buildings in their care, with particular attention to those which have been listed, scheduled or otherwise designated. Such information should be made available to Historic Scotland and placed in the National Monuments Record for Scotland.

In the longer term, an audit should be undertaken of all ecclesiastical sites. This might be led by the RCAHMS.

A sound approach to property management

Every congregation or religious group responsible for the upkeep of an historic place of worship should seek advice from an appropriately qualified professional accredited in building conservation.

Regular or quinquennial inspections should be undertaken by the appropriately qualified professional to an appropriate standard.

When change is proposed to an historic place of worship, the work should be guided by a simple conservation statement or conservation plan, as appropriate.

Over time, a simple conservation statement, or conservation plan, as appropriate, should be prepared for every place of worship of architectural or historic interest to inform those responsible for their management and maintenance. These should also consider archaeological potential, artefacts, and interior fittings.

Training in fabric matters should be provided for ministers and priests as part of normal training in theological colleges.

Religious groups should arrange training for lay people, fabric conveners, members of fabric committees, and kirk sessions or vestries, along the lines of the English scheme *Faith in Maintenance*.

State funding of repair

Scottish Ministers should commission an investigation of the *Repair Grants for Places of Worship in Scotland* scheme to identify patterns, gaps and emerging needs, and assess whether the present scheme is best serving the conservation needs of the ecclesiastical heritage. The investigation should be based on original research, be informed by a sound knowledge of the state of the ecclesiastical heritage, and include a proper assessment of the effectiveness of the current scheme.

The *Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme* should continue.

The ecclesiastical exemption

The exemption should be continued subject to stringent conditions.

The exemption should be enjoyed only by those religious groups which have a demonstrably robust internal control system, which is adequately resourced, and with access to expert and professional advice.

Historic Scotland should be made responsible for determining that the internal systems used

by each denomination are indeed robust, and, in particular, that denominations have access to and pay due regard to expert and professional advice.

Mixed uses

There is a need for greater understanding of the contribution which churches can make as community assets. Historic Scotland should, in conjunction with religious groups, consider providing guidance and encouragement on adapting churches to accommodate new facilities and new uses.

HEACS recommends that access plans, which can cover not only community use but also educational and tourism purposes, should be produced for the more historically important sites to balance accessibility with the needs of the heritage.

Redundant churches

When considering the disposal of a church, the Churches, particularly the Church of Scotland, should recognise their responsibilities, not only to congregations and the institutional church, but also to local communities and to the heritage, national and local.

An options appraisal should be undertaken to inform the disposal process.

All policy decisions, particularly the disposal of redundant churches, should take greater account of local community and national and local heritage interests.

Guidance should be produced on converting historic places of worship for new uses.

In the case of places of worship of outstanding architectural or historic interest, to prevent such buildings falling into a ruinous condition, the state should be ready to intervene in the interim until a solution can be found.

The main means of care for outstanding redundant churches should be provided by the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust.

The Scottish Redundant Churches Trust's role should be developed and its funding enhanced to enable it to operate in the same manner and as effectively as comparable bodies in England.

Graveyards

Local authorities should accord greater priority to their historic graveyards and adopt a more strategic approach to their management, based on an audit to identify those of significance.

Local authorities, in association with the RCAHMS, should encourage and co-ordinate the work of local groups to undertake surveys of historic graveyards.

Local authorities should arrange for the production of conservation statements or conservation plans for historic graveyards.

An integrated approach, involving the appropriate denomination or religious group, should be adopted for the management of those graveyards which surround a church in ecclesiastical use.

Historic Scotland should assess the impact of the extensive guidance which has been produced on the conservation of historic graveyards.

INTRODUCTION

1. This report is submitted by HEACS, the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland, which provided Scottish Ministers with strategic advice on issues affecting the historic environment.
2. The report covers one of the four priority issues on which the Scottish Ministers asked Council to give advice during its second term of three years. HEACS was asked:

To provide advice to Scottish Ministers on how best to secure the long-term conservation of Scotland's rich and diverse ecclesiastical heritage in a time of demographic change.

The inquiry process

3. A Working Group was established to gather written and oral evidence and to draft a report for consideration by Council.
4. The Working Group met a number of interested parties, including all the main religious denominations and representatives of Historic Scotland. Appendix 1 lists the organisations and individuals seen by the Group.
5. The Working Group also invited written evidence and received 12 responses. A list of the organisations and individuals who responded is in Appendix 1.
6. Further material was gathered through desk-based research. Appendix 2 lists the relevant literature and websites consulted.
7. Two research projects were undertaken by an independent consultant. The first examined the extent of the ecclesiastical heritage in Scotland. The second investigated church-state relationships elsewhere in Europe, and their impact on the ecclesiastical heritage, with a view to understanding the range of approaches taken to the management and funding of the ecclesiastical heritage.

The ecclesiastical heritage

8. In its approach to the Minister's request, HEACS has defined the ecclesiastical heritage broadly, taking it to include:
 - early Christian and medieval ecclesiastical sites including those of parish churches, cathedrals, monasteries and private chapels;
 - post-Reformation churches and meeting houses of all denominations;
 - synagogues, mosques, shrines and temples of non-Christian faiths;
 - ruined structures, churchyards, mausolea and burial grounds specifically associated with religious buildings and sites;
 - the settings of all such structures and sites; and
 - the interiors, fixtures, fittings, decoration and furnishings of all such structures and sites.
9. Most European countries have a wide-ranging ecclesiastical heritage and, because of the place of the church in medieval and early modern society, many of the greatest buildings and works of art, both nationally and locally throughout Europe, were created for the worship of God. Scotland is no exception and its ecclesiastical heritage is, as elsewhere, a significant component of the nation's built and cultural heritage.¹ The nature, character and extent of Scotland's

¹See Haynes, N, *Research Report on the Extent of the Ecclesiastical Heritage in Scotland*, 2008; <http://www.heacs.org.uk/documents.htm>

ecclesiastical heritage is the product of its own particular political and religious history, notably: its Reformation in the 16th century; its turbulent 17th century; the splintering of its Presbyterian denominations in the 18th and 19th centuries; and their partial reunion in the 20th century. The survival and revival of the Catholic and Episcopalian Churches, and the arrival of other denominations and non-Christian faiths from other countries and cultures, have added to the richness, diversity and complexity of Scotland's ecclesiastical heritage.

10. Associated with the inescapable factor of historical over-provision are the effects of demographic change, manifested mainly through changes in church-going. Diminishing congregations have put particular pressures on those who have responsibility for the management of church property. A significant number of churches have been made redundant and, while new uses have been found for many, and a few have been taken into care, many have been demolished. The extent of this cumulative loss to the heritage over an extended period of time is likely to have been considerable.
11. In addition there are changing attitudes to church buildings, including their decoration and furnishing, associated with changing fashions of liturgy and worship; inability or reluctance to spend money on large elaborate structures and unwanted fixtures and fittings; and all the difficulties and costs associated with accessibility, health and safety, and comfort. There is also widespread and continuing concern over the availability of appropriate materials and skills for maintenance and repair.
12. The situation in Scotland is not unique. This was made clear in the Council of Europe report, *Redundant Religious Buildings*, published in 1989, which

drew attention to the very considerable number of religious buildings throughout Europe no longer fulfilling their original function. The study carried out for HEACS on the ecclesiastical heritage in Europe, specifically in England, France, Germany, and Denmark, suggested that all the comparator countries are facing significant challenges to their ecclesiastical heritage through demographic change.

13. Like all aspects of the heritage, the ecclesiastical heritage and how it is perceived will change over time. However, contemporary society expects such change to be both considered and responsible. Conservation is often characterised as the management of change, with a view to securing the survival of objects of value and significance for the benefit of present and future generations.

The scope of the report

14. As part of the inquiry process, HEACS gathered evidence covering a wide range of issues. In this report HEACS has concentrated on those issues which it considers to be of greatest relevance at the present time.
15. This report begins with a consideration of the significance of Scotland's ecclesiastical heritage and draws attention to the problems caused by a lack of information. The impact of the historical over-provision of churches and demographic change are considered, and the extent to which redundancy of churches is likely to be a continuing issue, particularly for the Church of Scotland. The report then focuses on the following issues:
 - the need for proper maintenance;
 - state funding of repair;
 - alterations and the operation of the ecclesiastical exemption;

- the disposal process with particular reference to the Church of Scotland and new uses for redundant churches;
 - churches in care and the role of the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust;
 - the management and care of graveyards; and
 - the need for a strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage.
16. This report does not consider ecclesiastical buildings and sites which are no longer church-owned and are now in secular use.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SCOTLAND'S ECCLESIASTICAL HERITAGE

17. The ecclesiastical heritage comprises those structures and buildings which have a religious purpose and which are held to have cultural value whether they have been statutorily designated or not. The core of the ecclesiastical heritage consists of structures which are protected by listing and/or scheduling, or are located within conservation areas. However, there will be structures which for various reasons have not been designated, but which are worthy of being listed or scheduled. Churches which may not appear to be of national heritage importance may, nevertheless, have considerable significance for local communities.
18. Although the importance of Scotland's ecclesiastical heritage might seem to be obvious, it is surprisingly difficult to quantify. The research undertaken for HEACS established that there are 3,551 listed ecclesiastical structures in Scotland.² This is about 7.5% of the total of 47,377 list entries. It includes an unknown but growing number of churches no longer in ecclesiastical use. 538 of the ecclesiastical list entries are in Category A (14.6% of the total), 2,145 in Category B (9.0%) and 868 in Category C(S) (4.4%). Of the listed ecclesiastical sites, about one-third are urban and two-thirds are in rural areas. A further 600 or so unlisted ecclesiastical buildings are protected by virtue of being in conservation areas.
19. In addition, 542 scheduled ancient monuments are described as being primarily ecclesiastical, 7% of the total.
20. HEACS's research suggests that, if there are 4,500 to 5,000 protected sites, there may be 6,000 to 10,000 unprotected ecclesiastical sites, though probably towards the lower end of this range. It would appear, therefore, that a third to a half of all ecclesiastical sites have been granted statutory protection.
21. HEACS has heard evidence that Scotland's ecclesiastical heritage includes works of international standing for their cultural, historical or architectural significance. Many places of worship have national or regional significance and almost all hold local significance.
22. The ecclesiastical heritage is essential to understanding Scottish history and identity. Religion is a fundamental part of Scotland's story. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that churches and churchyards have always been focal points for communities. Places of worship can tell the story of the communities they served: they can chart the fortunes of a place through time, telling us about people and communities.
23. Recognised as key buildings in the planning and townscape of Scotland's cities and burghs, churches make important contributions to the urban environment. Country churches are almost invariably of similar importance to their villages, and to the rural and cultural landscapes within which they are set. The social significance of churches to their local communities may, in some instances, be of equal or greater significance than their heritage value. Many people who are not active church-goers attach considerable value to Scotland's churches. There is considerable interest in ecclesiastical buildings as places to visit, as demonstrated, for instance, by the success of Scotland's Churches Scheme and Doors Open Day.

² An assessment of the numbers of protected and unprotected sites is provided by Haynes, N, *Research Report on the Extent of the Ecclesiastical Heritage in Scotland*, 2008; <http://www.heacs.org.uk/documents.htm>

24. Churchyards are often the immediate visual and historical settings for most parish churches, as well as being documents of history and genealogy vital to their communities and to the relatives and descendants (including the world-wide Scottish diaspora) of those who are buried there. They also provide evidence of changing artistic and architectural tastes.
25. Churches and churchyards make an exceptional contribution to our understanding of place, the meaning of place, and the distinctiveness which enables us to identify with particular landscapes and features of memory.
26. Attention must also be drawn to the value and significance of artefacts and special features of historic churches. These include works of art (paintings, sculpture and carving), archive material of many kinds, communion plate, furniture, decorative and functional metalwork, carved and lettered memorials, organs, stained glass, works in ceramics and textiles, and other works, which by their variety or rarity, almost defy categorisation.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF PLACES OF WORSHIP IN ECCLESIASTICAL USE?

27. Information on the number of listed churches owned by the various religious groups in Scotland is not readily available. It can be assumed, however, that the Church of Scotland owns a very high percentage of the total (an estimate made in 1976 suggested that the Church of Scotland owned almost 80% of the then 1,689 listed churches in Scotland).
28. It can also be assumed that the Church of Scotland has responsibility for the most substantial built heritage estate, or portfolio of built heritage assets, in Scotland: more extensive in number than those cared for by Historic Scotland and the National Trust for Scotland combined. Moreover it is distributed across the entire country. The Church of Scotland is therefore in a comparable position to the Church of England, although it lacks similar resources, procedures or management structures.
29. Furthermore, the Church of Scotland has by far the main responsibility for the churches in ecclesiastical use which were inherited from the medieval church. The Church also has many parish churches sited on medieval or earlier Christian sites. Some incorporate medieval fabric, even though this is not always immediately obvious. This is one essential difference between the Church of Scotland and other religious groups in Scotland.
30. Information on the approximate number of list entries in the ownership of various religious groups other than the Church of Scotland has been provided to HEACS by Historic Scotland. The Roman Catholic Church in Scotland has 200 listed entities, the Scottish Episcopal Church 200, the Free Church of Scotland 186, the Baptist Union 47, the Methodist Church 25, and the Jewish faith 3.
- These statistics do not cover all the denominations and religious groups. For example, HEACS was informed that the United Reformed Church has 51 churches in Scotland, of which 37% are listed.
31. Some places of worship are not owned by a religious group. These include buildings in the hands of local authorities, public institutions (including health boards), and in the private ownership of schools and landed estates. A number of churches are in the care of local trusts. The Scottish Redundant Churches Trust (SRCT) currently owns five churches.
32. A significant part of the ecclesiastical heritage is cared for by the state. Of the 345 heritage properties managed by Historic Scotland, 93 (about 27%) are ecclesiastical. These include the medieval cathedrals, owned by the Crown, some of which are in use as parish churches by agreement with the Church of Scotland. Most of the ecclesiastical properties in state care, however, are no longer in ecclesiastical use: a significant proportion are ruinous, pre-Reformation structures in rural areas.

The relevance of ownership

33. Legislation relating to ancient monuments and historic buildings allows such assets to be protected for the public benefit including future generations. Ancient monuments are generally considered not to have the same economic value as buildings and land which may be used for the owner's economic or other personal, corporate or group benefit. Listing as a system of protection assumes that buildings will remain in use, but nevertheless subject to constraints in the wider local or national interest. Places of worship are no exception.

Religious bodies and individual congregations may wish to use their buildings in the way they choose, and to be able to demolish or otherwise dispose of them if they deem it in their interest to do so. While many are aware of the architectural and historic significance of their buildings, it is recognised that the preservation of the ecclesiastical heritage can never be their primary aim. Religious bodies are no different in this respect to many owners of historic environment assets.

34. Religious groups everywhere tend to be constrained by their own governance arrangements, and this is particularly true of the Church of Scotland. The Church of Scotland's constitution, called the *Articles Declaratory*, proclaim that the Church is a national church. Unlike the Church of England, the Church of Scotland is not established by law. Nevertheless, its independence from the state and its right to deal with matters falling within its spiritual jurisdiction without state interference has been recognised by legislation, namely, the *Church of Scotland Act 1921*.
35. The Church of Scotland is a presbyterian church with a hierarchy of courts, from the general assembly, to presbyteries, and at the lowest level, kirk sessions. The Church's authority is vested in church courts rather than individuals. According to the Church, "it operates on a conciliar model with a system of checks and balances". In relation to buildings, "the primary responsibility for repairs and improvements rests with congregations under the general oversight of regional presbyteries with advice, encouragement and financial support from the [General] Trustees."
36. The property of the Church of Scotland is vested in the Church of Scotland General Trustees which is a statutory corporation, created by Act of Parliament in 1921. The Trustees act as the property-holding corporation for the Church and exercise their responsibilities within a framework set by parliamentary legislation, Scots law on Trusts, and the Charities and Trustee Investments (Scotland) Act 2005. The Trustees are also recognised as a charity whose overarching purpose is the advancement of religion. The Church has stressed to HEACS that the Trustees "are not a conservation agency but, as an integral part of the Church, support its Christian mission."
37. Other denominations and religious groups have their own governance arrangements, but are essentially independent charities, whose position is similar to that of independent schools and other institutions. They, like the Church of Scotland, are subject to trust and charity legislation: the United Reformed Church, for example, has a "fiduciary duty to raise an appropriate level of funds" from disposals.

THE ROOTS OF THE PRESENT SITUATION: ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

38. In considering the impact of more recent demographic change on the ecclesiastical heritage, it is necessary to take account of the ecclesiastical history of Scotland. The 18th and 19th centuries saw the establishment of many, often competing denominations, which broke away and built new churches. This was compounded by the impact of the particularly rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of Scotland. It was recognised in the late 19th century that there were too many churches in Scotland: a position which was exacerbated when many of the groups later rejoined the Church of Scotland, bringing with them both their members and their buildings. Some churches were re-used by other religious groups, a process which continues. However, the main impact has been an historic over-provision of churches by competing Presbyterian denominations.
39. The churches in Scotland have been facing the impact of more recent demographic change, which may be taken to include both population change and changes in religious adherence. Both have impacted on church-going and membership. Population change includes the ageing and movement of population as well as the movement of people out of inner-city areas, for instance, which may lead to the dispersal of congregations. The Church of Scotland has suffered particularly from having a surfeit of Victorian churches in the 'wrong' location. The dispersal of once-concentrated Jewish populations has led to the loss of synagogues. On the other hand, substantial immigration from Ireland and later from Italy strengthened the Roman Catholic population and led to the building of many new churches. Recent immigration from Eastern Europe may possibly have a similar effect. Immigration has also led to the growth of non-Christian religions, particularly Muslim, Hindu and Sikh.
40. Church-going has also been affected by changes in the nature of religious adherence within society. Religious belief continues, but religious practice has declined markedly: the phrase 'believing without belonging' has been used to describe the situation. Since the 1960s British people have stopped going to church in unprecedented numbers. It appears that church-goers have become not only a smaller, but a more committed group. Mission has become of greater importance for religious groups.
41. Such changes have manifested themselves in a number of ways. Diminishing congregations have become less able to maintain and repair churches, particularly as a significant proportion of churches are old (although relatively young churches can also present challenges in view of the poor standard of their construction). In the last 60 years, many churches have become redundant and been disposed of. In this process, there seems to have been a decreasing willingness to consider the wider local community.
42. Forecasting the future rate of decline amongst Scottish church-goers is not straightforward. Previous predictions amongst church people from the 1960s to 1990s that the corner was about to be turned appear to have been optimistic and unfulfilled. However, the Church of

Scotland has suggested to HEACS that: “The rate of decline had lessened in each year since 1981 and, while numbers had continued to decline, the rate had slowed and there was the prospect that a steady state would be reached. From that perspective the Church of Scotland could take an optimistic view”. It is not clear whether other denominations share this view.

43. It is also important to be aware of the growth of some evangelical congregations and their impact on forms of worship, as traditional services are rejected in favour of more interactive or multimedia forms. There has been a greater readiness amongst some adherents to modify the internal arrangements of churches, often with the loss of significant decorative structures and features, and of artefacts.

IDENTIFICATION AND DESIGNATION

44. The lack of information on the ecclesiastical heritage has already been mentioned. The independent study undertaken for HEACS on the extent of the ecclesiastical heritage found that “the current state of information does not allow for a full and reliable overview of the extent and condition of Scotland’s ecclesiastical heritage. A very wide range of bodies, authorities and individuals are responsible for different aspects of operating, maintaining, protecting, and recording ecclesiastical structures and sites. Each group or individual holds different information in a variety of formats, and for historical or practical reasons there has been very little co-ordination or standardisation of information across the sector. In general more complete information is available for scheduled or listed buildings”. Practitioners and other interested parties find the lack of information to be a major shortcoming which makes working in the sector very challenging.
45. It is good asset management practice for owners and managers to be fully informed about the assets in their care. HEACS recommends that, where denominations do not already have the information, they should be required to compile, with the assistance of Historic Scotland, accurate lists of ecclesiastical buildings in their care with particular attention to those which have been listed, scheduled or otherwise designated. Such information should be made available to Historic Scotland and placed in the National Monuments Record for Scotland.
46. One particular issue is that the statutory designation process does not necessarily recognise the full significance of heritage assets. As HEACS stated in its report to Scottish Ministers on the heritage legislation: “The methodology by which early list descriptions were prepared is no longer relevant. A long-term systematic re-survey was commenced in the late 1970s but progress, however, has not been as good as had been anticipated. As the Review of Historic Scotland pointed out, earlier lists are now a generation old and do not reflect modern understanding, scholarship, and appreciation of buildings.”³ It is important that those responsible for the management of the ecclesiastical heritage are aware of these shortcomings.
47. HEACS recognises that there have been calls for an inventory of all ecclesiastical sites. An audit of ecclesiastical buildings and former ecclesiastical sites would:
- identify unprotected assets which should be designated and/or recorded;
 - improve the description of assets already designated and protected;
 - provide information on what is being lost and its significance; and
 - assist with decisions on what to protect.
48. The importance of thematic surveys to understanding the nation-wide picture should be emphasised. Similar advantages would be gained by the compilation of a comprehensive, publicly accessible list of all graveyard sites in Scotland.
49. HEACS considers that there is a strong case for an assessment of all of Scotland’s early church sites, establishing what undeveloped ground survives

³ HEACS, *Whether there is a need to review heritage protection legislation in Scotland*, 2006: <http://www.heacs.org.uk/documents.htm>

around them, and undertaking research to demonstrate the archaeological potential of such sites, both in general and specifically. The gradual attrition of early sites in the face of development pressures without any attempt to understand or record them is a significant issue.

50. HEACS recommends that, in the longer term, an audit should be undertaken of all ecclesiastical sites, similar to the work on Chapels undertaken in Wales. This might be led by the RCAHMS.
51. HEACS welcomes efforts to engage volunteers in recording. The way in which the *Scotland's Rural Past* project has involved people has been exemplary. Mention should also be made of the considerable voluntary work invested in the recording of graveyards.

A SOUND APPROACH TO PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

52. There is general recognition that there has been some improvement in the condition of churches in ecclesiastical use. It is the view of the Church of Scotland, for example, that all their buildings are now in much better condition than they were in 1970. Certainly, cases of complete neglect are rare amongst all religious groups. This may be attributed to: the general prosperity of the period; the availability of state aid over almost 30 years; the standards and conditions which have been imposed; and the instigation of basic systems of inspection.
53. It is the view of HEACS, however, that the arrangements for preventive maintenance and 'stitch in time' repair are still insufficiently systematic and professionally guided. In practice standards of maintenance are patchy. HEACS is aware that there are pressures on maintenance from a number of factors. Smaller congregations are producing less income, while maintenance costs have risen rapidly. Additional pressures have arisen from the requirements, for instance, of health and safety, and safe access. However, thorough professional quinquennial or regular inspections are the key to sound and timely maintenance and are an important investment in terms of value for money.
54. The standard of such inspections should be raised at least to the equivalent of those required by the Church of England. For instance, the Church of England's Diocesan Advisory Committees have to approve the choice of architect or surveyor to carry out quinquennial inspections. There is much to be said for a long-term consultancy relationship between a church and its architect or professional adviser: churches and funding bodies should both recognise that such arrangements are basic good practice.
55. There is a need for those responsible for the upkeep and care of churches and other places of worship to have a proper understanding of the heritage significance and value of the buildings, their interiors, and associated artefacts in their care. Some of these artefacts, through their high value or their fragile state, can bring a tension between the laudable desire to maintain access and providing adequate security. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that their significance and purpose will be immediately understood as in previous generations.
56. The Scottish Government's *Scottish Historic Environment Policy* sets out the key principles on which the conservation of any part of Scotland's historic environment should be based.⁴ This includes sound knowledge and understanding of the site or building, full awareness of its cultural significance, and a conservation plan. Professionally prepared conservation statements, or conservation plans for more complex sites, should be the basis for all decision making.
57. HEACS recommends that:
- every congregation or religious group responsible for the upkeep of an historic place of worship should seek advice from an appropriately qualified professional accredited in building conservation;
 - regular or quinquennial inspections should be undertaken by the appropriately qualified professional to an appropriate standard;

⁴ Historic Scotland, *Scottish Historic Environment Policy*, 2009

- when change is proposed to an historic place of worship, the work should be guided by a simple conservation statement, or conservation plan, as appropriate;
 - over time, a simple conservation statement, or conservation plan, as appropriate, should be prepared for every place of worship of architectural or historic interest to inform those responsible for their management and maintenance. These should also consider archaeological potential, artefacts and interior fittings; and
 - training in fabric matters should be provided for ministers and priests as part of normal training in theological colleges.
58. HEACS recognises that efforts are being made to promote better maintenance and particularly commends the Church Buildings Maintenance in Scotland initiative and online guidance at <http://www.maintainyourchurch.org.uk/>. HEACS recommends that religious groups should arrange training for lay people, fabric conveners, members of fabric committees, and kirk sessions or vestries, along the lines of the English scheme *Faith in Maintenance*.
59. Another issue is whether congregations, which are acknowledged to be diminishing, wish to continue to have sole responsibility for the upkeep and management of their churches, or whether many of them would willingly share responsibility with non church-goers in the wider community of which they are part. In part, this issue is related to proposals to develop places of worship for multiple use: these are considered below.

STATE FUNDING FOR REPAIR OF CHURCHES IN USE

60. Government funding for places or worship has been available since 1977. There has been a considerable take-up of such funding and there is evidence that it has been a major factor in improving the general condition of church buildings. However, in 2001 Historic Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) came separately to the conclusion that too high a proportion of their grant schemes for all historic buildings was being awarded to churches. In 2002 the churches requested a simpler scheme on the basis that they did not like Historic Scotland's insistence on repairing to a 'gold standard'. A revised scheme was therefore introduced, which concentrates on high level and urgent repairs, but is still based on demonstrable financial need. *The Repair Grants for Places of Worship in Scotland* scheme provides grants of up to £250,000. The view within Historic Scotland and the HLF is that the churches and other religious bodies like the current scheme, because they can easily ascertain what is eligible. Taking the VAT relief scheme into account, the churches have to find only about 12% of project costs. It is also Historic Scotland's and HLF's view that the scheme is meeting demand.
61. HEACS does not consider the current scheme to be satisfactory in the following ways and for the following reasons:
- while it may deal with the most urgent work, which may have been beneficial for a time, it discourages a holistic and professional view of what is required for a particular church, based on the sort of understanding which might be derived from the preparation of a conservation statement or a conservation plan;
 - the parallel but separate administrative procedures required by Historic Scotland and the HLF are laborious, bureaucratic and slow, entailing significant costs and delays to the churches and to the funding bodies themselves simply in navigating the process. Such procedures may be thought even less appropriate in a more challenging financial climate; and
 - funding allocated on a church-by-church basis, as if each congregation was a separate owner, discourages a proper strategic and holistic view of the ecclesiastical heritage estate as a whole.
62. Concern has also been expressed that the focus of the scheme on the most outstanding churches in terms of their architectural or historical importance leaves other, still significant, churches to fend for themselves without the prospect of grant aid. It has been suggested that a more flexible approach might be adopted which involved denominations putting forward 'priority' cases.
63. The principle of 'first-come, first-served' for grant applications does not promote a strategic approach to state funding for either the funder or the recipient. It would be a significant improvement if religious groups adopted a more strategic approach and acted as gatekeepers to applications coming forward for grant assistance. This would require religious groups to be better informed as to the scope, value and significance of their historic buildings, confident as to their long-term future, and more aware of their community importance.

64. HEACS recommends that Scottish Ministers should commission an investigation of the *Repair Grants* scheme to identify patterns, gaps and emerging needs, and assess whether the present scheme is best serving the conservation needs of the ecclesiastical heritage. The investigation should be based on original research, be informed by a sound knowledge of the state of the ecclesiastical heritage, and include a proper assessment of the effectiveness of the current scheme.
65. The *Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme* which recompenses congregations for the VAT on repairs and maintenance for listed places of worship is very helpful. HEACS recommends that the scheme, which is due to end in 2011, should continue.
66. The Scottish Redundant Churches Trust drew HEACS's attention to *Building Faith in Our Future*, a report published in 2004 by the Church Heritage Forum on behalf of the Church of England. This contains a summary of the support given to church organisations in various countries in the European Union, through subsidies, tax breaks and grants. The report concludes from the evidence that: "UK churches and places of worship are poorly funded compared to many of our European partners." HEACS would add that Scotland's ecclesiastical heritage is more poorly funded than England's.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL EXEMPTION

67. Although subject to planning permission, works at ecclesiastical buildings in use lie outwith the scope of listed building and conservation area control. The exemption extends not only to all Christian denominations but also to other faith groups.
68. A voluntary scheme of internal control is currently in operation, involving those denominations which are members of the Scottish Churches Committee, to deal with proposals which might affect the exteriors of churches in ecclesiastical use. Where a planning authority or Historic Scotland is not content and a compromise cannot be reached, the application is put to a Decision Making Body within the denomination.
69. The HEACS report on the heritage legislation recognised that the exemption had long been seen as an anomaly, particularly by conservation interests. The churches had, however, continued to defend it. The report accepted that there were legal complexities surrounding the issue which prevented a straightforward removal of the exemption. HEACS recommended that the exemption should be enjoyed only by those denominations or faith groups which have a robust internal control system and the capacity to ensure that it is properly monitored. It was also recommended that the Scottish Ministers should consider ending the exemption for all other denominations and faith groups.⁵
70. The Church of Scotland has since stated to HEACS: “The Trustees are confident that there is a comprehensive internal system of control which, by and large, works effectively given that at any one time a large number of the approximately 1,600 congregations of the Church of Scotland will be engaged in repair and improvement projects. The Trustees consider that this has been recognised given that, for many years, the Church of Scotland has enjoyed an exemption from the requirement to obtain listed building consent for internal or external alterations to listed church buildings. The pilot scheme conducted by Historic Scotland in consultation with COSLA over a six-year period indicated that, at least so far as the Church of Scotland was concerned, there were less than a handful of cases where alterations to listed church buildings, approved by the Trustees, would not have received listed building consent.”
71. Historic Scotland admitted to HEACS that there were concerns about the Decision Making Bodies and that there was little evidence as to their accountability. The agency pointed out that, during the Pilot which ran from 2002 to 2004, the majority of cases were dealt with without having to be put before a Decision Making Body. Historic Scotland also commented that it was the historic interiors, fixtures and fittings which were most at risk.
72. HEACS does not accept that the current arrangements are sufficiently professional and independent of church interests to be wholly satisfactory. In the case of the Church of Scotland, the advisory role of the Committee on Church Art and Architecture (CARTA) is considered to lack force. The Committee requires greater authority and resources if it is to fulfil its role adequately. Moreover, not all denominations involve the amenity societies in the decision-making process. Archaeological assessment of proposals rarely takes place.

⁵ HEACS, *Whether there is a need to review heritage protection legislation in Scotland*, 2006: <http://www.heacs.org.uk/documents.htm>

73. HEACS suggests that the current arrangements in Scotland fail to approach the standard maintained by the Church of England's statutory system of Faculty Jurisdiction for regulating changes to its church buildings, their contents and churchyards, on the basis of which ecclesiastical exemption in the UK was predicated in the first place. From this perspective, the exemption has always been anomalous in Scotland. Indeed, when the exemption was introduced in 1913 the merits of extending the exemption to non-Church of England churches were not debated. Attention is also drawn to the Church of England's Diocesan Advisory Committees which provide advice and knowledgeable support on architectural, archaeological, artistic and historic aspects of places of worship. It is generally accepted that the protection afforded under the systems operated by the exempt denominations in England is generally more comprehensive than that offered by the listed building consent mechanism.
74. A number of possible courses for action present themselves, ranging from the removal of the exemption to retention of the status quo. HEACS recommends that the exemption should be continued subject to stringent conditions, and that the present voluntary scheme relating to exteriors and the arrangements for interiors should be strengthened.
75. HEACS recommends that the exemption should be enjoyed only by those religious groups which have a demonstrably robust internal control system, adequately resourced, and with access to expert and professional advice (this would bring Scotland nearer to the situation in England where, since 1994, the exemption has only been enjoyed by denominations with an 'approved system of control'). The control systems should also be properly monitored. It is not sufficient for participating denominations merely to inform Historic Scotland of the identity of their Decision Making Bodies. HEACS recommends that Historic Scotland should be made responsible for determining that the internal systems used by each denomination are indeed robust and, in particular, that denominations have access to and pay due regard to expert and professional advice. HEACS notes that Historic Scotland is to review the scheme in 2009.

ENCOURAGING MIXED USE OF CHURCHES WHILE KEEPING THE BUILDING IN ECCLESIASTICAL USE

76. From a conservation perspective it is preferable for churches to remain in ecclesiastical use. Churches cannot afford for their buildings to be used for only one hour a week, and there is growing recognition of the value of churches for community purposes. In areas where communities have limited financial resources a church can provide the only place for meetings. It was suggested to HEACS by the Church of Scotland that significant levels of community activity took place in churches.
77. There are good examples of churches being used imaginatively by a cross-section of the community and multifunctional use of churches is clearly quite possible. Various approaches may be suggested: the space for worship may be reduced and part of the building given over to other uses; or there may be multiple use of the space used for worship.
78. HEACS considers that there is a need for greater understanding of the contribution which churches can make as community assets. Measures to make churches more accessible should be encouraged. HEACS notes the emphasis in English Heritage's *Inspired!* campaign on the need to accommodate new facilities and new uses within English churches. In December 2008 English Heritage launched Historic Places of Worship Support Officers, offering part-funding to "partner faith organisations for up to 30 officers who will help to build capacity in faith-groups to care for their historic buildings". HEACS also notes the recent publication of *Churches and Faith Buildings: Realising the Potential*, a paper aimed at identifying sources of funding available in England which might help to release the potential of church and faith buildings as community resources.
79. HEACS recommends that Historic Scotland should, in conjunction with religious groups, consider providing guidance and encouragement on adapting churches to accommodate new facilities and new uses.
80. It has to be recognised that not all churches are equally easy to adapt without loss in heritage terms: each building needs to be considered individually, with the aid of a conservation statement or a conservation plan for the more complex sites. HEACS recommends that access plans, which can cover not only community use but also educational and tourism purposes, should be produced for the more historically important sites to balance accessibility with the needs of the heritage.

MAKING CHURCHES REDUNDANT

81. Not all churches will be capable of being modified to suit multiple uses and there will be cases where religious groups will have to declare buildings redundant. This has been the case for at least several decades.
82. A study of redundant church buildings in Scotland over the period 1946 to 1984 found that none of the denominations had kept systematic records. However, it was estimated that 1,078 churches had been made redundant during this period.⁶ The Church of Scotland accounted for nearly 77% of redundancies, although it was suggested that the contribution of other denominations should not be under-estimated. Detailed investigation of six case study areas revealed that more than 57% of churches made redundant in these areas between 1946 and 1984 had been demolished, particularly in cities. It was also revealed that a relatively large proportion had been listed.
83. The 1989 report by the Council of Europe provided further evidence on the situation in Scotland. For instance, between 1978 and 1987 the Church of Scotland disposed of 102 churches, of which 17 were demolished. The United Free Church made 34 churches redundant in the period 1945 to 1987, while the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland demolished or sold 81 churches between 1949 and 1989.
84. Research carried out for HEACS stated that what evidence there is suggests that the number of disposals by the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland at the present time was very low. It was also stated that the sale of church buildings by the Scottish Episcopal Church reached a minor peak in the 1980s and that the trend has been downward ever since. It would appear that, at present, redundancy is a relatively small and manageable issue for these and other smaller denominations.
85. The research for HEACS revealed that, between 1978 and 2005, some 322 church buildings were sold by the Church of Scotland. The average disposal rates were as follows: 1978-87: 10.5 per year; 1988-1997: 12.0 per year; 1998-2005: 12.3 per year. The figures suggest a slight upward trend in recent years or, at the very least, a consistent and enduring level of disposals. The overall conclusion is that redundancy appears at present to be mainly a Church of Scotland phenomenon.
86. The Church of Scotland has pointed out to HEACS that: "Although there is no doubt that there are still too many buildings (not just churches but also halls), it is worth remembering that there were an estimated 3,000 or so church buildings in 1929 whereas there are now some 1,550 churches (excluding halls and manses). While the process of parish readjustment and disposal of surplus buildings is far from complete, the scale and significance of what has already been achieved should be recognised."
87. HEACS recognises that the Church of Scotland has disposed of a considerable number of church buildings since 1929 when the number of its churches is said to have risen from 1,703 to 3,186 through the union with the United Free Church. The Church accepts that the "process of parish readjustment and disposal of surplus buildings is far from complete". HEACS appreciates that predicting the future is difficult, but in this

⁶ Campbell, K A *Redundant Church Buildings in Scotland* (Edinburgh College of Art/Heriot-Watt University Department of Town and Country Planning Research Paper No.28), 1988

context records the view that the Church of Scotland might have to dispose of between 400 to 500 more churches. At current rates this might take 30 to 40 years. However, there are some signs that the process of disposal is quickening.

88. While there will continue to be examples of places of worship being taken over by other religious groups, it is clear that there will be a greater number for which new secular uses will have to be found. It is difficult to assess the situation fully given the lack of systematic monitoring of churches which have been made redundant.
89. Although views vary, there is general agreement that there is not a crisis, but it is likely that future years will see a number of churches of considerable architectural and historical importance made redundant. These churches, if demolished, or even converted to another use, would represent a significant loss to Scotland's heritage. Typical of such churches would be Govan Old, Glasgow, a distinguished Category A-listed building and Scheduled Ancient Monument, containing an exceptional collection of early Christian tombstones and sculptures, which was recently closed by the Church of Scotland with no regard to its future care and has become a building at risk.

The disposal process

90. If it is accepted that a significant number of Church of Scotland churches, as well as some churches of other denominations, are likely to become redundant in the short to medium term, this is a situation which requires to be carefully managed, and better than it has been in the past. Some of those churches are likely to be demolished to provide clear sites for development. A substantial number, however, are

likely to be converted for commercial, cultural, leisure, residential or other purposes. Some of those considered for redundancy may, in the end, be retained in ecclesiastical use and a small number may be preserved in care, either by the state or the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust, or by private charitable trusts.

91. The need for an overall strategic approach to redundant churches was emphasised to HEACS by Historic Scotland. The English Heritage strategic study of ecclesiastical buildings in Manchester suggests a possible approach. The study identified four categories: those buildings of importance for heritage and mission; those of importance for mission alone; those of heritage importance but not of mission; and those which were neither important for heritage nor mission. Historic Scotland noted that buildings of heritage importance but not of mission were the most challenging to deal with.
92. Evidence presented to HEACS suggests that the lack of long-term strategic planning by some religious groups is a cause for concern. Managed reduction of the total number of churches in a balanced and strategic way would appear to be particularly difficult for the Church of Scotland in view of its governance arrangements. However, HEACS welcomes the efforts being made by the Church currently to put in place a forward planning system to identify churches which had a future, and those which had to be disposed of either in the medium or short term.
93. HEACS is, however, concerned that the internal nature of the process currently in train in the Church of Scotland means that it is likely to be concerned almost entirely with the needs of congregations, and that there will be little consultation with local communities or sufficient regard

for the heritage, local or national. The interests and wishes of congregations (or the General Trustees) frequently diverge from those of the communities in which they and their buildings are embedded – both physically and historically – and from those who are concerned for the heritage, both local and national. HEACS has heard evidence of considerable unease in various quarters over the way in which the Church of Scotland disposes of buildings without apparent regard to the wishes or interests of local communities.

94. While there is professional expertise within the membership of presbyteries, there is likely to be little independent advice at this level on such matters as intrinsic and relative heritage significance, archaeological interest, the adaptability of interiors, community needs, or the opportunities for shared use. It is likely that the nature of the process will vary considerably from presbytery to presbytery. By comparison, the Church of England's procedures are significantly more rigorous and professional, requiring more independent advice and wider pre-redundancy consultation.
95. Many local communities still regard parish churches and churchyards as their own. Many of the churches inherited by the Church of Scotland are testimony to a long history of local stewardship and care over the centuries. This is an important force behind much community interest in redundant churches. HEACS recommends that when considering the disposal of a church, the Churches, particularly the Church of Scotland, should recognise their responsibilities not only to congregations and the institutional church, but also to local communities, and to the heritage, national and local. An options appraisal should be undertaken to inform the disposal process. All policy decisions, particularly the disposal of redundant places of

worship, should take greater account of local community and national and local heritage interests.

New uses for redundant churches

96. Much good work has been done in the field of new uses for churches and there have been some highly appropriate and successful conversions, although some have been less successful. The Scottish Civic Trust maintains a database of such conversions, currently with over 300 entries, and the Church Buildings Renewal Trust has been particularly active in arranging conferences and seminars on the subject. The challenges are firstly to establish which churches can most easily and appropriately be converted; and secondly, to ensure that the architectural approach ensures the qualities of the building which give it significance are retained, and the work as a whole is creative and of appropriate quality.
97. HEACS welcomes the fact that the proportion of churches being demolished has declined. However, it is evident that the process of disposal for conversion to secular use should be improved. Too often, churches have been sold off before a new use was found and the buildings have deteriorated. New owners may lack sufficient knowledge or understanding of what can be involved in converting a church, or the necessary resources. In these circumstances there is a danger that former churches may become buildings at risk, and the target of vandalism, the theft of materials, and arson.
98. Conservation statements, or in major cases full conservation plans, should be material considerations in the planning process and should be required to be in place before any decisions on disposal are reached. These should also provide

a guide to any conversion to secular use, and should deal with the significant fixtures, fittings and contents of all churches to be sold, to ensure that items of heritage or community importance are dealt with properly and not dispersed. At the present time there is also a need for better and more readily available information on moveable artefacts. The role of museums, particularly the National Museums of Scotland, should be kept in view.

99. HEACS recommends that guidance should be produced on converting historic places of worship to new uses, similar to that already available for traditional farm buildings.

CHURCHES 'IN CARE', AND THE ROLE OF THE SCOTTISH REDUNDANT CHURCHES TRUST

100. There may always be a small number of outstanding places of worship which cannot be retained in ecclesiastical use, but are of such heritage importance that they should not be altered and converted for any alternative use. Like the ruined abbeys, such buildings deserve to be preserved as monuments, and perhaps for occasional use.
101. HEACS recommends that, to prevent places of worship of outstanding architectural or historic interest falling into a ruinous condition, the state should be ready to intervene in the interim until a solution can be found. It is essential that state care remains an option in view of the significant numbers of churches which are likely to be made redundant and the fact that some, such as Govan, will be of exceptional heritage importance. Too many churches linger on in a state of disuse, gradually decaying and accumulating defects which often add significantly to the final repair bill.
102. HEACS recommends that the main means of care for outstanding redundant churches should be provided by the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust. The Trust was established in 1996 to secure the future of nationally important churches threatened by closure. Its purpose was to provide a 'safety net' for those churches which were made redundant, but which were of such importance – particularly for their interiors, decoration and furnishings – that they were unsuitable for conversion to other uses. Churches of all denominations, and places of religious worship of all faiths, are eligible for care. The Trust's churches remain open at all times and are available for occasional ecclesiastical and community use.
103. Since its creation, the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust has had to operate with minimal funding. In its 12 years of operation, it has acquired five churches, and is currently engaged on only its second substantial conservation project. In addition to project funding, the Trust received £66,000 core funding from Historic Scotland in 2008/09 and will receive similar amounts, adjusted for inflation, in 2009 and 2010. It also received £10,000 from the Church of Scotland in 2008 and will receive the same amount in 2009 and 2010.
104. The Scottish Redundant Churches Trust parallels the various bodies operating in England and Wales. These, however, operate on a scale which means they have a much greater impact. The Churches Conservation Trust, has 340 churches in its care and a budget to match provided by the Department of Culture Media and Sport and the Church Commissioners for England. The Historic Chapels Trust was established in 1993 to take into ownership redundant chapels and other places of worship of outstanding architectural and historic interest from all denominations and faiths apart from the Church of England. It is grant-aided by English Heritage and has saved 24 Nonconformist and Roman Catholic churches, with their interiors and fittings intact. Since their foundation in 1957, the Friends of Friendless Churches have saved over 100 churches and chapels and have assumed ownership of 34, sixteen of which are in Wales. They receive funding from Cadw.
105. The Scottish Redundant Churches Trust's role is a valued one and it is widely recognised that its funding should be increased. HEACS recommends that

the Trust's role should be developed and its funding enhanced significantly to enable it to operate in the same manner and as effectively as comparable bodies in England. This is essential if a more strategic approach is to be adopted to the issue of redundancy. It should be pointed out that securing funding for projects is particularly challenging when a purely business-case approach is imposed by funders.

106. The enthusiasm and commitment of local preservation trusts is to be welcomed, and HEACS considers that they should continue to be supported as they are often best placed to care for a redundant place of worship. HEACS acknowledges that there are concerns that such trusts may lack the resources and expertise to care for an historic church in the first place, and may be faced with declining enthusiasm in the longer term. HEACS considers that the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust should have the capacity to advise and work with local groups and, if necessary, to assist with or take on the ultimate responsibility for such places of worship.

THE MANAGEMENT AND CARE OF GRAVEYARDS

107. Graveyards are often of considerable heritage value, not only to the population at large, but also to local communities and family historians. They help to 'people' the past and thus contribute to a sense of place. They can also be important for recreational purposes, provide open space, and contribute to biodiversity. HEACS endorses the strong statement made by Historic Scotland to the Scottish Government Burial and Cremation Review Group on the importance of burial grounds and gravestones and notes that a good number of historic graveyards and associated structures are protected under heritage designations.
108. The care and maintenance of graveyards is a significant issue. The majority of graveyards are under the management of local authorities. The standard of maintenance varies substantially between authorities and many graveyards are neither protected nor in good condition. It is easy to see that protecting and enhancing the heritage value of churchyards may not be a high priority for local authorities, given the other pressures on their resources, including financial and health and safety pressures.
109. However, some local authorities have undertaken or are engaged in worthwhile projects to conserve and interpret their historic graveyards. The strategic approach to its historic graveyards taken by Aberdeenshire Council is to be commended. Attention should also be drawn to the work in Dumfries and Galloway being carried out in partnership between Dumfries and Galloway Council and Solway Heritage as part of the Sulwath Connections Landscape Project. Note may also be made of the support provided by Edinburgh World Heritage Trust in this context.
110. HEACS acknowledges that a considerable amount of guidance on the management and recording of historic graveyards has been published in recent years and there is greater acceptance of the need for skills and awareness training for cemetery managers. It is to be hoped that the well-intentioned if drastic efforts to make gravestones safe by systematically toppling them because of health and safety concerns are now less likely to occur. But awareness amongst the general public of the responsibilities of private owners of headstones and more elaborate structures such as mausolea needs to be broadened.
111. HEACS recommends that Historic Scotland should assess the impact of the guidance which has been produced on the conservation of historic graveyards.
112. Responsibility for the management of most parish church sites is divided, with the church being the responsibility of the Church of Scotland, and its setting, the churchyard, being that of the local authority. From a conservation perspective it makes good sense that graveyards should be managed with their associated church. But, in practice, there are many graveyards which are not associated with a church, and there are also many unaccompanied cemeteries. Notwithstanding the conservation argument, HEACS acknowledges that it makes practical sense for the management of all graveyards to continue to be undertaken by local authorities. This includes landscaped cemeteries which require appropriate management. It is acknowledged that resources would be an issue for whoever managed them

and that local communities should be encouraged to play their part.

113. Graveyards sometimes contain important ecclesiastical structures, including medieval chapels, churches which went out of use when parishes were reorganised in the 17th century, or churches which were subsequently replaced on the grounds of insufficiency. Such structures are often ruined, tend to be neglected, and may raise ownership issues. Local trusts and some local authorities have sometimes taken a welcome interest in their conservation.
114. Some ecclesiastical structures, together with early crosses and other carved stones, require to be treated as ancient monuments. HEACS acknowledges that there can be tensions between the local community and what is considered to be the national interest, and suggests that such tensions should be diffused through discussion. Monuments such as these can have strong links with local communities (as the Hilton of Cadboll study demonstrated)⁷ and should be kept in the community wherever possible.
115. HEACS recommends that local authorities should accord greater priority to their historic graveyards and adopt a more strategic approach to their management, based on an audit to identify those of significance. Local authorities, in association with the RCAHMS, should encourage and co-ordinate the work of local groups to undertake surveys of historic graveyards.
116. Each historic graveyard, including upstanding ecclesiastical structures, should be the subject of a conservation statement or conservation plan which would include the resolution of any ownership issues, as well as covering the need for sensitive repair, a regard to authenticity, and increasing access. Raising awareness of the responsibilities of private owners of memorials and more elaborate structures such as mausolea should also be part of such an approach.
117. HEACS recommends that an integrated approach, involving the appropriate denomination or religious group, should be adopted for the management of those graveyards which surround a church in ecclesiastical use.

⁷ Heath F J, Henderson, I, Foster, S M and Jones, S, *A Fragmented Masterpiece: Recovering the Biography of the Hilton of Cadboll Pictish Cross-Slab*, 2008; Jones, S, *Early Medieval Sculpture and the Production of Meaning, Value and Place: The Case of Hilton of Cadboll* (Historic Scotland), 2003

A STRATEGIC APPROACH

118. HEACS recommends that a proper strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage in use is required to balance the interests of religious groups with those of communities and of the heritage, local and national.
119. The prime object of such an approach should be to ensure that the best long-term choices are made and a structured approach taken to long-term change. It should ensure that there is general agreement on which churches should be retained in ecclesiastical use, which should be converted to other uses, which should be preserved, and which should be demolished. It should also help to ensure that the condition of churches identified as suitable for disposal was safeguarded.
120. A strategic approach would allow the various needs to be prioritised and resources targeted more effectively. It would identify which churches should be the recipient of grant-aid and should provide an indication of the overall need for financial assistance from external funders. This is considered to be essential in a period when funding is uncertain.
121. The approach should, in the main, be developed by religious groups, informed by independent expert and professional advice, and assisted by Historic Scotland and the local authorities.
122. It is recognised that such an approach will almost certainly require a greater commitment on the part of Government to the funding of churches in care, particularly the funding of the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust.
123. HEACS recommends that there should be greater recognition by Scottish Ministers of the role of religious groups in the management of the ecclesiastical heritage and more effective partnership-working between Historic Scotland and religious groups. HEACS was surprised to note that the role of the churches, particularly the Church of Scotland, was not specifically acknowledged in the *Scottish Historic Environment Policy* which lists the partners working with Scottish Ministers and Historic Scotland.⁸
124. HEACS recommends that the management of the ecclesiastical heritage by religious groups should be embedded within the context of good asset management. This would enable them to take more account of the ecclesiastical heritage in their role as owners and managers and would be part of the strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage. It would enable resources to be properly prioritised, avoid harm to historic buildings through decay or inappropriate repair, and encourage action to be taken sooner and thereby prevent buildings falling into disrepair (including places of worship which had been declared redundant, but not yet disposed of). Picking up on recommendations already made in this report, this would include: ensuring that religious groups had a proper understanding of the cultural value of their buildings through the provision of conservation statements or plans; regular maintenance based on periodic inspection; and a systematic approach to repairs.
125. HEACS recommends that Joint Agreements should be negotiated between Historic Scotland and the

⁸ Historic Scotland, *Scottish Historic Environment Policy*, 2009

various individual denominations or religious groups. These Joint Agreements and accompanying Action Plans should cover:

- the adoption of a strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage. The approach should not rely solely on the input of Historic Scotland but should also take account of local authority and community interests;
- the recognition by denominations of their responsibilities to local communities and to the heritage, national and local;
- identification and assessment by denominations of the places of worship in their ownership;
- the availability of funding for repairs;
- the operation and review of the ecclesiastical exemption;
- the sharing of information, for instance from the impact of demographic change, to technical information,
- regular meetings between Historic Scotland and the religious group;
- the standards of repair and maintenance; and
- regular review of the Joint Agreement and Action Plan.

126. HEACS recommends that staff should be employed at a corporate level within the Church of Scotland to provide professional advice and guidance to those responsible for church buildings and to increase understanding within the Church of the heritage value and significance of its buildings. HEACS suggests that these should include a conservation architect, architectural historian with knowledge of ecclesiastical history, and an archaeologist. These posts should be funded by Historic

Scotland in the first instance, possibly on a three-year pump-priming basis. The establishment of some local authority archaeology posts with funding by Historic Scotland provides a possible model. The funding of such posts should be included in the Joint Agreement with the Church of Scotland.

127. There are a number of areas where the need for advice, guidance and sharing of good practice have been highlighted in this report. Clearly this may place an insurmountable burden on some of the smaller religious groups. HEACS considers there would be advantages if there was more co-ordination between religious groups over conservation of the ecclesiastical heritage. Arrangements should be made for the professional staff employed within the Church of Scotland also to be available to other denominations.

128. HEACS recommends that good conservation practice should be disseminated through publications, seminars and conferences. These should include good practice in the management of change, for instance in the re-ordering of church buildings, adaptations and extensions. The dissemination of good practice should be supplemented by shared knowledge of specialist skills in the form of registers of professionals, conservators, and craftspeople.

129. There should be closer working between religious groups and other stakeholders including the voluntary sector. HEACS suggests that there needs to be a more effective harnessing of the enthusiasm and knowledge within the voluntary sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage in use

A strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage in use is required to balance the interests of religious groups, with those of communities and of the heritage, local and national.

There should be greater recognition by Scottish Ministers of the role of religious groups in the management of the ecclesiastical heritage and more effective partnership between Historic Scotland and religious groups.

The management of the ecclesiastical heritage by religious groups should be embedded within the context of good asset management.

Joint Agreements should be negotiated between Historic Scotland and the various individual denominations or religious groups. These Joint Agreements and accompanying Action Plans should cover:

- the adoption of a strategic approach to the ecclesiastical heritage. The approach should not rely solely on the input of Historic Scotland but should also take account of local authority and community interests;
- the recognition by denominations of their responsibilities to local communities and to the heritage, national and local;
- identification and assessment by denominations of the places of worship in their ownership;
- the availability of funding for repairs;
- the operation and review of the ecclesiastical exemption;
- the sharing of information, for instance

from the impact of demographic change, to technical information;

- regular meetings between Historic Scotland and the religious group;
- the standards of repair and maintenance; and
- regular review of the Joint Agreement and Action Plan.

Appropriate professional staff should be employed at corporate level within the Church of Scotland. HEACS suggests that these should include a conservation architect, an architectural historian with knowledge of ecclesiastical history, and an archaeologist. Such posts should be funded by Historic Scotland in the first instance, possibly on a three-year pump-priming basis.

There would be advantages if there was closer co-ordination between religious groups over conservation of the ecclesiastical heritage. Arrangements should be made for the professional staff employed within the Church of Scotland to be available to other denominations.

Good conservation practice should be disseminated through publications, seminars and conferences.

The information base

Where denominations do not already have the information, they should be required to compile, with the assistance of Historic Scotland, accurate lists of ecclesiastical buildings in their care, with particular attention to those which have been listed, scheduled or otherwise designated. Such information should be made available to Historic Scotland and placed in the National Monuments Record for Scotland.

In the longer term, an audit should be undertaken of all ecclesiastical sites. This might be led by the RCAHMS.

A sound approach to property management

Every congregation or religious group responsible for the upkeep of an historic place of worship should seek advice from an appropriately qualified professional accredited in building conservation.

Regular or quinquennial inspections should be undertaken by the appropriately qualified professional to an appropriate standard.

When change is proposed to an historic place of worship, the work should be guided by a simple conservation statement or conservation plan, as appropriate.

Over time, a simple conservation statement, or conservation plan, as appropriate, should be prepared for every place of worship of architectural or historic interest to inform those responsible for their management and maintenance. These should also consider archaeological potential, artefacts and interior fittings.

Training in fabric matters should be provided for ministers and priests as part of normal training in theological colleges.

Religious groups should arrange training for lay people, fabric conveners, members of fabric committees, and kirk sessions or vestries, along the lines of the English scheme *Faith in Maintenance*.

State funding of repair

Scottish Ministers should commission an investigation of the *Repair Grants for Places of Worship in Scotland* scheme to identify patterns, gaps and emerging needs, and assess whether the present scheme is best serving the conservation needs of the ecclesiastical heritage. The investigation

should be based on original research, be informed by a sound knowledge of the state of the ecclesiastical heritage, and include a proper assessment of the effectiveness of the current scheme.

The *Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme* should continue.

The ecclesiastical exemption

The exemption should be continued subject to stringent conditions.

The exemption should be enjoyed only by those religious groups which have a demonstrably robust internal control system, which is adequately resourced, and with access to expert and professional advice.

Historic Scotland should be made responsible for determining that the internal systems used by each denomination are indeed robust, and, in particular, that denominations have access to and pay due regard to expert and professional advice.

Mixed uses

There is a need for greater understanding of the contribution which churches can make as community assets. Historic Scotland should, in conjunction with religious groups, consider providing guidance and encouragement on adapting churches to accommodate new facilities and new uses.

HEACS recommends that access plans, which can cover not only community use but also educational and tourism purposes, should be produced for the more historically important sites to balance accessibility with the needs of the heritage.

Redundant churches

When considering the disposal of a church, the Churches, particularly the Church of Scotland, should recognise their responsibilities, not only to congregations

and the institutional church, but also to local communities and to the heritage, national and local.

An options appraisal should be undertaken to inform the disposal process.

All policy decisions, particularly the disposal of redundant churches, should take greater account of local community and national and local heritage interests.

Guidance should be produced on converting historic places of worship for new uses.

In the case of places of worship of outstanding architectural or historic interest, to prevent such buildings falling into a ruinous condition, the state should be ready to intervene in the interim until a solution can be found.

The main means of care for outstanding redundant churches should be provided by the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust.

The Scottish Redundant Churches Trust's role should be developed and its funding enhanced to enable it to operate in the same manner and as effectively as comparable bodies in England.

Graveyards

Local authorities should accord greater priority to their historic graveyards and adopt a more strategic approach to their management, based on an audit to identify those of significance.

Local authorities, in association with the RCAHMS, should encourage and co-ordinate the work of local groups to undertake surveys of historic graveyards.

Local authorities should arrange for the production of conservation statements or conservation plans for historic graveyards.

An integrated approach, involving the appropriate denomination or religious group, should be adopted for the management of those graveyards which surround a church in ecclesiastical use.

Historic Scotland should assess the impact of the extensive guidance which has been produced on the conservation of historic graveyards.

APPENDIX 1: CONSULTEES

List of organisations and individuals met by the Working Group

Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland
 Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO Scotland)
 Church Buildings Renewal Trust
 Church of Scotland
 English Heritage
 Friends of Friendless Churches
 Simon Green
 Heritage Lottery Fund
 Historic Chapels Trust
 Historic Scotland
 Institute of Historic Building Conservation
 Ian McCarter
 Places of Worship@Heritage Link (POWlink)
 Roman Catholic Church in Scotland
 Scottish Church Heritage Research
 Scottish Civic Trust
 Scottish Episcopal Church
 Scottish Redundant Churches Trust
 Gurmit Singh

List of organisations and individuals who submitted written evidence

Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland
 Association of Preservation Trusts Scotland
 Fiona Baker
 Church of Scotland
 Jocelyn Cunliffe
 Friends of St Ninian's Deerness, Orkney
 The Garden History Society in Scotland
 Derek Hall
 Mansfield Traquair Trust
 National Museums of Scotland
 Scottish Churches Architectural Heritage Trust
 Scottish Redundant Churches Trust
 Tom Woodbridge

APPENDIX 2: REFERENCES

Select list of websites accessed

Aberdeenshire Council
 Archaeology Scotland
 Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland
 Church of England website Churchcare:
 Working with an architect or surveyor
 Church of Scotland
 Department of Media, Culture and Sport
 Edinburgh World Heritage Trust
 English Heritage Inspired
 Friends of Friendless Churches
 Heritage Lottery Fund
 Historic Chapels Trust
 Historic Scotland
 Places of Worship@Heritage Link (POWlink)
 Royal Commission on the Ancient and
 Historical Monuments of Scotland
 Scotland's Churches Scheme
 Scottish Christian Churches Directory
 Scottish Church Heritage Research
 Scottish Churches Architectural Heritage Trust
 Scottish Civic Trust
 Scottish Episcopal Church
 Scottish Government
 Scottish Graveyards
 Scottish Redundant Churches Trust
 Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
 Sulwath Connections

Relevant research commissioned by HEACS

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