

HRBA Crowd Brainstorming results as at 14 September 2016

What *new ways* are there to spend grant money to help secure the future of historic religious buildings?

Below are the results of the crowd brainstorming carried out by HRBA in summer 2016. The request for ideas is reproduced in the appendix.

The ideas have been summarised where necessary, but they not been assessed – they are a collection of possibilities for further consideration. Some have potential, others may not.

Please note that some people provided several different ideas under the same general heading, so the number of ideas under each heading does not give a good indication of how many people were thinking along those lines.

The word 'church' is used throughout to include a historic religious building of any denomination or faith group.

Money for churchyards

1. Use money to look after churchyards - general maintenance, plus stonemasonry etc when needed
2. Fund ecological work in churchyards

Fund competitions

3. A design competition for new collecting boxes for churches
4. Churchwarden (or equivalent) of the year award
5. Competition 'best maintained church' and/or 'best church maintainer'

Use money to support supporters

6. Provide starter packs, seedcorn money and training for local Friends groups
7. Finance professional posts to help secure the future of historic religious buildings
8. Assist with trips and visits for churches (particularly those in difficulty) to learn from each other
9. Find ways of assisting those looking after historic religious buildings
10. Use social media or a radio channel for those caring for historic religious buildings
11. Provide support for clerics with several buildings in their charge
12. Provide funding for 'flying support officers' – either directly or by funding the purchase of their services by churches
13. Set up a Churchwardens Society, for carers of buildings of all faiths and denominations
14. Set up a Federation of Friends groups
15. Provide free of charge an annual 'caring for your church' book
16. Centralise and make official all advice and guidance
17. Actively communicate with church carers on a regular basis with an informative glossy magazine
18. Provide expertise to Trusts wishing to care for churches, and perhaps financial support or a supervening Trust
19. Continuously promote understanding by Parish Councils of the opportunities provided by religious buildings

20. Formally provide a stamp of approval for good but normal church caring - not a competition for heroes

Financial support for running projects

21. Automatic grant money for project definition and for project management
22. Automatic money available for advice on community engagement
23. Automatic support for early option/feasibility appraisal/ market testing for major projects

General uses of money

24. Give priority to uses that respect the spiritual nature of the place
25. Support a common format for church websites
26. Build a website to act as hub for all central organisations concerned with future of historic religious buildings
27. Hold open days at churches for local builders and tradesmen
28. Reduce red tape
29. Collect together redundant furniture into a regional study centre for church furniture e.g. in a church no longer used for regular worship
30. Provide defence mechanisms against bats
31. Support the repopulation of closed churches with new congregations
32. Ensure funding does lead to religious buildings being more open to visitors
33. Move away from strait jacket of three-year project funding to support long-term 'infrastructure' groups

Money for facilities

34. Heating in churches (alongside other facilities)
35. Seed corn money for eco friendly heating and lighting
36. Automatic funding and advice for provision of basic facilities with a fifteen year roll out plan, including hand-holding

Money for maintenance

37. Subsidies for maintenance, including gutter clearing by professionals
38. Support for maintenance co-operatives
39. Support provision of expert maintenance advice and kit etc to groups of churches
40. Pay for changes to building to make maintenance easier (e.g. access ladders)
41. Support volunteer groups of gutter clearers

Different ways of distributing money for repairs

42. Use County Trusts etc to make local grants
43. Change repair grant schemes so that they require good previous maintenance to be demonstrated
44. Subsidise a soft loan scheme for repairs
45. Have an automatic top-up scheme for larger repairs - e.g. receive 50p for each pound spent above £20k, receive one pound for each pound spent above £50k
46. Subsidise pre-saving for repairs by individual churches (individual pots)
47. Subsidise a central repair pot into which churches pre-paid a fixed amount; the pot pays for repairs above a certain amount for churches which have paid in over a number of years

Financial support of visitors and tourism

48. National membership scheme for people interested in visiting and exploring churches, with information, benefits etc etc
49. Long-term support for tourism projects e.g. by area or type of attraction
50. App for smart phones with common information
51. Develop local guides / trails or regional church trails (building on existing models)
52. Bring together those who have created their own county websites of churches and similar to learn from each other
53. Develop guides for specific types of church architecture and furnishing
54. Brown signs pointing to churches
55. Bulk-purchased 'welcome: open for visitors' signs

Appendix: The request for ideas

The original email requesting ideas is reproduced below

IDEAS WANTED

We have been brainstorming, and then had the best idea of all - to **ask you for your ideas**.

The question: **What *new* ways are there to spend grant money to help secure the future of historic religious buildings?**

At the moment, most grant money goes straight on repairs, or on toilets and such like, or on interpretation. Obviously this use of grant money is very important, and needs to continue.

But there must be other good ways to spend money, whether its public money or from private charitable foundations . . . we want ideas for **new** ways that aren't being tried at the moment.

All types of ideas welcome

We want obvious and sensible ideas (if you're not sure whether they've been tried, then just suggest them anyway). And we also want off-the-wall ideas which might stimulate further thought.

For example, how about brown signs to ancient churches and chapels, or bulk-purchased 'welcome: open for visitors' signs? Or starter packs, seedcorn money and training for Friends groups? Or subsidising a national organisation to support those who look after the buildings? Or supporting a Youtube channel? Or . . . what?

A chance to contribute to future thinking

We promise to take all ideas seriously, and think how each one might be taken forward, using our network of contacts.

And in a few weeks' time, we'll let you know what ideas have been flowing in. This is your opportunity to provide fresh thinking about using money in new ways to help secure the future of historic religious buildings. We look forward to hearing from you.

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