



FABRIC NEEDS SURVEY 2005 SUMMARY

1. Aims of the research

The Fabric Needs Survey 2005 (FNS 05) seeks to review the places of worship first studied in the 1994 Church Needs Survey, to

- establish the repair needs of the sample places of worship over the next five and the next ten years;
- review whether repairs identified in 1994 have been undertaken and if not, why not

and from these buildings and others, determine

- an average annual maintenance figure for places of worship
- a national repair needs figure for listed places of worship

2. The Survey

2.1 1994 Churches Needs Survey (CNS 94)

In 1994/5, the Council for the Care of Churches (CCC) and EH conducted a *Churches Needs Survey* to inform a campaign to lift the level of funding available for repair grants. It concentrated on five Church of England deaneries in the dioceses of Newcastle, Manchester, Gloucester, St Edmundsbury and Portsmouth. Although the majority were listed, the sample deliberately included unlisted churches too, for comparative purposes. For various reasons, the results were not published until 1998, by which time the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) had become established and there was a Joint Places of Worship Grant Scheme between EH and HLF with a £20m annual budget.

2.2 The sample areas are:

- the Deanery of Petersfield in the Diocese of Portsmouth which includes the surrounding rural area
- the Deanery of Newcastle Central which extends out northwards from the city centre through Jesmond and Gosforth to the first villages

- the Deaneries of Salford and Eccles in the Diocese of Manchester, a conurbation but reaching out to the rural fringe at Worsley.
- the Deanery of Cheltenham in the Diocese of Gloucester, the town centre and the largely suburban areas with a few of the nearby villages.
- the Deanery of Halesworth in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, all rural.

These areas were chosen by the CCC to broadly represent urban/rural/suburban contexts and also offer a wide social spread. There is a mix of buildings of all sizes and ages, both listed and unlisted. Cheltenham and Newcastle were included as there were already some reasonably good comparative statistics available from a 1973 study done by the Church of England to make the case for State Aid to the Department of the Environment. Within the defined areas every Church of England church is included, and other places of worship were invited to take part. In 1994, 136 buildings took part, 19 non-Anglican, including one synagogue in Cheltenham.

2.2.1 The five areas chosen should represent a reasonable span of the different context of places of worship, but it should be stressed that they are not necessarily a statistically representative sample.

2.3 2005 Fabric Needs Survey (FNS 05)

The sample buildings in the present *Places of Worship Fabric Needs Survey* are those of CNS 94 with the following differences. St Thomas Newcastle has been dropped from the Survey because of its non-parochial circumstances, St Ignatius, Salford is redundant, West Avenue United Reformed Church (URC), Gosforth has been sold for redevelopment and Weaste Lane URC, Weaste, Salford demolished. A few were on the brink of major changes and the dioceses asked us to exclude them. Others were excluded as there was not enough time to make a visit to compensate for insufficient documentary evidence. Of the 127 buildings, there are a total of 102 useful records for listed places of worship and 25 unlisted.

2.4 Survey questionnaires

A questionnaire, mainly requiring tick-box responses, was sent to 128 contacts at the places of worship (most often the churchwarden). Despite chasing from denominational contacts, responses have only been received from half, which may in itself demonstrate the time pressures such volunteers are facing. The answers also need some interpretation; the great majority were Church of England, but there were 2 Roman Catholic churches (out of 5) and 1 URC (out of 8). The reasons given for not undertaking all the repairs identified in 1994 included;

- still fundraising
- unable to afford the work
- 'inertia'
- new and more essential work arising
- lack of time to organise the work
- not a priority

- maintenance of three other properties taking up parish resources
- change of architect
- interregnum

2.5 Survey technique

The intention was that this should be a largely desk based review of information on each place of worship, including

- the 1994 survey questionnaire return
- the architectural report from CNS 94 by Geoffrey Claridge, including his photographs of the individual places of worship
- the latest quinquennial inspection reports where they exist
- the FNS 05 survey questionnaire responses
- financial details abstracted from the CoE *Parish Finance Returns* for the years 1995-2004 and any other denominational records made available
- responses to the “one-off” questions about fabric repair costs in the 2003 CoE *Parish Finance Returns*. These were made available on a parish by parish basis for the churches in our study areas and as summaries for each diocese.

It was also intended that the review should be backed up with conversations with the churches’ inspecting architects and churchwardens. Finally a few visits were to be made to confirm the results of those enquiries.

2.6 In the event, some of the critical background information was not available, or not available in time. 39% of the quinquennial inspection reports (QIRs) included no cost information and many others had such brief information as to make it impossible to relate the costs to the works recommended. For example, in one diocese the norm was to include a single figure for all works suggested over the quinquennium. Other reports did not set out a possible repair programme, but were simply schedules of defects. The statistical information from the Church of England was also not available until well into the progress of the study.

2.7 Brief visits were planned to each of the five study areas. The first trips were arranged to cover carefully selected buildings which would be representative of different building types, the work of different inspecting architects and to buildings where CNS 94 had shown that there were particularly difficult problems. On this basis four appointments were made each day to meet one or more representatives, usually churchwardens or a minister. It became clear that even a very brief visit was extremely helpful to fill in cost data where the documents had not provided it and to check on the progress of repairs advised in CNS 94. Therefore, between the appointments as many other visits as possible were slotted in. On the later trips the absolute minimum of appointments were made so as to cover as much ground as possible, though in actual fact our consultant architect often encountered someone at a church who was familiar with the fabric repairs. A *proforma* was completed for each building.

3. Survey results

3.1 The FNS 05 database contains useful records of 102 listed places of worship. **Their average repair needs have been assessed as £98,182 over ten years of which £63,777 will be needed within five years.**

3.2 There are around 12,200 listed CoE churches and about 2,300 other listed places of worship in England. **Total repair needs, therefore, for around 14,500 listed places of worship, based on our survey sample, are £1.42 billion of which about £925 million will be needed within the next five years; say £185 million per year.** These national figures need to be treated with some caution, as the sample used in five clusters is not considered to be statistically representative enough. However, the results correlate reasonably well with the findings of CNS 94 and other available data, like the 2003 Parish Finance Returns (see 3.7 below). Further work is needed on the non-Anglican buildings and it is hoped to complete this by the autumn.

3.3 Progress on repairs 1994-2005

There is no readily discernible link between the needs identified in the 1994 Churches Needs Survey and the repairs which were actually carried out in the subsequent years. Although the congregations were sent a copy of the 1994 assessments, the repairs subsequently tackled would have come about through the normal process following quinquennial inspections or on the initiative of the congregation. Usually the architects and churchwardens have changed over the past ten years and the information about what work has been done is not readily available. In some cases a visit for FNS 05 showed that all the repairs anticipated in CNS 94 had indeed been carried out, but in most cases some of the identified work had been done, some had been done in a different way and some was still outstanding. Occasionally the parish had not yet seen any urgency in the work anticipated. Very often other things would have been done as well as some of the CNS 94 repairs. With so many possible outcomes it has not been possible to match them directly to the expectations.

3.4 For the Church of England buildings in FNS 05 we have used the annual *Parish Finance Returns* to identify the value of building repairs carried out since 1994. An indication of “success” has been judged to be the percentage ratio of expenditure on repairs to the repair costs foreseen in CNS 94, appropriately up rated to January 2006 values. This gives a useful ranking, but can be misleading where the 1994 expectations were very low (in which case quite a modest extra repair leads a very high ranking) or where large repairs have been done for work which was outside the brief, perhaps linked to other projects (like new bells, or facilities).

3.5 Such a method can be used to identify the most vulnerable churches, where repairs have not been achieved, by looking for those with particularly low scores. Eleven (11%) Church of England churches had spent less than one eighth of the expected values of their five-year needs even after nine

years. This group includes the churches at greatest risk as well as the one which has already become redundant. It also includes a few which seem not to have submitted records and it is possible that there might be some where effective holding repairs have been achieved for negligible cost.

3.6. Parish Finance Returns 2003

The parishes of the Church of England are asked to make yearly returns of their expenditure and, as well as the routine questions, each year they answer two additional 'one-off' questions. For the year 2003 these concerned the cost of outstanding repairs:

- *Based on your most recent quinquennial inspection report, what is the estimated cost of repairs still needed to the church(es) covered by this form?*
- *How much of this estimated cost is for repairs to listed churches?*

3.7 The average repair needs for our sample group of churches (listed and unlisted) in the CoE 2003 questions was £43,015. This would be £57,353 after adjustment to January 2006 values and making allowance for the span of dates of the QIRs current in 2003, and so is close to the FNS 05 average costs of £66,377 over the next five years rising to £98,325 over ten years. The FNS 05 forecast for repair needs over ten years is 71% higher than the amount which the parishes have foreseen for this group of churches. However, only 4% of the quinquennial inspection reports in our sample suggested any figure for the possible cost of works beyond the next five years. The costs of that work would not emerge therefore from the CoE returns, even when such longer term works have been indicated. As the FNS 05 needs figures were developed largely from the site visits of one architect working to an EH brief, it is not altogether surprising that they are higher than figures given in the QIRs, produced over a period for a different client. The FNS 05 figures are at least consistent within the sample, having been produced by one person over a short time.

3.8 Maintenance

As well as looking at the expenditure figures in the Church of England records (which can include heating and electrical bills), four organisations looking after redundant churches and chapels were consulted on their expenditure on maintenance; the Churches Conservation Trust, the Historic Chapels Trust, the Friends of Friendless Churches and the Norwich Historic Churches Trust. A further source of figures was the 'maintenance pilot' involving 64 rural Church of England churches in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. There is quite a wide variation between the figures, as the sample sizes are very uneven and the maintenance definitions vary, but they do all represent actual experiences of maintenance costs for organisations which are trying to achieve high standards with carefully controlled expenditure. Average costs were £351 for the St Edmundsbury pilot scheme, £491 for the small sample from FoFC, £629 for HCT, £906 for NHCT and £1067 for CCT. The simple average for all the buildings included in these samples was £943. It is interesting to compare all of these with the feasibility study done for NHCT in

1999 by a local architectural practice experienced in church work. This suggested an annual expenditure of £2,542 (at Jan 2006 values), including testing and inspections and routine painting.

3.9 Many congregations would be unlikely to have the skills to arrange for work as cost effectively as these organisations. For the larger buildings where ladder access is not viable, even with fixings for ladders and safety harnesses, the routine maintenance costs could be very much higher than the average £943. The St Edmundsbury pilot figures are essentially for gutter and drain clearance, using scaffold towers, cherry pickers and ladders, but not scaffolds.

3.10 The questionnaire revealed that 13 of the 58 congregations who answered had a maintenance contract that had been in place for an average of 8 years and 12 of them thought it had been an effective use of money (the 13th didn't answer the question). Reasons given for not having a contract were given in the following order of frequency;

1. we can do it ourselves
- 2= no money available
- 2= too expensive
- 4= not necessary
- 4= other
6. no builder available
7. no one to organise it

3.11 Other findings

3.11.1 *Access to Church of England churches*; the first visits were made in Suffolk where almost every church was open, or where keys were readily available. In Manchester, not only most of the churches were locked, but keys were almost never available to borrow – only escorted visits were possible. The Portsmouth churches were generally open, the Newcastle and Cheltenham churches varied. In two cases, our architect was forbidden entry to churches on the grounds that there were children there.

3.11.2 *Unlisted churches*; for unlisted Church of England churches, in the sample group, the comparative repair figures are £18,509 (£24,679 @ Jan 2006 values) foreseen by the parishes and £63,415 over 5 years or £82,690 over 10 years indicated in FNS 05. So the parishes and their quinquennial surveyors felt that the unlisted churches had much lower repair needs than listed churches. There are two broad categories of unlisted churches, those from the nineteenth and early twentieth century which are essentially of similar traditional construction to the listed buildings of their age, and post-war buildings of modern (relatively untried) construction - 62% of the unlisted CoE churches in our sample were built after 1955. Just as in the housing and commercial sectors, buildings of that age are not valued. The repairs identified in the QIRs are not addressing the fundamental problems of ageing materials, perhaps because these buildings are still considered 'new' after forty or more years of life?

3.11.3 *Range of costs*; 58% of the sample had predicted costs of £50k or less over the next five years and 39% costs of £30k or less. Most of these repairs were also unlikely to be eligible under the current rules of the EH/HLF Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme, as 'de minimis' or low level and so of low priority. As previously reported to POWF, the average grant under RGPOW is now about £74k at 65%.

3.11.4 *Organising repairs*. Congregations reported that the QIR, their inspecting architect and a local 'buildings aware' person were the main prompts to beginning a repair project. When asked what further help would be most useful, the answers were given in this order of interest;

- Information pack for churchwardens/fabric officers
- Fabric officer employed at diocesan or more local level
- Practical help with grant applications
- A 'churchwardens day'
- Closer collaboration with the inspecting architect
- Subscription scheme with local builders
- Training for volunteers
- Improved *Churchcare* website

3.11.5 *Fundraising*.

- 60% of congregations said that they budget for repairs;
- 41% put money aside for repairs
- 64% put money aside for maintenance
- 28% had a *Friends Group* or standing fund-raising committee
- half had experience of asking local authorities for grants and 36% had received one, but normally for projects other than repairs to the church and on the basis that the community would benefit.

3.11.6 *Congregational responsibility for repairs*

We asked;

*Have you any comments on the current reliance on locally based organisational funding of repairs and maintenance of places of worship?
Should Government (local or national) take a greater responsibility?*

Thirty-two respondents gave some sort of response to the question. Nine respondents (28%) said that outside help was needed, either in the form of more available and accessible grants or in local or central government taking some responsibility for the upkeep of places of worship. Fourteen respondents (44%) described the current situation as very difficult and/or likely to get worse in the future. Only four respondents (12.5%) were explicitly in favour of the current system on the grounds that it encourages community spirit and loyalty and for the practical reason that those responsible are on-the-spot and familiar with the building.

3.11.7 *Community uses*.

55% said that they used their church for non-worship use. Of those that didn't, typically they had good facilities adjacent/nearby or the church was unsuitable

because it was isolated, without toilets or with fixed pews. Three had recently built new accommodation.

4. Conclusions

The sample used in the Survey is small and not necessarily statistically representative. Nevertheless it has the advantage of being based on detailed study of actual buildings rather than just on statistics. Further work is needed to address a more representative sample of non-Anglican places of worship.

4.1 On the basis of FNS 05, we have estimated the current outstanding repair bill for listed places of worship as around £1.42 billion over ten years and £925 million over five.

4.2 It was not possible to mark off the actual repairs done to places of worship over the past decade against the works which had been suggested in CNS 94. However, actual fabric expenditure over the five and ten year periods has been compared church by church for CoE churches and set out as an 'indicator of success' against the five and ten year targets in CNS 94. Only a handful of churches had done very few repairs. By five years 38% had spent the equivalent of their 5 year target. By nine years 61% had passed that mark and 40% had already passed their ten year target. However, these successes cannot be taken to mean that the actual works anticipated in CNS 94 were those carried out. In the few cases where the expenditure could be simply related to the forecasts, the CNS 94 anticipated repair costs (suitably adjusted for inflation and for fees and VAT) were generally about right.

4.3 The annual maintenance tasks for places of worship, once in a fair state of repair, will be similar to those for churches no longer in use, but parishes may not be able to organise the works as cost effectively as the charitable trusts and the one diocese whose costs have been examined here. The average annual cost was found to be £943 at January 2006 prices. However, higher costs can be expected if the costs of routine inspections and regular re-painting are included, and in those larger buildings where ladder access is not viable.

4.4 From the very small sample of non-Anglican places of worship, listed and unlisted, repair needs were established for only nine buildings. These average £79,833 over the next ten years at Jan 2006 values, of which £51,389 will be needed within five years. Further research needs to be done on a broader range of buildings. It is hoped to carry out some inspections in the Leeds area, where a *Locality and Religion* survey is underway and where we hope to combine other denominational (and faith) interest.

A copy of the full Survey report will be posted soon on the *Inspired!* website.