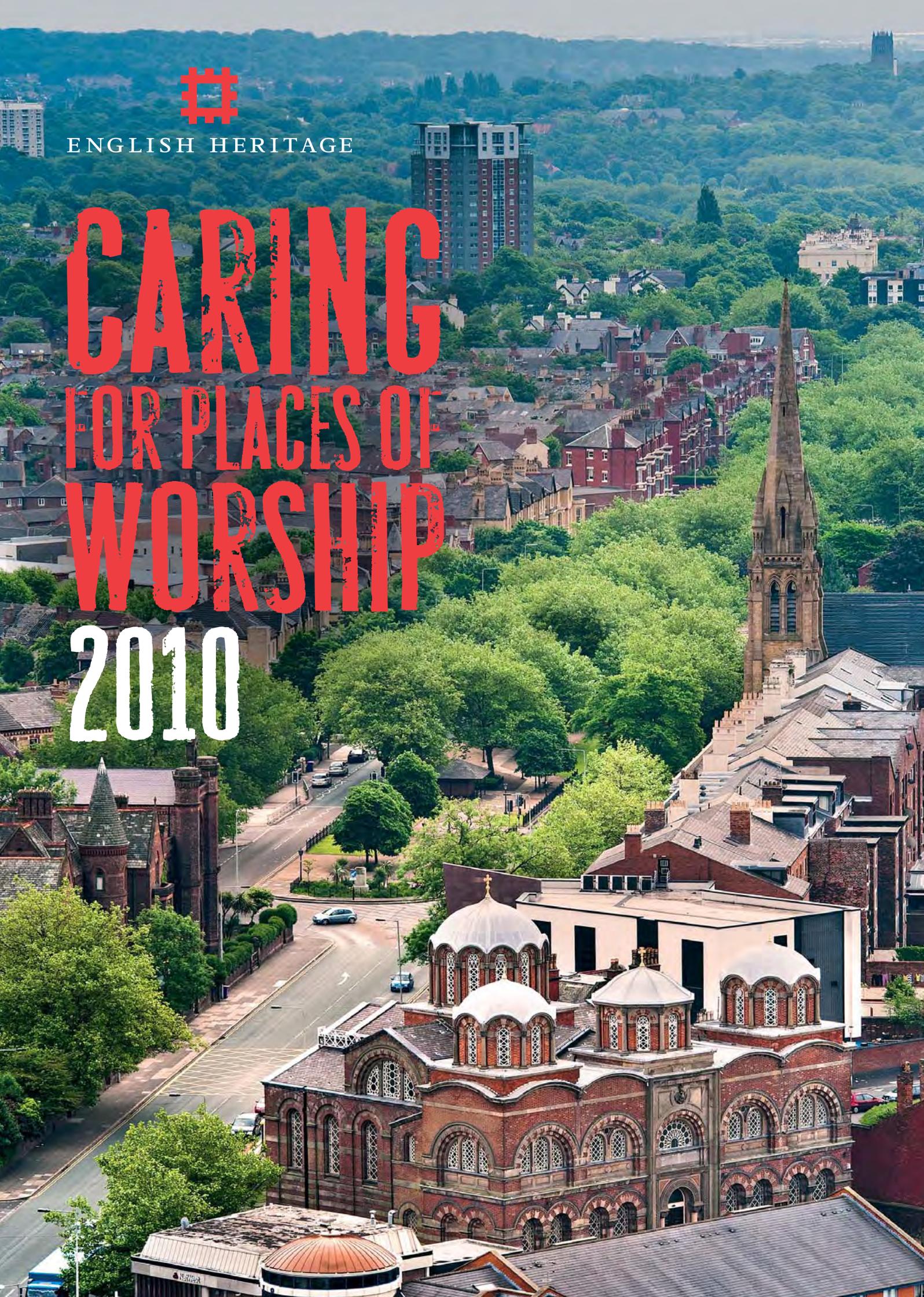




ENGLISH HERITAGE

# CARING FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP

# 2010



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### Toxteth, Liverpool

In both rural and urban England places of worship are integral parts of the historic environment, acting as landmarks and centres of community. The following places of worship are shown in the image overleaf: Greek Orthodox Church (1865–70, grade II); Princes Road Synagogue (1872–74, grade II\*); Welsh Presbyterian Church (1865–67, grade II); Church of St Matthew and St James (1870–75, grade II\*).

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# CARING FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP

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If conservation is about the management of change, then England's historic places of worship are beacons of good conservation. They have survived for many generations, withstanding weather and warfare, political and religious revolution and the ravages of fleeting fashion.

This very resilience is why their contribution to the heritage of England is often overlooked. Most people wrongly assume that they are maintained by 'the state' or some other unidentified organisation. In fact their care, repair and development are all the responsibility of local congregations. Some public funds have been offered to a small minority of the most vulnerable buildings but the vast majority of the costs are borne by those who have inherited them for worship.

Recognising the significance of places of worship to our historic, artistic and community environment is crucial to English Heritage's work with those congregations. Sometimes this will involve a parish church that has served one community since before the Reformation. On other occasions it will be a former chapel that has been a synagogue and now provides a faith centre for Muslims, or a site that combines worship, hospitality, schooling and social facilities within an old school.

Whatever the circumstances, we have to appreciate them as a dynamic places – ones that have an impact on the congregations who worship in them, on the people who value them as part of their familiar neighbourhood and on the community groups who want to adapt and widen their use. We also have to explain what makes them special enough to be designated as being of national interest and why their repair deserves the use of traditional materials and such careful attention to detail.

One of the most important lessons we have learnt during our research on places of worship over the past two years is that English Heritage needs to communicate more effectively with congregations. In particular, we must explain more clearly the complementary roles we play within the planning system, Ecclesiastical Exemption and the grant-giving process.

Congregations have also told us they want help in navigating their way through the legal, technical and financial systems that they often find overwhelming and frustrating. The newly appointed Support Officers, which we have helped to fund, will play a crucial part in helping congregations to help themselves, but we also recognise that creative partnerships with funders, faith groups and denominations will be vital if good work is to continue and best practice shared.

Nearly 90% of congregations are doing extremely well in keeping their historic buildings in a good or fair state of repair. We need to celebrate their achievement and provide what support we can to help them stay in that condition. Equally, we want to help the remaining 10% to take the first steps towards getting their buildings windproof and watertight, and thereafter gradually achieve what needs to be done to keep them safe for the future.

This is what *Caring for Places of Worship 2010* is about; trying to understand, offering constructive conservation advice and identifying those buildings that are desperately vulnerable and in need of urgent help.

English Heritage is committed to caring about places of worship. We must never take these buildings for granted, no matter how much they have proved themselves to be survivors in the past.



**Simon Thurley**  
Chief Executive, English Heritage

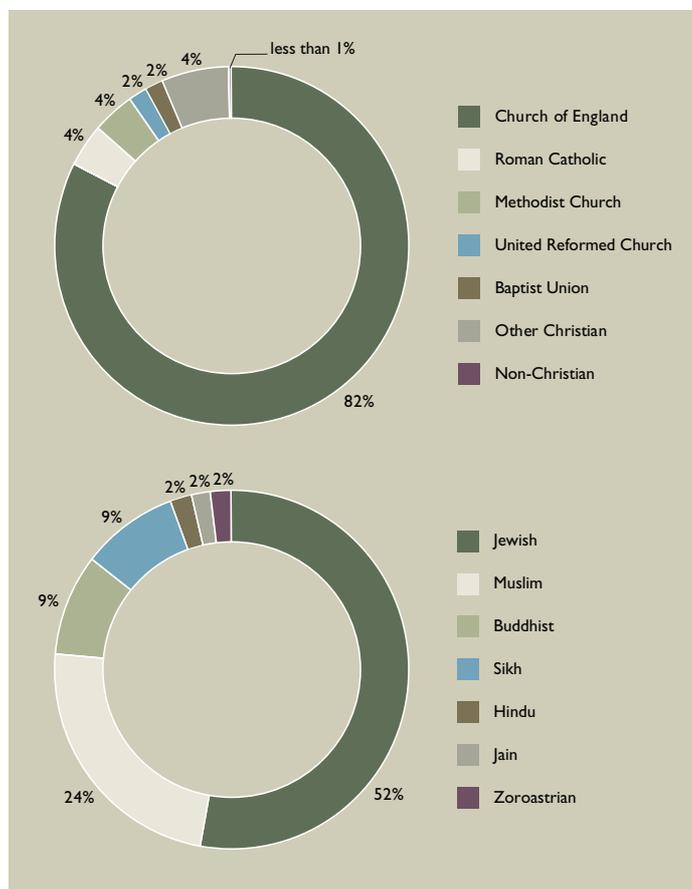
# A precious legacy

Places of worship make a huge contribution to the quality of our towns and villages. Three quarters of England's 16,000 parish churches are protected by law and almost 45% of all grade I listed buildings are places of worship. The vast majority are still used for the purpose for which they were constructed, often hundreds of years ago. Some are no longer occupied by the faith group or denomination that first built them, but the fact that they are still primarily places of worship means they reveal a more coherent narrative of aesthetic, architectural and communal experience than any other group of buildings.

Places of worship are a finite resource and they matter, whether or not the population around them wants to worship in them. During 2009 85% of the adult population visited a place of worship for a service, event or for personal interest.<sup>1</sup>

Set against that popularity is the fact that the Church of England has disposed of 346 listed church buildings in the last 20 years.<sup>2</sup> Other denominations have had to do the same, although there are no centrally-held records of the exact numbers. Some of these buildings will have been found new and sustainable uses by other faith

## LISTED PLACES OF WORSHIP BY CHRISTIAN DENOMINATION (ABOVE) AND NON-CHRISTIAN FAITH GROUPS (BELOW)



groups or commercial ventures, some have been turned into homes. However, many historic places of worship are too significant to bear radical intervention, or are in locations where alternative uses are hard to find. Unless these are vested in a charitable trust devoted to their preservation, that undertakes to raise the money to maintain the buildings (e.g. Churches Conservation Trust, Historic Chapels Trust, Friends of Friendless Churches), their future will be bleak.

## CHANGING NEEDS

The closure of a place of worship is not always caused by a failure of the building or the demise of its congregation; there are situations where the old building simply is not large enough to accommodate the flourishing community. This happened during the urban expansion of the 19th century, when large new churches were built to provide for the spiritual needs of people moving out of rural communities, but it also happens as the needs of today's congregations change. Indeed, reports from congregations across the country indicate that the majority are deeply proud of their historic buildings, valuing their status within the community, their link with previous generations' experience and their prominence within the local landscape.

## PROVIDING SUPPORT

One of English Heritage's priorities is to support the thousands of people who are keeping these precious historic buildings open and well maintained. We are doing this by identifying the sorts of practical help they need if they are to succeed in their efforts to conserve their very special buildings for the benefit of our own and future generations. This is why English Heritage is bringing places of worship into the spotlight – so that for the first time we can have a shared understanding of the condition of this immensely significant part of the nation's built heritage, and of the challenges it faces as we move onwards through the social and economic changes of the 21st century.

<sup>1</sup> Church of England Omnibus Survey, 2009 <sup>2</sup> [www.cofe.anglican.org/about/churchcommissioners/pastoralandclosedchurches/closedchurches](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/churchcommissioners/pastoralandclosedchurches/closedchurches)



## Stoke Newington, London

Old St Mary (1563, grade II\*) faces the newer St Mary (1858 grade II\*) across Church Street. These two significant buildings require maintenance and management that is stretching local resources. Across the country, many communities face similar challenges.



## Sandy's Row Synagogue, London (grade II)

This rare 18th century French Huguenot chapel, set in a narrow side street, has a plain brick exterior and, inside, a gallery supported on Doric columns. It was built to provide a spiritual home for refugees who had fled persecution in France and established themselves as a settled community in Spitalfields, London. In 1870 new residents in the area, Dutch Jews, took it over and reordered it to accommodate their liturgical practice. It is a good illustration of a building that has served different faith groups and communities over a sustained period and remains in use as a place of worship, although not for the community that originally built it and not without adaptation to suit the requirements of successive congregations.

## Crossing cultures

Representatives of Aawaz (Lancaster) visit Carlisle Cathedral as part of the North West Multi-Faith Tourism Association's Marquee of Excellence project, a scheme that encourages Places of Worship to offer a high quality welcome for visitors. This was the first time the cathedral had welcomed Muslim women into its consecrated interior. According to VisitBritain, visiting churches and cathedrals is now among the five best-rated 'things to do' in the UK.



## St Giles, Shipbourne, Kent (1879, grade II)

The last shop in Shipbourne closed in 1981. In 2003, supported by a grant from Rural Revival, the parish church made a weekly Farmers' Market welcome, reviving the local market first authorised by Edward I in 1285. In 2005 and 2009 it was voted Best Farmers Market in Kent. There are 20 stalls and more than 200 people visit them every week. It is run by volunteers and any profits are given to agricultural charities. The church roof and tower have been repaired, partly funded by an English Heritage/Heritage Lottery Fund Repair Grant.

# Giving heart to communities

Places of Worship are at the heart of communities. Physically they dominate familiar sky-lines, give character to the face of high streets and proclaim the concerns, ambitions and commitment of many generations. Economically they represent the investment of traditional skills over centuries and the philanthropic generosity of the individuals who paid and continue to pay for them. Socially they have served as meeting places and the focus of public service and volunteering. Spiritually they stand out as places of faith and education, prayer and controversy, worship and mutual support.

Over and above their role as centres for faith groups, places of worship offer numerous benefits for the wider community. Many faith groups need catering facilities because their religious practice includes offering hospitality to all. Numerous Christian denominations similarly consider the sharing of coffee or a meal as a vital part of their communal life.

Community benefit can also take the form of internet access or shops, crèches and health care centres, whether provided by the congregation or through partnerships with voluntary sector bodies, local authorities or commercial partners. As a result, marginalised groups can be provided with affordable services that are not otherwise available to them. It also means that members of the community who would never previously have identified with the building can develop a new sense of ownership and interest in its future.

The welcome offered to tourists is a variation on the old theme of pilgrimage to sacred sites. Places of worship have traditionally been on the itinerary for both domestic and overseas visitors and therefore make a significant contribution to local economies. <sup>1</sup>

Closer to home, places of worship offer educational experiences to young people and can contribute to curriculum targets ranging from history and religious education to art and design, ecology and maths.

## THE NEEDS OF WORSHIP

For many congregations, however, activities of this kind must take second place to the needs of worship. In Catholic churches, for instance, the sacred importance of the central space means that secular activities must be accommodated in ancillary rooms rather than the body of the church. The value of a holy, set-aside space to the community cannot be quantified, but every building that is kept open provides a haven for people, especially those seeking a place of calm and quietness.

Even congregations that wish to share their space have to tread a fine line between the facilities it offers and the building's primary role. One building that hosted a bookshop found the peaceful atmosphere was destroyed by conversation, mobile phones and the other sounds of normal business. Regular visitors who came to pray stopped coming until the thriving bookshop found other premises nearby; the evening concerts and lectures continued but the day-time balance was restored, to the satisfaction of all.

### The socio-economic benefits of listed places of worship

**In the North West** 98% of places of worship have rooms used by the community <sup>2</sup>

**In the North East** 50% of places of worship offer activities for older people or baby/toddler groups; <sup>3</sup> 33% undertake some form of youth work

**In Yorkshire and the Humber** 25% of churchgoers are involved in community work through their church <sup>4</sup>

**In the West Midlands** 33% places of worship offer certified courses or training within their walls; <sup>5</sup> 25% offer lunch or another meal

**In the East Midlands** An estimated 85,000 volunteer hours are donated by church members in Derbyshire <sup>6</sup>

**In the East of England** 30% of respondent places of worship ran projects designed for unemployed adults <sup>7</sup>

**In London** 70% of places of worship had buildings available for use by the local community, benefitting more than 120,000 people <sup>8</sup>

**In the South East** 94% of responding places of worship in deprived areas were involved in social action <sup>9</sup>

**In the South West** An estimated 165,000 people are supported by community and social activities undertaken by places of worship <sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ECOTEC Survey (2004) <sup>2</sup> *Faith in England's Northwest: The Contribution Made by Faith Communities to Civil Society in the Region* (2003) <sup>3</sup> *Faith in the North East: Social Action by Faith Communities in the Region* (2004) <sup>4</sup> *Angels and Advocates: Church Social Action in Yorkshire and the Humber* (2002) <sup>5</sup> *Believing in the Region: A Baseline Study of Faith Bodies across the West Midlands* (2006) <sup>6</sup> *Faith in Derbyshire* (April 2006) <sup>7</sup> *Faith in the East of England: A Research Study on the Vital Role Played by Faith Communities in the Social, Economic and Spiritual Life of a Region* (2005) <sup>8</sup> *Regenerating London: Faith Communities and Social Action* (2002) <sup>9</sup> *Beyond Belief? Faith at Work in the Community* (2004) <sup>10</sup> *Faith in Action in the South West* (2006)

# The challenge of care

Two crucial facts underpin the maintenance of these buildings. Firstly they are looked after by volunteers – whose priority is not the care of historic fabric but the living-out of their faith. Secondly, they are almost entirely financed by their own congregations.

The upkeep of 14,500 listed buildings is a huge challenge for the volunteers who care for them. English Heritage estimates that there are £925m<sup>1</sup> of outstanding repairs that need to be done in the next five years. Grants of £40m<sup>2</sup> a year help, but the vast majority of repairs have to be financed from voluntary giving – a major challenge in a climate of increased unemployment, low interest rates and reduced returns on invested capital. Some congregations will branch out to seek grants and donations and others to secure partnership funding from local authorities and businesses, but in the end the sustainability of any place of worship depends on the willingness of faith groups to give of their own, personal, resources.

This responsibility is unevenly distributed. In Rutland there are only 738 people per listed building and in Herefordshire there are 786. On the other hand, in Slough, Southend and Blackpool there is only one listed place of worship for every 20,000 people.<sup>3</sup> A pre-industrial legacy means the cost of maintenance falls to a very small number of people, mainly in rural areas.

What are the biggest concerns of congregations? To find out, English Heritage undertook a series of consultation events in March 2010 with congregations, user groups and local authorities.

## WHAT CONGREGATIONS TOLD US

The majority view was that an historic place of worship is a blessing rather than a burden: 'Our historic buildings are a continuing witness of faith to pass on to future generations'. For some, however, there was a real sense that the building had a negative impact on their mission and service to the community. By contrast, several Catholic consultees highlighted the fact that for many communities, especially those from eastern Europe, the church is one of the only public spaces where they feel comfortable because they understand its physical character.

In discussing the use of their buildings many congregations expressed concern about being seen to be 'in competition' with village schools and halls. In urban areas a similar conflict might arise if other social enterprises were established locally. Consultees stressed the need to take the broader community's needs and established provision into account to avoid embarrassing social tensions and the possibility of two ventures failing where one would have been able to thrive.

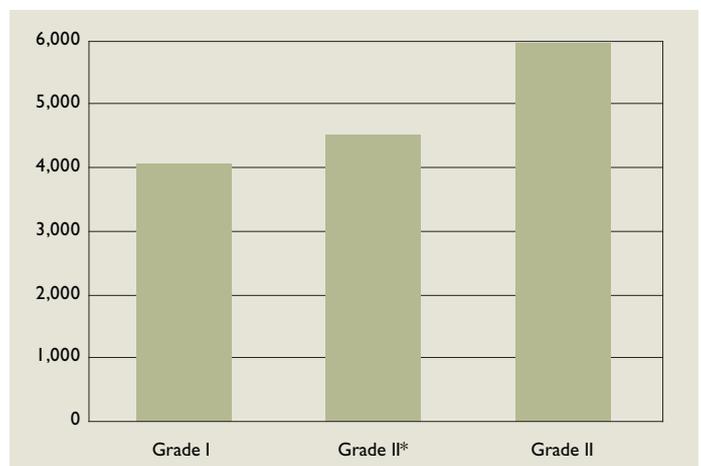
Our consultation suggested that there is relatively little sustained community use of listed places of worship, what there is tending to be limited to one-off events such as concerts. Very few congregations had accessed funding for activities and most had no idea how to apply for secular project resources. Many that had explored wider uses found they were frustrated because they lacked basic facilities such as toilets and kitchens.

## THE NEED FOR ADVICE

The discussions also revealed occasions where congregations had not fully understood the value of talking to local authorities about their plans. They highlighted situations in which architects had told congregations that they would not gain support for their visions for their listed building from ecclesiastical bodies, amenity societies or secular authorities. Direct encounters at the consultation meetings demonstrated to them that this was absolutely not the case.

Congregations all agreed that the single biggest challenge faced by places of worship was the decline in the number of and increase in the age of worshippers: 'In twenty years time there will be no one left to look after the building, that is the simple truth'.<sup>4</sup> Congregations were nevertheless keen to know more about funding opportunities and to understand the role that English Heritage and local authorities play in obtaining permission to make changes to buildings and in providing grants.

## PLACES OF WORSHIP LISTED AT GRADES I, II\* AND II



<sup>1</sup> Based on the 2005 Fabric Needs Survey <sup>2</sup> Estimated on the basis of Repair Grants for Places of Worship – £25m, Listed Places of Worship Scheme £13m and Trusts £2m <sup>3</sup> English Heritage figures and mid-year population estimates 2008 <sup>4</sup> Comment made during English Heritage 'Living Stones' research



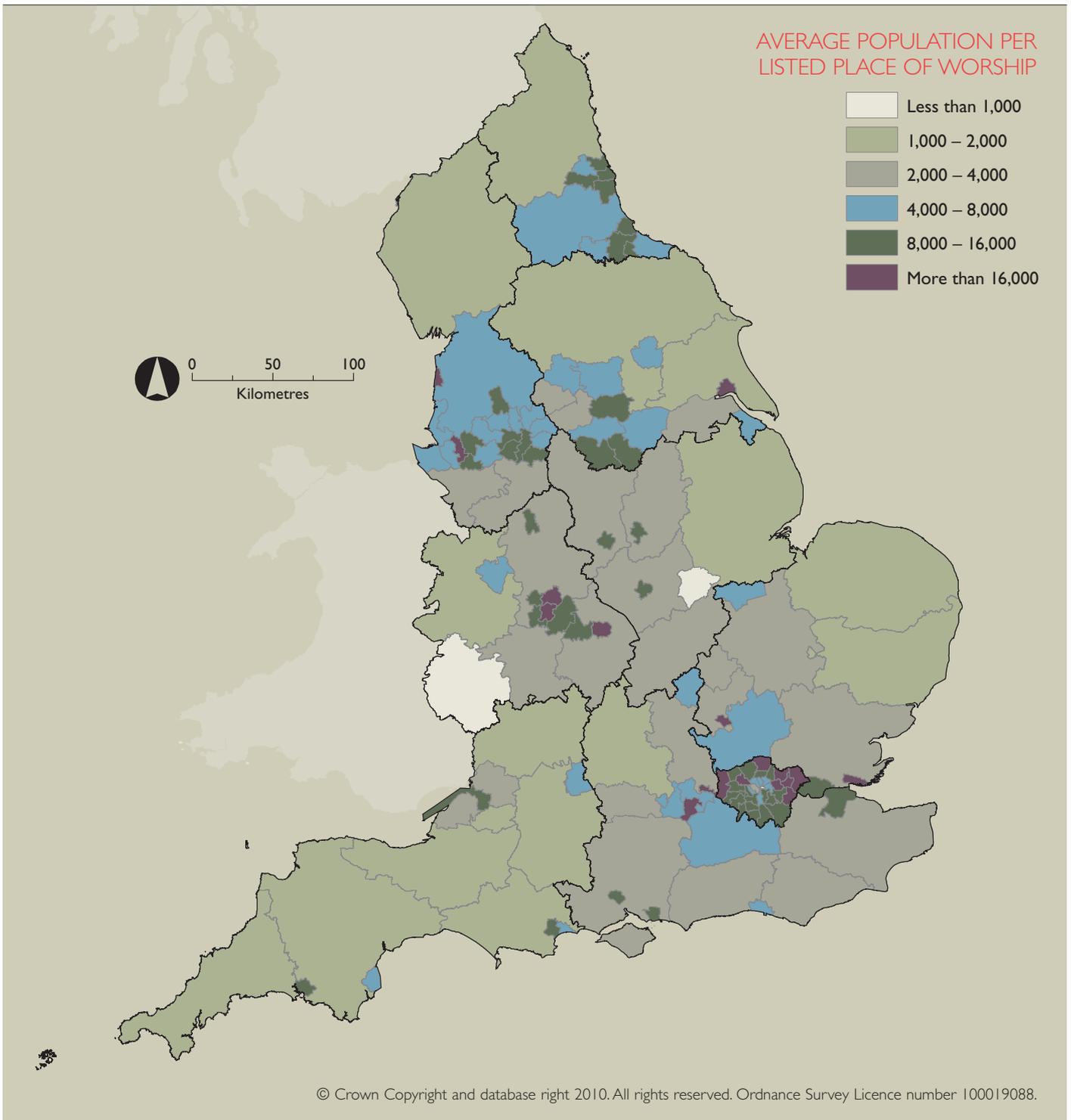
## The things congregations say they want to know more about

- Finding out what makes their building significant
- Getting permission to make changes
- How to get funding for installing tea points and toilets
- Unlocking potential funding
- Finding out what the wider community needs
- Opening up to visitors
- Looking after the building by increasing support



### Prescott Baptist Chapel, Culmstock, Devon (grade II)

This isolated rural chapel, with adjacent Manse, was rebuilt in 1715-18 when religious dissent was thriving amongst the agricultural population. The excellent interior includes galleries and seating made to high standards of country craftsmanship as well as graffiti dated 1719 and 1721. The small surviving congregation has a deep attachment to the building and wants it to serve the local community. The congregation is no longer able to meet the cost of urgently needed maintenance; rotten windows and roof problems mean serious decay of historic fabric and, possibly, closure is imminent.



## Assemblies of the First Born, Lozells Road, Birmingham (1880, grade II)

The Assemblies of the First Born Church of God took over the building in 2002. The congregation was unable to worship in the church due to its state of disrepair but has now raised funding, including grants from English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. When the work is complete the congregation should be able to move from temporary accommodation in the adjacent hall into the church itself. The repair of the building has become something of a regeneration symbol for the community in Lozells as it occupies a prominent position in the area and provides a range of social services.



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# The survey results

As well as listening to what congregations have to say about their buildings, English Heritage has undertaken a survey of the physical condition of a representative sample of listed places of worship across the country – the first of its kind and a vital starting point for understanding the challenges facing this irreplaceable component of the nation's heritage.

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In a 15% sample survey of listed places of worship in England, 1 in 9 (11%) were found to be in poor or very bad physical condition and therefore potentially at risk. Some 4 out of 10 are in good condition and the remainder in are fair condition.

This initial survey suggests that the likelihood of a place of worship being at risk is unevenly distributed across grades and locations. The preliminary results indicate that grade I and II\* places of worship are significantly more likely to be at risk than grade II. Thus we found that 14% (1 in 7) grade I and 13% (1 in 8) grade II\* buildings were at risk, but just 8% (1 in 13) of the grade II examples in the sample. The reasons for this are yet to be understood. It might be because highly graded buildings are more complex structures, or that their location has an impact on their condition. The survey suggests, for instance, that rural places of worship are more likely to be at risk than urban ones: 13% (1 in 8) as opposed to 9% (1 in 11).

## EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

However, there are exceptions to this. Small sub-surveys of inner city areas in London and Birmingham and of all listed synagogues, suggest that places of worship in our inner city areas might be more at risk than average. In Tower Hamlets and Hackney, where all places of worship were surveyed, 21% were in poor or very bad condition. A similar survey in inner city Birmingham (defined as within 3km of the city centre but excluding the central business district) indicated that 28% were at risk. More research is needed to explore whether these sub-surveys reveal something that is generally the case or whether they have accidentally picked up hot-spot areas.

The national survey of one distinctively urban group of buildings, synagogues, also runs against the perceived trend of rural buildings being at greater risk. Thus 11 of the 32 listed synagogues were found to be in poor or very bad condition. This may illustrate the issues faced by any buildings belonging to faith groups relocating away from historic urban locations or reducing in number; or it may indicate a challenge faced particularly by the Jewish communities.

## REGIONAL VARIATIONS

The survey also suggests significant differences between regions. In Yorkshire and the Humber and the North East only 6% of buildings surveyed were judged to be in poor or very bad condition, significantly lower than the national average. In some regions (West Midlands, South East and East of England) an above average number appeared to be at risk. This needs to be explored further.

The survey also identified regional differences in the location of places of worship at risk. For example in the East of England, three quarters of places at worship at risk are rural whereas in the North West three out of four are in urban locations. This is probably because of the dramatic decline in populations that these places of worship were set up to serve – agricultural labourers in the East, industrial workers in the North West – but more research is needed to fully understand the reasons behind the differing pictures across England's regions. We very much hope that faith groups and others interested in the historic environment will find this research an interesting starting point and be stimulated to pursue it in greater depth.

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## Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking (1889, grade II\*)

Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner constructed Europe's first purpose-built mosque beyond those created centuries ago in Spain, in the Surrey town of Woking. It still serves a thriving community that overflows into ancillary buildings for Friday prayers.



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# A cause for concern?

In our survey 89% of listed places of worship sampled were in good or fair condition. This is a major achievement on the part of the many congregations who care for them. But what of the 11% that are in poor or very bad condition, and thus potentially at risk; what can we say about them?

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Of the 227 surveyed places of worship potentially at risk, 12 appeared to be under repair at the time of the survey. Of these, 5 were being partly funded by the Repair Grants for Places of Worship and their future should be positive. 22 others were found to be out of use, of which 5 were unusable as a result of fire damage, which clearly poses a severe challenge to their future.

Listed places of worship are frequently old and complex buildings that require high levels of maintenance to keep them in good condition. Often their voluntary stewards lack experience or training to look after such complicated and historically sensitive structures. Their congregations also frequently struggle to find the funds needed for day-to-day maintenance, let alone the more substantial long-term programmes of repair.

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## Guru Teg Bahadur Sikh Gurdwara, Lenton, Nottingham (1841, grade II)

When the Sikh community acquired this former school extensive repairs were needed; further repairs and improvements are planned.



## THE CHALLENGE OF REPAIR

With rare exceptions places of worship are not commercial businesses (although they may be social enterprises), which means that they do not generate profits to reinvest in the building. Nobody stands to make a personal financial gain from a place of worship – whatever condition it is in. This also makes it harder to attract investors in their future; grant-making bodies are generally the only option, unless generous personal benefactors can be found.

Many places of worship, especially grade I and II\* examples, incorporate different phases of construction and several centuries of development. This means that their repair depends on the highly trained skills of professional architects, engineers and craftsmen. As well as increasing the costs of maintenance and repair this makes it much harder for their owners to identify the right people to do the necessary work.

## ADAPTING TO CHANGE

A particular issue raised by the places of worship survey is the way in which faith buildings migrate between denominations and faith groups. A building that began life as a chapel is transformed into a synagogue and then becomes a gurdwara or mosque as the local population continues to come and go. As a result it remains in use as a place of worship, but each time with a new cultural identity. Its story becomes an important part of the experience of succeeding generations, all the while increasing its significance both locally and nationally.

Some faith groups have a very functional view of their buildings, which means that they are quite content for another denomination or faith group to take them over when they no longer need them for their own purposes. Others, however, believe their place of worship to have a permanently holy dedication and are therefore unwilling to allow members of a different faith to inherit their sacred space. This can sometimes be a very significant challenge for congregations seeking ways of preventing their places of worship falling into neglect and decay.

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## Highfield Trinity Methodist Church, Sheffield (1877, grade II)

This typical Victorian gothic urban Methodist church is distinguished by a prominent tower and spire. The building was in serious disrepair, with leaking roofs, unsafe masonry to the steeple and poor access for maintenance. A £394,000 project, largely funded by grants, including the Listed Places of Worship Scheme, has since addressed these issues. Today it is well-used by four congregations – one Methodist, two West African and the fourth an Afro-Caribbean Pentecostal church. Between them they have financed the removal of many of the disfiguring internal alterations, completely redecorated the interior and upgraded the facilities. As a result, the church is now able to meet the needs of this neighbourhood.

## St Mary Magdalene, Stoke Canon, Devon (15th and 19th centuries, grade I)

The building remains primarily used for worship but sensitive alterations mean that the wider community can be offered hospitality and much appreciated opportunities for other kinds of social gathering. Most importantly the neighbouring school is now able to use the nave on a regular basis, enhancing the facilities offered to local children.



## St Margaret's, Paston, Norfolk (14th century, grade I)

The tiny village of Paston (population 265) managed to support one service each month but was concerned that the church might be closed. The Paston Heritage Society (dedicated to celebrating the famous medieval Paston family and the local area) is working with the congregation to keep the building open for worship alongside use as a heritage, arts and community resource. This has already increased access to the building and allowed better interpretation of its long and interesting history; the next objective is to raise further funds to develop new facilities for visitors. This is a great example of small local communities sharing the parish church but keeping it open for regular worship.

# Sharing the load

England's places of worship are hugely valued, not only by their congregations but also by their surrounding communities and the nation at large. We also know that they need constant maintenance if they are to survive for future generations.

In 2006 English Heritage used its *Inspired!* campaign to raise awareness of the vital importance of routine maintenance for safeguarding historic places of worship. Supported by all the major denominations, the campaign identified how English Heritage, government and the faith communities could work together to address the rising costs of repairs and ensure a sustainable future for these irreplaceable buildings.

One of the most important results was the launch, in December 2008, of a new English Heritage grant scheme to enable denominations and faith groups to appoint Support Officers to help congregations with the care, maintenance and development of their buildings. The subsequent take-up of Support Officer grants has been encouraging. By the end of March 2010, 12 posts had been created and job descriptions for a further 12 were being agreed – a positive result given that the funding was offered at the heart of the financial crisis, when many organisations were thinking about making existing staff redundant.

## NEW PARTNERSHIPS

The recognition of places of worship as 'very profound assets for mission' <sup>1</sup> and a desire to see many of them used as 'places of assembly and celebration for the whole community' <sup>2</sup> means that the Support Officer posts are helping to address some very topical concerns. At the same time, some innovative conversations with a range of secular bodies have begun to look at ways in which faith buildings could help in the delivery of local and national services.

Another approach for hard-pressed congregations is to seek the help of others who want to keep the building in good repair as part of the local environment. Friends' groups, volunteers who mow the burial ground, fund-raising committees that arrange coffee mornings and concerts all have a part to play – the kind of social 'glue' that has traditionally bound English rural and urban communities together.

## ENGAGING THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Almost a thousand Friends groups are now registered with the Charity Commission and unnumbered others

operate as sub-committees of Parochial Church Councils and similar groups. For all that, there is no Friends' Forum to help them share their knowledge and learn from one another's experiences. <sup>3</sup> English Heritage is therefore supporting the National Churches Trust so it can create a network for Friends' groups, through which good ideas can be disseminated, achievements celebrated and information about setting up new groups easily found.

Congregations also involve members of the wider community in more immediately practical ways. Sometimes local businesses can be persuaded to sponsor fund-raising events or provide practical support for concerts or exhibitions. Local authorities can also become valuable partners through their encouragement of farmers' markets or tourism ventures focused in and around the church.

The value of this kind of wider participation is incalculable. In recognition, the Church of England has recently passed legislation that allows congregations to lease part of the place of worship to partners on a commercial basis, an option taken up thus far by playgroups and cafés, funeral directors and craftsman. <sup>4</sup>

## Support Officers

Historic Places of Worship Support Officers, employed by partners but part-funded by English Heritage, help congregations to fund repairs, develop facilities and welcome visitors.



<sup>1</sup> Prebendary Philippa Boardman, General Synod, 9 February 2010 <sup>2</sup> The Right Revd Richard Chartres *Churches and Faith Buildings; Realising the Potential* (2009) CLG, DCMS, HMT, DEFRA, OTS and Church of England <sup>3</sup> The Revd Lawrence Mortimer, a Trustee of Sanctuary UK has done much to promote the idea of a national Friends' trust <sup>4</sup> Pastoral (Amendment) Measure 2006

# A stitch in time

Maintenance is crucial to keeping listed places of worship in good repair – a ‘stitch in time’ is still the best way of avoiding unnecessary and expensive problems. Clearing blocked gutters, replacing a slipped tile or mending a split in a lead sheet can be a nuisance, but leaving them undone can result in much more serious headaches. For many congregations the idea of spending hundreds of pounds on minor repairs feels at odds with their primary business of worship and charitable giving. It is nevertheless a crucial investment for the future.

Before any building can serve the worshipping and wider community it has to be windproof and watertight. This requires both week-by-week basic maintenance and regular inspection to identify incipient major problems. Helping volunteers to understand the importance of maintenance is the driving aim of the Faith in Maintenance project led by The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and jointly funded by Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage. Over a five-year period faith groups will have access to more than 30 training days a year; informative monthly email bulletins, a telephone helpline, an internet forum, a maintenance manual and accompanying DVD – all entirely free of charge.

The size and complexity of many places of worship means that they cannot be properly maintained by volunteers alone; high level guttering, complex roof construction and inaccessible gullies all depend on professional contractors for their regular cleaning. Responding to this reality, English Heritage worked

## Faith in Maintenance

Volunteers learn about the care of historic brickwork at Old St Mary's, Stoke Newington, during a training day organised by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.



## ADULT AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE IN CHURCH OF ENGLAND PARISHES IN 2001

ADULTS	PARISHES	%
1-5	130	1
6-10	650	5
11-20	2,500	19
21-30	1,800	14
31-50	2,200	17
51-100	3,100	24
OVER 100	2,600	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,950</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Trevor Cooper, *How Do We Keep Our Parish Churches?*)

with the Anglican dioceses of London, Gloucester and St Edmundsbury and Ipswich to create pilot schemes to provide a fairly priced, high-quality service to congregations. These have in turn allowed the production of more general guidance on what a contractor should agree to do for a particular price and how congregations or denominations in other parts of the country might set up similar schemes of their own.

## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Not all repairs are due to bad maintenance. Even the best construction materials eventually fail – roofs need recovering, stonework replacing and previous repairs re-furbishing. Every building owner needs to plan for such eventualities and that means putting aside funds each year to offset the inevitable expenditure. For congregations that live hand-to-mouth, however, that can often be an impossible dream.

Meeting the costs of repair can be a real challenge even for large congregations. For the 6% of Anglican congregations with 10 or fewer regular Sunday worshippers ■ it is difficult enough to cover the costs of day-to-day essentials such as insurance, heating and lighting and the minister's expenses.

■ 2001 Church of England figures quoted in Trevor Cooper, *How Do We Keep Our Parish Churches?* (2004), The Ecclesiological Society



## Colchester Garrison Orthodox Church, Essex (1856, grade II\*)

Originally constructed as a military hospital during the Crimean War, this is the only remaining church of its type. The Army ceased to use the building in 2007 as part of the redevelopment of Colchester Garrison and a new user, probably another Christian group, is now being sought.



## St John, Chester (late 11th century, grade I)

The building is in poor condition and an appeal to raise £10 million in the next decade has just been launched. The roof and the underlying integrated ceilings need attention and urgent masonry failings must be addressed. One of the problems is the high-level stonework, which is particularly susceptible to erosion due to a combination of exposure and its inherent porosity. The expansion of rusting iron dowels is cracking masonry and structural movement of the outer facing of the clerestory stone has been inadequately restrained in the past. There are several unstable pinnacles to the parapets, which, if dislodged, will cause extensive damage. There is strong leadership behind the fund-raising drive and public awareness of the situation has been enormously increased through local media. The church is open daily for visitors and also organises a huge spectrum of public events throughout the year, including regular concerts.



## St Mary Magdalene, Lincoln (rebuilt 1695, grade II)

This urban building is difficult to access and maintain because of its tight city centre location. Clearing gutters and refixing roof tiles requires the use of a cherry picker, which is expensive, although the north side can be reached via the tower and a neighbouring hotel. The condition of the roof and gutters and the stonework of the tower causes concern. Although the walls are generally in good condition they have been repaired using modern materials that are now damaging historic stonework. The ceilings below the roofs have decorative painted schemes that are wonderful but quite dirty; further water ingress through the roof would cause considerable damage to the historic fabric but if that can be stopped, and the ceilings cleaned, the results would be impressive. This building can play a crucial part in enhancing the public realm as part of proposed works in the Bailgate area of the city.

# A helping hand

Managing historic buildings is a challenge. They require understanding and skills that have to be learned, whether those responsible for them are volunteers or professionals. Getting the right people to undertake particular jobs is crucial – people who understand the significance of the building, who know about the materials from which it is constructed and who have access to the technologies needed for its sustainable repair.

Great damage can be done to an historic building despite the very best of intentions – the enthusiastic volunteer who brightens up the interior of a church with a coat of emulsion only to discover that this prevents the evaporation of damp and leads to wet floors and rotting roof timbers, or the public-spirited architect who proposes interventions that will damage the fabric and significance of the building in ways that an experienced conservation architect would have avoided. It is very hard for congregations to turn down such offers of help, not only because they appear to provide low-cost solutions but because of the affront to goodwill. Places of worship depend on a volunteer culture, in which any assistance is gratefully received, whether or not it is exactly what is required.

## Conservation craft skill in action

Rory Young completes the fixing of Christ Triumphant, which he designed and carved, on the chancel gable at St Peter, Windrush, in Oxfordshire.



## GRANT APPLICATIONS AND OFFERS 2007 TO 2010

FINANCIAL YEARS 2007-08 TO 2009-10	Average no. applications per year	% of total no. in region applying	Average no. offers per year	% of total no. in region receiving grants
EAST OF ENGLAND	72	3.1	33	1.4
EAST MIDLANDS	50	2.7	24	1.3
LONDON	28	3.6	15	1.9
NORTH EAST	7	1.4	5	1.0
NORTH WEST	56	4.3	29	2.2
SOUTH EAST	52	2.3	27	1.2
SOUTH WEST	47	1.6	20	0.7
WEST MIDLANDS	60	4.3	37	2.7
YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER	67	4.9	30	2.2
	<b>439</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>1.5</b>

## ADVICE WHEN IT IS NEEDED

A congregation that wants to use suitably skilled craftsmen and architects may find it challenging to identify the right people. For example, if it wants to use an architect or surveyor with an accreditation in historic building conservation (essential if an English Heritage or Heritage Lottery Fund grant is involved) there are only 421 in England. <sup>1</sup> In terms of contractors and craftsman, congregations also need help in identifying those of good reputation and sound workmanship.

English Heritage and the HLF will continue to offer £25m a year in grants to places of worship in England until at least 2013. Less certain after 2011 is the future of the government's Listed Places of Worship scheme, which allows VAT to be reclaimed on repairs and is currently injecting a further £13 million each year into the care of listed places of worship. Of equal concern are proposed changes to Gift Aid arrangements, which are estimated to reduce the annual income for places of worship by at least £4 million. <sup>2</sup>

However, it is very encouraging that the survey shows that 89% of congregations are already negotiating these challenges and achieving very positive results.

<sup>1</sup> RICS Conservation Accredited Surveyors (58); Architects Accredited in Building Conservation (AABC) (363) <sup>2</sup> The Right Revd Michael Langrish, Bishop of Exeter and Chair of the Churches Legislation Advisory Service, General Synod February 2010. For more about gift aid see [www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals/giving/gift-aid.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals/giving/gift-aid.htm)

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# Looking ahead

This Places of Worship at Risk survey provides a snapshot of the condition of a representative sample of the nation's listed religious buildings. Some may since have been repaired and will now be in fair or good condition. Others will have deteriorated, tipping them from fair to poor. Others still will have received sufficient attention to halt their deterioration, even if it has not solved all of their problems. The survey has provided us with a better understanding than ever before of the physical state of this country's irreplaceable stock of historic places of worship.

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After July 2010 individual places of worship identified as being in poor or very bad condition will be placed on the Heritage at Risk Register. It is hoped that this will draw attention to their vulnerability and encourage their congregations, communities and local authorities to seek help to repair and sustain them.

English Heritage is committed to supporting congregations in their task of stewardship, whether or not their particular buildings are amongst the minority on the at risk Register. In addition to providing grant-aid for specific buildings we will continue to fund the Support Officer scheme and to provide expertise and guidance where it is needed.

As part of this year's Heritage at Risk programme we are also distributing a 'Caring for Places of Worship' booklet to every congregation using a listed building – a practical guide to finding information about funders, health and safety issues, security, maintenance, welcoming visitors and broadening community involvement. This will include short films, accessible on both computer and television, in which those responsible for a listed place of worship talk of their experiences. Further resources will be available through [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk) for congregations wanting more detailed information. In addition the National Churches Trust will provide a telephone helpline for people who would rather speak than surf, in parallel with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings' technical helpline, run in conjunction with *Faith in Maintenance*.

## THE ROLE OF CONGREGATIONS

English Heritage hopes that denominations and individual congregations will want to explore the condition of their buildings more thoroughly in the light of Places of Worship at Risk. To support this, a self-assessment manual prepared for use by volunteers in Hackney and Tower Hamlets will be available to download from the English Heritage website. Together, these tools will enable congregations, circuits, deaneries, synods and meetings, fabric officers, property stewards and caretakers to gain

a better understanding of their own places of worship and in turn to be more confident about managing them in an appropriate and sustainable way.

In parallel, based on its own consultation with congregations, English Heritage has developed advice for groups wanting to share experiences and to foster discussion with local authorities and the wider community. ■ Effective communication between all interested parties is the key to creating strong and creative partnerships, ones that simultaneously acknowledge the unique qualities that places of worship make to our historic environment and recognise the massive contribution of those prepared to be responsible for their care, use and development.

## AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

This survey strongly suggests that the vast majority of places of worship are actually in good or fair condition. This is a cause for celebration and gratitude to the many who work so hard. What it doesn't reveal is what the future might hold. Will it be a world of thriving congregations, multiple sustainable uses and a positive approach to maintenance and cyclical repairs? Will the ageing of the national population and a steady rise in retirement ages reduce the pool of volunteers with strength and energy to carry out essential maintenance tasks?

These are the issues that need to be explored by the denominations and faith groups themselves. English Heritage is very keen to work in partnership to encourage strategic thinking about the future of places of worship. How should we develop the Support Officer role or continue to assess the significance of places of worship and their potential for change? How might we respond to the concerns raised in the Church of England Synod about the need for a national and diocesan strategic vision? ■ These are all vital questions, and ones that we believe will in future be helped by the addition of places of worship to our annual survey of Heritage at Risk.

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■ Exploring the Value or Role of Places of Worship: A Toolkit for Consultation. Living Stones for English Heritage (2010) ■ General Synod debate on Church Buildings February 2010, various speakers including the Rt Revd Anthony Priddis, the Very Revd Michael Sadgrove and Mr Roy Thompson



## Former St John's Church, Belper, Derbyshire (1260, grade II)

This historic church was closed in 1986, but since then it has been adapted for constructive re-use as the Town Council chamber and the home of the local heritage centre.



## St Lawrence, Warkworth, Northumberland (12th century, grade I)

St Lawrence's has always been prominent within the historic settlement of Warkworth (population 2000). Aside from worship the building welcomes other community events including concerts, exhibitions and flower festivals. It is well loved and thriving. However, the building is too heavy for the ground on which it stands. By 2007 the north wall bulged and its condition was critical. The church was so significant and the priority for action so high that the site was placed on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk Register. Structural surveys were undertaken to determine the most appropriate approach to stabilise the north wall. Repair work was completed in August 2009.

# Further information

## HERITAGE AT RISK ON THE WEB

To find out more about Places of Worship at Risk and English Heritage's broader Heritage at Risk programme visit [www.english-heritage.org.uk/risk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/risk) where you will find an interactive database providing detailed information on all heritage sites at risk nationally.

For further information about the different classes of designated heritage assets, including listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and protected wreck sites visit the Heritage Protection section of our website [www.english-heritage.org.uk/heritageprotection](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/heritageprotection)

### SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR HISTORIC PLACES OF WORSHIP

#### English Heritage

Customer Services  
0870 333 1181  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

#### Funds for Historic Buildings

A directory of funding sources especially for historic buildings.  
[www.ffhb.org.uk](http://www.ffhb.org.uk)

#### Heritage Lottery Fund

Has useful guidance on various aspects of looking after historic sites.  
Helpline 020 7591 6000  
[www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

#### National Churches Trust

An independent source of advice and grants. Their website includes a directory of professional advisers, building contractors and craftsmen.  
020 7600 6090  
[www.nationalchurchestrust.org](http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org)

#### Heritage Alliance

The Heritage Alliance funding directory  
[www.heritagelink.org.uk/fundingdirectory](http://www.heritagelink.org.uk/fundingdirectory)

### DIOCESAN MAINTENANCE SCHEMES

#### London

London Diocesan maintenance scheme  
[www.london.anglican.org/gutters](http://www.london.anglican.org/gutters)

#### Gloucester and Maintain our Heritage

[www.gutterclear.org](http://www.gutterclear.org)

#### St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

[www.stedmundsbury.anglican.org/pages/admin/downloads/Elix\\_72.pdf](http://www.stedmundsbury.anglican.org/pages/admin/downloads/Elix_72.pdf)

### SOURCES OF GENERAL ADVICE

#### Building Conservation Directory

An annual publication and also an online database of suppliers and professional advisers.  
01747 871717  
[www.buildingconservation.com](http://www.buildingconservation.com)

#### Churchcare

The Churchcare website offers advice for Anglican parishes on the care and development of their buildings. Much of the advice is applicable to any place of worship.  
020 7898 1866  
[www.churchcare.co.uk](http://www.churchcare.co.uk)

#### Faith in Maintenance

Guidance on how to maintain your building and information on maintenance training courses.  
020 7456 0913  
[www.spabfm.org.uk](http://www.spabfm.org.uk)

See also, **National Churches Trust** (details above)

### REGISTERS OF ACCREDITED PROFESSIONALS

#### Architects

Architects Accredited in Building Conservation (AABC)  
01625 871458  
[www.aabc-register.co.uk](http://www.aabc-register.co.uk)

#### Conservator-restorers

Conservation Register  
020 7785 3805  
[www.conservationregister.com](http://www.conservationregister.com)

#### Surveyors

Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)  
0870 333 1600  
[www.rics.org](http://www.rics.org) (follow the links to Services/Find a surveyor/Accreditation)

### DENOMINATIONAL BODIES

#### Baptist Union of Great Britain

General Enquiries  
01235 517 700  
[www.baptist.org.uk](http://www.baptist.org.uk)  
(follow links to Resources /Admin/BUC Guidelines)

#### Catholic Church in England and Wales

Patrimony Sub Committee  
020 7630 8220  
[www.catholic-ew.org.uk](http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk)  
(follow the links to Bishops Conference/Departments/Christian Life and Worship/Patrimony Committee)

#### Church of England

Church Buildings Council  
020 7898 1866  
[www.cofe.anglican.org](http://www.cofe.anglican.org)  
(follow the links to About the Church/Built Heritage)

#### Methodist Church

Resourcing Mission Office  
0161 236 5194  
[www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk)  
(follow links to Church Life/Resourcing Mission Office)

#### United Reformed Church

General enquiries  
020 7916 2020  
[www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)  
(follow links to What We Do/Administration/PLATO)

### STATUTORY AMENITY SOCIETIES

#### Ancient Monuments Society

020 7236 3934  
[www.ancientmonumentsociety.org.uk](http://www.ancientmonumentsociety.org.uk)

#### Council for British Archaeology

01904 671 417  
[www.britarch.ac.uk](http://www.britarch.ac.uk)

#### Georgian Group

0871 750 2936  
[www.georgiangroup.org.uk](http://www.georgiangroup.org.uk)

#### Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

020 7377 1644  
[www.spab.org.uk](http://www.spab.org.uk)

#### Twentieth Century Society

020 7250 3857  
[www.c20society.org.uk](http://www.c20society.org.uk)

#### Victorian Society

020 8994 1019  
[www.victoriansociety.org.uk](http://www.victoriansociety.org.uk)

### PRESERVATION TRUSTS

The following trusts take ownership of redundant places of worship and maintain them:

#### Churches Conservation Trust

Church of England churches only  
020 7213 0660  
[www.visitchurches.org](http://www.visitchurches.org)

#### Friends of Friendless Churches

Churches and chapels in England and Wales  
020 7236 3934  
[www.friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk](http://www.friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk)

#### Historic Chapels Trust

Non-Anglican places of worship in England  
020 7481 0533  
[www.hct.org.uk](http://www.hct.org.uk)

## INSURANCE

### Baptist Insurance

Leading insurer of  
Baptist churches  
[www.baptist-insurance.co.uk](http://www.baptist-insurance.co.uk)

### Congregational and General Insurance

Insurer for thousands  
of places of worship of  
most denominations  
[www.congregational  
insurance.com](http://www.congregational<br/>insurance.com)

### Ecclesiastical

Advice on a range of  
practical issues relating to the  
upkeep of places of worship.  
0845 777 3322  
[www.ecclesiastical.com](http://www.ecclesiastical.com)  
(follow the links to Our  
Products/Insurance/Church  
Insurance)

### Methodist Insurance

Insurer for Methodist churches  
and other denominations.  
[www.methodistinsurance.co.uk](http://www.methodistinsurance.co.uk)

## WELCOMING VISITORS

### Churches Tourism Association

020 7213 0665  
[www.churchestourism  
association.info](http://www.churchestourism<br/>association.info)

### Divine Inspiration

024 7652 1346  
[www.divine-inspiration.org.uk](http://www.divine-inspiration.org.uk)

### Heritage Open Days

A national event co-ordinated  
by English Heritage to  
open up interesting places  
to the public.  
0845 335 1884  
[www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk)

### North West Multi-Faith Tourism Association

07545 580 437  
[www.multi-faith.org](http://www.multi-faith.org)

### Volunteering England

0845 305 6979  
[www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

## OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

### Chapels Society

Promotes interest in the  
architectural and historical  
importance of all nonconformist  
places of worship and their  
associated structures.  
01283 558 169  
[www.britarch.ac.uk/chapelsoc](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/chapelsoc)

### Church in Society

Helping churches make  
an effective contribution  
to their communities  
01622 755 014  
[www.churchinsociety.org](http://www.churchinsociety.org)

### Ecclesiological Society

For the study of church  
architecture, furnishings and  
liturgy. Their website gives  
access to the society's own  
publications but also to a  
wide range of other material  
on historic churches.  
c/o 38 Rosebery Avenue,  
New Malden,  
Surrey, KT3 4JS  
[www.eccsoc.org](http://www.eccsoc.org)

### Health and Safety Executive

0845 345 0055  
[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

### Jewish Heritage UK

Dedicated to caring for  
the historic buildings, sites  
and collections of Britain's  
Jewish community.  
Jewish Heritage UK  
PO Box 193  
Manchester M13 9PL  
[www.jewish-heritage-uk.org](http://www.jewish-heritage-uk.org)

### One Church 100 Uses

Promoting and assisting  
the effective regeneration  
of churches for wider  
community use.  
020 7785 6202  
[www.onechurch100uses.org](http://www.onechurch100uses.org)

### National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS)

NADFAS Church Recorders  
are volunteers who make  
comprehensive records of  
the contents of churches.  
They also make church  
trails for children.  
020 7430 0730  
[www.nadfas.org.uk](http://www.nadfas.org.uk)

### Shrinking the Footprint

020 7591 1865  
[www.shrinkingthefootprint.org.uk](http://www.shrinkingthefootprint.org.uk)

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[www.english-heritage.org.uk/powar](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/powar)

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[www.english-heritage.org.uk/risk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/risk)

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