



ENGLISH HERITAGE

NEWS RELEASE

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ENGLISH HERITAGE INSPIRES NATION TO HELP HISTORIC PLACES OF WORSHIP

- **New Figure For Total Cost of Repairing All England's
Listed Places of Worship
and
First Strategic Attempt to Tackle Problem -**

Inspired!, an English Heritage campaign launched today (Wednesday May 10, 2006) and supported by all the faith groups with listed places of worship in England, reveals the full extent of the threat facing our historic places of worship and sets out proposals to help solve the problem. It estimates that the cost of repairing all of England's listed places of worship is £925 million over the next five years, or £185 million a year. This exceeds the amount raised by congregations by approximately £118 million a year. Grants available from English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and other sources currently total only £40m and the Government cannot be expected to meet the remaining shortfall.

Survey after survey shows that the vast majority of us, not just churchgoers, care deeply about our historic places of worship. However, it is also a fact that congregations are decreasing in size, repair costs are rising and the amount of money English Heritage can offer is falling in real terms.

Inspired! provides a five-point plan, the most ambitious and strategic attempt yet to tackle this problem head-on.

Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage, said: "This campaign is about understanding the problem and taking action before we reach the crisis that is otherwise approaching, not this year, not even next year, but in the very near future.

"£118 million is a staggering annual shortfall which we cannot realistically expect the Government to pay for. Instead we are asking Government for a total of £26.52m (£8.84m a year for three years) to shrink the problem by:

- re-writing out-dated list descriptions for all 4,200 grade I places of worship as part of the current reform of heritage protection which will make it simpler to adapt the buildings to the needs of their congregations and communities in the 21st century;
- helping congregations to help themselves by appointing Historic Places of Worship Support Officers to provide expertise;
- creating a "Maintenance Grants" scheme to shrink repair bills in the longer term;
- continuing the English Heritage/Heritage Lottery Fund Repair Grants Scheme for Places of Worship and augmenting it with a new "Small Grants" scheme; and
- making sure the safety nets are in place for redundant places of worship, including campaigning for adequate Government money for the Churches Conservation Trust."

He continued: "You may not be a regular worshipper but imagine your village or town without its places of worship. With pubs and post offices disappearing and social problems growing, these buildings often provide the only remaining physical, cultural and spiritual focus for a community."

As well as describing what English Heritage is going to do, *Inspired!* also sets out what the Government, the central bodies of the denominations and faiths, and also the public can do to help struggling congregations who currently shoulder almost the entire burden of keeping the country's historic churches intact.

What the Government can do

English Heritage was pleased by the Chancellor's decision, in the recent Budget, to extend the scheme which returns VAT on repairs to listed places of worship for a further three years, an encouraging sign that the Government cares about England's heritage of religious buildings. However, it is not a permanent solution. English Heritage is urging the Chancellor to support its call for a total package of £26.52m (£8.84m a year for three years) to fund Support Officers, training programmes, maintenance and small repair grants and to enable us to re-write out-dated list descriptions for all grade I listed places of worship.

What the denominations and faiths can do

English Heritage is calling on the denominations and faiths to see their historic buildings as real assets to their core mission, rather than as expendable burdens, and to use their beauty and spirituality to practical advantage in the community. We are urging the denominations to take a greater strategic and supportive role in managing their historic places of worship wherever possible, rather than relying on heroic but under-resourced individual congregations to do it themselves.

What the public can do

Anyone who cares about the future of these buildings as part of our heritage needs to get involved and find out how they can help their local place of worship. This might mean making a "covenant", offering time or expertise, creating or joining a Friends group, donating to one of the national charities that care for places of worship or supporting one of the 31 local County Historic Churches Trusts which aim to develop interest in places of worship.

Website

English Heritage has created a dedicated *Inspired!* website www.english-heritage.org.uk/inspired! where members of the public can find out information about many aspects of historic places of worship.

Sponsorship

***Inspired!* is sponsored by the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group.**

Ecclesiastical is the UK's leading insurer of church property and an insurer of many historic buildings. Ian Wainwright, Ecclesiastical's chief surveyor, said: "Protecting heritage has been our business since we were founded and it continues to be our inspiration. Those responsible for looking after our heritage need more than just an insurance policy. They need advice, guidance and expert knowledge. We're here to give just that. So we're also enthusiastic about supporting *Inspired!* and hope that it rallies even more much-needed support."

For a free copy of the Inspired! campaign booklet, please contact: English Heritage Customer Services 0870 3331181 customers@english-heritage.org.uk

ENGLISH HERITAGE / HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND 2006 REPAIR GRANTS FOR GRADE II PLACES OF WORSHIP ANNOUNCED

English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund also announced today (10 May 2006) their joint annual repair grants for grade II places of worship in England. Holy Trinity Stroud in Gloucestershire, Assemblies of the First Born Pentecostal Church in Birmingham and Higher Crumpsall & Higher Broughton Synagogue in Salford, Manchester are just three of the 65 buildings set to benefit from a £7 million package. This follows the £17.5 million awarded by the scheme in March to grade I and II* places of worship. The *Repair Grants for Places of Worship* scheme was launched by the two organisations in 2002. So far it has awarded £89.8 million to more than 1,000 buildings struggling to cope with the ravages of time.

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For further information on Inspired!, please contact: Anya Matthews, English Heritage Corporate Communications, 020 7973 3372 anya.matthews@english-heritage.org.uk

For further information on the joint English Heritage/Heritage Lottery Fund repair grants please call Anya Matthews or Alison Scott, Heritage Lottery Fund Press Office, on 020 7591 6032 alisons@hlf.org.uk

CAMPAIGN IMAGES CAN BE DOWNLOADED FREE FROM A FOLDER MARKED "INSPIRED!" ON THE PA PICSELECT WEBSITE www.papicselect.com

SUPPORT FOR THE *INSPIRED!* CAMPAIGN

Most Revd and Rt Hon Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

"This year countless people will enter a church building, to enjoy worship and experience the support and nourishment of community life. Others will come to seek peace and space and the inspiration and wonder which historic buildings evoke. Churches and other places of worship are part of our family's history as well as our national heritage.

I welcome the *Inspired!* campaign by English Heritage, which recognises the time, effort and determination which so many people invest in keeping our historic churches open and active. The initiative looks to ways in which this endeavour can be supported. Whether places of worship are valued for what they enshrine and express in faith, or whether they are viewed as treasured buildings at the heart of a community or embodiments of our shared heritage, this campaign will help the Church in its own ongoing work to ensure that the historic churches of England continue to provide a focus for worship, inspiration and continuity for generations to come."

Jools Holland, Musician

"These are some of the most important and beautiful buildings in all England. They help to show where we have come from and perhaps where we are going to. They have been at the centre of our communities for hundreds of years. They are like dear old friends or relatives in our landscape. Therefore, it is our duty to treat them as such. With care, love and respect and to be interested in what they have to show us."

Jeremy Paxman, Broadcaster and Journalist

"Church spires are the great punctuation points of the English countryside. But the religious buildings of this country not only tell where we are geographically, they tell us where we've come from. They're often the only place in a community which has a living, visible connection to the past. They hot-wire us into our history."

Griff Rhys Jones, Television Presenter

"We used to meet as a community in many wonderful buildings and Churches are perhaps the most obvious victims of our preference for sitting at home entertaining ourselves in the dark. As a community we still need them though and I salute English Heritage for highlighting the threat to the fabric of our landscape once again. What would we rather have at the end of our street, a church or a boarded up lot? I know what my answer is."

Cristina Odone, Broadcaster and Journalist

"The nation's glorious spiritual history is in danger of being lost. With this timely campaign, English Heritage is giving us a chance to save it. Let's take it."

A.N Wilson, Writer

“Not only are our parish churches and cathedrals an aesthetic feast spread out across the land. They are also a subversive challenge to our contemporary viewpoint. They are embodiments in stone, wood and glass, of our ancestors and their way of viewing the world. A few quiet minutes in an empty church can often make our way of viewing things seem foolish or trivial compared with theirs.”

Candida Lycett Green, Writer

“I can't pass a church I haven't seen before without wanting to go in. Perhaps it is an addiction. A church provides a calm encompassing I need and crave. I feel comforted by the hearts and souls of generations of parishioners all around me. I don't see how you can get the gist of a village without going into its church, for it brings home so much of the past and the present. The names on the cleaning rota in the porch, the local carvers' art on the gravestones, the Norman moulding round the bottom of the font or the organ installed in grateful memory of those who gave their lives in the last war.”

Lord Lloyd Webber, Composer, Producer and Founder of the Open Churches Trust

“My Open Churches Trust has been one of many institutions focussing on the need to ensure that something will be required soon to replace the historic generosity of congregations, which during the 20th century did so much to keep the fabric of their churches in good order.

English Heritage is exactly the correct organisation to discover the level of help needed to continue this process and to promote ideas to generate sufficient public funds to ensure this amazing historic asset is properly maintained.”

Richard Briers, Actor

“At my time of life, I'm rather keen on saving old things – especially myself! But a far more popular cause is the salvation of this country's church buildings. We so often take them for granted. They can be just the “wallpaper” in our country villages - often unseen and unappreciated but in fact adding so much silent beauty and grace to England's landscape. There is nothing like walking through the cool air of a church porch, pushing open the heavy wooden door, and stepping inside to breathe in history - mingled with the smell of candle wax.”

Dr Sharman Kadish, Director of Jewish Heritage UK

“England's historic synagogues express the stability of Jewish life in this country, which we are celebrating this year, the 350th year since the reestablishment of the Jewish community in England (1656-2006).”

Lucinda Lambton,

“With a mere glimpse of a church spire or tower in the landscape, my spirits are sent soaring; huzzahing hymns of praise at the sight, with the certain knowledge that an adventure of discovery is to be relished within its walls. For one whose life is largely spent thundering around Britain's roads, wailing with

despair at plastic developments, these invariably beautiful architectural beacons are often the lone, and always exhilarating, element of continuity that link us with our historic past. Walk through any church door - from Banff down to Bognor and Norwich across to Newquay - and you will be enveloped by that past, whilst rejoicing in its miraculous survival. Whereas all other buildings have changed hands over the years, the house of God has not."

Rabbi Lionel Blue

"Evensong...when only two or three are gathered in My Name, in a hamlet or village, is one of the times I feel closest to Heaven. I discovered this over 50 years ago when I was a history student."

Revd Nicholas Holtam, St Martin-in-the-Fields, London

"We started talking to people with the professional skills to advise us about the very complex set of problems of great heritage, in a prominent location, and on an intensively used site. And we found ourselves reading about the first and second Temples in the Bible, and thinking about the significance of a holy place at the heart of a city. We set about rediscovering our church history and asking what St Martin's is for?"

"It's an experience many churches go through when facing major change and seeking direction for the future. When we began, we thought it might be a distraction from our very practical work of caring for people in need and of building up God's people. Actually it's intensified what we do and how we pray day to day. Renewing the buildings has taught us about what it means for this place to be 'the house of the Lord' and for us to be God's people."

Ian Wainwright, Chief Surveyor at Ecclesiastical Insurance

"Churches have played a crucial role in the communities they serve since time immemorial. They're part of our heritage, and heritage belongs to everyone but we all have a responsibility to look after it."

We've never insisted that churches lock their doors out of respect for the Church's customs, only encouraged them to do so at night. We recommend churches maintain a secure area within an open church where valuables can be kept, and inexpensive substitutes put on display. Volunteer attendants, passers-by and friendly neighbours visiting the church at various times of the day can discourage criminals and provide a warm welcome for visitors.

However, the very best way to keep our churches safe is to keep them busy, make them an integral part of local life and an invaluable resource for the entire community. Churches need to continue to build links with local groups, trusts, charities, businesses, education authorities, tourist authorities or cultural bodies in order to secure their futures."

Alan Pimlott, Property Secretary, Methodist Church

"The Methodist Church welcomes and fully supports this important and timely initiative. Our historic churches and chapels are an irreplaceable asset, important not just because of their beauty but because of their vital place at the heart of so many communities. Their value should be recognised by a

more equitable distribution of financial resources which would be a huge encouragement to the extensive army of volunteers who bear the brunt of maintaining them."