

# SACRED BRITAIN

Places of worship and the tourism destination experience



## AN AGENDA FOR ACTION

Published on behalf of the Sacred Britain Working Group by  
The Churches Conservation Trust and The Churches Tourism Association  
with the support of VisitBritain

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cover photo: Mountain biking at St Monance, Fife. britainonview

## A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR CULTURE

“The beauty and history of our churches is everywhere, round every corner and in every town; But sadly people don’t always take that extra step to visit them. This strategy addresses this and demonstrates to a wider audience the many reasons for visiting churches- the art, the architecture, the craftsmanship and their social history.

“We need to explore how church tourism can contribute to keeping these buildings as going concerns. Everyone involved in promoting their churches needs to come together to encourage and learn from one another. This strategy will do all of these things, and I wish it every success.”

### David Lammy MP



David Lammy with Helen Swift of The Churches Conservation Trust at St James's, church, Toxteth. Photo: Liverpool Daily Post & Echo

# FOREWORD

Spanning thirteen centuries of history and offering countless features of interest, beautiful and historic churches are to be found in every city, town and most villages in Britain. Most are open for visitors to enter and explore freely. But are we making the most of the relationship between churches and tourism, especially at the level of the destination experience?

Churches and cathedrals are such a familiar part of our landscape that it is possible to take them for granted. For many visitors they remain a mystery, merely a part of the quintessential picture-postcard view. They do, however, make a vital contribution to Britain's heritage, attractiveness and economy. Moreover, these sacred spaces are integral to the story of the places and communities within which they have evolved. They are signposts of our heritage, points where you can touch history, as well as places of visual and spiritual wonder.

The Open Churches Trust and several county and regional church tourism initiatives have done much to encourage churches to open their doors and to adopt good 'visitor welcome' practices. The Churches Tourism Association brings practitioners together to share insights and experience, as does the Churches Tourism Network in Wales, and the Scotland's Churches Scheme publishes an annual guide to churches. The Churches Conservation Trust and other historic church bodies are attracting more visitors each year, with increased efforts to improve promotion and access arrangements. Each year, Heritage Open Days, led by The Civic Trust, involve a huge range of faith buildings from parish churches to Buddhist temples and attract more visitors.

The good news is that these initiatives appear to have a positive impact on tourism and active support for our heritage. Churches seem to be enjoying renewed interest, too, perhaps fuelled in part by popular history and restoration programmes on television, and by growing interest in tracing family roots.

A national working group, initiated by The Churches Conservation Trust, has met several times over the past year to consider what more can be done, adopting the 'Sacred Britain' title to reflect our desire ultimately to expand our work to include all faiths. We

considered the strategic position of churches in relation to tourism, looked at visitor expectations and examples of good practice, and identified a set of actions to enable churches and tourism destinations to work more closely together, to mutual benefit, and thereby enrich the visitor experience.

We are delighted that The Heritage Lottery Fund has now awarded a grant to the project to help move the strategy forward, particularly to enable further project-planning work to take place.

It is our hope that this strategic document will stimulate more collaborative action amongst tourism, heritage and faith bodies to unlock the visitor potential of Britain's sacred heritage.

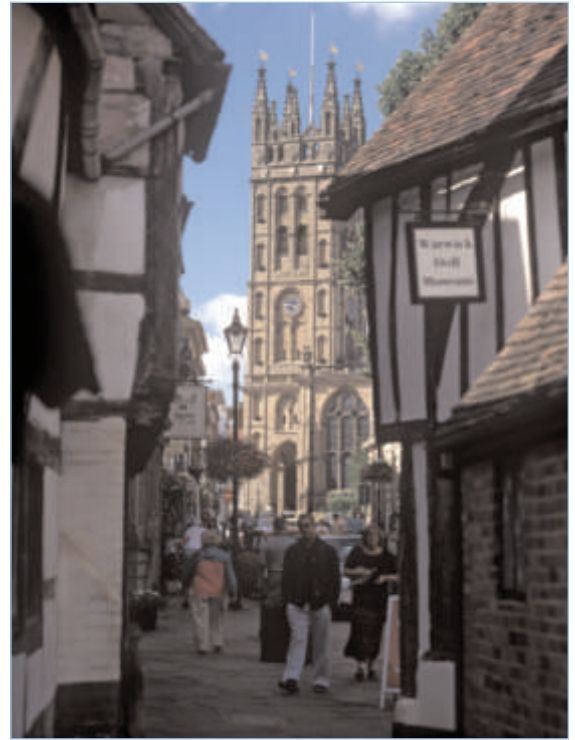
## Peter Bembridge

Managing Director,  
*The Civic Trust, and Chairman of the Sacred Britain Working Group* November 2006.



Photo: A footpath sign by Abbotsbury Chapel in Dorset. [britainonview](#)/Martin Brent

# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



- 1.1 This 'agenda for action' has been prepared under the guidance of the national 'Sacred Britain' working group, set up in November 2005, involving representatives of churches and tourism interests at national and regional levels<sup>1</sup>. The strategy proposes a marketing and branding framework for the promotion of visits to churches and other places of worship of recognised heritage significance. It also sets out priorities for action over the next three years (2007-2009) at national and regional levels.
- 1.2 This document is based largely upon the Sacred Britain consultation paper widely circulated in June 2008, and reflects a number of constructive suggestions received.
- 1.3 The vision for Sacred Britain is:  
**"Making churches and places of worship a 'must see' part of exploring Britain's destinations."**
- 1.4 The strategic aims are:
- To **increase the number of people** who are able to visit and enjoy engaging with the cultural inheritance of Britain's churches and places of worship;
  - To achieve **an inclusive approach**, including more visitors from socially excluded backgrounds (with reference to DCMS targets) and multi-faith cooperation; and
  - To attract **increased appreciation of, and support for**, maintaining the cultural inheritance amongst visitors, tourism organisations and heritage agencies.
- 1.5 The strategy proposes action at national, regional and local levels. This can be summarised under six key priorities:
- Adopt an **experience-oriented approach** to audience development, access and marketing based upon up-to-date research into visitor/non-visitor characteristics. The proposed tourism brand proposition is to promote a visitor experience that is **'authentic, welcoming and rewarding'**.
  - Seek **improvements in online data content and its distribution**, improving access to information about places of worship open to visitors and catering for a range of visitor interests and themes.
  - Promote **collaboration in heritage events** and other actions to raise the profile of places of worship within tourism destinations.
  - Provide **'best practice' guidance** for visitor welcome and volunteer development and establish clear quality criteria for sites to be promoted within the 'Sacred Britain' initiative and campaigns.
  - Encourage the **formation of area-wide 'sacred heritage' tourism partnerships** using best practice principles and resources.
  - Seek support for **a national project officer** to facilitate the formation of 'sacred heritage' tourism partnerships and to co-ordinate marketing and access actions at national level.

## 2 WHAT WE WISH TO ACHIEVE

Photo: Stained glass window inside Shri Sabha Sikh Gurdwara, the largest Sikh Temple outside of India. [britainonview/VisitLondon/Ingri](http://britainonview/VisitLondon/Ingri)

- 2.1 A national 'Sacred Britain' working group was set up in November 2005, involving several representative stakeholder organisations. The purpose: to consider the tourism potential of churches, and to develop a presentation and branding framework for the promotion of visits to churches and other places of worship of recognised heritage significance.
- 2.2 A major part of the picture is the more than 12,000 listed parish churches in England, which symbolise the essence of England for many UK residents and overseas visitors. However, there are other important sites associated with Methodism, the Catholic Church, Jewish heritage and other faiths that are also of existing or potential visitor interest and many of which are also listed. The term 'Sacred Britain' has therefore been adopted as the title for this document to indicate the desire for an inclusive approach.
- Working in partnership and pooling resources
  - Firmly focused upon the needs of customers and responsive to change
  - Make more of what we already have
  - Be sustainable
  - A quality experience for all- excellent value and surpassing expectations
  - Spread the benefits of faith related tourism
  - Attract more customers and hold onto visitors
  - Best use of new technology and market intelligence
  - Environmentally responsible and making a positive contribution to the quality of life experienced in Britain today
- 2.5 The support of organisations with a strong interest in historic churches is vital, including the Churches Tourism Association, the Church of England's Cathedral and Church Buildings Division, The Civic Trust, The Churches Conservation Trust, English Heritage, National Trust, Open Churches Trust and many others.
- 2.8 The support of other organisations with an interest in tourism is also needed for this strategy to succeed, including the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, VisitBritain, VisitScotland and Visit Wales, the Regional Development Agencies, Destination Management Organisations and Area Tourism Partnerships, Local Authorities and local Civic Societies.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 2.3 The aim is to develop and deliver a partnership approach for the marketing of places of worship with visitor appeal that will:
- Identify themes by which historic places of worship can be successfully marketed;
  - Tie in places of worship to other tourist products and destinations;
  - Introduce appropriate marketing methods and tools, and develop a higher level of marketing and customer quality awareness and skills amongst relevant staff;
  - Put in place a marketing plan which identifies the requisite resources, training needs and capacity and where they might be sought; and
  - Contribute to the raising of public awareness about the value of historic places of worship and their vulnerability, helping to build popular support for their sustainability.

### UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

- 2.4 The following principles have guided thinking behind this agenda for action:
- An integrated strategy and approach
  - Create a basis for co-operation and working together, embracing a **multi-faith** approach as far as possible



## 3 NATURE, SCOPE AND VALUE OF VISITS TO PLACES OF WORSHIP

3.1 Whilst cathedrals and churches attract substantial numbers of visitors, obtaining reliable data is difficult, as places of worship do not charge entry and most are not stewarded. Some indicators:

- North West Faith Tourism Scoping Study (Connor & Co., 2003) estimated 17m visits to 45 cathedrals and 52 places of worship
- Cooper (2004)<sup>2</sup> suggests churches receive around 700-4,000 visitors each year
- VisitBritain Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions (2002): 13m visits to places of worship in 2002 (excluding visits to most parish churches), accounting for 21% of visits to major historic visitor attractions

3.2 Making assumptions based upon a 'basket' of indicators, it seems that a realistic estimate would be around 35-50m visits to churches across the country.

3.3 Visits to churches have economic value, as people will typically spend money on accommodation, travel, food and other items as part of a day out. VisitBritain estimates for day trip spending are summarised in the table, opposite.

3.4 A report commissioned by the Association of English Cathedrals and English Heritage (2004)<sup>3</sup> estimates that visitors to cathedrals generate £91m in spend and directly support 2,800 jobs. This would equate to around one third of average day visitor spending (which by definition excludes accommodation costs). In the absence of more specific in depth research, this would seem to be a reasonable assumption. Using this as a guide, **the total value of visits to churches is probably around £300 million each year.**

THE TOTAL  
VALUE OF  
VISITS TO  
CHURCHES IS  
PROBABLY  
AROUND £300  
MILLION EACH  
YEAR.

Tourism Day Visits	
All	£27.70
Town/City	£30.80
Countryside	£20.70
Seaside/Coast	£18.50

### HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

3.5 The currently accepted best estimate<sup>4</sup> is, in summary:

- 5 World Heritage sites in the UK specifically include church buildings: Bath Abbey, Canterbury Cathedral, Durham Cathedral, Fountains Abbey and Westminster Abbey.
- 12,200 C of E church buildings are 'listed', of which 4,200 are listed Grade I or A, representing 45% of all secular or religious buildings listed at this grade.
- 335 listed buildings in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust
- **Other listed faith buildings** include 822 Roman Catholic, 537 Methodist, 308 Baptist and 89 Congregational churches, 28 synagogues and one mosque
- 148 ecclesiastical sites in the care of English Heritage or National Trust

3.8 Ultimately, it is not possible to estimate the full value of churches and places of worship to the character and distinctiveness of destinations. Even for those visitors who do not enter into church buildings they form part of the scenery and sense of place. This is not just about buildings, but about people and 'stories', with churches and other places of worship being integral to the story of the communities and destinations wherein they have evolved.

3.7 There have been a number of excellent examples of regional or county church tourism initiatives around the country, and these offer a range of good practice to take in to account in considering the potential of further market development.

<sup>2</sup> Trevor Cooper, "How Do We Keep Our Parish Churches" 2004, Ecclesiological Society

<sup>3</sup> "The Economic and Social Impacts of Cathedrals in England", ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd, June 2004

<sup>4</sup> Sources include Cooper, and reckoned by English Heritage to be the current best estimate.

Project Examples	Activities
Lincoln 'Cascade' North Yorkshire Church Tourism Initiative North West Multi-Faith Tourism Association Liverpool Walk of Faith Sacred Sussex Herefordshire Churches Tourism Group Wayland Partnership Go West Teme Valley Rotherham Churches Tourism Initiative Northumbria 'Spirit in Stone' Open Churches Network, Wales The Churches in Scotland Scheme The Open Churches Trust	Signage Interpretation Workshops Visitor guides/ maps Websites Trails and tours Church leaflets Events Visitor welcome schemes Quality assessment models Training volunteers

*NB: the above is not an exhaustive list, but is drawn from a more detailed case study mapping exercise documented separately.*



Photo: Caption: Young woman inside York Minster.  
 'Reproduced with Kind permission of Dean and Chapter of York'  
 Credit: britainonview/ McCormick-McAdam

## 4 PROGRESS ON THE STRATEGY

### A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR SACRED BRITAIN

- 4.1 For the purposes of engaging with tourism agencies and other secular support organisations, a distinction needs to be drawn in this project between:
- the cultural inheritance of churches and other places of worship and those who care for, interpret and welcome visitors to it, and
  - the spiritual mission that has given rise to that inheritance.
- 4.2 The latter is properly the responsibility of the respective faith communities. The former is the dimension that we believe merits additional investment in the interest of increasing access to, and enjoyment of, our national cultural heritage.
- 4.3 The diagram (right) is presented as a means of illustrating this distinction.



### WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO GET THERE

- 4.4 The work of the 'Sacred Britain' group has highlighted the need for complementary activity, including national strategic direction linked to more localised delivery and activity.
- 4.5 Key directions to be pursued:
- Adopt a more experience-oriented marketing strategy aimed at key visitor markets
  - More and continuous research and intelligence on visitor/non-visitor characteristics
  - Improve online data content and its distribution•. Develop a 'Sacred Britain' Web portal
  - Develop campaigns, trails, tours, etc, for key markets
  - Investigate partner/sponsor marketing opportunities
  - Improve the profile of places of worship within tourism destinations
  - Establish clear criteria for sites eligible for promotion within the 'Sacred Britain'
  - Develop and disseminate 'best practice' guidance on quality, welcome, and promotion by destinations
  - Encourage formation of area-wide 'sacred heritage' tourism partnerships with a multi-faith perspective
  - Seek support for a 'Sacred Britain' tourism officer to lead, facilitate and co-ordinate activity at national level, identify and secure resources, and provide a voice on churches tourism issues
  - Continue to raise the profile for places of worship within the tourism experience through supporting conferences and sector events.
- 4.8 Benefits for partner organisations:
- Individual organisations will strengthen their market position within the wider context of the 'Sacred Britain' framework.
  - Some costs will be shared with others (e.g. Church of England, Church Tourism Association, The Churches Conservation Trust, Civic Trust, English Heritage, etc) for technical solutions, visitor research and/or personnel.
  - New solutions will be leveraged, e.g., common web portal leading to rich content to motivate visitors, information on church opening times, etc.

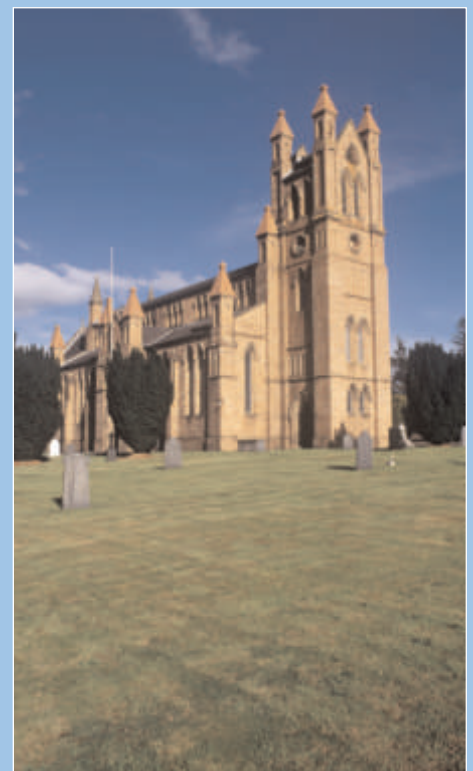


Photo: The 18th century St David's Church in Drenewydd, Wales, bathed in bright sunshine. [www.britainonview.com](http://www.britainonview.com)



## 5 MARKET AND PRODUCT AUDIT

### WHO VISITS PLACES OF WORSHIP OF HERITAGE OR TOURIST INTEREST, AND WHY?

- 5.1 Based upon a review of available research, project reports and discussions with several churches tourism groups, the audience can be summarised as follows:
- ‘Church crawlers’ - the committed core market
  - Family-related visits and activities - largely locally-driven and reactive, but also a growing interest in family history and ‘ancestral tourism’
  - Educational visitors, including adult groups and ‘out of the classroom’ activities
  - Short-break ‘explorers’, for whom churches may be points of interest, which may include short-term interest in places featured in TV programmes and popular films
  - Country walkers or cyclists, with churches as points of interest or target destinations
  - Special interests such as history, music, art, (and more) with churches as part of the ‘story’, perhaps encouraged by TV documentaries such as ‘Restoration’
  - ‘Haven seekers’ who enjoy quiet places in which to reflect, a sense of ‘sanctuary’ or ‘mini-retreat’
- 5.2 For many of these visitors, especially those from outside the immediate locality or tourists enjoying a short break in the area, the visit to a church or other faith site is just one component in a trip. Participation in events such as concerts, village fairs, Heritage Open Days and others will involve a cross-section of the types of visitor identified above. Other components may include general sightseeing, a walk, a visit to a local museum, restaurant or pub, or other activities. As such, therefore, the church visit may be perceived and enjoyed within a range of different contexts.

### WHAT IS IT THAT PEOPLE ARE EXPERIENCING WHEN THEY VISIT CHURCHES?

#### ATTRIBUTES

- 5.3 There are clearly a number of physical or cultural features that may be of interest, including:

*Architecture • Bells & bell ringing • Paintings • stained glass, decorative arts • Family history and ancestry • Monuments and carvings • Festivals, concerts and cultural events • Historic context and heritage • Taking part in a church service • Famous people • Churchyards and nature • Film, TV or literary connections • A quiet tranquil place*

<sup>5</sup> For example, L Bartlett, University of Newcastle, 2004, unpublished dissertation.

### EXPERIENCES

- 5.4 Recent surveys<sup>5</sup> have revealed some of the aspects of a visit to historic churches that have appealed or have been enjoyed by visitors:

*“A very personal and special place”  
 “I’m not religious but I love churches”  
 “The simplicity of the church is what makes it special”  
 “The human aspect of churches is what matters”  
 “Encapsulates social history of the area”  
 “A haven of peace and tranquillity”  
 “I love old churches... history and stories of the past”*

- 5.5 These responses are, however, focused upon the immediate context of an actual visit to a church. This does not explain what part this site-specific experience plays within the visitor’s overall trip or short-break, although it is evident from the market audit that these visits are often points of interest within a wider itinerary.

### NEED FOR FURTHER INSIGHTS

- 5.6 It is clear that it would be useful to have further and regular intelligence on the value of churches tourism and emerging trends to guide future marketing, and to support the business case for resources to invest in this, including:
- More precise data on the volume and value of visitors to churches;
  - More insight into visitor motivations, the ‘experiences’ they are seeking or enjoying (e.g., the growing interest in tracing ancestors), and levels of satisfaction;
  - Insights into non-visitors’ perceptions of historic churches. [Some research in Liverpool has looked into this, and there is scope for further research];
  - Developing quantitative and qualitative performance measures to assist in monitoring
- 5.7 A new computer-based survey questionnaire has been designed and used by The Churches Conservation Trust, and the model questions are available on request for other churches to use. The adoption of a common approach would enable comparative analysis to be developed, and other possibilities for research should be investigated.
- 5.8 An important starting point is to consider the markets identified and prioritised by VisitBritain, as these are the focus of significant national marketing investment and provide a framework for marketing campaigns within which churches might be positioned. This also influences the marketing strategies and opportunities available via regional tourism organisations.

## MARKET SEGMENTATION

- 5.9 By reference to VisitBritain's England Market Segmentation research paper (VB, 2005) and insights into existing visitors' experience, it is possible to identify several markets with potential to visit places of worship (see diagram below).

### VISIT BRITAIN UK TARGET MARKET SEGMENTS

Ark Leisure segments (VisitBritain 2005)	% of UK pop.	EnjoyEngland priorities (VB)	Potential to visit churches?
'Cosmopolitans'	15%	Yes	Short breaks potential - value art, culture, relaxing, peace, self-organising
'Discoverers'	13%	Yes	Outdoor activity /adult learning potential - 'off the beaten track', activity/theme trips, history, etc
'High Streets'	21%	Yes	Low
'Style Hounds'	12%	X	Low
'Traditionals'	12%	X	Self-reliant, enjoy intellectual activity, familiar places, visit churches (inc. 'church crawlers'?), use tourist information centres
'Functionals'	9%	X	Similar to above, family trips, visit churches
'Habituals'	7%	X	Family orientated, least active, visit churches
'Followers'	10%	X	Low

- 5.10 There is growing interest in '**ancestral tourism**', i.e., visits by people exploring their family roots, tracing ancestors, and wishing to see places, monuments and records associated with them. This has been fuelled by the Internet, offering unprecedented access to records and online family history websites, and encouraged by TV programmes on the subject. This applies to the UK domestic market as well as to overseas expatriate communities. There may be opportunities for cooperation in this area via non-tourism partners such as ancestry.co.uk, National Archives or British Telecom
- 5.11 The main opportunities for **attracting overseas visitors** appear to be:
- The interest in 'ancestral tourism', as outlined above. This is a widely dispersed market, best addressed by ensuring appropriate content is on churches', local history and tourism websites, and linking to relevant VisitBritain campaigns.
  - USA market segments with an interest in religious heritage or other historical themes. These tend to be catered for by special interest tour operators, or self-organised independent travel. Channels for reaching USA markets include VisitBritain campaigns (e.g. Jamestown 2007 campaign), or by working with incoming tour operators specialising in organised group travel. However, anything other than a highly selective approach may not give a good return on investment compared with the main domestic market opportunities outlined above.

### UNDER-REPRESENTED AUDIENCES FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE

- 5.12 In addition to the tourism markets identified above, there appears to be significant scope for church tourism to contribute to public sector targets for increasing visits to historic sites amongst priority groups. According to DCMS these are defined as people with a physical or mental disability, people from black or minority ethnic groups, and people in the C2, D and E socio-economic groups. This could be particularly relevant to the design of multi-faith tourism initiatives, especially where this involves public sector partnership. Educational visits could be one route for addressing such groups.

## 6 SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Over 4,000 historic places of worship, most open and accessible for visitors to enjoy</p> <p>Many are in attractive tourism areas, city centres, market towns, villages, or in open countryside</p> <p>They are rich in stories, historical associations, monuments, architectural and decorative features</p> <p>Most can be visited any day, many open at advertised times</p>	<p>Places of worship not a 'must see' in the minds of most visitors</p> <p>Many are in rural locations, often off 'the beaten track'</p> <p>Tend to be regarded by destinations as just part of the scenery</p> <p>Limited content on churches in national and local destination websites</p> <p>Churches have irregular opening times, not well advertised</p> <p>The churches 'experience' is disparate and largely unexplained for visitors</p> <p>No clear set of tourism interpretation or visitor welcome standards or shared strategic view of the future</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>The heritage status of places of worship</p> <p>Growing interest in history and conservation - documentaries and books</p> <p>National marketing campaigns need evocative content</p> <p>Churches could play a greater part in destinations and their interpretation</p> <p>Local community initiatives could bring churches and their stories to life</p> <p>Websites could be used to create a sense of discovery for visitors in advance</p> <p>Creative presentation and good visitor welcome could help change perceptions of historic churches</p> <p>Good 'welcome to our church' training material has been developed and tested in some areas</p> <p>DfES agenda for 'education outside the classroom' is an opportunity</p>	<p>Many churches have declining congregations and lack funds for maintenance and for investing in the visitor experience</p> <p>Competition with other visitor 'experiences'</p> <p>Lack of funding could limit investment in website, publications and distribution</p> <p>An increased rate of church closures could lead to a decline in availability and a poorer visitor experience</p> <p>Lack of marketing funds could result in churches being excluded from destination databases</p> <p>Insufficient staff or volunteer resource at local and county/diocese level</p> <p>Lack of coordination at regional and national levels leading to fragmented approaches.</p>

# 7 VISION AND VALUES FOR MARKETING CHURCHES FOR TOURISM

## VISION: WHERE DO WE WANT TO GET TO?

7.1

- An ambitious tourism vision or mission for 'Sacred Britain' is needed. This should be broad enough to involve all faiths and attract a wide audience of current and future visitors and the support of many stakeholders;
- It needs to forge an emotional connection with visitors and communities;
- It should be understandable and useful across a wide range of church visitor 'welcomers'/volunteers;
- It should also act as a guide for future developments and all the small things that go into making a memorable experience; • It must appeal to the visitors' imagination as a rewarding experience; and
- Relate this to national tourism priority markets and position 'Sacred Britain' themes or experiences within tourism campaigns and websites.

7.2 The vision for Sacred Britain is therefore defined simply as this:

*"Making churches and places of worship a 'must see' part of exploring Britain's destinations"*



## CONSUMER BRAND VALUES

7.3 The consumer brand image for Sacred Britain has to be clear, consistent and rooted in a sound appreciation of the cultural inheritance as well as the appeal to priority consumer growth markets. This should include definition of consumer brand values or essence, and how the visitor experience may be conveyed in an 'experiential' way via editorial themes and images. Following discussion and consultation by the Sacred Britain working group, it is recommended that the 'brand essence' for churches as part of the destination experience be developed around the following key words:

***Authentic • Welcoming • Rewarding***

7.4 The purpose of having such a definition is to inform the design and selection of content (words and images) for use in marketing communications. Having a consistent set of underlying values will help to ensure that a clear sense of purpose, consumer appeal and call to action is conveyed throughout.

Marketing objectives

- To increase the overall number of people who are able to visit and enjoy engaging with the cultural inheritance of Britain's churches and places of worship;
- To spread visitors to less-visited sites with strong visitor potential, whilst nurturing existing visitor markets for established 'honeypot' locations;
- To achieve an inclusive approach, including more visitors from socially excluded backgrounds (with reference to DCMS targets) and multi-faith cooperation;
- To promote and improve participation in Heritage Open Days, Bike Ride and other events in collaboration with the Civic Trust and local civic societies; and
- To attract increased practical and financial support for the care of historic churches and places of worship.

## PRIORITY MARKETS

- 7.5 The following priorities are proposed, taking into account experience of national tourism priority markets for whom churches could be points of interest, regional and local market potential, and the relative cost and ease of addressing each of these. All are important markets, but are listed in approximate order of importance and required investment of money and effort:
- **UK 'traditional' and 'functionals'** (VisitBritain), especially family-related visits and activities with potential for repeat visits, addressed mainly via local events, tourism office websites and TICs.
  - **'Educationals'** including adult groups, DCMS 'priority groups' and 'out of the classroom' activities, addressed via direct marketing and targeted website content.
  - **UK 'discoverers'** (VisitBritain) for whom churches and other faith sites could be points of interest within country walking, cycling or other activity breaks, addressed via national and regional destination tourism campaigns, adult education/special interest groups, and targeted website content.
  - **UK 'cosmopolitans'** (VisitBritain) for whom churches and other faith sites could be points of interest within value-added cultural short-break visits, addressed via national and regional destination tourism campaigns and targeted website content.
  - **'Church crawlers'** - sustaining and building upon the committed core market for visits to churches, addressed via a churches tourism website and marketing to special interest clubs and group organisers.
  - **Family-related visits and activities**, including DCMS priority groups, addressed mainly via local information channels, cultural events, tourism office websites and TICs.
  - **UK/international 'ancestral tourism'**, addressed via VisitBritain topical campaigns and individual online research (ensuring relevant content is available).
  - **USA special interest groups** addressed via VisitBritain campaigns or incoming tour operators specialising in organised group travel.
- 7.8 Amongst all of the above will be many visitors to the destination simply 'passing by', who see a 'church open' notice on the roadside, venture inside and are amazed by what they find.

## PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- 7.7 The tourism 'product' consists of the churches and their features of interest, the visitor experience of enjoying these within the local context of scenery, walks or other attributes, access to the church, and the sense of welcome on site whether in person (custodian or volunteer) or as conveyed via information or interpretation.
- 7.8 Product development in support of the marketing strategy should focus upon churches with potential for attracting

increased visitor interest, as identified by a review of current audience, features, market opportunity and local support.

7.9 Possible actions:

- Defining quality standards for sites to be eligible for promotion, e.g. quality of information, visitor welcome, etc.;
- Researching current visitors and reviewing available market intelligence;
- 'Capacity building' - developing skills of volunteers in various ways to build confidence and enthusiasm, including visitor welcome, 'story-telling', etc.;
- Linking churches and other faith sites into itineraries, town or rural trails, etc, in association with local tourism or heritage interests or special interest tour organisers;
- Developing theme trails or 'pilgrimage' routes in collaboration with churches tourism groups, civic societies;
- Signposting of churches and other faith sites close to busy tourist routes, e.g., driving, cycling or long-distance walking routes;
- Developing educational resources and programmes; and
- Developing events programmes.

## REVENUE GENERATION

- 7.10 There is a popular presumption that access to churches should be free of charge, evident in the protests when some cathedrals or larger churches first introduce entrance fees. This does not mean that such a move should be ruled out. If carefully introduced and backed up by a professional level of visitor welcome and presentation, this is a valid option for larger, heavily visited sites.
- 7.11 Some churches - and not only large ones - have developed attractive bookshops or cafés.
- 7.12 For most churches and other faith sites, opportunities to charge visitors for entry are limited to special events, fairs or concerts, and may not result in significant surplus after the event costs are covered. Also, the potential for raising revenue through sales of guidebooks or other merchandise will generally depend upon volunteer staffing or custodians, or reliance on 'honesty boxes'.
- 7.13 The opportunity to attract donations should be considered positively as well as sensitively. Whilst crude demands for cash may be off-putting, if visitors feel welcomed and have a positive experience they are more likely to be generous. Anecdotal reports suggest that serious efforts to make churches visitor friendly can have a substantial impact on donations.
- 7.14 It is important that visitors are positively encouraged to put a value on their visit, and to be made aware of churches' charitable status, the demands (and achievements) of maintenance and conservation, and are encouraged to take an interest, to donate, and/or get involved. Moving visitors from casual interest, through repeat visits, and on to becoming actively engaged as supporters is therefore an important marketing objective.

## 8 COMMUNICATING THE SACRED BRITAIN EXPERIENCE

### A REVIEW OF MARKETING CHANNELS AND PROMOTIONAL TACTICS

#### The Visitor Journey

- 8.1 A visit to a church takes place at one point in a cycle of behaviour: this is illustrated in the diagram, right.
- 8.2 This cycle starts with an idea, progresses through finding information and making the actual trip. After the trip there is recollection and (usually) telling others. The requirements and marketing opportunities at each stage need to be considered: e.g., sources of information, how to encourage recommendations.
- 8.3 Websites, media articles, publications, tourist information centres, signposting, 'church open' sign, visitor welcome, on-site interpretation, postcards/souvenirs, leaflets promoting further sites or tours, and customer data capture all have parts to play in this cycle.



Diagram: The Visitor Journey

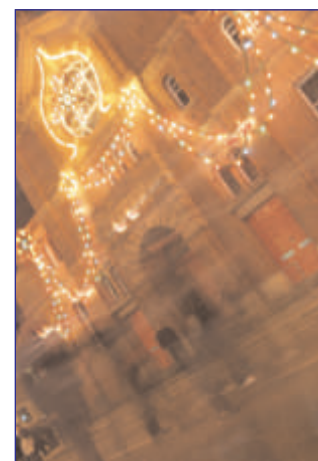
### WORKING WITH/THROUGH OTHERS

#### Working with Tourism Destinations

- 8.4 Whilst working with VisitBritain at national level is strategically significant, it is vital to recognise that at least three-quarters of all tourism and leisure trips occur within a 2-hour range of home. County and city tourism destination marketing organisations (DMOs) are therefore recognised by most visitor attractions as their first 'port of call' for reaching new visitors.
- 8.5 It would be possible to promote churches and other faith sites within destination publications, by advertising alongside other visitor attractions, or by working with the tourism manager to improve editorial and image coverage. Churches are not commercial attractions, however, and few are in a financial position to spend money on tourism advertising.
- 8.6 Given the unique position of churches as visual, historical and cultural points of interest within destinations, and their consequent value to the local visitor economy, it would be reasonable for tourism offices to pro-actively promote churches as part of the destination experience. Visits to churches can complement and enhance the experience of visits to other attractions, eating in local pubs and cafes, or an overnight stay in a guest house. A good starting point would be to encourage destination managers to include, free of charge, content on churches to visit within the local visitor attractions database and website editorial.

#### Tourist Information Centres

- 8.7 There are currently over 500 Tourist Information Centres (TICs) across England, providing a widespread network of points of personal contact, information and advice for visitors and local residents. TICs receive over 80 million visits each year, and are especially well used by the kind of people who appreciate local heritage including churches (see priority markets, above). TICs are an important channel for the distribution of leaflets, and keeping TIC staff informed about places and events of interest will help them to advise visitors effectively. Actions could include arranging 'familiarisation' visits for tourism officers and TIC staff to churches or events, an effective way of raising awareness of the visitor potential. Efforts to strengthen the local relationship with TICs in this way are likely to be beneficial.



### County or regional churches tourism initiatives

- 8.8 The table on page 2 highlighted examples of area-based multi-partner projects. In some of these projects specific research has been carried out, providing evidence that these have helped to build the tourism profile in those areas. However, such projects are relatively limited in coverage. There are undoubtedly many more areas where such approaches could be beneficial.
- 8.9 A key recommendation, therefore, is for a strategic initiative to share best practice models for involving churches and other faith sites, marketing, volunteer development, visitor welcome, and so on, via a 'pathfinder' approach targeting urban and rural areas where there is evidence of interest and support for further collaboration.
- 8.10 At a more local level, a targeted approach focussing on a church or group of faith sites with significant common interest and potential for visitor growth could be beneficial, especially if combined with other local points of interest and visitor services, e.g., using the Hidden Britain approach. A combined approach with signposting, a new trail, outreach to TICs in that area, and a visitor welcome programme could also make a significant contribution to local regeneration, especially in rural areas.

### Travel Trade and Group Travel Organisers

- 8.11 Whilst the most visible aspects of the travel trade (e.g. high street travel agents) are focused upon the commercial holiday market, there are also many British group travel organisers active in arranging group visits based around special interests and activities, including clubs, societies, women's groups, arts groups, etc. Dedicated faith-based organisations, pilgrimage societies, study groups or conference organisers also play a role.
- 8.12 There are specialist agents who promote special interest itineraries overseas, particularly for the North American market.
- 8.13 A targeted direct marketing approach at national or

regional level may help to reach these, offering sample itineraries and special opening arrangements or linked to organised festivals or events able to cater for group visits on a pre-arranged basis.

- 8.14 Harness the expertise of sub-regional and regional tourism organisations agencies and offices, as they are active in targeting and promoting to the various group markets.

### NEED FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND INSIGHTS

- 8.15 Additional research is required to support the case for support for churches tourism, e.g., from tourism and heritage organisations, grant-making bodies and so on.
- 8.16 Topics for further ongoing research include:
- More precise data on the volume and local economic value of visitors to churches;
  - Further insights into the part that visits to churches plays within visitors' wider tourism or learning experiences;
  - Research into ways of involving **other faith groups** with sites of potential visitor interest;
  - Insights into the social or ethnic background or physical mobility of visitors;
  - Further insights into non-visitors' perceptions of historic churches;
  - Scoping the potential for infrastructure investment to improve visitor access to, and enjoyment of, the cultural heritage of places of worship;
  - Product development and presentation opportunities;
  - Customer satisfaction, retention and value; and
  - Community perspectives and relationships.
- 8.17 Several good examples of local surveys have been identified and compared, and a new model survey prepared for pilot testing. Opportunities to use this in different areas, and the scope for pooling results, should be explored.



# 9 AGENDA FOR ACTION 2006-2009

- 9.1 A number of recommendations are put forward in the following Agenda for Action. Columns indicate whether the lead action is required at national, regional or local levels, with an indication of priorities. All these actions are important, the highest are rated \*\*\*.
- 9.2 Further work is needed to define these actions in more detail: specific lead responsibilities, timescales and performance measures. The reality is that little of this will happen without practical commitment on the part of the main organisations involved in the support of tourism, heritage and the presentation of places of worship to potential visitors. It is therefore the hope of the Sacred Britain working group that this document will stimulate the necessary collaboration and action to unlock the visitor potential of Britain's sacred heritage.

	National action	Regional/ county	Local churches
<b>A. ORGANISATION</b>			
A1 Establish a national 'Sacred Britain' tourism partnership, to coordinate the development and implementation of a national initiative to facilitate and support a network of regional/local multi-faith tourism projects.	***		
A2 Prepare a brief and person specification for a tourism coordinator to lead and facilitate activity at national level, identify and secure resources.	***		
A3 Establish a national channel for communication on issues relating to the development of churches and faith tourism.	**		
A4 Establish or maintain inclusive multi-agency and multi-faith tourism partnerships.		***	
A5 In some areas there may be opportunities for partnership with other organisations to offer tourism information points, local heritage displays, or other services of interest to visitors and local people.			**
<b>B. RESEARCH</b>			
B1 Buy in, commitment to, and support for research to monitor and evaluate progress and performance, and to inform, shape and develop future strategy development and planning.	***		
B2 Identify channels for communication with other faith groups, and mechanisms for participation in the 'Sacred Britain' Agenda for Action.	***		
B3 Prepare national audience development, marketing and communications plans.	***		
<b>C. PROCESS</b>			
C1 Investigate funding sources to support a national 'Sacred Britain' tourism partnership marketing initiative	***		
C2 Define key responsibilities, actions, resources, leads and timescales for the national initiative	**		
C3 Define monitoring and evaluation measures and procedures	**		
C4 Prepare a business plan for the national initiative and a 'continuation strategy' for future sustainability	**		



D. PRODUCT			
D1	Develop and disseminate 'best practice' advice on the positioning and profile of churches and other faith sites within tourism destinations	**	
D2	Develop and disseminate 'best practice' model(s) for visitor quality management	**	
D3	Develop a volunteer capacity-building/animation programme for delivery via regional/local partner projects.	**	
D4	Adopt nationally-recognised models of good practice in partnership working, visitor welcome, volunteer development, marketing and communications (with the support of the national 'Sacred Britain' initiative, assuming this is successfully established).		***
D5	Implement regional audience development actions, including volunteer recruitment, visitor welcome, educational activity, 'story-telling' skills, etc. (e.g., with Civic Trust or other partners).		***
D6	Promote and facilitate high quality participation in Heritage Open Days, Educational Weeks and other events, in collaboration with the Civic Trust, local civic societies and/or other organisations.		***
D7	Identify opportunities to link churches and other sacred places into itineraries, town or rural trails, in association with local tourism or heritage interests, related to VisitBritain themes (e.g. Jamestown 1607), or special interest tour organisers/operators		**
D8	Initiate or take part in local opportunities to develop volunteers'visitor welcome skills, preferably using the widely recognised 'Welcome to our Church' course.		**
D9	Initiate or take part in 'workshops' to review the history of the church and locality, design heritage displays, and develop volunteers' 'story-telling' skills.		**
D10	Learn about other points of interest, trails or events in the locality that would help visitors to make the most of their visit.		**
D11	For sites with significant historic interest and tourism potential that are located 'off the beaten track', explore the scope for local signposting, possibly in co-operation with other places of interest, local tourism office or association.		*
E. ONLINE DISTRIBUTION			
E1	Develop improved data content on churches and sacred sites, especially via the destination management systems of regional or sub-regional tourism organisations linked to VisitBritain and other distribution channels.		**
E2	Develop a <i>Sacred Britain</i> tourism Web portal with database and search facility linking to regional/local partner content.	**	
F. PROMOTION			
F1	Coordinate and integrate working with other national and regional organisations such as VisitBritain, Regional Development Agencies, Diocesan Offices, etc.	***	
F2	Develop national campaign themes and trails/tours for key markets	**	
F3	Develop and promote national theme trails/itineraries in association with VisitBritain, travel trade or other interests, e.g., topical themes such as Jamestown 1607 (with regional involvement).	**	
F4	Raise awareness of churches and sacred sites via tourism offices and TICs, with supporting promotional activity.		***
F5	Identify churches with specific tourism growth potential (e.g., close to other attractions, tourist centres, etc) and work with tourism offices to promote these within their campaigns and via TICs.		**
F6	Develop and promote educational resources and events		**
F7	Develop a relationship with 'customers' via websites, newsletters or other communications, supported by an up-to-date contacts database		**
F8	Deployment of 'church open' boards, 'visitors welcome' signs and displays.		***
F9	Visit local TICs to let staff know about the church or site, see if leaflets are (or could be) on display, arrange for local leaflet 'swaps' for cross-promotion, etc.		***
F10	Cross-promote churches and other faith sites in association with nearby attractions or heritage sites, with shared information displays and/or signposting as appropriate.		**

## ANNEX 1: NATIONAL SACRED BRITAIN WORKING GROUP

### **Set up in November 2005, involving representatives of the following churches and tourism interests at national and regional levels:**

The Civic Trust – Peter Bembridge (Chairman)  
 The Churches Conservation Trust – Colin Shearer, Constance Barrett,  
 Church of England's Cathedral and Church Buildings Division – Stephen Bowler, Rebecca Payne,  
 VisitBritain – Andrew Duff (Strategy Preparation), Vineet Lal  
 English Heritage – Guy Braithwaite, Tania Weston  
 Open Churches Trust – Brigadier A B D Gurdon  
 Churches Tourism Association – Colin Shearer  
 Churches Tourism Network Wales – John Winton, Gaynor Thomas  
 Scotland's Churches Scheme – Dr Brian Fraser  
 The Pilgrims' Association – David Earlam

### **Representatives of regional and diocesan churches tourism initiatives:**

Sacred Sussex – Jane Hald  
 Lincoln Diocese – Terry Miller  
 Yorkshire Churches Regional Commission – Zoe Kemp

### **Representative of tourism destination organisations:**

LeicesterShire Promotions – David Friesner

### **Other specialists.**

Methodist Heritage – Keith Cheetham

### **Also included in communications:**

Department of Culture, Media and Sport – Roy Boardman, Jeremy Dann  
 South West Regional Development Agency – tourism lead region contact, Huw Jarvis

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The Churches Conservation Trust is the leading body conserving England's most beautiful and historic churches which are no longer needed for regular worship. It promotes public enjoyment of these churches and encourages their use as an educational and community resource. [www.visitchurches.org.uk](http://www.visitchurches.org.uk)



The Civic Trust is the leading national charity which campaigns for, and promotes better places in which we can all live, work, learn and relax. We do this through campaigning, influencing, celebrating, promoting and rewarding the people and places that make our communities better places. [www.civictrust.org.uk](http://www.civictrust.org.uk)



As the national tourism agency VisitBritain is responsible for marketing Britain worldwide and for developing England's visitor economy. Its mission is to build the value of tourism by creating world class destination brands and marketing campaigns and also build partnerships with - and provide insights to - other organisations which have a stake in British tourism. [www.visitbritain.org](http://www.visitbritain.org)



The Churches Tourism Association is England's leading body for faith heritage tourism, representing and developing the tourism potential and visitor experience for a unique part of our historical and contemporary faith heritage; captured for the future, living in the present, distinctive to the location of every community across the land.



The Cathedral and Church Buildings Division (CCBD) is part of the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England. It exists to help parishes, diocese and cathedrals use, care for and develop the Church's buildings, their contents and churchyards, enabling them to release their potential for mission and worship, and to reach out to the community. The Division supports the statutory work of both the Council for the Care of Churches and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England. It is the Church's lead policy body and "official face" for church buildings and cathedrals (over 16,200 buildings, of which around 13,000 are listed). [www.churchcare.co.uk](http://www.churchcare.co.uk)

