

New guide to developing a place of worship for community use

Work is getting underway on a new, updated and much expanded version of the influential and much valued 'Crossing the Threshold: a community development approach to the use of church buildings toolkit'.

It is all possible thanks to a grant of £12,000 from Allchurches Trust to the HRBA (Historic Religious Buildings Alliance).

The new publication, 'Crossing the Threshold: a step by step guide to developing your place of worship for wider community use and managing successful building projects', is being undertaken in partnership with the Diocese of Hereford.

The diocese published the original version of the toolkit in 2005 and it has continued to be a well-known and often consulted publication throughout the church sector. The Diocese of Hereford is contributing £2,000 towards the updating.

HRBA and the Diocese of Hereford are working alongside an alliance of interested parties to develop the content including Churchcare (Cathedral and Church Buildings Division) and Parish Resources, the Church of England, National Churches Trust and representatives of other denominations.

The Toolkit is being written by a specialist consultant along with contributions from an architect and other professionals, with the material also being checked by a working group of experienced practitioners.

It offers step-by-step guidance for parishes beginning to consider making changes to their buildings and who have a vision of opening up their church buildings for wider community use. The new revised resource will include additional guidance on managing building projects and new models of sharing management of church buildings with local communities.

The new resource will be made available online and free to download. Printed versions will be available on request.

*** SAVE THE DATE ** It is to be launched at a training event on 3rd November 2017 being held in St Martin in the Bullring, Birmingham.

As far as is possible, the guidance will be applicable to England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and cover churches of all Christian denominations.

Background on the Toolkit:

The 2005 edition of the Crossing the Threshold Toolkit was produced in response to demand from parishes who wanted to open up their buildings for use by their local community. It offers an easy to follow step-by-step resource containing exactly the sort of information any parish would need to know. By providing support and practical guidance, the intention is for more churches to remain open as places of worship but also as places where the wider community can enjoy a whole range of activities and support that will improve the quality of their lives.

In 2013, with funding from Historic England (formerly English Heritage), and in partnership with Herefordshire Council and Shropshire Rural Communities Council, the toolkit was rewritten and updated in the light of further experience and feedback from church building projects.

The last few years have seen the movement to open up church buildings for wider community use while remaining living places of worship growing apace. *Crossing the Threshold* was produced in response to demand from parishes at the beginning of this movement. The need for guidance is even greater now.

The new edition will again provide guidance on how to develop a community project within a church building and how to manage all stages of a building project (which might or might not be a community project). It will take into account the changing funding, community, local government and voluntary sector landscape as well as providing guidance on new funding

and governance models that have developed over the last four years.

The Toolkit will also link to up to date resources which provide guidance on how churches can be eco-aware and ensure their new facilities are as environmentally-friendly and energy efficient as possible.

It will include new case studies and incorporate best practice learnt from the experience of more recent projects. As before, it will set out the processes by which this is achievable within historic, and very often listed-buildings, as well as the need to ensure that the liturgical requirements of a place of worship are balanced with community use.

Allchurches Grants Officer, Peter Mojsa, said: *"Allchurches is delighted to be making possible this new, updated and expanded guide. We hope it will help even more churches remain open as places of worship but also become places where the wider community can enjoy a whole range of activities and services that will improve the quality of their lives."*

Wendy Coombey, Community Partnership and Funding officer for the Diocese of Hereford, one of the main partners in the project said: *"The primary aim of the toolkit is to support parishes to develop the widest possible use of their buildings, but to approach it in a sustainable way. The best way to do this is to adopt good community development practice and encourage strong project development. We are delighted to be working with the HRBA and our partners on the updating of the toolkit – because it means that the support to parishes will be even better and we really appreciate the support of AllChurches Trust"*.

Ann Stead, OBE, Chairman, Stadhampton Community Building Project said: *"We started our project to modify our local church so that it could become a village hall as well as a place of worship in 2008 and it took us five years to achieve it. We had excellent help from our local Rural Communities*

Council and Volunteer Action groups in terms of project planning and fundraising but they lacked the information we desperately needed about the sensitivities involved in creatively modifying a religious building so we felt very alone for much of the time. Undertaking projects like these can seem overwhelming. This toolkit is laid out very clearly and it breaks down the various tasks involved to show that they are eminently achievable even by a group of volunteers who might feel they lack the necessary skills. The checklists at the end of each chapter are particularly helpful. I cannot recommend this toolkit highly enough. I wish I had known about it when we started!"

Dr Joseph Elders, Major Projects Officer, Cathedral and Church Buildings Division said: *"ChurchCare welcomes this initiative, which we will adopt as part of our 'open and sustainable' campaign supporting parishes and dioceses in sharing their wonderful church buildings with the local and wider community, and inspiring new forms of mission and community engagement. Our churches are there for everyone to enjoy and use; this new resource will help parishes to realise their ambitions by providing practical and accessible advice and tools."*

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Notes to Editors

In 2013, with funding from Historic England, and in partnership with Herefordshire Council and Shropshire Rural Communities Council, the 2005 *Crossing the Threshold: a community development approach to the use of church buildings* toolkit was rewritten and updated, taking account of experience and feedback from church building projects. The new guide will provide a further and much-needed update.

For further information please contact Becky Payne, Development Director at the Historic Buildings Alliance hrb@theheritagealliance.org.uk **and Wendy Coombey,**

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The Historic Religious Building Alliance brings together those working for a secure future for historic religious buildings. Our scope is all listed places of worship in the UK. Our members are representatives from the main Christian denominations and other faith groups as well as organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic England, the Churches Conservation Trust and the National Churches Trust, and the Historic Chapels Trust and the Amenity Societies which in different ways support those who have responsibility for looking after our church heritage. Membership also includes individual clergy and churchwardens and trustees as well as other who support them Eg: architects, fundraisers and historic churches support officers part-funded by Historic England. HRBA also produces a free e-newsletter, with excellent feedback which is now sent directly to over 1,325 recipients. <http://www.hrballiance.org.uk/>

The Diocese of Hereford is the most rural in the Church of England. It covers Herefordshire, south Shropshire and some parishes in Worcestershire, Powys and Monmouthshire. The diocese has over 400 church buildings in 356 parishes and 84 schools and academies. It is also home to dozens of Christian youth organisations, community events and social action groups many of which benefit from sympathetic changes made to churches. More than 30% of church buildings in the diocese now have improved facilities thanks to the hard work and dedication of volunteers in parish and advice from support staff. Between 2013 and 2016 these efforts saw £2m of capital funding for building improvement projects brought in through grants and other means. <https://www.hereford.anglican.org/>

Allchurches Trust is one the of UK's largest charitable trusts. Allchurches Trust is the charitable owner of the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group, which grants a significant proportion of its

profits to Allchurches so they can be given back to society for good causes. <https://www.allchurches.co.uk/>

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ChurchCare is the Church of England's national resource, adding value from the centre to support over 16,000 parish churches and 42 cathedrals. We support all those in parishes, dioceses and cathedrals caring for their buildings today and for the enjoyment of future generations.

ChurchCare is the comprehensive source of information for everyone managing a church building.

<http://www.churchcare.co.uk/>

The **Parish Resources'** website is provided by the Church of England's National Stewardship & Resources team and offers over 400 pages of resources (web & pdf) to support all aspects of stewardship, administration and management in the local church, as well as links to other sites and pages of interest.

<http://www.parishresources.org.uk/>

The National Churches Trust is the national, independent charity dedicated to supporting and promoting places of worship of historic, architectural and community value used by Christian denominations throughout the UK.

The Trust does this through the provision of grants for repairs and modernisation, support, advice and information and campaigning to highlight the cause of church buildings and the value they provide to communities.

www.nationalchurchestrust.org

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