



Inspired North East

# INSPIRED FUTURES

For Historic Places of Worship in North East England

## Methods, Examples and Learning

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# About Inspired North East

- An initiative of the Church of England, Diocese of Newcastle
- Working with local congregations to help achieve a sustainable future for church buildings as living places of worship used and enjoyed by local communities, welcoming to visitors, valued as unique heritage assets
- HLF funded 'Inspired Futures' project working with partners including the Churches Conservation Trust to provide targeted development support for 18 churches in the dioceses of Newcastle and Durham (runs until 2019)
- Inspired North East Project Officer provides advisory support to all historic churches across the Diocese of Newcastle

# Why Inspired Futures?

- Builds on Inspired North East experience since 2010 (including Durham Diocese up to 2015)
- Reflects churches' identified needs and opportunities
- Based on a collaborative project concept and way of working
- A 'task team' approach
- A 'cohort' working model

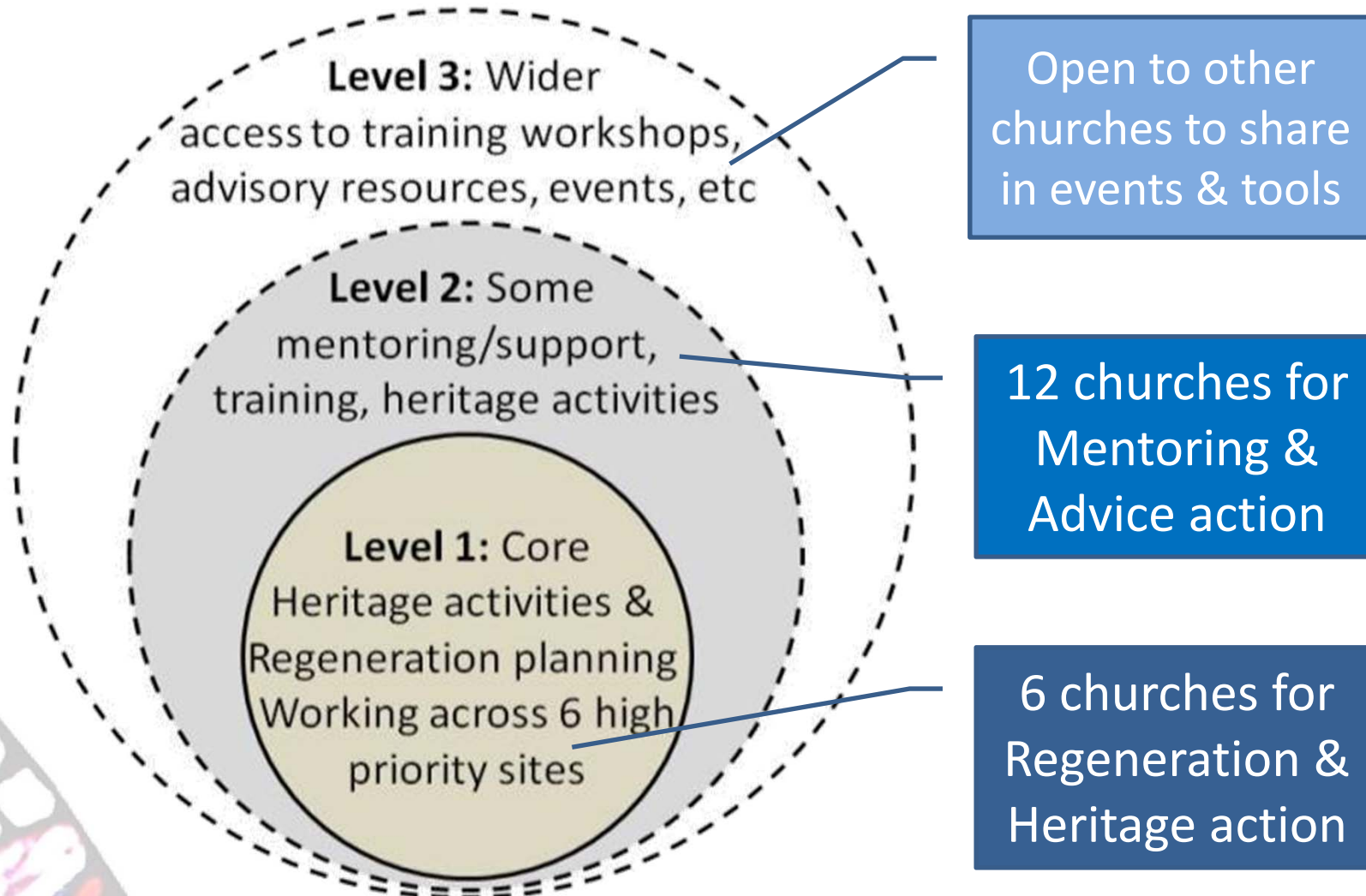


# Vision and Aims

- Create sustainable futures for historic churches, build upon heritage and wider community opportunities, and strengthen capacity of those caring for this heritage
- Demonstrate new models, practical tools and concepts for working with historic places of worship and getting resources to where they are needed

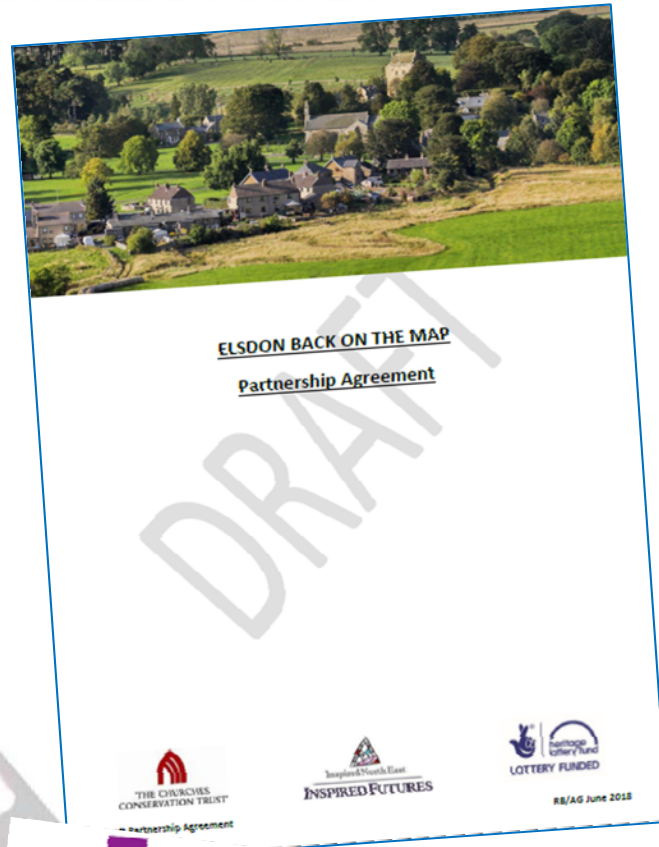


# Three levels of activity





# Much already achieved.....



# Travelling Treasures



## A place for people

Churches are all about people. Our greatest treasures are the individuals and communities who have shaped and use this building. It wouldn't be here without them.

People come here for many reasons: to worship, mark momentous occasions, admire the building, enjoy an event or find a quiet space.

Everyone is welcome.

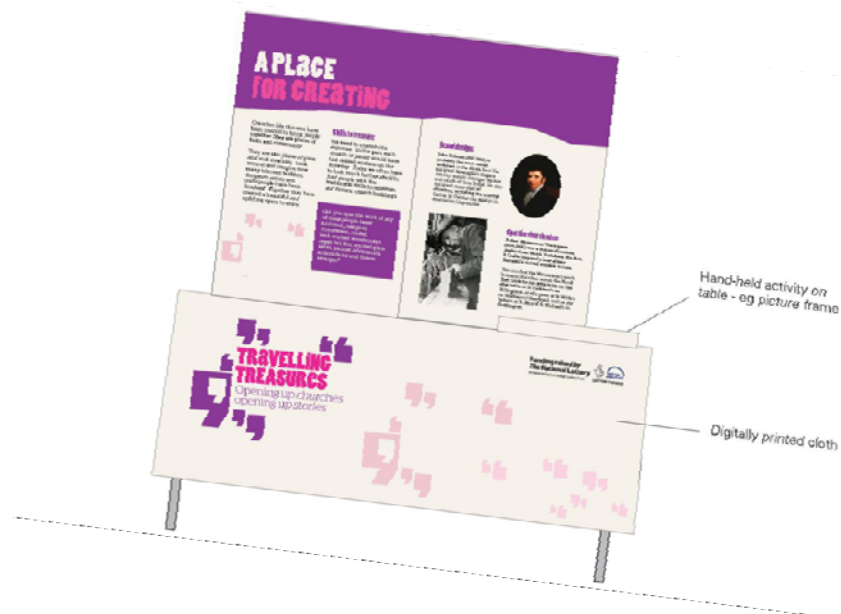
What has brought you here today?

**COME IN &  
DISCOVER  
OUR STORY...**

Each exhibition element will include:

- An **introduction panel**
- Options for **add-on graphics**, with bespoke content relevant to each church
- A secure location for a **generic object** or resource as the centrepiece for each story (low cost, robust, easily replaced)
- Simple **handling objects** or activities that support the main story
- Optional **shelves** and/or display points where the church's own objects can be displayed

**COME IN &  
DISCOVER  
OUR STORY...**





# St Cuthbert's, Elsdon

Impressive Grade 1 listed church in a remote/isolated village location in Northumberland (and Northumberland National Park)





# Strengths and Challenges

## Strengths

- Attractive village location
- Largest settlement in NNP
- Long and rich history (village and church)
- Beautiful, atmospheric and much loved building, great acoustics
- Central to village activities
- Dedicated team
- Existing relationships with other village assets
- Successful GPOW in progress for roof and window repairs
- Inspired Futures adds momentum and expertise



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## Challenges

- No heating
- Minimal lighting
- No running water or toilets
- No kitchen or servery
- Poor physical access outside
- Uneven floor levels inside
- Newer members of church team moving away
- Small team now struggling
- Disabled by impossible challenge of the big vision
- Interregnum and absence of clergy support/leadership
- Narrative of lack of past support (e.g. NNP)
- Low confidence

# Approaches



Specialist consultancy support and workshops

Consultation and testing: Evidence of need and proof of concept

Answers on a postcode for St Cuthbert's  
we welcome your thoughts...



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Heritage  
LOTTERY FUNDED

Facilitating local  
and wider  
partnership and  
stakeholder  
development

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**INSPIRED FUTURES**  
St Cuthbert's Elsdon 'A Warmer Welcome' Stakeholders Consultation event  
St Cuthbert's Church and St Cuthbert's Village Hall  
Thursday 26 April 2018



Report produced by The Churches Conservation Trust  
June 2018

## Culture in a cool place - Summer Events at St Cuthbert's Church, Elsdon



Tony Williams, Book Event, Wednesday 19th July  
Coquetdale Chamber Choir, Sacred Lights, Saturday 29th July  
Elsdon Village Fete, Monday 28th August  
Benedict Biscop Gregorian Choir, Plainsong Workshop, Saturday 9th September

Church and village events programme



# Outputs

St Cuthbert's Church, Elsdon  
A Warmer Welcome



ELSDON BACK ON THE MAP  
Partnership Agreement



New uses of the church realised, testing of development options



October 2017 v1



St Cuthbert's church, Elsdon long case for Support



Draft Partnership Agreement



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RB/AG June 2018

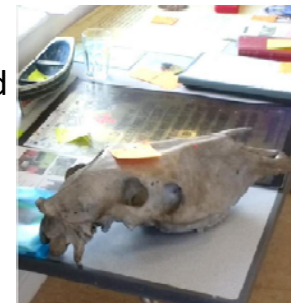
Vision, Case for Support, outline  
Business/Fundraising Plan

Elsdon Partnership Agreement

New relationships  
formed improving  
long term  
sustainability  
(pledges)



Church heritage  
'offer' developed  
as a key asset



Pew heating  
application to  
Windfarm Trust



# Learning and Ongoing Challenges

- Capacity still limited/fragile
- Has required intensive consultancy input to get results (but 'task team' has worked well)
- Leadership an issue for much of the project
- Other church pressures have eaten into focus for strategic development agenda
- Challenging to realise a significant rural church building change agenda in 3 years
- Inspired Futures has got Elsdon to a much improved starting point – but moving on from there will still be challenging
- Limited 'self-help' integration with the wider Inspired Futures cohort

# St Chads, Bensham (Gateshead)

- Inner city church
- Area of high deprivation
- High incidence of foreign nationals as asylum seekers
- Church sits in the heart of a community being ripped apart and put back together
- Church wants to 'be there for' the new community and to open itself to the opportunity this brings





# St Chads, Bensham



- Built as the 'Cathedral of the working man' in 1904
- Astounding but relatively unknown 'Arts and Crafts' interior
- Fairly 'brutal' reordering in the west end under 'Faith in the City'
- A mission to the people of Bensham
- Aspiration to establish church as a community and social enterprise hub alongside its role as a place of worship - **St Chads – A Safe Haven**

# From Burden to Opportunity

## Presenting Issue or burden

Leaking roof due to time expired materials



## Opportunity

Roof repair project a focus for new heritage activities . Secure building for 150 + years

1980s reordering significantly detrimental impact on heritage significance



Sensitive redesign and refurbish for a new community and social enterprise space to meet community need

Undervalued arts and crafts interior which community is unlikely to engage with



Focus on the social heritage in living history sessions telling the stories of the *Cathedral of the Working Man*

Under-resourced church with very few volunteers



Bensham is being regenerated and a new community being rebuilt around the church



# Project Approach

## Develop partnership

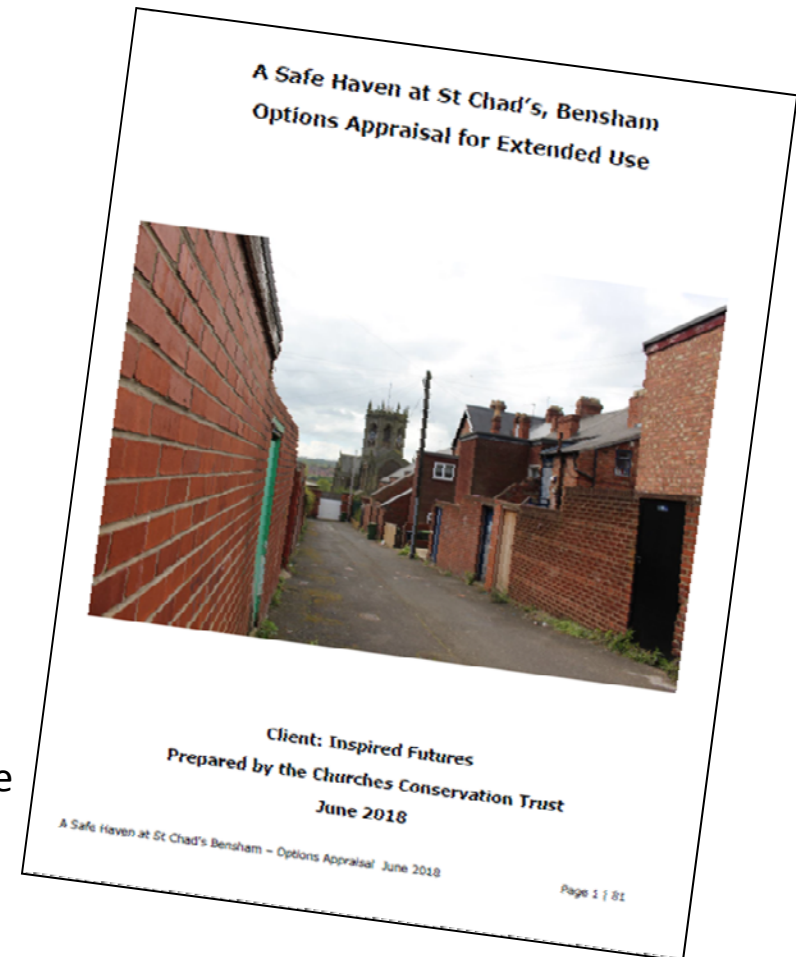
- St Chads Community Project
- Bensham and Saltwell alive
- Gateshead Borough Council

## Consultancy support

- Identifying need
- Options appraisal
- High level business plan
- Community workshops
- Piloting role as Community /Enterprise hub

## Funding

- Success with revenue funding to appoint project officer
- C £600K required for roof repair – *Mountain 1*
- C £600K required for refurbishment of community space *Mountain 2*
- GWF Anniversary Fund –Failed bid but secured faculty
- The HLF conundrum.





# Successes v Remaining Challenges

## Successes

- Church governance strengthened through partnership
- Piloting Safe Haven has really shown the project will work.
- Church can become 'go to place' for community support
- Bidding for grants even though unsuccessful has assembled documents needed for success
- Church believes in itself and what it must do

## Challenges

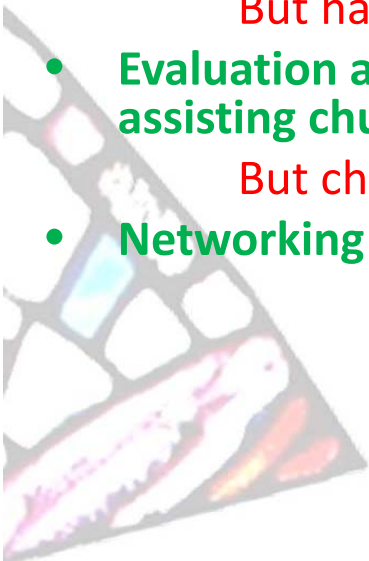
- Scale the funding mountains
- Volunteer base remains small
- GBC support vulnerable to service cuts
- Finding ways to make the heritage of St Chad's meaningful for the community
- Build momentum before IF project support ends in 2019



# IF Learning Summary

## What's worked /what hasn't:

- General project concept of a facilitating & enabling resource for churches  
But underestimated capacity and leadership
- Training through project has been comprehensive and well received  
But ability to take away learning and apply it - patchy
- Building a partnership of consultants to assist both the heritage and regeneration side of church projects  
But consultant time necessary underestimated at start
- Templated tools for preparing key documents  
But had to work alongside churches 1:1 to assist them to complete
- Evaluation and learning has worked well with baseline / mid / end evaluation plus assisting churches with concepts.  
But church take up of evaluation and review processes - patchy
- Networking and learning from other churches



# IF Learning Summary 2

What a continued / wider roll-out of IF would require:

- Single level of assistance rather than more complicated two tier approach
- More time to allow hands on assistance
- Assisting churches to bid for project development grants
- Strengthening partnerships across the community sector
- Pick up on wider national agendas/opportunities
- Stronger liaison with dioceses/church governing bodies to ensure projects do not collide (e.g. recent example with Resource Churches)
- Trying to avoid selecting churches where leadership is going to be an issue
- Develop simple, straightforward methods of evaluation for churches to gather evidence, find out opinions and track progress
- Flexibility and adaptability in project governance and delivery.
- Build on legacy of tools, learning and contacts





Inspired North East

# INSPIRED FUTURES

## **Project partners:**

Newcastle Diocese & Durham Diocese

The Churches Conservation Trust

Historic England

National Churches Trust

Northumbria Historic Churches Trust

## **Project Officer:**

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