

## **English Churches and Cathedrals Sustainability Review**

The Church of England, responsible for over a third of England's grade I listed buildings, has recently conducted a major review of the stewardship of its cathedrals and 16,000 church buildings (75% of which are listed). Cathedrals and church buildings are the jewel in the crown of our national heritage and repositories of the history of local communities. The vast majority remain active community hubs providing all sorts of services to the wider community. It is encouraging to note that church buildings are probably in better physical shape than they have ever been. However the challenges are great. Over 2000 of these churches have congregations of fewer than 10 and 2/3rds of church buildings and 75% of grade I listed churches are in rural areas where only 20% of the population lives.

Churches and cathedrals define many of our cities, towns and villages. We want to open up these buildings for wider community, cultural and heritage use. There are many examples of good practice up and down the land. The challenge is to share good practice and enable it to be spread whilst at the same time ensuring sustainable maintenance and funding of these exceptional buildings.

For this reason the Government has decided to set up a church buildings task force to work with the Church of England (which already does a great deal to encourage community use). The task force will be charged with:

- Exploring new models of financing repairs and maintenance of churches and cathedrals, including reviewing existing maintenance costs and repairs funding from lottery and central government grants. The review would also identify and develop a series of tools/resources/models, draw on successful case studies, and existing management within the Church of England, Churches Conservation Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Consulting with stakeholders including: Church of England, church-goers, charities, local residents and business on ideas for uses of listed buildings for purposes beyond worship and current barriers that prevent these and how to generate revenue from these.

The Taskforce will be chaired by Bernard Taylor, supported by experts in the field and a working group comprising of officials from the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division of the Church of England, Historic England, the Heritage Lottery Fund and DCMS.

It will report to the Secretary of State for Culture and the Chancellor in April 2017.