

embargoed until Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April



## NATIONAL SURVEY REVEALS STATE OF UK CHURCHES

The results of the National Churches Trust Survey, published today, establish new and up-to-date facts about the state of the UK's church buildings.

The survey, the most comprehensive of its kind, was open to all of the estimated 47,000 churches, chapels and meeting houses in the UK. It has found that these buildings play a key role in local life as venues for volunteering and community activities – but need support in undertaking repairs and maintenance.

The survey is unique in revealing not just the physical condition of churches but also the way they are managed, funded and used by their communities.

The results show that in addition to their role as places of worship, church buildings play a vital role in activities for the benefit of the wider community, including supporting children and young people. Analysis suggests nearly 80% of churches are used for purposes other than regular worship.

The survey also reveals the maintenance needs of church buildings. Whilst many buildings are well looked after, the survey indicates 8% of churches are in poor or very poor condition.

**Andrew Edwards, Chief Executive of the National Churches Trust, said:**

“Through a single, national survey we now have a better understanding of church buildings across the UK. The survey shows that open, accessible church buildings provide communities with a significant resource. Voluntary action that takes place locally often needs a physical space in which to happen, and it is clear that church buildings help fill that need.

“However, the survey also reveals these buildings’ repair and maintenance needs, which can pose great challenges to those tasked with their care. Good maintenance practice is fundamental and the evidence of the survey backs our assertion that formal maintenance plans are essential.”

**John Penrose MP, Minister for Tourism and Heritage, said:**

“It's excellent to hear that so many of our places of worship are in such a good state and are serving their local communities in a variety of ways beyond just worship. Much of this is thanks to the hardworking volunteers and congregations who selflessly give up their time and energy. Of course, it's important we know where there are problems too, so we can work together to address them. I'm grateful to the Trust and everyone who contributed to this vital study.”

Analysis of the responses, carried out with the support of McKinsey and Company, indicates that:

- **The majority of church buildings are open and being used, for both regular worship and other purposes.** More than 90% of the UK's church buildings hold a service at least once a week and nearly 80% are used for

other purposes, including community activities. More than half are regularly open to the public beyond their worship services.

- **Church buildings are significant venues for volunteering.** 1.4 million members of church congregations volunteer in any capacity in their church building along with an estimated further 200,000 people from the wider community. 20% of the UK's church buildings have more than 50 people volunteering in the building, and in less populated rural areas over a third have more than 20 volunteers.
- **Church buildings are important cultural venues.** Nearly half of the UK's church buildings are used for arts, music and dance activities.
- **Church buildings are key locations for supporting children and young people.** More than half of the UK's church buildings facilitate activities such as nurseries, youth groups and additional activities for young people.
- **Church buildings are significant places for support and counselling.** More than two-fifths of the UK's church buildings are used for support and counselling services on issues such as homelessness, drug and alcohol misuse, finance and debt, parenting and mental health.
- **Church buildings are important in the administration of the democratic process.** More than 4,600 church buildings served as polling places at the 2010 general election, around one-sixth of the total number of locations used for this purpose.
- **Church buildings could offer more to their communities with improved space and more volunteers**
- **Many church buildings have key facilities, but there is room for improvement.** Buildings with adequate heating, toilets or tea/coffee-making facilities are more likely to offer additional community activities. Nearly a third of churches lack toilets. Listed buildings are generally less well equipped.
- **A critical number of churches need help.** Whilst most buildings are in good or fair condition – a testament to the hard work of the churches themselves and external funders - 8% are in poor or very poor condition.
- **Urgent repairs cost an average of £80,000,** to those buildings in the survey sample in need of them. The most commonly required repairs identified as urgent are to roofs, heating and rainwater goods.
- **'Friends' groups that support churches demonstrate community involvement and provide additional funds for church buildings.** The results suggest that there are a significant number of Friends' groups in existence, involving thousands of people, of whom more than half are not members of the local congregation.

The findings are endorsed by a range of prominent individuals including Tony Hall CBE, economist Ruth Lea, Professor Eamon Duffy, Dame Stella Rimington and others.

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For further information about the National Churches Trust and to download the full report visit [www.nationalchurchestrust.org](http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org)

#### Notes to Editors:

- [1] The National Churches Trust is the only national, non-profit organisation dedicated to supporting and promoting church buildings of all Christian denominations across the UK, of which there are an estimated 47,000.

The National Churches Trust, formerly the Historic Churches Preservation Trust, developed the survey with the support of McKinsey and Co on a pro-bono basis. Discussions were also held with heritage organisations, Christian denominations and those that look after churches in designing the survey

The Trust is independent of Government and Church Authorities, giving grants, raising funds and offering practical assistance to churches, chapels and meeting houses of historic, architectural and community value – not only as places of worship, but as centres of support and care for all, as venues for social, cultural and educational activities, and as sites of local history and identity.

The National Churches Trust was created from two long established charities that have worked for almost two centuries to protect and preserve Britain's churches. It aims to keep these buildings at the heart of community life.

- [2] The survey was developed with the support of McKinsey and Company and its findings are endorsed by a range of prominent individuals who have signed its foreword:

- Tony Hall, Lord Hall of Birkenhead CBE - *Chief Executive of the Royal Opera House and Chair of the Cultural Olympiad*
- Richard Best, Lord Best OBE - *Former Director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and President of the Local Government Association*
- Professor Eamon Duffy - *Professor of the History of Christianity, University of Cambridge*
- Dr David Kynaston - *Research Fellow in History at Kingston University, author of a history of post-war Britain*
- Ruth Lea - *Economic Adviser to the Arbutnot Banking Group and a Vice-President of the National Churches Trust*
- Kate Parminter, Baroness Parminter - *Former Chief Executive of the Campaign to Protect Rural England*
- Dame Stella Rimington DCB - *Former Director-General of the Security Service*
- Rt Hon Sir Timothy Sainsbury - *Former MP and Minister, Trustee of the Victoria and Albert Museum*