GS Misc 887B

SPECIAL AGENDA III

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTION

CHURCH TOURISM

A background paper by the Cathedral & Church Buildings Division

Introduction

1. This note has been prepared by the CCB Division to provide factual background to Mr Roy Thompson's Motion on Church Tourism, which broadly asks Synod to:
   - support the aims and objectives of the Church Tourism Association's *Sacred Britain* strategy;
   - encourage dioceses to provide suitable resource to enable the development of the church tourism partnerships and networks at regional and local level.

   It further asks the CCB Division to report back on progress to Synod before July 2010.

2. This note sets the Motion in the context of the ongoing national Church Buildings campaign, *Building Faith in our Future*, and sets out some facts about UK tourism and church visiting. It should be read in association with GS Misc 887A, which outlines the background to the Sacred Britain initiative and some recent church tourism projects.

Building Faith in our Future

3. The Motion sits squarely, in both intent and approach, with the Church of England's strategy framework for safeguarding its church buildings and cathedrals, set out in the 2004 Report, *Building Faith in our Future* ("Building Faith"). General Synod unanimously supported the report's recommendations in February 2006.

4. Building Faith made proposals to support and enhance the contribution that church buildings and cathedrals make to the life of this country and its communities. It highlighted the critical importance of partnership with outside partners.

   '*It is vital that we both value the huge achievement of previous generations, celebrate the work of countless volunteers and… look to how we can make common cause with other stakeholders…in securing the future of such an important asset, the supreme treasury of English vernacular art and memory.*' (The Rt Rev and Rt Hon Richard Chartres, Bishop of London, 2004)

5. Building Faith has three simple messages:
   - Churches matter because of their central role as places of worship, mission and community, and deserve support
   - Without support they and the achievements to which they contribute are at risk
   - We are therefore seeking:
     - additional funding for repairs;
     - a fair share of other funds/resources already available;
     - to strengthen the Church's capacity to develop the use of its buildings for worship and mission to the wider community.

6. In relation to tourism, Building Faith states: '…we draw attention to the considerable economic magnet effect of cathedrals and greater churches for their cities and towns, as

well as the similar, if less easily quantifiable, effect of smaller parish churches. We encourage all local and regional authorities to consider with the churches and faith groups how this economic effect can best be reflected in mutually supportive practical and financial help.'

7. The report also highlights the wider contribution which churches and cathedrals make, beyond providing a place for worship, and the broad appeal which they have to those beyond the local worshipping community. Many strangers cross the threshold, whether calling themselves tourists, travellers, guests, visitors or pilgrims, for the rich heritage - architecture, history, arts and crafts, landscape – for social, educational and cultural events, for the community services offered, or sometimes simply searching for a peaceful refuge.

   'It is through the churches of England that we learn who we were and thus who we are and might become. Lose that learning and we lose the collective memory that is the essence of human society. We must remember.' (Sir Simon Jenkins – England's Thousand Best Churches, 1999)

The UK Tourism Industry

8. Tourism – inbound and domestic – is one of the UK's largest industries. In 2006, it contributed approximately £85.6 billion to the national economy, of which almost 80% was spending by domestic tourists. This sustains over 2 million jobs, directly or indirectly, and well over 5% of all people in employment in the UK.

9. In industry terms, the UK's "brand" emphasises Heritage, Culture and Scenery and this is reflected in overseas visitors' high ratings of the UK as a place to visit churches and cathedrals along with museums, galleries, walking/touring, relative to being a place for golfing, night clubs and beach holidays. High proportions say they would visit churches and cathedrals whilst in the UK – up to three-quarters of South Africans and South Americans, down to one third of Japanese, the least likely to visit.

The Church and Tourism

10. Cathedrals and churches matter to both tourist markets, comprising the most significant single element of the UK's built heritage:
    - 45% of Grade I and 20% of Grade II* listed buildings are cathedrals and churches
    - St Paul's and Canterbury cathedrals, Westminster Abbey and York Minster are among the top 20 paid attractions
    - Approximately 15 million visits are made to those churches and cathedrals regarded as "major tourist attractions" out of an estimated 35-50 million visits made to churches each year (Church of England surveys and other indicators, excluding regular worshippers)
    - Cathedral visiting alone is worth an estimated £91m to the local economy (£150m with total procurement) and supports 2,600 FTE jobs (ECOTEC 2004).

11. The trend in visits to places of worship is up, with visits increasing by 3% in both 2005 and 2006 (Visit Britain – Visitor Attraction Trends). The Churches Conservation Trust has recorded an increase in visitors to its 340 churches from 1 million to 1.25 million in the last 5 years. Lincoln Cathedral estimates a 17.5% increase in visitor numbers in 2006 compared to 2004, with income up 20% in the same period owing to the publicity surrounding the Da Vinci Code.

12. In terms of broader visitor interest, successive Opinion Research Bureau polls between 2001 and 2007 have consistently shown that the proportion of those surveyed visiting

churches for all purposes each year remains at around 85%. The same polls show between 25% and 38% attending social and community events or concerts and performances, around 20% seeking a quiet place and similar proportions feeling the need to drop in.

13. However, a survey of visitors to parish churches made in 2006 (Dr Bob Gibson) suggested that, with the exception of special events such as flower festivals, 91% of tourist visits are secondary, generally linked with some other leisure activity. Visitors to CCT sites in the same year linked their visit with: other places of interest (30%); walking/cycling trips (21%); eating out (19%); and shopping for pleasure (14%). In both cases few visitors had received information from "industry sources" - less than 1% of visitors had learnt of the church from tourist information centres. In the case of CCT churches, 30% had just came across the church, and 27% had prior personal knowledge; 18% had read the CCT's own website or brochures.

Current support for church tourism

14. Although cathedrals and churches make a significant contribution to UK tourism, there has been little formal support within Church structures. The Pilgrims' Association was established in 1981 to create a forum for cathedrals and greater churches in which those responsible for the care and welcome of pilgrims, tourists and visitors could meet and exchange ideas and experiences. The Churches Tourism Association was formed (as the National Churches Tourism Group) in 1996, an ecumenical grouping of churches engaged in tourism. The first full-time diocesan tourism officer (DTO) was appointed in 1988 in the diocese of Lincoln. Around half of dioceses currently have DTOs, most part-time including archdeacons, parish clergy, diocesan social responsibility staff or lay volunteers.

15. Virtually all of the landmark projects reported in Building Faith, Sacred Britain and set out in GS Misc 887A, such as those in Lincoln, North Yorkshire and Sussex, are associated with the presence of a diocesan officer or tourism group, generally working with external partners. Most other church tourism activity is by individual churches or in small groups, often reacting to visitors resulting from happy proximity to other tourist attractions, e.g. Bath Abbey or Haworth parish church.

16. The overall message is that although cathedrals and churches have considerable heritage significance and substantial visitor numbers, they remain under-valued, under visited, with limited support and lacking the capacity to create new opportunities or exploit those which arise. These opportunities go beyond income-generation and include to minister to the varied needs of visitors and to explain the Church's values and beliefs in an increasingly secular world.

'We are not just custodians of fine buildings; we are offering these buildings as sacred spaces in which God can speak to those who are searching. Interpretation of the building as Christian space is vital.' (Jenny Bate, Tourism Officer, Diocese of Carlisle – speaking in Church Building debate, February 2006)

The Sacred Britain Strategy – stepping beyond the Church Trail

'Churches and places associated with other faiths are a legacy vital to the culture, attractiveness and economy of every region, town and district of England …. More congregations want to open up these buildings to a wider audience, and need help to do this.' (ASPIRE Project Summary)

17. The Sacred Britain Working Group (now Tourism Partnership) drew together a broad coalition partners from Church, government, industry and voluntary sectors, including the

Church Tourism Association, the Churches Conservation Trust, the Civic Trust, English Heritage and Visit Britain, working with the leading church tourism practitioners at regional and local level. The resulting strategy, with its ASPIRE pathfinder initiative, advocates a partnership approach, sharing best practice to release 'the visitor, community and regeneration potential of churches'. This requires some improved co-ordination, communication and marketing at national level. The British tourism bodies are incorporating places of worship within the country's "offer" to visitors which opens the way for dioceses and parishes to access tourism-related resources. The CTA's website is also much expanded with information and toolkits for churches. However, to progress substantially more regional and local information is now required and local representatives to work with the tourism sector.

18. The strategy acknowledges that 'most churches are not traditionally thought of as visitor attractions and some congregations are uncomfortable about the perception that a Place of Worship could be bracketed together with an obvious tourist destination, like Alton Towers, for example.' However there is sufficient evidence already from successful projects that "sacred tourism" can compliment rather than compromise cathedrals' and churches' mission, worship and community work. Indeed, the Church 'may have something to learn from [tourist] attractions about our customer service', lessons potentially of value well beyond the heritage or tourism agenda, for example to outreach initiatives emerging from Mission-shaped Church.

19. Dioceses must determine themselves whether and how best to engage with the strategy. There can be no standard model, whether for diocesan-based models or formed in partnership with other dioceses, denominations, faith groups or regional bodies. A current opportunity to review diocesan engagement lies with the formation of Mission & Pastoral Committees, responsible for maintaining 'an overview of matters relating to church buildings in the diocese and their use, other than matters … within the functions of the Diocesan Advisory Committee'. If Synod supports the Motion, the Division (and other Sacred Britain Partnership members) would aim to work alongside dioceses to identify and share best practice models.

Conclusion

20. This is a positive Motion which the CCB Division supports. It emerges at a critical time for UK tourism with the 2012 Olympics raising both the challenge of competition for limited resources and the opportunity of substantial numbers of visitors from around the world. There is also emerging evidence that environmental and economic challenges are resulting in increases in domestic tourism, alongside increasing interest in our heritage and sacred buildings.

'The heritage sector has a real opportunity to put itself to the public value test. Passing that test will not just mean that the sector can continue to protect and enhance our heritage; it will also ensure that the sector drives itself forward to be a relevant, valued and vitally important part of a successful, diverse and modern Britain.'
(Rt Hon Tessa Jowell, MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, 2006)

'The power of heritage in building communities is the power of engaging people's imaginations and passions. Without that, communities cannot thrive. And, of course, shared history can bring not just communities but generations together.' (Baroness Andrews, Sustainable Development Minister, ODPM, 2006)

'I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.' (1 Cor 9:22)

Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ June 2008

Annex A

Facts and figures

The UK Tourism Industry - Contribution from the Visitor Economy

Visits (2006):

- The UK visitor economy worth over £85.6 billion
- Inbound – 32.7 million visitors spending £18.9 billion; 6th in the world
- Domestic – Over 102 million overnight and day (non-business) visits by UK residents spending £68 billion
- Tourism is the UK's 5th largest industry, employing over 2.1 million people and accounting for 3.5% of the economy

Top five overseas markets (2006)

Country	Visits (000)	Country	Visits (000)
USA	3,896	USA	2,908
France	3,693	Germany	1,093
Germany	3,411	France	1,055
Irish Republic	2,909	Irish Republic	907
Spain	1,981	Spain	835

(Source: Visit Britain)

Employment (at June 2007):

- Over 2 million jobs directly or indirectly sustained by tourism
- Estimated 1.45 million jobs directly related to tourism activity, around 5% of all people in employment in the UK.
- Approximately 132,400 of these jobs are in self-employment.

	Total (millions)	Tourism-related (millions)
Total Employment	29.2	1.45
Employee Jobs	25.2	1.32
Self-Employment	3.8	0.13

(Source: Office for National Statistics and DCMS)

Research Rankings

Markets that rank visiting Churches & Cathedrals as an activity to do in the UK

Highest (Mean score)			Lowest (Mean score)	
South Africa	6.17		Japan	4.74
Australia/NZ	5.93		Korea	4.78
Canada	5.76		Central Europe	5.22

(Based on score of 1- 7 with 1 being low)

Markets in visiting Churches & Cathedrals if they were to visit the UK:

MOST LIKELY	(%)		LEAST LIKELY	(%)
South Africa	74		Japan	33
South America	74		Korea	34
Southern Europe	73		Ireland	47

(Source: Anholt-GMI Nation Brands Index)