

A £40m scheme to conserve and repair England's cathedrals ahead of First World War centenary events has significantly reduced immediate risks, according to a report published today.

England's cathedrals contribute more than £220m to the economy each year, drawing in more than 11 million visitors. Often complex and historic buildings, each has the responsibility for raising the funds required for upkeep. However, with no regular Government funding, each cathedral faces an ongoing challenge to maintain their fabric while ensuring comfort, safety and accessibility for all.

The First World War Centenary Cathedral Repairs Fund, launched by the Government in 2014, invited applications from Catholic and Church of England cathedrals to address urgent repair works. The fund prioritised making buildings weatherproof, safe and open to the public as well as ensuring they would be in a safe condition to host acts of remembrance for the centenary of the First World War armistice in 2018.

Grants were awarded over two phases between 2014-18, each totalling £20 million. A total of 146 awards were made to 57 cathedrals. Twelve cathedrals were awarded more than £1 million each, and the average award was £274,000.

Projects supported by the fund were all assessed by architects as requiring urgent attention either immediately or within 12 months.

With funding now complete, [today's independent report](#) shows a significant reduction of problems requiring immediate repair as a result of the investment but warned that recipients all had outstanding repairs in areas not covered by the scheme.

The largest number of projects (approximately a third) were for roof repairs. Many of the repairs funded also related to external masonry, with other projects covered including guttering, heating, sound system, electrical and window refurbishment.

Grants were awarded by an independent panel chaired by Sir Paul Ruddock, a position appointed by the Secretary of State. The Fund was administered by the Church of England's Cathedrals and Church Buildings Division (CCB) on behalf of the [Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport](#), with the CCB praised in the report for cost efficiency and excellent communication.

The report concluded that the fund had been successful in achieving its aims and met a funding need that could not be met elsewhere, adding that areas of cathedrals covered by grant-aided projects had been very largely changed from needing urgent repair to needing routine maintenance only.

The Bishop of Worcester, Dr John Inge, the Church of England's lead bishop for churches and cathedrals said:

“Cathedrals are at the forefront of the nation’s acts of remembrance each year, and in 2018 will perform their civic and community duty with added significance, as we mark 100 years since the end of the First World War.

“This fund has been an imaginative and welcome resource to ensure our cathedrals are fit for this commemoration, as well as underpinning the vital contributions they make to their communities.

“With visitor and congregation numbers rising, and community outreach in abundance, it is vital that we do not stop here, and continue our commitment as a nation to protecting England’s cathedrals for generations to come.

"We look forward to continuing a constructive dialogue with the Government around future funding collaborations."

The Most Rev George Stack, Archbishop of Cardiff and Chair of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference Patrimony Committee said:

“The grant funding received through this programme has enabled a number of Catholic cathedrals to carry out major works of repair which would otherwise have been wholly unaffordable. Many Catholic cathedrals in England are located in deprived inner-city areas and have very limited funds.

“This grant scheme has allowed a considerable backlog of repairs to be addressed. Leaking roofs have been repaired, decaying stonework rectified, improvements to drainage has stopped damp penetrating walls and causing internal damage, and improvements to heating and lighting systems have made cathedrals warm and welcoming to all.

“These highly significant sacred buildings have been able to play their part in the commemorations for the First World War and we are enormously grateful to the government for this vital funding which brings renewed hope to many.”

The Second Church Estates Commissioner, the Rt Hon Dame Caroline Spelman MP, said:

“The value of cathedrals has been demonstrated time and again. One in four of us will have visited a cathedral in the past 12 months, and with an estimated contribution to the economy of around £220m a year, the First World War Centenary Repairs Fund investment in cathedrals has made very good sense.

“I will be working with colleagues to explore ways that a shared approach to cathedral repair work can continue, ensuring cathedrals are fit to continue their important contribution to society.”

Sir Paul Ruddock, who chaired the expert panel which made the awards said:

“I have found the four years allocating and monitoring the impact of the government’s £40 million in cathedral repairs to be immensely worthwhile and rewarding.

“As a result of this investment, many cathedrals planned additional First World War memorial services and activities and the legacy of repair works supported by this admirable grant programme will be a lasting and fitting commemoration of the centenary of the conflict.”

The Fund at work and Cathedral reaction

Case studies from Church of England Cathedrals:

Southwark Cathedral (**Church of England**) is in a neighbourhood boosted by the development of Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, The Tate Modern, The Shard, Borough Market and more recently London Bridge Station. Southwark Cathedral was at the centre of a terrorist attack in June 2017, and has played a key part in the grieving, commemoration and recovery of the area, including a service of remembrance for victims of the attack on the first anniversary when a memorial olive tree was placed. Grants totalling £887,000 funded high-level roof and masonry repairs and the installation of a number of new corbels (brackets, similar to gargoyles) in partnership with students from the City & Guilds of London Art School. Among the new corbels at Southwark is a carving of PC Wayne Marques, who fought off attackers in the London Bridge attack using only a truncheon and was temporarily blinded as a result, and another to the cathedral’s resident cat, *Doorkins*. During the work, members of the public had the opportunity to observe and talk to the workers, learning about the ancient craft of stone carving.

The Dean of Southwark, Andrew Nunn, said: “We are delighted with the work this fund has supported. The nave is now dry after many years, and the new corbels help to tell stories of our cathedral and community for generations to come. The preservation of this Grade 1 listed building and the survival of historic remains from a thousand years of its history are vital components of Southwark Cathedral’s life and ministry.”

Coventry Cathedral (**Church of England**) is unique in having two consecrated sites, one of them ruined in a Second World War bombing raid, with a new cathedral opening adjacently in 1962. The cathedral is a centre for peace and reconciliation ministry and the ruins stand as memorial to those killed, injured or traumatised by conflict worldwide. But the delicate stonework was never intended to be exposed to wind and rain and requires constant upkeep. Part of £1.26 million awarded (c.£250k) has helped to stabilise and protect the ruins, including bringing two medieval chapels beneath them back into use. As Coventry prepares to be European City of Culture in 2021, the ruins will be developed for new and innovative usage, including outdoor cinema and performance, drawing more visitors to the site. Significant repairs to the modern building’s unique Chapel of Unity (c.£1m) have also made possible the removal of protective fencing which has been in place since the 1980s.

The Dean of Coventry, John Witcombe, said: “The ruins of the medieval cathedral stand proudly as an icon of hope. They are known throughout the world as the place where our ministry of peace and reconciliation began and remain a focal point for many events and activities in the city

each year. This timely funding has enabled the completion of an eight-year project to ensure this iconic site remains open and accessible as a place for quiet reflection and to experience the impact of the peace-building work to which Coventry Cathedral is committed.”

At Lichfield Cathedral **(Church of England)**, grants totalling just under £1.5 million allowed for emergency rewiring and essential lighting improvements, as well as repairs to the cathedral’s unique two-storey Chapter House, which dates from 1195, and houses housing a historic library collection including the 8th century Chad Gospels. Obsolete and dangerous wiring had threatened to make the cathedral uninsurable. School-age children had the chance to observe masons and lead-workers on the project, to raise awareness of craft skill and to encourage the next generation.

The Dean of Lichfield, Adrian Dorber, said: “Prior to the work, Lichfield Cathedral was at a critical point. The electrics had degraded to the point where they were no longer safe, and the cathedral was beginning to struggle to function. This timely funding has not only reversed the immediate risks, but also given a boost for some of the funding to be matched locally, resulting in new lighting which greatly enhances the beauty of this building, as well as reducing our energy consumption. This all adds up to the First World War Centenary Repair Fund helping the cathedral to be a safe and welcoming environment for all visitors and worshippers, including those attending commemorations in the autumn, which has been very welcome.

Liverpool Cathedral **(Church of England)** is the largest cathedral in the UK. Consecrated in 1978, it was also the last in the country to be completed. Its scale, and the innovative use of materials in its construction mean however that the cathedral faces repair costs comparable to those of major medieval buildings. The cathedral, which received just over £1 million for roof and high-level repairs, is a major tourist attraction, welcoming around half a million visitors a year. Liverpool is hosting one of the most extensive programmes of First World War commemorations, including a commemoration of Captain Noel Chavasse, son of the second Bishop of Liverpool, who was the only soldier to be awarded the Victoria Cross twice in that conflict.

The Dean of Liverpool, Dr Sue Jones, said: “People love Liverpool Cathedral. It is a cathedral built by the people and for the people and has been the focus for much of the city’s grief and celebration over the last 100 years. As such the cathedral is a focus for the city. It is so important that we ensure the survival and upkeep of this beautiful building so preserving a place of prayer and worship that serves the community and city both for the present and for the future. The First World War Centenary Grant Fund makes this possible and it is fantastic that this funding has helped Liverpool Cathedral mark the centenary.”

Case studies from Catholic Cathedrals:

Salford Catholic Cathedral, built between 1844 and 1848, was the first cruciform catholic church to be built in England since the reformation.

The cathedral was awarded £373,000 in July 2016, which enabled serious problems of water penetration in to the fabric of the building to be addressed, and the provision of access to the roofs to allow for regular maintenance. In November 2016, the cathedral was awarded a further £180,000 to increase access to the North porch, allowing safe access to the cathedral for people of all abilities. Throughout the project, a local company was employed, and the nature of the work has sustained the need for traditional skills - challenging and increasing the knowledge of the stonemasons working on the building.

Fr Michael Jones, Cathedral Dean (speaking in 2016) said: "Ensuring that our wonderful cathedral is dry and secure from the weather is the first essential step in our mission to see St John's brought back into good repair and playing a major role in the regeneration of the historic centre of Salford."

Clifton Catholic Cathedral, an impressive late brutalist building, was completed in 1973 in response to the requirements of the second Vatican Council, which set out that all of the congregation should have a good view of the altar. The Cathedral was awarded a total of £700,000 over the course of 2014 and 2015 towards a £1.5 Million project. The money allowed for essential repairs to the roof, stopping leaks which had been present since the building was first opened. In 2016 the cathedral was awarded a further £700,000 for work on the lighting, electrics and heating system. As a result of the improvements, the cathedral has also been able to run more events, including First World War commemoration activities.

Cathedral Dean, Canon Bosco MacDonald said: "We at Clifton Cathedral are happy to report that we have drawn best value from the grant awards we received from the First World War Centenary Cathedrals Fund. The Cathedral is once again filled with natural light and more importantly it is watertight. No more buckets! The overall external appearance is also much improved and we can continue to present to our many visitors an iconic building and a local landmark that we can be proud of. We have replaced the ageing heating system and updated the electrical wiring and the lighting. These significant projects have made another huge and demonstrable improvement to the ambience and safety of the Cathedral and the experience of those who come here. On behalf of the Cathedral parishioners and all those who visit Clifton Cathedral, we are very grateful to the WWI Centenary Fund and to our other benefactors for making all this possible."

Birmingham Catholic Cathedral, St Chad's, received £227,000 towards the repair of unsafe stone masonry, which has led to increased local interest and visitors, who are able to enjoy this beautiful church designed by A.W. Pugin.

Canon Gerry Breen Dean of St. Chad's Cathedral & Minor Basilica. Birmingham said: "St. Chad's, being the first Catholic cathedral erected in the U.K following the Reformation of the 16th Century, stands above the Jewellery Quarter in the City of Birmingham. The World War 1 Centenary Repair Fund enabled us to carry out vital work to the stonework and statuary on the front elevation. Not only was it an occasion to promote this important milestone in defence of our democracy and freedom; but it gave us the opportunity to highlight the cathedral's World War 1 Monument in memory of the 200 men and boys from the parish who fell in the Great War. Our W.W.1 memorial remains a poignant place to pray for peace and unity in our world today."

Plymouth Catholic Cathedral is the mother church of the Catholic Diocese of Plymouth which covers Dorset, Devon and Cornwall. The cathedral received three grants between 2015 and 2017, totalling just over £1.18 Million. The position of the cathedral near the sea means that it is subject to severe coastal weather, and the grants allowed for urgent repairs to the windows and the replacement of the 1980s heating system. Without these repairs the cathedral would have to have closed, due to the risk to the health and safety of visitors. The work created 13 full time equivalent jobs, and has increased public confidence in the cathedral, with both visitor figures and service attendance showing an increase. In addition to this, the repairs have meant that the cathedral has been able to hold First World War commemorations, including opening a permanent display of memorabilia, and a remembrance book to commemorate the lives of local people lost in the conflict.

Mgr Batholomew Nannery, Dean of Plymouth Cathedral said: "The repair needs of this cathedral have been, and are, extremely serious compared to our limited means. However, the generous support of the Fund has enabled us to carry out the necessary repairs that would have otherwise been impossible, and would have ultimately put the very existence of Plymouth Cathedral and the future preservation of its heritage at great risk"

Notes for Editors

Documents:

- Final report (via Church of England ChurchCare website)

Church of England Cathedrals:

- 42 Church of England Cathedrals across England
- Generate £220million for the national economy
- Employ 7,380 people
- 11.3 million adults go to a cathedral annually (27% of the UK population)
- 320,000 school children visit each year
- 14,760 volunteers, giving 1.96 million hours a year, a rise of 15% between 2006 and 2016.
- 78% of people living in a city with a cathedral felt it was at the heart of their city
- 59% of people nationally consider that cathedrals belong to the whole community not just the Church of England
- 37,000 people per week attended cathedral services in 2016
- 53,000 attended Easter and 131,000 attended Christmas cathedral services in 2016

Sources: *The economic and social impacts of England's cathedrals, Ecorys, 2014*

Spiritual Capital: The Present and Future of English Cathedrals, Theos and The Grubb Institute, 2012

Church of England Statistics for Mission, 2016.

The report was compiled by ERS Research & Consultancy Ltd.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/repair-fund-ps40m-prepares-cathedrals-first-world-war-commemorations>