

The Church of England has welcomed warmly the announcement in the Chancellor's Budget today of a £20 million fund for works to cathedrals.

Cathedrals are active community hubs hosting activities from food bank collection, lunch clubs for older people, parent and toddler groups and support for vulnerable groups such as the homeless to concerts, exhibitions and of course daily worship.

The Church of England's 42 cathedrals alone welcome over 11m visitors a year including over 300, 000 children on school trips. Research has shown that 78% of people living in a city with a cathedral felt it was at the heart of their city

£20m of grants following the 2014 Budget went a long way to help meet the costs of urgent repairs to these buildings and support local fundraising efforts by Church of England and Roman Catholic Cathedrals.

Following today's announcement of further grants, the Very Rev'd Adrian Dorber, Dean of Lichfield and Chair of the Association of English Cathedrals said: "We are deeply grateful to the Government for the pledge of continuing funding for Cathedral repairs. Every Cathedral faces steep challenges in keeping this great collection of inspiring and historic buildings safely and properly; whereby we can continue to welcome nearly a quarter of the English population every year.

"Cathedrals play an important role as community hubs: they foster volunteering, music making, public debate and social action, alongside their primary task of worship and prayer. They seek to be constantly accessible to the public and offer a setting where some of the big questions in life can be asked, alongside a tradition of wisdom and hospitality that can minister to the diverse needs of all who come. We also play a role in economic regeneration and are increasingly recognised as important contributors to local and regional economies.

"What we spend on repairs helps us sustain craft skills and local employment. We congratulate the Chancellor on helping us steward and sustain a key national asset."

Janet Gough, Director of the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division for the Church of England said: "The value of Cathedrals as community hubs is now being recognised widely and I warmly welcome the Government's continued support for the amazing work that goes on in these culturally important buildings, the Jewels in the Crown of our built heritage."

Notes to editors

The Association of English Cathedrals is the representative body for English Anglican cathedrals, promotes their role and encourages cathedrals to share best practice and information

Details of the grant application will be available on the ChurchCare website, <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/> in due course.

