



...al conference of their roles providing practical advice and expertise to

Around 50 people attended the day-long event at Peterborough Cathedral including 27 Church Buildings Support Officers (CBSOs) appointed by the Dioceses out of grants from the Church of England's £11 million Buildings for Mission project.

A total of £3.2 million was awarded last year for CBSOs in 33 dioceses, and three partner organisations, providing parishes with advice on the management, conservation, repair and development of church buildings, including community use alongside worship.

The post holders are also helping oversee £6.2 million of grants from the fund across 41 dioceses for repairs to churches focused on small-scale but urgent works and 'stitch in time' projects that could save larger sums in the long term.

Faye Edwardes has been in post as a CBSO in the Diocese of Truro since January. Her work includes supporting and advising churches on the next steps in fundraising.

"It is amazing to be instrumental in maintaining what is a hugely important part of the heritage of England, not just the Church," she said.

"Even in areas where regular Sunday attendance is low, the emotional connection to the Church is huge."

Alena Douglas, from the Diocese of Leeds, has visited 29 churches in the diocese over the six months since her appointment providing expertise and advice in areas ranging from starting long term church re ordering projects to help with application forms to grants panels.

"Leeds Diocese is massive – my work can include going from a city centre church in Leeds to a tiny medieval chapel in the Dales in a space of a couple of days, it is great," she said.

Sophie Allen, who previously worked in consultancy in the heritage sector and took up her post as CBSO in the Diocese of Chichester in November, has been overseeing the distribution of funds for minor repairs and improvements.

Many of the grants have been made to replace and repair guttering in churches, she said, "unglamorous but so important" work that can save churches from the potentially highly damaging impact of heavy rain.

"It is wonderful to work so directly with the parishes," she said. "The diocese has allocated the grants to the areas most in need and the buildings most at risk."

David Knight, Head of Church Buildings for the Church of England, said: "All these newly appointed Church Buildings Officers are in post as a direct result of the Buildings for Mission fund announced last autumn.

"It has been wonderful to see their enthusiasm and hear of the great work and practical support that is already being provided to help our parishes remain sustainable into the future."

Buildings for Mission is funded by the Church Commissioners and administered by the Archbishops' Council over the period 2023 to 2025.

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