

## **Ripon and Leeds Diocesan Synod Motion**

### **Background paper**

The Ripon and Leeds Synod Motion calls on the HM Government to substantially increase the amount of money available for the repair of listed church buildings and to fully fund the repair of all Grade 1 listed Church Buildings.

The motion which was unanimously passed by the Ripon and Leeds Diocesan Synod in 2008 came out of a concern to preserve for future generations our national heritage, and a desire to maintain in good order our significant places of worship as living buildings to be used by the whole community. The same motion was also moved by the Diocese of Lichfield.

### **The Background**

In 2006, the Right Reverend Richard Chartres, Bishop of London, drew the General Synod's attention to the fact that 45% of all grade I listed buildings are places of worship and that 85% of listed places of worship in England belong to the Church of England. Although money is already set aside for repairs, either directly through English Heritage or the Heritage Lottery Fund, and generously matched by a number of independent trusts, much of the money raised comes through the tremendous efforts of local PCCs and the philanthropy of many individuals and families. The sum total given by Government is 'small' compared to the funding of other heritage buildings and other institutions, and the burden on local and often small congregations is becoming increasingly exhausting. Equally such allocation as Government currently makes is considerably less than that offered by other European counterparts. More needs to be done if, as a Church and a nation, we are not to reach a situation in which buildings are lost to decay and the backlog of necessary repairs to many of our listed churches becomes totally unmanageable.

### **Why a specific case for listed church buildings?**

All our church buildings whether listed or not play a significant role within the local community often providing a resource that can not be provided by any other group or organization. They also stand as part of the Church of England's commitment and witness to ministry in the local area, often maintaining a presence in difficult places when many other groups and organizations have retreated. A church building is, of

course, more than stone and mortar and more than an historic entity. Churches are living communities and church buildings are used to support community life and enable community growth and prosperity. This is a vital part of our twenty-first century mission and a direct consequence of our desire to relate to and serve all people within our parishes and localities but this too will be threatened if the greater part of our energies continue to go towards raising money for fabric.

However, we cannot escape the fact that as part of our heritage we are responsible for buildings that stand out as those of significant architectural and historic interest, not just to the church and the local community but to the nation. Such buildings include our cathedrals, Greater Churches and parish churches. While calling on Government to increase the amount of money available for the repair of all listed buildings, and while recognising that even those that are not listed require help and support, the Ripon and Leeds Synod motion highlights what would be lost to the nation, the local community and the church if significant funding is not made available

### **Five key reasons to support the Motion.**

While our church buildings are traditionally understood as places of prayer, pilgrimage, peace and reflection they offer much more and exist for the whole community:

- 1. Increasing numbers of visitors are coming to our cathedrals and major parish churches** to access various aspects of heritage, faith and national history. This in itself underlines the significance of our buildings to a wide range of people - those of faith and no faith. It has been noted that numbers attending our cathedrals and Greater Churches has risen year on year and they are so often used at times of particular need or crisis.
- 2. Cathedrals and major churches are often key to the local economy.** The increasing numbers attending our cathedrals and Greater Churches directly influences the economy through the money spent in the local retailers and outlets. It is estimated that cathedrals and major parish churches bring millions of pounds into local economies and a number of retailers, in cathedral towns and cities have commented that they would not survive in business were it not for the cathedral. The increased numbers also enable the cathedrals and Greater Churches to create employment opportunities for local people in such things as gifts shops, cafes and education departments.

- 3. Centres of excellence for music and major venues for the wider celebration of the arts.** That churches are physically often one of the largest venues in any community means that they are centres for community gatherings and are used for the wider celebration of the arts in its widest sense. Without such venues the community would not be able to present or access such opportunities.
  
- 4. Places of education, learning and public debate.** Church communities increasingly work with schools to support the delivery of a national curriculum of learning. In this regard the building is essential to such learning and might be used to support several areas – history, religious education, art, music, maths, design and technology, business studies and literature. With regard to adult education, many cathedrals and greater churches hold lecture series in which theology engages with contemporary issues. Equally, universities use church buildings and their libraries to support work up to post-graduate degree standard.
  
- 5. Centres for the delivery of essential local community services.** Faith in the Countryside has encouraged rural faith communities to see the church building as a potential centre for delivering essential services. Post Offices, shops and surgeries are amongst those facilities to been housed within church buildings.

Appropriate funding of our listed buildings, particularly our Grade 1 Listed Buildings, is then not only crucial to the Church of England's mission and witness and the development of community cohesion but it is equally important if we are to continue in our role as guardians of national heritage. This motion recognises and appreciates the invaluable work and money that has already been committed and raised by local congregations to enable this but further identifies the cost and erosion to our national heritage and local communities should these invaluable resources be lost for good or put beyond proper use through neglect and disrepair.

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