

GENERAL SYNOD**FINANCING THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST IN THE TRIENNIUM
2021 TO 2024****Report by the Church Commissioners****Introduction**

1. At the November 2020 group of sessions, the Church Commissioners laid a new triennium funding Order for the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) for 2021-2024 before the General Synod for approval as an item of deemed business. Members will recall that there was a request for a debate on the Order in November, following which the General Synod approved the Order. As a result of an administrative oversight, the Order needs to be re-laid and approved by Synod. Accordingly, the funding Order for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2024 is laid before members as GS2206 for approval. Members are invited to refer back to GS 2188X and read it alongside this paper.

Background

2. We have learned that the Order should have been formally signed and made by the Church Commissioners before it was laid before Synod. I apologise profusely for this oversight, which was a function of lockdown. Additional checks have now been put in place to ensure this does not happen again. We have asked for this item to be considered as deemed business, given Synod's full and welcome engagement with the matter in November.
3. The period of the funding Order is the same. The short funding gap occasioned by this technical hitch can be addressed by the Commissioners exercising their powers to pass sales proceeds onto the CCT in the absence of a funding Order. This enables us to continue funding whilst the processes relating to the new Order are completed. This does not mean that the CCT will be given any additional funds overall during the course of the 2021-2024 triennium, and the total will remain as set out in the Order.
4. Meanwhile we have good news from Parliament. As members are aware, the CCT is jointly funded by the Church Commissioners and by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on behalf of the government. The DCMS funding Order for 2021 was approved by the House of Commons on Tuesday 16 March 2021. It will now pass to the House of Lords for approval in that place.

Update

5. Because I take my accountability to Synod seriously, following the November 2020 Group of Sessions I wrote in detail to a member who had raised questions about CCT operations, both in Questions and in the debate. I duly updated both the Commissioners' Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee and the Board of Governors. Our Committee Secretary attended the CCT strategy away day meeting on my behalf, and at member level our DCMS appointee has attended their recent Board. We have also explored the issues raised at staff level with both the CCT and DCMS.
6. The Church Commissioners will be working closely with the Trust and DCMS officials to develop a funding proposal to feed into the government's next Comprehensive Spending Review process towards the end of 2021, which is expected to be for a three year period. A new tripartite framework document is now being agreed with DCMS, the CCT and the Commissioners, which sets the management framework for the CCT. It covers a number of critical areas including:
 - Purpose and legal status
 - Governance and accountability
 - Management and financial responsibilities
 - Working with DCMS (including performance reporting)
 - Performance metrics
7. We will use the discussion around the framework to consider the points made at Synod on the operating model and institutional audit, and pursue this with CCT in tandem with our funding partner.
8. In addition, members will be aware that the Mission and Pastoral Measure is being reviewed. A paper will be presented at the July session of General Synod. Getting the legislative framework right will be critical, in our efforts to reduce some of the practical burdens on dioceses that arise from our large base of historic churches, and in the context of the wider transforming effectiveness debate on buildings.

Eve Poole
Third Church Estates Commissioner
March 2021