

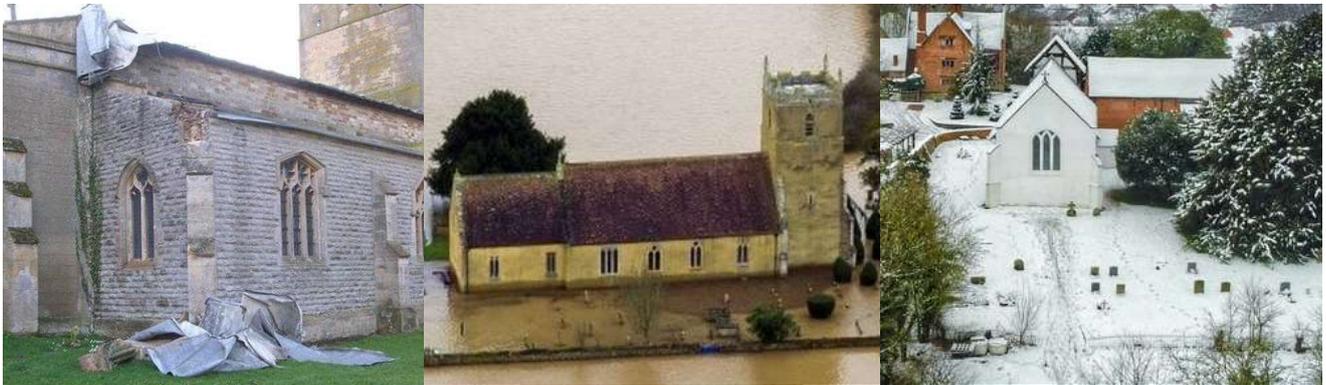
# Gathering and Sharing Examples of Church Buildings Increasing their Resilience in the Face of a Changing Climate

## SUMMARY

This new national research project is going to identify churches taking successful action to make their buildings and/or their communities more resilient in the face of increased weather and climate events, and then share findings and solutions through diocesan workshops.

## CALL TO ACTION

- **For DAC Secretaries and staff:** Contact [christopher.walsh@churchofengland.org](mailto:christopher.walsh@churchofengland.org) to suggest suitable case study churches and to register interest in the workshops.
- **For churches and cathedrals:** If you have taken actions in response to flooding, storms, rainfall, extreme heat, or any other weather event, either to protect your own buildings or your surrounding community, and are happy to be interviewed as a case study, please contact [christopher.walsh@churchofengland.org](mailto:christopher.walsh@churchofengland.org).



## BACKGROUND: OUR PROBLEM

Whilst climate change is often viewed as a future event, it is unfortunately true that all around the world people are already feeling the effects of a changing climate. Whilst our minds might immediately go to the recent drought in Madagascar or flooding in Bangladesh, it is also apparent that climate change is already having a real impact in the UK.

All ten of the warmest years on record have occurred since 2002, last year was the wettest February on record resulting in widespread flooding as well as the wettest day on record on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October. We are also facing an increased number of storm events that will also be more extreme<sup>1</sup>. These climate events and harsh conditions have a negative impact not only on the buildings the church owns, but the communities who live near them and utilise them.

This project looks at how we can deal with these problems, minimising impacts to both our church buildings and communities (we call this climate adaptation). Secondly, how we can utilise our buildings in both a practical and missional sense to protect the at-risk communities that the buildings serve (we call this climate resilience).

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<sup>1</sup> [Climate change continues to be evident across UK - Met Office](#)

## OUR PROJECT

This new national research project focuses on how the Church can cope with these new climate challenges.

The work is fully funded by the Natural Environment Research Council<sup>2</sup>. It is funding a researcher from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research in Manchester, Chris Walsh, within the Cathedrals and Church Buildings Division for 12 months, from December 2021.

The good news is that there is already some brilliant work taking place in the Church of England and other heritage organisations and this project aims to support that work and amplify its success across the heritage and church sectors. It also wants to examine the barriers to making these changes and work on ways to minimise and overcome them.

Some of these include St Barnabas's, Eltham who used their church building as a refuge from the heat or Snaith Priory Church which became the community hub and crisis centre during recent floods or the many churches like St Marys Primrose Hill that use their space to offer shelter to those who cannot escape from the cold of winter.

The research will help to educate, motivate and empower others to take actions that will not only protect their ministry but enhance it, through supporting community resilience.

## OUR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the Church of England's exposure to climate risks?
2. What is the sensitivity to climate of: i) churches as buildings ii) churches as places of worship and community buildings?
3. How can we better increase adaptive capacity and climate resilience of the church and through it that of its community?

## OUR PLAN

### Stage 1: Hearing Stories (Jan-Aug 2022)

- Recording stories of successes; of projects that have 'future-proofed' the church, and of times when the church has acted as a refuge (like last year's floods).
- Recording learnings from times that making these changes hasn't worked first time.
- Building a resource base of 20 case studies.

### Stage 2: Gathering Knowledge (Apr-Aug 2022)

- Running 10 workshops across a range of Church of England dioceses.
- Better understanding the issues affecting churches, and finding solutions together.

### Stage 3: Sharing Learning (Sep-Dec 2022)

- Producing resources including guidance notes, short videos and academic papers.
- Increasing expertise on the issues of climate resilience and adaptation.
- Helping to inform future decisions that safeguard church buildings and communities.

For more information on the project contact [christopher.walsh@churchofengland.org](mailto:christopher.walsh@churchofengland.org).  
For CCB guidance go to: [www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/climate-resilient-church](http://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/climate-resilient-church)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/embedded-research-on-uk-climate-resilience/>