

Dame Caroline Dinenage DBE MP
Chair, CMS Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

30 July 2025

Dear Dame Caroline,

Many thanks for inviting the Church of England to give evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee inquiry into Protecting Built Heritage. I was very grateful for the opportunity to speak with you and your MP colleagues about the remarkable heritage and community value of the 16,000 Church of England churches and 42 cathedrals (of which 12,500 are listed, including 45% of the nation's Grade I-listed buildings) and the enormous challenge of sustaining them. I would like to amplify a few key points we discussed:

1. **Church buildings are national treasures for the common good.** We talked about their remarkable volunteer support and opportunities, unparalleled heritage splendour free to the public, and the extraordinary social action (emergency food provision, debt counselling, parent and toddler drop ins, cafés, etc.) they provide for local communities. **Condition** is fundamental to delivering all this; and a **sustainable funding strategy** for maintenance and repairs is key to good condition.
2. Despite the hard work of volunteers, the welcome support of the National Heritage Lottery Fund, and the funding raised by the local and national church, we estimate the value of major repairs needed in Church of England church buildings to be £1bn. **The funding crisis facing those who care for church buildings requires a concerted, shared, sustainable funding model for listed places of worship.** As set out in our submission, we suggest:
 - a. **A permanent Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme (LPWGS)**, which has been a lifeline for places of worship for 24 years. Current uncertainty is putting church communities under huge pressure. We urge the Government to make the LPWGS permanent, without a cap. We are very grateful for your compelling letter to Baroness Twycross, Heritage Minister. My fellow panellists, Rev'd Paula

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Griffiths and Becky Payne (Historic Religious Buildings Alliance), also send their thanks.

- b. **A new recurring capital funding scheme for listed faith buildings, worth £50 million per year and mainly covered by the taxpayer, with contributions from other partners.** This would be efficiently administered, ecumenically and in partnership, for the common good.
 - c. A Government commitment to working cross-party, with the principal denominations and with civil society and funders to develop a **plan of action for listed places of worship**; and
 - d. **An exploration of creative ideas like a national matched funding scheme** to incentivise private and public donations for church heritage.
3. **The Church of England** has a long history of joint working with Government, including on successful heritage funding delivery. The Church Commissioners are accountable to Parliament via the Second Church Estates Commissioner, Marsha De Cordova MP. Our **Buildings for Mission programme**, which grant aids minor repairs and 35 diocesan Church Building Support Officers has been confirmed for the next triennium (2026-28) and beyond. **This commitment recognises the importance of long-term funding, but more is needed.**
4. To **support the craft and heritage skills pipeline** for churches and cathedrals, we encourage **interventions from Government** working with education providers, funders, heritage institutions, professional membership bodies and small businesses, for example: incentivising the use of traditional skills and materials through tax or grant schemes, and encouraging heritage skills for under-represented groups by increasing post-16 education, apprenticeships, and providing other routes into heritage. We are supporting conservation training programmes through our expanded Conservation Grants Programme.
5. **Stitch-in-time repairs funding for church buildings – and all heritage buildings – are vital, and they unlock other positive outcomes.** Funding repairs and maintenance gives historic churches another phase of life, frees up volunteers to serve communities, develops skills and confidence to apply for other funding, helps avoid much larger costs later, builds resilience to climate change, supports small crafts skills businesses, and encourages good stewardship and care.

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6. Through the Ecclesiastical Exemption, the Church of England is supported by many hundreds of **volunteer experts on diocesan and national committees** (the latter have members nominated by the DCMS). We have introduced **Participant Observers** to create a pathway into church conservation and a pipeline for younger and more diverse volunteers. **All these committee volunteers provide – at no cost to the state** – advice on good practice in the care and development of churches and cathedrals.

We want to **work collaboratively** with Government, funders and the heritage and places of worship sector to:

- **invest in our nation's historic church and cathedral buildings;**
- **avert a heritage crisis; and**
- **keep church and cathedral buildings sound and accessible vital community assets for future generations – as they have been for centuries.**

Once again, many thanks for the opportunity to attend the Select Committee inquiry hearing. Please do call on us for any clarification or amplification – we are here to serve and keen to help. Additionally, if you need any information on churches in your constituency, please let me know.

Yours Sincerely,



Emily Gee FSA IHBC
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Church Commissioners for England