

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Churches: See them. Save them. Support them.

Tuesday 21 October 2025

Victoria and Albert Museum, London



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Pilgrimage
shared spaces
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hopeful light through glass
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ancient craft music & memory
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stone & story cups of tea creative
warm welcome
tradition & change stillness quiet
open doors
living history
rooted in place
cool places

WE LOVE
CHURCHES

“ Every church, however small or humble, offers individual variety and unexpected stories, combined with a sense of homecoming. ”

Revd Professor Sir Diarmaid MacCulloch Kt DD FBA
Emeritus Professor of the History of the Church,
University of Oxford

We have **GREAT EXPECTATIONS** for what can be achieved together

The future of historic churches, chapels and meeting houses across the UK hangs in the balance.

These buildings – ancient, beautiful, and central to our national story – are facing their greatest challenge in generations. They stand as anchors of community life, creativity, and worship, yet many are quietly deteriorating, alongside the networks of people who sustain them.

It is not too late to save them. But we are going to have to work together to turn the story around.

Can we count on you to help?

scan to stay in touch
and hear more



A call to action: what needs to be done



See them: Government leadership

There must be national recognition that the future of church buildings is a shared heritage challenge – local communities shouldn't have to struggle by themselves.

We want to see clear policies and strong leadership by the UK Government about how these buildings can be kept open and in use as this will give confidence to local communities.



Save them: Capital funding

Church buildings are crumbling on our watch – local people cannot shoulder the burden of spiralling repair and renovation costs any longer.

We want to see a dedicated capital funding scheme set up by the UK Government – of £50 million a year – to ensure that these buildings will not fall into disrepair and can continue to be enjoyed by all.



Support them: Help for volunteers

Almost every local church is looked after by volunteers – but they are in increasingly short supply; churches are doing more than ever in their communities, but with less and less support.

We want to see existing and new volunteers get the recognition, training, and resources they need from denominations, the local community and the Government, so that these buildings have a sustainable future within their local area.

These asks are not optional extras – they are key to ensuring that churches, chapels and meeting houses are kept open and in use.



“ Historic churches offer welcome, support, space and beauty for communities. Securing their future is vital and we know this can be achieved through involving local communities. ”

Lord Mendoza CBE
Chair of Historic England

A large, colorful stained glass window with various geometric and figurative designs in shades of blue, yellow, red, and white. The designs include floral motifs, animals, and abstract patterns.

Ecclesiastical Insurance is honoured to sponsor, and be part of, this inspiring and challenging event.

As the trusted guardian of the vast majority of Anglican churches across the UK, we protect and insure these amazing buildings that hold centuries of faith, history and community. We are one of over 40 financial services businesses belonging to the Benefact Group, united by a common purpose; to do good.

Founded in 1887, by the Church, for the Church, Ecclesiastical was born out of a deep commitment to service. Today, that spirit lives on. For us, keeping churches central to public life and communities is not just a business, it's a heart-felt calling; we have a love for what we do.

That culture of love – for our customer, and love for these extraordinary buildings, influences every aspect of how we approach our business. From our specialist underwriters and claims handlers to our heritage surveyors, we invest in excellence – ensuring our people are equipped to meet the evolving needs of church communities. We are open to new and innovative ideas such as those explored at this symposium and frequently provide funding to help new initiatives take off.

But it is not just our specialist church and heritage expertise that sets our teams apart. We have a unique, purpose-driven business structure.

Ecclesiastical is part of the Benefact Group which is owned by a charity, the Benefact Trust. That means we can give all available profits to good causes. We have already hit our giving target of £250 million, and have become the third largest corporate donor in the UK over a decade.*

Our mission is simple: to give all we can, to as many as we can. Our loyal customers make this possible and by supporting our business, you are contributing to our endeavours to build a more compassionate and connected world. When you choose Ecclesiastical, or any of the businesses in our Group, you're not just buying a financial product – you're supporting a movement for good.

Together, let's reimagine what is possible and let's turn bold ideas into lasting, positive change.

Mark Hews, Group CEO Benefact

St Idloes Church, Llanidloes, Powys

* Directory of Social Change's UK Guides to Company Giving 2017-26

“The fate of English parish churches is simply the dominant historic buildings issue of the day. Half our most valued listed buildings are churches, and of those possibly half are under-used and therefore at risk. The church cannot sustain them. Some means must urgently be found of giving them a new role in the community, such that they can be secured and supported. As yet there is no plan to that effect.”

Sir Simon Jenkins FSA FRSL FLSW
Author, newspaper columnist and editor



St Aiden's Church, Bamburgh, Northumberland

It's almost impossible to imagine cities, towns and villages of the UK without churches at their heart.

From a skyline punctuated by towers and spires to the glimpse of a steeple from a train window, these buildings shape our sense of place and identity.

Churches are public buildings, open to all. They have been visited, used and admired by people of every generation, of all faiths and none, in moments of joy and in times of need. Many have endured plague, reformation and world wars, and now face new challenges in the form of climate change, rising costs and questions of long-term sustainability.

Yet they are not relics. Churches adapt to the needs of the present: offering human connection in an age of digital distance, hosting food banks, providing shelter, and sustaining a living tradition of heritage craft and community skill.

It has been a pleasure to work with the Victoria and Albert Museum and The King's Foundation in hosting this symposium, and to draw on the insight of the many organisations and individuals who have helped shape this event. We are also grateful to Ecclesiastical Insurance for their generous sponsorship, which has made this gathering possible.

These buildings will only endure if we act together. Their future depends on our collective will, creativity and care. This symposium is a moment to face the reality of the crisis, to share solutions and to renew our commitment, ensuring that churches continue to stand the test of time not just as monuments of the past but as living spaces for generations to come.

Claire Walker, Chief Executive, National Churches Trust
Greg Pickup, Chief Executive, Churches Conservation Trust

St Michael & All Angels Church, Hawkshead, Cumbria





“It is simply unrealistic for these glorious buildings to rely on tiny groups of mostly elderly people to look after and pay for them.”

Dame Sarah Mullally DBE, Bishop of London and Archbishop of Canterbury-designate



The National Lottery Heritage Fund has been engaged with and investing in places of worship since it came into existence over 30 years ago.

Thanks to National Lottery players, since 1994 we have awarded over £1bn to more than 8,200 places of worship projects across the UK. We continue to collaborate with partners to address the many challenges facing the UK's much loved and appreciated places of worship today and to build a more sustainable future for them at the heart of their communities.

Some challenges are new, others longstanding, and with the pace of change hastening we continue to search for and find solutions together as well as invest in both standalone and strategic projects across the UK.

Through our 10 year strategy – Heritage 2033 – we have committed a further £15m for strategic projects to meet gaps in support in addition to awards made through National Lottery Heritage Grants. Since April 2023 we have supported over 255 projects focused on places of worship totalling £134million (including our strategic initiative investment).

We recognise that places of worship of all kinds represent not just the rich fabric of the past but also hold memories of great civic and personal events – births, deaths, crisis, and celebrations. They are often at the heart of communities providing much needed social support; rely on a large body of volunteers that are vital to their ongoing care and welcome; and the repository of diverse and rich heritage.

Heritage 2033 commits us to working with everyone concerned about their future to ensure that they are valued, cared for and sustained for everyone. We are open to applications from any place of worship in the UK, of any religion or denomination and any organisation looking to develop a new use for those historic buildings and sites no longer in use for worship.

This conference is timely allowing us to consider these challenges together and share solutions so that our heritage is sustained and more people can be engaged with places of worship right across the UK.

Eilish McGuinness
Chief Executive, The National Lottery Heritage Fund

All Saints Church, Fleet, Hampshire

CHANGE & DECAY - MORE OF THE SAME?

by Peter Burman MBE FSA

Fifty years ago, *Change & Decay: The Future of Our Churches* opened at the Victoria & Albert Museum. Commissioned by Sir Roy Strong, it shone a light on the crumbling condition of churches and chapels across Britain, and asked what could be done to save them. Half a century later, the questions it raised still feel strikingly familiar.

As someone involved in that original exhibition, and in the founding of SAVE Britain's Heritage and European Architectural Heritage



Year, I find myself reflecting on what has and hasn't changed.

At the time, I was Deputy Director of the Council for the Care of Churches, leading activities to support EAHY, whose Chair, Dean Dick Wingfield Digby, spoke at the closing conference in Amsterdam. I also became a founding trustee of SAVE,

a role I held for 41 years under Marcus Binney's dynamic chairmanship.

Sir Roy commissioned us to research and present, with designer Barry Mazur, an exhibition highlighting the challenges facing churches and chapels, to provoke debate and action.

Marcus and I travelled widely, producing two books: *Change & Decay: The Future of Our Churches* (1977), and *Chapels & Churches – Who Cares* (1977), with a Preface by Sir John Betjeman. Saturday after Saturday we drafted chapters at Marcus's kitchen table, swapping and editing each other's work. It was the closest collaboration of my career. At the same time, our fledgling SAVE team was learning that a good press release with a clear photograph almost guaranteed coverage.

We were inspired by Lady Wilhelmina Harrod of the Norfolk Churches Trust, who advised us to make a practical demonstration of rescue. We chose All Saints' Church, Rackheath, Norfolk, urgently needing £7,000 of roof repairs. With witty architectural mugs, Gothic headscarves and a teacloth designed by John Sutcliffe on sale in the exhibition shop, we and the parish raised the sum. The roof was repaired and the church remains open today.

'Open the church doors' has become a constant cry. Visiting churches can be as rewarding as visiting country houses, museums or gardens. Encouraging church tourism was another outcome of the exhibition where we helped 'make a difference'.

The fourth and most significant outcome came shortly before the

exhibition closed. For years I had written letters headed 'State Aid for Churches', as successive governments refused to fund repairs to historic churches in use. There was funding for the Redundant Churches Fund (now the Churches Conservation Trust), but nothing for active churches. Then Baroness Birk, Minister for Heritage, announced that state aid would, with immediate effect, be available for churches still in use as well as those removed from the ecclesiastical system.

Today there is far greater collaboration between church authorities and the national amenity societies than fifty years ago. Professional care now extends beyond architects and surveyors

to include art and architectural historians, archaeologists, archivists and conservators. The churches themselves have led wider conservation thinking: Wells Cathedral's West Front Committee pioneered the use of lime-based mortars, helping to drive the 'Lime Revolution'. Almost every fabric committee now understands the harm caused by cement-based mortars.



Cluny Centre, Morningside, Edinburgh

In Scotland, where I have lived for a quarter of a century, the Church of Scotland is selling many churches and halls (53 in Fife alone). Too many may be closing too quickly. Yet declining congregations and an acute shortage of ministers pose real challenges. Many of these buildings will find good new uses, but churches are more than structures: they hold the memories of generations and house

exceptional art and craftsmanship, notably stained glass and organs now at risk. I commend the work of 'Sowne of Organe', which records significant instruments, gives public recitals and advocates for their future.

I am daily reminded of the importance of clear and empathetic leadership. At St James's Goldenacre, Inverleith our Rector, Jane MacLaren, has inspired a gently growing congregation to embark on major repair and conservation work, supported by architect Stuart Allan of Simpson & Brown. Church care needs both professional expertise and tireless volunteers. It has been my joy to contribute to both.

'Open the church doors' has become a constant cry. Visiting churches can be as rewarding as visiting country houses, museums or gardens.

Peter Burman is an architectural historian who has worked with the Cathedrals and Churches Council, the National Trust for Scotland and universities in York and Cottbus. He chaired the Fabric Committee of St Paul's Cathedral for 20 years and remains active in church conservation through the National Churches Trust's Cherish project, a member of the Buildings Committee of the Scottish Episcopal Church, and Patron of the Medieval Kintyre project.



I am delighted to welcome you to Great Expectations, a one-day conference to look at the challenges facing our historic churches, chapels and meeting houses and just as importantly to celebrate them and the people who look after them.

At the Victoria and Albert Museum we are extremely proud of our collections of religious art, sacred silver, stained glass and more. But this is a tiny fraction of the huge treasury of art, architecture and objects that can be found in the UK's 38,500 church buildings. That is where they should be – available to local people and visitors free of charge to see and experience.

Keeping these churches open and in good repair and caring for their local collections of cultural treasures takes people, money and time. It is one of the most important heritage challenges we face. I know that many thousands of volunteers care deeply about these buildings and help to keep them open.

But heritage craftspeople who know about churches are increasingly in short supply. Money to repair churches, particularly from central Government, can wax and wane, and for an increasing number of churches time is running out – indeed, some 3,500 have closed in the last 10 years.

Great Expectations is a wonderful opportunity to make sure that church buildings remain at the heart of the history and heritage of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

It will generate new ideas, create new connections and hopefully new funding opportunities. But perhaps the most important task we face is to grow support and enthusiasm for these buildings.

In the past, icons of heritage such as Sir John Betjeman and Sir Roy Strong flew the flag for churches and prevented the closure of a fair few, including Holy Trinity just down the road at Sloane Square.

So it is great that today, in addition to some very impressive and distinguished representatives from churches and the heritage sector, we also have with us many other people including Hugh Dennis, Rob Rinder and Alice Loxton who can help spread the word about why these buildings matter, why they are so beautiful and why they can and must be kept open and in good repair for all our sakes.

Tristram Hunt
Director, The Victoria and Albert Museum



GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Churches: See them. Save them. Support them.



Venue

Today's sessions take place in the Lydia and Manfred Gorvy Lecture Theatre at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL.



Programme

The day will be guided by our host, who will introduce the sessions. The event is designed to flow without extended breaks, so please remain seated during discussions wherever possible.



Facilities

Toilets are on the lower ground floor accessed by stairs from the foyer outside the Lecture Theatre. An accessible toilet is also available on that level. Cloakroom facilities and a café can be found near the main entrance.



Access

Most of the museum is accessible. The Lecture Theatre is accessed by stairs. Staff are on hand should you require assistance.



Wi-Fi

Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the museum via the **VA-Visitor** network.

We're delighted to welcome you to the Great Expectations conference at the Victoria and Albert Museum. This promises to be a momentous day of ideas, discussion and collaboration, bringing together people who care deeply about the future of our churches and the communities they serve.



Sharing the Day

We encourage guests to share reflections from the event on social media. Please tag **#GreatExpectationsforChurches** when posting.



To stay connected beyond the Great Expectations event, please do sign up to receive three event newsletters over the coming months.

Whether you booked through the V&A or directly with us, we will share follow-up news, highlight the impact of the discussions, and set out practical next steps for action. By subscribing, you'll receive three updates on future initiatives, opportunities to get involved, and ways to continue supporting the future of our churches, chapels and meeting houses across the UK.

Scan the QR code below or visit the link:

<https://mailchi.mp/nationalchurchestrust.org/great-expectations>

scan to stay in touch
and hear more →



We hope you enjoy the day, make new connections, and leave inspired to help shape a bright and sustainable future for our churches.

Morning session

10:30am Conference starts

10:40am Welcome & Opening

Dr Oliver Cox

Head of Academic Partnerships at the V&A

10:50am Host welcome

Richard Taylor

Author, Presenter and Lawyer

11:00am **Keynote Address: Hugh Dennis**

Writer, Comedian, Presenter and Actor

Keynote Address: Rob Rinder MBE

Criminal Barrister and Presenter

11:25am What is the National Churches Survey telling us?

Dr Karl Newton

Deputy Chief Executive, National Churches Trust

Who Cares? Saving Historic Churches by
Telling the Right Story

Ian Morrison OBE

Director of Policy and Evidence, Historic England

12:00pm Panel: Recognising the Challenges

Sir Philip Rutnam

Chair, National Churches Trust

Revd Prof Sir Diarmaid MacCulloch Kt DD FBA

Emeritus Professor of the History of the Church,
University of Oxford

Aiden O'Donovan

Architect, HLM Architects

Sarah Robinson

Associate Director (UK) Architecture and Heritage,
The King's Foundation

Dr James Lindow

Art and Private Client Underwriting Director,
Ecclesiastical Insurance

12:35pm **Keynote Address: Alice Loxton**

Historian, Presenter, Author and Content Creator

1:00pm Lunch

Lunch is available to purchase at one of the three
V&A Cafés on Level 0. A list of other suggested
locations for lunch is provided in your event bag.

Take the opportunity to visit the museum and
follow our special church heritage treasure hunt.

EXPECTATIONS

ve them. Support them.

Afternoon session

2:30pm Host recap and welcome to the afternoon

Richard Taylor

Author, Presenter and Lawyer

2:40pm **Keynote Address: Dame Fiona Reynolds DBE**

Former Director General of the National Trust

Keynote Address:

HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO GCStJ

Keynote Address: The Most Revd Stephen Cottrell

Archbishop of York

3:20pm **Panel: Living Churches**

Greg Pickup

Chief Executive, Churches Conservation Trust

Rt Revd Andrew Rumsey

Bishop of Ramsbury

Paul Emberley

Chair, The Wesley Centre, Malton

Susie Mayhew

Resident, Hope into Action

Dr Emma J. Wells

Architectural Historian, Author and Broadcaster

3:55pm **Keynote Address: Luke Sherlock**

Author and Bookshop Owner

4:10pm **Panel: Heritage and Hope**

Sophie Andreae CBE

Vice Chair of the Patrimony Committee,
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Victoria Collison

Executive Director, Historic Churches Scotland

Susan Fielding

Senior Investigator (Historic Buildings), Royal Commission
on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

Emily Gee

Director for Cathedral and Church Buildings, Church of England

Alex Glanville

Director of Property Strategy, Church in Wales

Rachel Morley

Director, Friends of Friendless Churches

Kristina Murrin CBE

Chief Executive, The King's Foundation

4:55pm **In Summary**

Sir Philip Rutnam

Chair, National Churches Trust

Claire Walker

Chief Executive, National Churches Trust

5:15pm **Conference ends**

WHAT NEXT?

How you can play your part...

Churches need the support of many people. Whatever your role, there are ways you can make a difference now. Take a look at some of the ideas that you could do this month to make a difference.



See them

MPs
Policymakers,
Councillors,
Councils.

Ask local and public bodies to work with faith groups to use churches and church halls for community services.

Use churches and craftspeople as positive examples in debates and speeches about heritage and community.

Make data and information about church buildings available for policymakers and local planners, showing the importance of church buildings.

Raise awareness of the heritage crisis by posting on social media, writing to newspapers, and supporting heritage charities.

Promote churches as great spaces to visit and learn about history; encourage children to discover them.

Visit your local church and see how you can support and help them.

Heritage lovers,
Congregations,
Visitors.



Save them

Visit churches in your constituency to find out what help they need.

Make permanent the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme and remove the cap so that churches can carry out necessary repairs.

Share the load by investing in church building support officers and grant writers to help churches.

Advocate for and support traditional skills in short supply; stonemasonry, carpentry, stained glass restorers.

Write to your MP about your local church, raising awareness of its heritage and community use.

Invite your local paper, radio or tv to come to your church and tell them about the repairs needed and how people can support.



Support them

Invest in church buildings and specialist heritage skills.

Create good training and resources to support volunteer needs, as well as a linked church heritage qualification, to bring support into the digital age and attract new people.

Make it easy for people to get involved in your church by welcoming newcomers and helping them join in.

Promote volunteering in churches to non-churchgoers through social media and local media interviews.

Nominate volunteers for awards to show recognition for their work and remember to say thank you!

Arrange shadowing and succession planning for key roles to allow volunteers to avoid burnout and retire safe in the knowledge someone will take over.

Every action – whether small or large, symbolic or practical – adds up.
By taking a step, you are helping ensure that churches remain part of our shared future as well as our past.

“ Getting the vision right is pivotal,
but convincing others to think
unconventionally can be genius. ”

Paul Emberley, Chair,
The Wesley Centre, Malton

Providence Methodist Chapel, Throwleigh, Devon



Dr Oliver Cox is Head of Academic Partnerships at the V&A, where he leads the museum's growing portfolio of partnerships with universities in the UK and internationally. Outside of the V&A he is a Trustee of the University College Oxford Old Members Trust and was appointed as a Trustee of the Churches Conservation Trust in March 2022. He also sits on the Grants Committee for Historic Houses.

He previously sat on Arts Council England's Designation Panel and was a member of the 'The Devonshire Inheritance: Unlocking the Chatsworth family papers' Advisory Group for the Chatsworth House Trust and a Trustee of Compton Verney House Charity.



Richard Taylor is a Vice President of the National Churches Trust, author of the Sunday Times bestseller *How To Read A Church*, writer and presenter of the eponymous BBC series, *Pugin: God's Own Architect*, *Church Bells* and a frequent contributor to *Songs of Praise*.

Richard was for over 20 years a partner in international law firm DLA Piper, recently retired. He is a North Londoner who lives in South Yorkshire, with his wife Rebecca and children.



©Andy Sillett

Hugh Dennis is a much-loved actor, comedian and broadcaster, familiar to audiences from *Outnumbered*, *Mock the Week* and *The Great British Dig*.

The son of an Anglican priest who became a bishop, Hugh grew up surrounded by the life and rhythm of the church, an experience that has shaped his deep affection for church buildings and the communities they serve. He wrote the foreword to *How Village Churches Thrive* and has co-hosted the *National Church Awards* for several years, celebrating the extraordinary people who keep churches at the heart of local life.

A Cambridge graduate and Chancellor of the University of Winchester, Hugh brings his reflections on heritage, faith and community.



©Ollie Rosser

Robert Rinder MBE is a barrister turned broadcaster and Sunday Times No.1 bestselling author. He first came to prominence on ITV's *Judge Rinder*, and has presented acclaimed BBC documentaries *Who Do You Think You Are?*, *My Family*, *the Holocaust* and *Me*.

Awarded an MBE in 2020 for services to Holocaust education, Rob also holds honorary doctorates from the University of Law and University College London for his writing, teaching and advocacy.

A regular host on ITV's *Good Morning Britain*, Rob also co-hosts *Amazing Hotels: Life Beyond the Lobby* and *Rob & Rylan: A Passage to India*. His third novel, *The Protest*, will be published in 2025 alongside several new factual television series.



Dr Karl Newton is Deputy CEO of the National Churches Trust, supporting the Chief Executive in providing strategic and operational leadership for the charity. He joined the Trust in 2023 following senior roles at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the University of London, the London School of Economics and the National Autistic Society.

With over 25 years' experience across the non-profit and academic sectors, Karl brings expertise in organisational development, partnership building and heritage leadership. He is committed to ensuring churches remain vital, sustainable centres of community life.



Alice Loxton is a historian, presenter and author with over three million followers on social media [@history_alice](#), where she shares her enthusiasm for British history, heritage and art. Her book *Eighteen: A History of Britain in 18 Young Lives* was a Sunday Times bestseller and named Blackwell's Book of the Year 2024. Her latest work, *Eleanor: A 200-Mile Walk in Search of England's Lost Queen*, traces a modern journey through medieval history.

Alice has worked with organisations including the National Trust, English Heritage, The King's Foundation, the BBC, and Microsoft. She writes for The Times, The Telegraph and The Spectator and is a mentor for The King's Foundation's 35 Under 35 Network.



Ian Morrison OBE was appointed Director of Policy and Evidence at Historic England in 2019, helping to shape the organisation's strategic direction and leading its specialist services, policy development and research functions.

He was previously Chief Executive of the Architectural Heritage Fund, where he expanded the charity's advice, grants and loan programmes to support communities repairing and re-using historic buildings. Before that, Ian was Head of Historic Environment at the National Lottery Heritage Fund, holding the UK policy lead for the historic environment and directing major grant programmes including Heritage Enterprise and Grants for Places of Worship.



Claire Walker is Chief Executive of the National Churches Trust. Under her direction, the Trust has launched major campaigns, published the acclaimed *The House of Good* report, and celebrated its work with national services at Westminster Abbey and St Paul's.

Claire is a trained singer and has previously run her own theatre company, appearing in many productions.

A graduate of the University of Kent and former Maths teacher, Claire brings fundraising and volunteer management expertise from previous roles with Parkinson's UK and The Royal British Legion.

©MikeSwift



Sir Philip Rutnam became Chair of the National Churches Trust in 2022, reflecting his lifelong passion for churches as expressions of history, architecture and community life. His previous career included senior roles at the Treasury, the Department for Transport and the Home Office.

A keen church explorer, Philip enjoys cycling through the countryside with *Pevsner* in hand. He chairs the National Institute of Economic and Social Research and supports efforts to secure the future of his local church, now on the Heritage at Risk Register.

©BarryJones



Professor Sir Diarmaid MacCulloch is President of the Ecclesiological Society. An Anglican priest and Emeritus Professor of the History of the Church at Oxford University, and Fellow of St Cross College and Campion Hall, he is one of the UK's most respected church historians. His acclaimed works include *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*, *A History of Christianity* (and its BBC series), and *Thomas Cromwell: A Life*.

He continues to explore the relationship between faith, history and humanity in his latest book, *Lower than the Angels* (2024).



Sarah Robinson studied at Bath University and Oxford Brookes University, qualifying as an Architect in 2009. She joined London-based Panter Hudspith Architects in 2007, working for over a decade on large-scale new build and heritage-led regeneration projects before moving to The King's Foundation where she is Associate Director for Architecture and Heritage. Sarah also contributes to the Foundation's Building Craft Programme, promoting heritage skills and sustainable reuse.



Dr James Lindow is Art and Private Client Underwriting Director for Ecclesiastical Insurance, bringing more than 30 years' experience in the insurance industry. He has previously held senior roles at Chubb, ACE Syndicate 2488 at Lloyd's, Torus Syndicate 1301 at Lloyd's and AXA Art Insurance. James holds a PhD in the History of Design from the Royal College of Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum, where his pioneering research on Renaissance Florence became the basis for his book *The Renaissance Palace in Florence*.



Aiden O'Donovan is an Architect, Master Planner and Product Designer with over 20 years' experience designing and managing justice, social and community infrastructure projects. His work combines innovation with sensitivity to place. His master's thesis at Queen's University Belfast, *From Sacred Spaces to Social*, explored a 'Just Transition Framework' for repurposing heritage churches.

Aiden has collaborated with the National Churches Trust and brings deep expertise in urban regeneration, heritage preservation and sustainable, community-led design.

ERAS
0844 472 0011



“Repair grants from government for historic churches were introduced in 1997, but effectively stopped in 2017: a disastrous change in policy with massive ongoing repercussions.”

Sophie Andreae, Vice Chair of the Patrimony Committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

“ Capeli anghydfurfiol yw creigwely hanes crefyddol, gwleidyddol a diwylliannol Cymru, ac mae angen eu trysori. ”

Nonconformist chapels are the cornerstones of Welsh religious, political, and cultural history, and need to be cherished as such.

Susan Fielding, Senior Investigator (Historic Buildings)
Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales



Dame Fiona Reynolds DBE is a non-executive Chair and Director whose work reflects her lifelong commitment to landscape, heritage and sustainability. She is Chair of the National Audit Office, the Council of the Royal Agricultural University, the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England, and Cambridge University's Botanic Garden, and a trustee of the Grosvenor Estate.

Fiona has been Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge and Director-General of the National Trust. In her career she has led the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Council for National Parks, and served as Director of the Women's Unit in the Cabinet Office. Author of *The Fight for Beauty* (2016), she was made DBE in 2008 for services to conservation.



His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO GCStJ has long been a committed advocate for architecture, heritage and the built environment. A qualified architect and Patron of the Royal Institute of British Architects, he has maintained a lifelong interest in the conservation and design of historic buildings.

As Vice-Patron of the National Churches Trust, The Duke regularly supports its work through visits, events and awards, helping to highlight the importance of protecting and adapting church buildings for future generations. His Royal Highness also holds a number of roles with other architectural and heritage organisations, reflecting his personal commitment to the preservation of Britain's historic environment.



The Most Revd Stephen Cottrell is the 98th Archbishop of York. He has previously served as Bishop of Chelmsford, Bishop of Reading, Canon Pastor at Peterborough Cathedral and Diocesan Missioner for the Diocese of Wakefield, and earlier in parish ministry in South London and Chichester. He is also a member of the House of Lords.

A well-known writer and speaker, recent books include *Praying by Heart: The Lord's Prayer for Everyone* and *The Lord's Prayer: A Beginner's Guide*.

He is married to Rebecca, a potter, and they have three sons, two grandchildren and a dog.



Luke Sherlock is an author and owner of Sherlock & Pages, a bookshop specialising in nature, landscape, history and heritage. Before this, he worked in sustainability for over a decade and remains a passionate environmentalist.

On Instagram, as **@englishpilgrim**, he documents his explorations of historic places. His first book, *Forgotten Churches: Exploring England's Hidden Treasures*, was an instant Sunday Times bestseller.

Luke is a Patron of the British Pilgrimage Trust and served as Judging Chair of the Wainwright Prize for Nature Writing in 2025.



Greg Pickup is Chief Executive of the Churches Conservation Trust. He was previously Chief Executive of the building preservation trust Heritage Lincolnshire, and before that worked on townscape regeneration schemes, community heritage projects and funding programmes, including a period with the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Greg is a Trustee of the Architectural Heritage Fund and was a board member of the Arkwright Society at Cromford Mills.



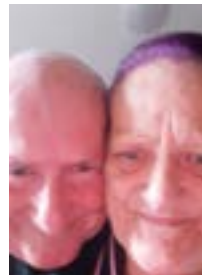
The Right Reverend Dr Andrew Rumsey is Lead Bishop for Church Buildings and Cathedrals for the Church of England. With an academic background in history and theology, he is the author of *Parish: An Anglican Theology of Place* and *English Grounds: A Pastoral Journal*.

Andrew lives in Wiltshire and, alongside his ecclesiastical roles, is a songwriter and musician whose recent albums have been recorded in historic churches.



Paul Emberley has lived in North Yorkshire since 2010, moving to Malton in 2013. He served as a town councillor, including terms as Mayor and as Chair of the Malton & Norton Area Partnership.

A lifelong Methodist, Paul has held senior corporate roles in both the private and public sectors, including with Trafalgar House, Kvaerner, Metronet and First Group, as well as advisory roles with the Government's Rail Operator of Last Resort and East Coast, the London-Scotland train company.



Susie Mayhew has been on an extraordinary journey. Once sleeping in doorways and derelict buildings, and living through addiction and domestic abuse, her life was transformed after being housed by Hope into Action in Norwich. Now over a year free from addiction, she is a valued part of her community and church.

Hope into Action empowers churches across the UK to respond to homelessness through a unique model that brings together investors, housing and support groups to provide lasting change.



Dr Emma J. Wells is an ecclesiastical and architectural historian, author, broadcaster, and consultant. She holds a PhD from Durham University. She is Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and a professional member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation, and has served as a Churches Conservation Trust trustee and SPAB guardian.

Her latest books are, *Heaven On Earth: The Lives & Legacies of the World's Greatest Cathedrals* and *Pilgrim Routes of the British Isles*.



Kristina Murrin CBE is Chief Executive of The King's Foundation and a global leader in innovation and social change. She helped build the innovation consultancy ?What If! before joining the PM's Delivery Unit under Tony Blair, later serving under David Cameron.

Kristina has been Senior Fellow at the Institute for Government and Fellow at Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government. She led the Government's 2017 Defence and Security Innovation Review, was Founding CEO of the National Leadership Centre and CEO of the Royal Anniversary Trust.



Sophie Andreae CBE is Vice Chair of the Patrimony Committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and Co-Chair of Historic England's Places of Worship Forum.

Sophie is an architectural historian whose career has focussed on protecting historic buildings and promoting them to a wider public. She has served as a Trustee of Historic Royal Palaces, an elected Council Member of the National Trust and as a member of the Fabric Advisory Committee for St Paul's Cathedral.



Victoria Collison has been Director of Historic Churches Scotland since 1999 and has more than 25 years' experience in the church heritage sector. She works with local volunteers to care for nine nationally significant church buildings in the charity's portfolio, promoting their conservation and community use.

Victoria also advises church-owning community trusts and supports a growing number of local groups seeking to acquire and adapt churches.



Susan Fielding is Senior Investigator at the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. She works on wide-ranging projects relating to various faiths and denominations, with a particular research focus on Welsh Nonconformist Chapels. She leads the Chapels Recording Project and the Capeli Cymru: Preserving the Nonconformist Heritage of Wales project.

She works closely with faith heritage organisations and denominations and sits on the Welsh Places of Worship Forum.



Emily Gee IHBC FSA is Director for Cathedral and Church Buildings at the Church of England. She spent 22 years with Historic England in senior roles including Head of Listing Advice and Regional Director for London and the South East.

A Trustee of the Oxford Preservation Trust and member of the English Heritage Blue Plaques Panel, her book *Hostel, House and Chambers: Accommodating the Victorian and Edwardian Working Woman* will be published this year.



Alex Glanville is a Chartered Surveyor who serves as Director of Property Strategy at the Church in Wales. He supports local churches across Wales in managing their buildings and churchyards, offering practical advice and guidance to volunteer congregations.

His focus is on developing initiatives to strengthen local support, improve compliance and enhance the Church in Wales faculty system. He is also exploring new ways to care for churchyards and to help churches facing closure find sustainable futures.



Rachel Morley is Director of the Friends of Friendless Churches, leading the rescue of 22 redundant churches in England and Wales, and raising over £9 million for repairs. She has served as a Trustee of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, a judge for the John Betjeman Award, and co-editor of the Journal of the Church Monuments Society.

Her first book, on why churches matter, will be published by The Bodley Head in 2026.

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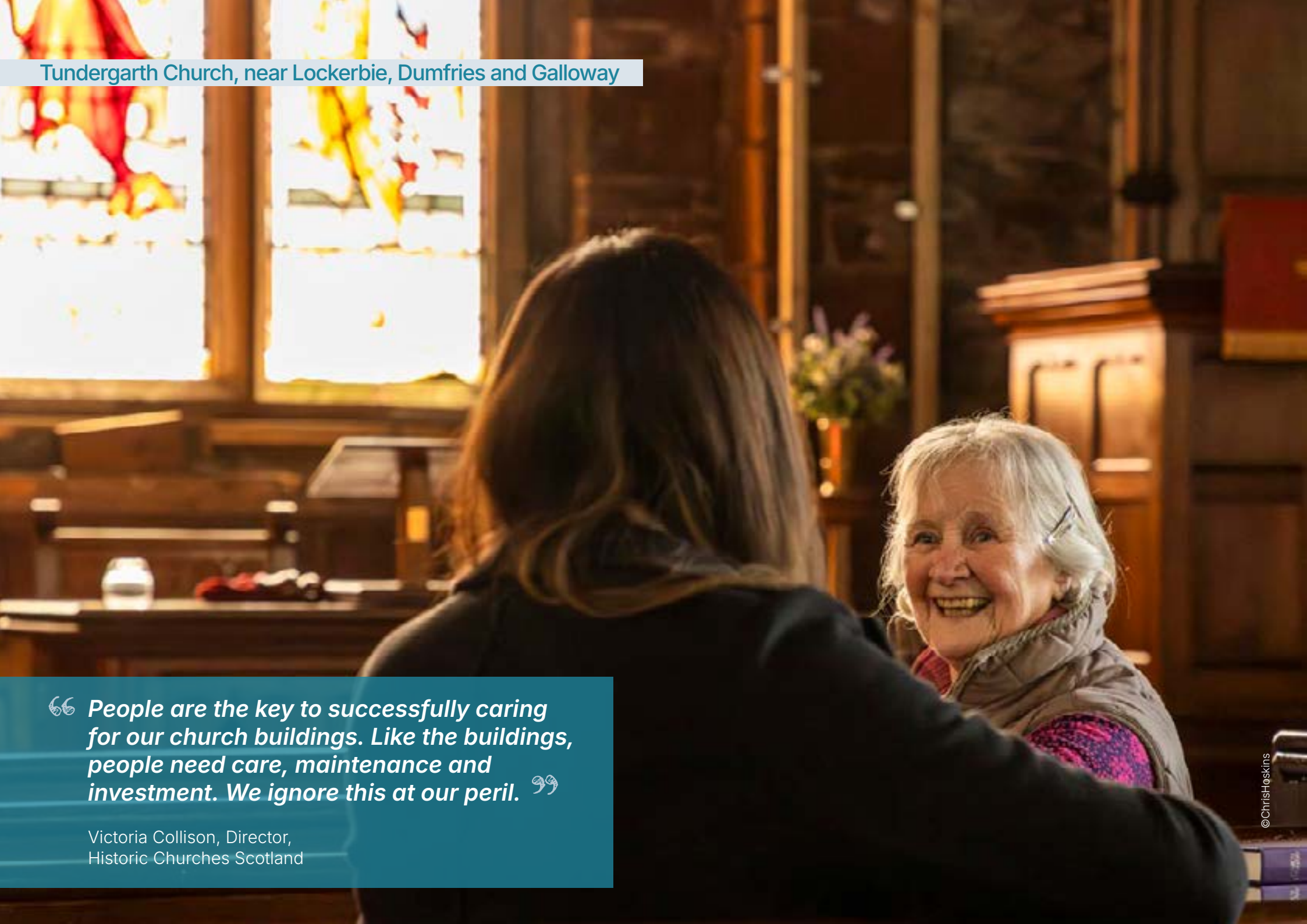
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June Butler (Treasure Ireland)	Historic Environment Scotland
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Friends of Friendless Churches	Historical Monuments of Wales
Historic Churches Scotland	Scotland's Churches Trust
Historic England	The Methodist Church
Historic Environment Division, Northern Ireland	The Wesley Centre, Malton

With sincere thanks to all speakers, participants and attendees who have made this event possible.

The background image shows the interior of a church. In the foreground, the back of a woman's head with long brown hair is visible. To her right, an elderly woman with short white hair is smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a grey jacket over a purple patterned top. In the background, there are large stained glass windows with colorful designs, and a wooden altar area with a vase of flowers. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

Tundergarth Church, near Lockerbie, Dumfries and Galloway

“ People are the key to successfully caring for our church buildings. Like the buildings, people need care, maintenance and investment. We ignore this at our peril. ”

Victoria Collison, Director,
Historic Churches Scotland