

## Call for Evidence for the English Churches and Cathedrals Sustainability Review

### Online survey responses

1. What do you believe to be the key factors in whether or not a church building is a financially sustainable community resource? (please rank in order of priority)

- Strategic support from within the Church 3
- Community support 1
- Facilities to cater for alternative/extended use 4
- Access to grants 8
- Local level resources 7
- Raising public awareness about the building 5
- Generating additional income sources 6
- Volunteers 2
- Other (please specify)

Local land and property economic factors and overall economic viability.

2. What do you believe the key factors are that might prevent a local community from feeling a sense of ownership for their local church? (select all that apply)

- Church doesn't appear available for wider use
- Put off by it being a religious building
- Contact details of main church contact not readily available
- Location of the church
- Perception that nothing is going on in the church
- Lack of heritage or other interpretation
- Other (please specify)

Lack of community and stakeholder engagement and communication. The impression that the church is just for 'church people' and so is an unwelcoming, closed community. Limited opportunities for use. The perception that some religious bodies fail to support equality and inclusivity.

3. In your experience, can you comment on the extent to which funding for building repairs presently supports church sustainability?

Many churches rely on external funding support to operate sustainably. They also rely on the volunteer effort and immense goodwill of local people. In rural areas, small numbers of people support large numbers of churches and it is unlikely that there is market demand for the introduction of sustainable additional uses.

But in some areas, a sustainable market-based business plan may be viable. Depending on economic and factors such as location and infrastructure, some degree of financial support may be necessary for the capital phase of some projects. Much also depends on the extent of flexible and usable floorspace or the scope for making interventions into the space and layout of the building.

4. At what level is support in managing church buildings most useful in ensuring church sustainability? (Select one)

- National

- Diocesan/County
- Local Authority
- Parish

5. What kinds of support work best at this level?

Grant aid, publicity and support from other parishes. Although it depends to a large degree on the nature of the project and the location support may include access to professional advice, business planning, feasibility appraisals, financial support for capital works, financial support for professional fees and project development, etc.

6. How can church buildings be more closely integrated into local networks in order to ensure they help to meet services required by the local community?

- Publicise the services in other public buildings and on social media
- Work with other organisations (including other faith groups)
- Increased community and stakeholder engagement
- Improved stakeholder mapping
- Enabling community leadership and ownership, etc.

7. If there is anything else that you would like to add, please detail below.

It is important to recognise different levels of community and stakeholder involvement, from community engagement and consultation to direct community leadership or partnerships. The distinction between the private and third sectors is increasingly blurred. An important challenge is reconciling community aspirations and needs with the development of a sustainable business model.

The circumstances of religious buildings are likely to be unique in each case. It is important to make decisions against the context of local circumstances and not to impose a 'one size fits' all solution. Some churches may be able to develop their own self-funding sustainable future while others, which still operate a valuable community asset, may need more external support.

The answer to Q4 largely depends on the nature of the project and the location. The list is very limited and does not include other support groups, such as national membership bodies (e.g. Locality) or community-led organisations.