

Church Buildings Team

Bulletin June 2026



Welcome

Welcome to the June edition of the Church Buildings Team Bulletin. This issue has been slightly delayed in order to provide details of the government's Places of Worship Renewal Scheme. While we may have liked the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme to have continued, we are where we are and the Renewal Scheme promises £92m of support over the next four years and so it is really important that we engage with it where possible. As ever please be in touch if any one of the team can be of help – contact details at the end.

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Visit Us at the Lincolnshire Show!

On the 17th and 18th June you can find us in the Diocese of Lincoln tent, so why not come and see if you can identify all the churches in our quiz, join us for a cuppa, or sing along at 'Hymns & Pimms'.

Thank you for your Feedback

We hope this Bulletin meets your needs and thank you for your patience in its continued development. As always, if there's something you'd like to see or to share please get in touch.



STOP PRESS - RENEWAL FUND LAUNCH



Historic England

What we know so far

The Places of Worship Renewal Fund is now open, allowing listed churches to access a government funding pot totalling £92 million over four years. Crucially, its differences to the prior scheme are:

- This is not a VAT rebate scheme, but non-recoverable VAT will be eligible as a project cost
- Maintenance and minor repairs are not eligible, only larger schemes of work
- Facilities, accessibility, and interpretation works are eligible, but all projects must include repairs
- This fund is competitive, rather than first come first served
- There are two opportunities to apply per year, rather than anytime
- There is not a £25,000 cap, but rather three streams available up to a value of £1 million

How to apply

The three funding brackets are £10,000 to £50,000 (small grants), £50,001 to £350,000 (medium grants), and £350,001 to £1,000,000 (large grants), and the application process remains the same for each. You must first complete an expression of interest by logging into the Historic England website, after which you may be invited to submit a full application if successful.

Our thoughts

Although we welcome any commitment to funding churches, we are disappointed in the significant challenges this new scheme brings. While it offers larger volumes of funding than the £25,000 cap previously imposed on VAT reclaim, the two-stage application process and deprivation-score-focussed assessment make receiving funding significantly more difficult for many. We recognise that the online expression of interest form alone is a severe barrier to access, even before being invited to complete a full application. The lack of any replacement scheme for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland also means that the National Lottery Heritage Fund will become much more competitive, as will the fact that all sources of grants will be 'worth' 20% less.

We share in your frustrations at the loss of the VAT reclaim scheme, and are here to support you as we navigate the future of funding for church projects.

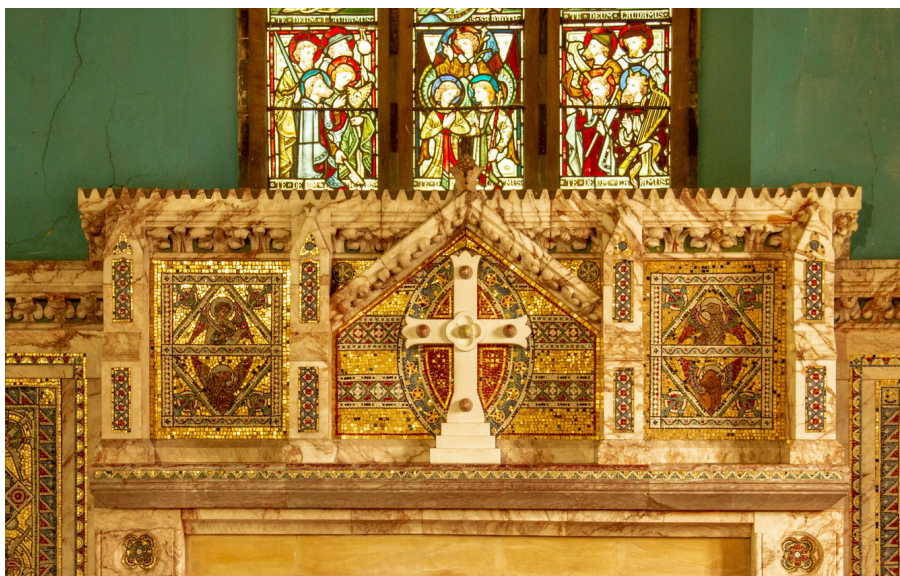
You can find full details on the [Historic England](#) website, including guidance on [preparing an expression of interest](#). The next deadline is the 14th June, followed by the 26th September.

While at present we know no more than you as to the potential of this fund, we hope that by September's deadline we shall have a better picture.

If you are planning to apply and we can offer support, or you can share feedback, please reach out.

The [National Churches Trust](#) website also offers a helpful breakdown of what's different about this fund.

30 Years of the West Lindsey Churches Festival



On the 9th, 10th, 16th, and 17th May we celebrated the 30th year of the West Lindsey Churches Festival, which attracts thousands of ‘churchcrawlers’ into our Diocese each year.

Churchcrawling, a term coined by once poet laureate John Betjeman, describes the hobby of visiting many churches, in verbiage taken from the perhaps more familiar ‘pub crawl’! These hobbyists often join us from far afield to sample the unique treasures our local churches hold.

Still the focal point of their towns and villages, these open churches share an insight into both the historic and the current life of their parishes. Some churches open their doors simply to provide an oasis of peace and spirituality, a place to relax and witness the Holy Spirit. Many also offer a vibrant collection of stained glass, architecture, carvings, and artefacts worthy of our national museums. One of the most rewarding things about working with church buildings is the irresistible puzzle they each hold, piecing together their history through their art and architecture. Though we know just how they come with their frustrations, they also come with joys, and it is wonderful to see parishes sharing this joy over the festival.

It is a fantastic example of putting into practise the guidance for saving our churches set out in The Taylor Review: *Sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals*, which states, “The long-term survival of Church of England church buildings requires a change in the way many communities regard these buildings... The determination to keep these buildings open and active needs to be owned by the wider, not just the local worshipping, community so that more people make use of them and feel invested in their future.”

Opening your church offers opportunity to bring your community together, offer Christian hospitality, and allow each other to exchange our gifts. You may be surprised how much support is out there for your church, and how willing people are to share their talents and skills to support these community spaces. Being open both literally and metaphorically to welcome the stranger is too a powerful tool for mission.

Our Church Development Officer Sophie spoke about churchcrawling and the West Lindsey Churches Festival with Liz Drury, author of ‘Come Here’, a podcast all about local culture and heritage sites for people to visit. Listen to it [here](#).

If you’re curious about opening your church for the festivals, or more generally additionally to worship, please speak to Sophie to arrange a Zoom meeting. If you opened your church for the festival and have photographs or advice that you are able to share, please get in touch too.

Net Zero Update – Caring for God’s Creation

Churches Count on Nature

Spring is a wonderfully restorative time for revisiting our environmental endeavours and spending time in God’s creation. This season, we have an array of opportunities to help churches engage with communities through their outside space.

Churches Count on Nature is a 10 day event which runs from Saturday 6th June to Sunday 14th June 2026, which is organised jointly between the Church of England, A Rocha Eco Church, Caring for God’s Acre, and Love your Burial Ground Week.

Churches Count on Nature runs at the same time as Love Your Burial Ground Week, and focuses on spotting the brilliant wildlife to be found in churchyards and church outdoor spaces.

This is something EVERYONE can be part of and contributes to important citizen science research.

Find out more about how to get involved via our learning platform Lean Grow Share.



No-Mow May – and Beyond!

Churchyards, cemeteries and other burial grounds are often the oldest enclosed spaces in a parish, town, or city. They contain grassland that has remained relatively undisturbed for centuries. The gradual, natural reseeding over an extended period has given rise to a diverse ecosystem of grasses, flowers, insects and animals. This ancient, unimproved grassland, once abundant across the UK, has now become a rarity. We have lost 97% since the Second World War. Churchyards are some of the few sanctuaries left for this flower-rich grassland.

Allowing certain sections of our churchyards to grow freely during the summer months before cutting it and removing the cuttings allows the flowers to bloom once more. However, it is important to inform visitors why the grass is being left to grow long to prevent any unnecessary concerns. People need to know that it is about active management – not neglect!

So Caring for God’s Acre are offering free meadow signs for flowery areas, and you can request a download [here](#).



News, Events, and Resources



Church Building Case Studies

We know how daunting it can be to take on a church building project, whether that's for a scheme of repairs or reordering and facilities.

While we already offer opportunity for parishes to meet with us via Zoom for tailored guidance (please get in touch), we are looking for further ways to encourage and champion the work you do caring for and developing your churches.

Our neighbouring Diocese of Ely are leading by example with their [Project Summaries](#), which feature key information from costs and grant funding breakdowns to top tips for fellow churchwardens.

This gives us a fantastic opportunity to support our Diocese with a series of case studies of our own, which will be published in our future Bulletins and made permanently available for reference on our learning platform.

If you have recently completed a project and could help out your fellow churches by sharing your experience, please contact Sophie for the simple Word document form to complete.

If you have previously received guidance from our team, we will reach out directly.



Explore the Diocesan Resource Centre

Did you know that our resource library isn't just for books? We can also offer loan of various items that could be used for events or on open days.

There are several labyrinths available, made out of stone or fabric, that can be used indoors or outdoors. You could also borrow our banners to make your church more visible.

We are looking to expand our resource offer to include more items like A boards, banners, visitor counters, or lawn games to help with your community engagement initiatives.

If you have any suggestions for items that would be useful, please let us know.

[Click here](#) to explore the full list of resources available for loan.



Grant News

Are you Grant Funding Ready?

While each individual funding body has different requirements that it's important you familiarise yourself with, there are a few key components that you need before you are ready to apply.

An in-date Quinquennial Inspection

If your QI was not completed within the last five years, it's time to get a new one so that you have an accurate view of the condition of your church. Please ensure a copy is sent to Matthew for our records, and do get in touch if we can demystify technical jargon and help you meet repair costs.

Your role in the community

It's essential to demonstrate your church is central to your community, and that all developments are taking place in response to real need. How many people attend your lunch club, toddler group, or visit you on open days? Our churches are not just historic monuments or venues for weddings and funerals - and funders need to see that.

Permissions are in place

Ensure you understand any permissions needed and start this process as soon as possible. It can take time, especially if your project needs multiple kinds of permission like Planning as well as Faculty. Steven and Pete are here to help with any Faculty related queries.

You've followed procurement regulations

Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund are subject to procurement regulations, meaning that all contractors (including your architect) must be hired through an open tendering process. We can facilitate this, and it is very important to consider before spending funds drawing up plans.

Find our funding and project planning advice [here](#), and get in touch for full details of what you may be eligible for.



Parish Accessibility Fund

We are looking for parishes to develop projects with the new [Parish Accessibility Fund](#) in mind. Any application to this fund requires completion of an Accessibility Audit, which will help you to explore what is needed as well as what is possible. Please ask Sophie for the provided template.

“God’s love is boundless, and when we try to put limits on that love, our churches are poorer for it”

While we may often think of ramps, handrails, or accessible toilets, are there other ways you can raise the voices of disabled people in your community, or remove any barriers to them engaging with your church?

What about working with your local school to develop a sensory area for SEND pupils?

Could funding provide training or resources to make services accommodating for neurodivergent people or those with dementia?

Or with support could you pilot a nightlight café for people with mental health issues?

There are lots of ideas to be found on the [Church Support Hub](#) about Barrier Free Belonging.

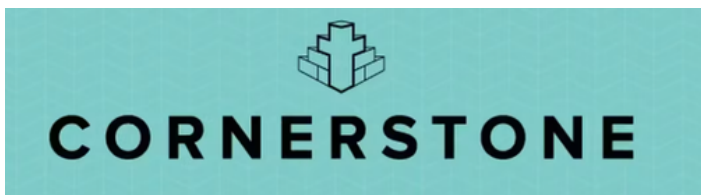
Please contact Sophie for more information.

Grant Information

Where to Start

Please get in touch with us to help you with a funding plan to know what to apply for and when. We keep in contact with many grant providers so have the latest information and can offer feedback to give you the best chance of success.

You can also browse available grants through the Charity Excellence Framework, Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service or use Cornerstone.



Cornerstone is a new programme developed by the National Giving Team which offers three distinct functions: Insights, Pathways, and a comprehensive Grants database. If you are interested in being involved, please contact the Generous Living Team for more information generosity@lincoln.anglican.org

Grants with No Deadlines

Benefact Trust ☐ The Barron Bell Trust ☐ The Beatrice Laing Trust ☐ The Bernard Sunley Foundation ☐ Church Buildings Council Conservation Reports ☐ The Clothworkers' Foundation ☐ Garfield Weston Regular Grant ☐ The Hobson Charity Ltd ☐ John Warren Foundation ☐ The Kochan Trust ☐ Lincolnshire Churches Trust ☐ National Lottery Community Fund: Reaching Communities Fund ☐ National Lottery Heritage Fund: £10,000 to £250,000 ☐ Tesco Community Grants

Share your Grant News

Please do share your grant news, good and bad with us. We know that parishes starting out on a project find it really helpful to hear what others have done elsewhere. Help us to build the network across our Local Mission Partnerships.

Upcoming Grant Deadlines

June	
4 th	Parish Accessibility Fund Small Grants
July	
9 th	Parish Accessibility Fund Small Grants



Energy Footprint Tool Deadline 30th June

If you are aspiring towards environmentally conscious developments in your church, make sure you complete your energy footprint tool to be eligible for future Net Zero funding.

Monthly Tasks



Ecclesiastical Insurance's Church Risk Calendar

June – Fire Risk Assessment

- Have you reviewed your fire risk assessment? All churches need to complete a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which should be periodically reviewed to remain valid.

July – Working at Height

- Falls from height can result in serious injury. Identify circumstances where tasks or access at height may be required and check that the precautions you have taken are adequate.

August – Security

- From theft to arson and vandalism, security is key. As every place of worship and its location is unique, a tailored assessment and response, reflecting the individual risks faced, should be undertaken.



SPAB's Faith in Maintenance **Calendar**

June

- Inspect all windows. Check the glazing, putty, lead cames and wire ties for signs of damage.
- Check timberwork for signs of rot including less accessible areas such as floor and roof voids, under stairs and in cupboards.
- Clear any dirt from condensation drainage channels and holes at the base of windows.
- Remove any vermin from floor and roof voids

July

- Look at timber windows, doors, fascias and bargeboards. Check for cracked and rotten wood. Redecoration may be required.
- Clear away any plant growth from around the base of the walls and in particular from the drainage channel.
- Have the lightning conductor system serviced once every five years.
- If your building has a steeple consider having it inspected by a steeplejack once every five years

August

- Take a break!



Key Dates

The DAC agenda dates and meeting dates for the next few meetings can be found below.
Please get in touch with Steven or Peter for further information.

Meeting Date	Agenda Close
Thursday 4 th June	Thursday 21 st May
Wednesday 1 st July	Wednesday 17 th June
Wednesday 2 nd September	Wednesday 19 th August

Contact Details

Please contact the team if we can help with any church building related query.

Steven Sleight, DAC and Pastoral Secretary, steven.sleight@lincoln.anglican.org
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Matthew Godfrey, Historic Churches Support Officer, matthew.godfrey@lincoln.anglican.org
01522 504048

Sophie Clark, Church Development Officer, sophie.clark@lincoln.anglican.org
01522 504018

George Davies, Net Zero Carbon Officer, george.davies@lincoln.anglican.org
01522 504050

Contributions and Suggestions Please

Have you got a good news story about your church building, carried out a project, found grant funding or have something you'd like to share? We would like to include your contributions in future editions. If there is a subject you would like us to cover, let us know and we will see what we can do. Email the team via churchbuildings.team@lincoln.anglican.org

Church Photographs

It would be really helpful if you could share your photographs of churches with the Church Buildings Team. Whilst we have an archive, they are not as up to date as they could be. Clear pictures through the seasons of the exterior as well as key items and facilities in the interior are always useful. Get in touch with the team via churchbuildings.team@lincoln.anglican.org