

'THE FUTURE FOR CUMBRIA'S FAITH BUILDINGS'



Churches Trust  
for Cumbria

# CHURCH BUILDINGS SURVEY

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## REPORT 2015

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[www.ctfc.org.uk](http://www.ctfc.org.uk)

## FOREWORD

There are about 650 church buildings in Cumbria. Many have been places of worship for generations. They are also a vital part of the fabric of our communities, both in our towns and our villages. Without these buildings Cumbria would be a poorer place socially, culturally and architecturally.

This Report, for the first time ever, looks in detail at our church buildings. Over 400 church communities contributed, making it one of the most extensive reviews ever carried out in this country. We now have a clear picture of the state of our buildings, and the communities they serve. There are some important conclusions, and many examples of individual stories to provide encouragement.

This Report is for everyone in Cumbria, not just for those who attend church Sunday by Sunday. It is a story of great commitment by many dedicated people. It is also a story of challenges to us all to value our church buildings and to keep them at the heart of our communities.

Please read the Report; share it and discuss it with your friends, neighbours, and colleagues. Please consider what you can do to help sustain these buildings and the activities they support.

*Bryan Gray, Chairman.*

The Churches Trust for Cumbria is an independent charity. This Report was produced by the **Director, Nigel Robson**, and the trustees:

**Bryan Gray, Claire Hensman, James Irving, Richard Pratt and Peter Stybelski.**

“Christians throughout Cumbria are being challenged to reflect on the way in which church buildings have traditionally been used for a variety of purposes – and encouraged to see such use as an essential part of their stewardship. This Report will help everyone who cares for church buildings to consider what they can do to ensure that they are sustainable and continue to be used at the heart of communities in Cumbria.”

*Rt Revd James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle  
Revd Richard Teal, Chairman Methodist District of Cumbria  
Revd Sarah Moore, Chairman URC Synod of Cumbria*

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Old St Martins, Martindale



Whitehaven, URC Church

# THE CHURCHES TRUST FOR CUMBRIA

The Churches Trust for Cumbria (CTfC) was formed in 2008 as a new initiative with support, including funding, from national and regional bodies: The North West Development Agency, The National Churches Trust and English Heritage and from the Church of England Diocese of Carlisle and the Methodist District of Cumbria.

**Its purpose is to support the care of “Faith Buildings” to:**

- Position church buildings in context within the local community
- Encourage partnerships
- Optimise the use of available resources
- Help make the most of these buildings

In 2010 it was becoming clear that with about 650 church buildings in Cumbria, and a population of around 500,000, there were many church communities struggling to fund their ministry and their buildings. Despite an awareness of these challenges within ‘church’ circles, there was limited knowledge of the overall picture of how church buildings were being used, maintained, paid for and promoted. Yet their sustainability depends upon local support and funding, in its widest sense, as well as good maintenance.

It was also clear that each of the main denominations were facing broadly the same issues with their churches, chapels, meeting houses and halls, within the same communities. Yet it was exceptional for discussions to take place between the denominations when it came to planning, rationalisation, re-ordering or refurbishment of facilities.

The CTfC works with faith communities and has increased capacity in the sector through faith Projects including the provision of extensive training, setting up and maintaining the Churches Trust for Cumbria website, Architects’ Networking Days, Church Trail Leaflets, providing impartial advice and signposting grant funding opportunities for churches. Further information about the CTfC and its work can be found at Appendix II.

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## FAITH BUILDINGS AND OUR SURVEY

The church buildings in Cumbria are important in the life of the county not only as places of worship but also as part of the traditional iconic imagery of towns, villages and rural landscapes. They are some of the most architecturally, culturally and historically significant buildings in the county. Amongst listed buildings, Churches comprise the biggest single category of listed buildings at Grade I or equivalent.

Many communities regard faith buildings as essential community assets but do not know how these buildings are run and paid for, and of their wider role beyond that of their use for worship. Awareness of actual worship use is also not widely available and there is little evidence available about the overall health and sustainability of church buildings and the contribution they make to local society.

The Churches Trust for Cumbria therefore carried out a Survey to examine the current state of the Cumbria’s church buildings by collecting data on a consistent basis across Christian faith denominations and places of worship.

The Survey covered all the congregations belonging to the Anglican, Methodist and United Reformed Churches, but the findings are relevant to all denominations. The three denominations included have between them over 600 places of worship, and there were responses to the Survey from over 400 congregations.

The approach was based on evidence prepared by those on the ground about the facts, their experiences and successes. Most of all the Survey was intended to provide insight into to the reality of their challenges.

**The Survey sought information from respondents using a questionnaire covering 6 key areas:**

### 1. “Resources - About Your Church”

This section invited people to reflect on the current stability of the church’s financial and human resources, as well as their projections looking forward 5 -10 years, including any estimates for repair bills.

### 2. “Open to All”

If places of worship are to have a future, it is suggested that they need to be open – and open to everyone. This section encouraged respondents to look at their place of worship with fresh eyes, particularly as a first time visitor, and for accessibility.

### 3. “Realising your Church Building’s Potential”

Church buildings are there to serve all. The better they do this, the better they will be supported and maintained. This section encouraged respondents to report on community needs and explore the extent to which they can be appropriately accommodated (including the provision of basic facilities) in the church building.

### 4. “A Comfortable Church - Energy Efficiency & Costs”

It is difficult to find a balance between maintaining comfort, reducing environmental impacts and costs, and preventing damage to historic church fabric. This section asked churches to think about how they currently consume energy and to look at ways of reducing energy consumption and costs, whilst increasing comfort.

### 5. “Maintaining a Stable Church Building - Fabric Maintenance & Repairs”

Most of Cumbria’s church buildings are historic buildings. They require regular maintenance and financial forward planning. This section asked about the approaches used to implement a regular active maintenance regime.

### 6. “How Sustainable is Your Church?”

Having completed the questionnaire, this final section asked each church leadership group to reflect collectively upon how well it is doing, its future sustainability, and complete a self assessment exercise.

The Buildings Survey was conducted over 2012 and 2013, with the questionnaires returned to Churches Trust for Cumbria for analysis and recording through 2014. Publication was delayed because of the scale of the project and the resources available.

The information provided was collated and fed back to representatives from several churches clustered together. They were invited to look at what had been recorded and validate the information so that any appropriate amendments could be made.

This gave the opportunity to share and learn about good practice, build relationships and initiate conversations about the future. Many said they would like these broader discussions to continue as, for example, they help to ensure that future decisions are not taken in isolation. It was envisaged that these would continue with the support and encouragement of the Working Groups led by senior representatives of the participating churches.

# KEY FINDINGS

The Survey and follow up events underlined the contribution made in Cumbria by outstanding, dedicated and hardworking people who care for Church Buildings on a daily basis as volunteers. It became clear however that they are often operating in isolation, in difficult circumstances and with limited resources.

**The following series of key findings expose the vulnerability of our churches in the current situation:**

## Church buildings are in general underused

- Only 22% of churches are used more than once a week for worship, and their average Sunday attendance (adults) is 50.
- Used once a week: 20%
- Used once a fortnight: 15%
- Used once a month: 14%

63% of Churches reported that they were used more than 3 times a year for other non-worship activities. Very few were being used on a regular basis for such activities, and these were in the main re-ordered buildings with good facilities, located in the larger communities.

Over twenty churches have an attendance of fewer than 7, the majority of whom travel from outside the community, in some cases long distances, in order to be present.

There is active research on Church attendance in several academic institutions in the UK as well as more widely:

[www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/progress\\_findings\\_reports](http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/progress_findings_reports)

[www.brin.ac.uk](http://www.brin.ac.uk)

## Few children or young people challenges sustainability

The figures are bleak for all denominations: less than 7% of persons attending church are aged 18 years or younger. Within this, there are striking variations between the situations in different churches in Cumbria.

- 35 churches have an average of more than 10 children present on Sundays; these all have large congregations (50+), and meet more than once a week
- Of these 35, only 10 churches report an average weekly Sunday attendance of more than 20 children or young people every week
- 62% of churches state that amongst this age group they have only one or none attending on a Sunday

This is unlikely to be the complete story as it should be noted that during feedback there were a number of examples given of youth ministry work supported at county level by the denominations; these had not been included in the responses because they were not formal services. In addition, Church Schools are an important part of the life of both Church and County.

## Diminishing number of local volunteers

Church buildings and ministry depend upon local volunteers taking on various allocated responsibilities.

Although only 39% of churches reported that they had vacant positions, the most significant anxiety during feedback, apart from finance, was the difficulty of recruiting new people to take on jobs and responsibilities. A number of churches reported that individuals had been trying to resign for years. The age profile of existing volunteers was a matter for concern, reflecting that of the congregations. As a result it was difficult to introduce fresh blood. The newly retired seemed reluctant to volunteer for the church, preferring other causes. There were some disparities between areas with Barrow reporting 54% vacancies and Windermere 50%. It would be wrong to assume that this problem applies solely to small rural churches. Included in the list were many urban churches serving large communities, and churches in communities of 1200 plus, with local schools and other facilities.

## Financial problems

Virtually half of all churches in Cumbria have financial concerns. 18% of churches regarded their financial position as very serious, and a further 30% had major concerns as to their viability over the next five years.

This reality is seen (for example for Anglicans) in the reduced Parish Offers (money paid to the Diocese to cover salaries/stipends and other costs) coming from parishes. The Methodists have a different system which prioritises the Assessment (the money paid to the Circuit/District) rather than what is spent on building maintenance. Although not part of the Survey results, it was stated at many meetings that the current financial liabilities were only being met by drawing down on capital reserves. On many occasions communities prioritised expenditure on the maintenance or repair of buildings over paying for ministry.

## Many church communities are not planning or collaborating

Only 56% of Churches had a strategy or action plan.

65% of churches were not interested in collaborating on repairs. 57% of churches were not interested in offering their church as a venue for training in repair and historic buildings.

Most churches claim to do a weekly visual check on the building. 80% of churches did not want help in training to do minor repairs. The desire to get advice on improving energy efficiency did not stretch to 'caring for the environment'.

Respondents were far more interested in saving costs, but not to the point of entering into some form of centralised bulk purchase arrangement, even though one company proved easily to be the biggest supplier, to more than 70% of churches.

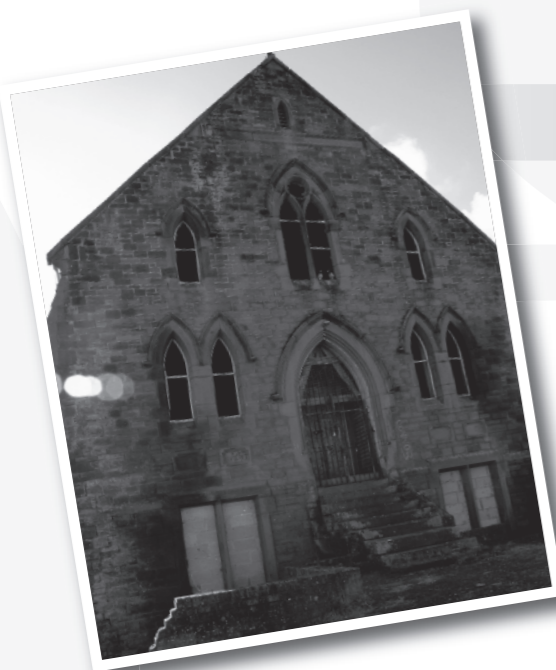
Over 90% of churches had not had an energy audit. In terms of obtaining further support or advice, the areas identified by the responders were (in terms of ranking):

- Improving energy efficiency
- Engaging with their local community
- Creating a fund raising strategy
- Mission Action Planning
- Setting up a Friends Group. (Friends Groups are made up of volunteers who work specifically to care for a building or some other cause).



## Many Churches are locked

Churches which are open only once a week or less, and are only open for worship, appear to have most problems. The Survey shows that a worryingly large number of churches in Cumbria are in this situation. The county is full of churches with a significant architectural, historic or cultural offering. Too many of these are locked, or if open, the welcome and care of visitors fails to engage effectively, or signpost connected churches. Even churches with a footfall of thousands seem to attract tiny sums from visitor donations.



Methodist Church, Cleator Moor



Abbeytown (just after the fire)

- Many significant rural churches are not adequately signposted either on networking sites or on the ground
- 48% of churches in Cumbria, across the denominations, are not open except for services
- 66% of Anglican churches are open, compared to 15% for Methodist Churches. For many this can be regarded as a lost opportunity for outreach

During feedback there were many misapprehensions concerning insurance and security. There was a lack of awareness of new technology to overcome either the security or the logistical issues of opening the buildings. Across the denominations there seems to be a mismatch on self-awareness, because over a third of the churches which were locked, except for services, gave themselves the highest rating for welcoming visitors.

## Church buildings that are used once a week or less for worship face serious challenges on sustainability

The average congregation in Cumbria is 20 or less, declining in size when services are less frequent than once a week.

Of those attending a church with worship once a week, 51% of the congregation are more than 70 years old. Analysis of the different denominations shows that 64% of URC congregations across the County are 70 yrs. or more, 47% for the Church of England, and 51% for Methodists.

## 'Friends' groups are a good demonstration of community involvement

- Just 10% of Churches have an active Friends' group

In many rural communities a faithful few are determinedly maintaining their church, and see it as the last community asset as schools, shops and pubs close. Friends groups spread the financial "net" and involve people who are not members of the local congregation, but nevertheless value the presence of the Church or the building within the community. It is clear that Friends' Groups are valued and contribute many thousands of pounds a year for regular repairs and maintenance, and much larger sums for new or major works.

The nature and performance of Friends' groups vary enormously and there were anecdotal concerns expressed that Friends' groups could sometimes divert community and church giving away from funding ministry. Many rural churches survive upon the generosity and hard work of a single or small group of families. When the next generation does not make the same commitment there is no one left to sustain the building.

## There is enthusiasm to re-model churches

Over 20% of congregations are actively looking to make major changes to their building.

During the feedback sessions the commonest changes made or aspired to were:

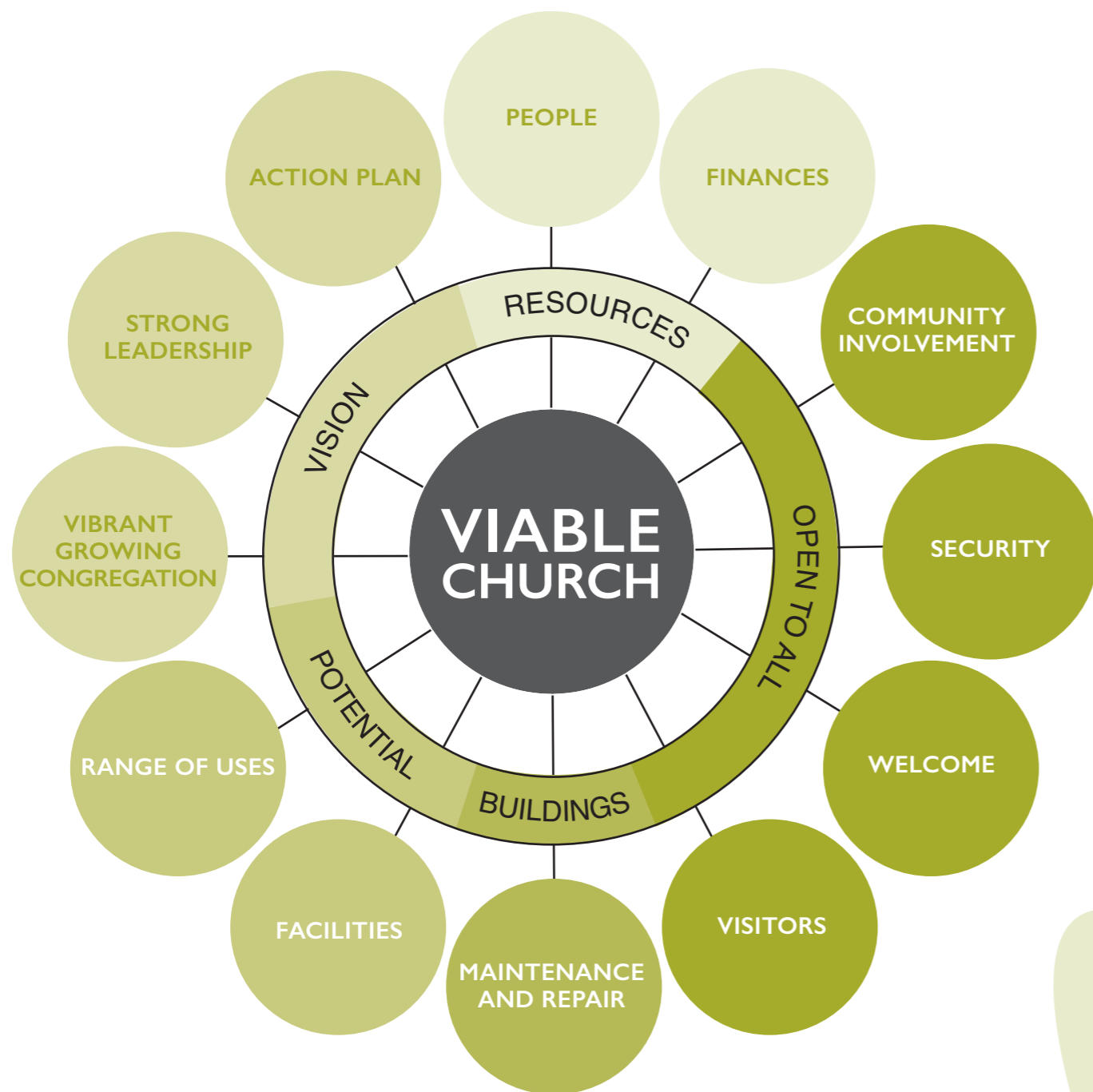
- installing a toilet
- improved kitchen/coffee making facilities
- improving heating
- removal of pews
- improving accessibility

It is calculated that a third of churches are without toilet provision. Listed buildings are generally less well equipped. Buildings with adequate heating, toilets or tea/coffee-making facilities are more likely to offer additional community activities. The biggest inhibitors to implementing these changes were finance.

# SUSTAINABILITY

The Churches Trust for Cumbria has mapped the key findings from the Survey into a diagram - the "Sustainability Rosette". The concept emerged during the pilot surveys and was progressively refined through the Feedback meetings. It shows that for Churches to be sustainable they need to be reasonably healthy in all the areas shown in the twelve petals.

There is unfortunately no single template for success.



The sections below relate to the main headings in the inner ring of the rosette.

## Resources

**People** The Survey shows the strongest guarantee of the healthy survival of a historic building is the sustained commitment of a "long-lived" group, such as a congregation. In other words, buildings need people. They need to be of a sufficient critical mass to resource, in terms of time, skills and funds, the work to be done to maintain ministry and buildings.

The Survey shows that many of our churches are finding it difficult to recruit volunteers to take on responsibility. If one then adds in the evidence on age profile, many of our church buildings may soon be without a group of people to sustain them in the future.

Whilst bleak, it must be noted that many churches reported anecdotally that they had been on the 'edge of the precipice' for decades, but new members had joined, often incoming retirees to 'refresh' the congregation. Others reported examples, especially in rural communities, of how local families, sometimes a single family, had faithfully supported and maintained a church for many decades, and continued to do so.

**Finance** Lack of funding is clearly identified as a limiting issue and many Anglican Churches admitted to reducing their payment of the Parish share to fund ministry when faced with a major repair bill. A very significant number of Anglican churches are meeting their total Parish Offer only by withdrawing from reserves. This is clearly unsustainable.

Some vibrant churches with large congregations and good reserves were realistic and aware of the costs of ministry and their buildings but expressed anxiety about the future. On the other hand, many small elderly Anglican congregations, paying only a small amount of Parish share, seemed to be overly optimistic as to future sustainability.

In general, Church congregations are persevering in their church building despite poor and/or expensive heating, notwithstanding a warm Hall nearby. Rising energy costs, specifically for heating, at the time of the Survey, appear to have been the catalyst for many church communities to review patterns and place of worship, and in some cases more broadly to review their overall future.



Post Office in Stavely Church



Air Source Heat Pumps at Mosser



## Open to all

In a number of towns there were examples given of individual church communities planning their futures, including substantial capital investment, without discussion between the denominations, or even within the same denomination. This needs to be contrasted with the towns, and communities in Cumbria where there was evidence of active constructive dialogue and common working. In the latter there was a tremendous sense of energy, purpose and of a positive future.

In a significant number of cases there was evidence of missed opportunities where works or changes had been carried out in the past without consultation between churches, and money had not been expended wisely. If it is decided that there are too many church buildings and that some rationalisation is needed, national bodies, local planning systems, and others, need to streamline the process by which churches are disposed of.

Where the building is an important part of a landscape, and needs to be retained, its change of use needs to be simpler. The feedback suggested that where buildings had been sold this was often seen as liberating for church growth.

There were, however, many other instances in feedback of successful local collaborative working or mergers. The common ingredients for success included, starting discussions early from a position of strength, open mindedness, flexibility, and strong leadership.

Some churches will defy the odds in continuing to exist simply because of the determination of a particular family or group or individual associated with the church. The Survey results revealed that the interest of many in the wider community seems to be much less than might have been assumed in the survival of the building, and much more in the churchyard.

## Buildings

Many villages or communities have more than one church, but do not have the population to support one. In one case, three churches in a community of 120 people each expressed confidence in the long-term future of their Church.

Too many small communities have several Halls locally competing for limited custom and funding to upgrade. Often it is the same people and the same pockets that are resourcing these facilities.

The result of all this is that, although congregations do care about their buildings, not all are well maintained, and many of even the best maintained need significant sums of money. To put just the Grade I and II\* buildings in the county in good repair would cost many millions.



## Potential

A significant number of Anglican churches are not located in the centre of, or even within, their village. Others, whilst often dramatic or picturesque in terms of landscape, no longer serve an existing geographical community at all. They may serve a transient tourist population or as a wedding venue, but in either case meeting the costs of repair, maintenance and ministry is challenging.

**Overall, there seem to be four categories of buildings:**

- Those which are as good as they can be with good income streams, have a viable group of people to care for them, and are sustainable;
- Those buildings which are not currently as good as they can be, but are appropriate for investment as they are in the right place for the Church's mission and have the potential to be sustainable;
- Those buildings designated as 'special places', for example, as places of pilgrimage or for weddings, etc, which can run at "a lower temperature", which are inexpensive to maintain;
- Those buildings for which there is no long-term viable faith use and are to be considered for disposal.

## Vision (and Leadership)

One common factor underpinning vibrant church communities and well used buildings is strong effective leadership at ordained and lay level. When starting a new initiative, perseverance and resilience are key requirements. Many of the 'successes' in terms of new uses or growing congregations had hesitant starts. Impact should be judged after two or three years, not months. Some ordained clergy responsible for an ever-growing number of churches to feel weighed down by buildings and administration.

**County level leadership** The three denominations are, at County level, working to tackle many of these issues through a Strategy for Growth (which they are calling "God for All"). This strategy includes three strands, covering:

- Outreach: reaching out to and attracting new members - though its intention is wider than just getting people to go to church
- Ministry: how best to use the Church's volunteers, clergy, and other paid staff
- Buildings: how to have the right buildings in the right places

The conclusions of the Strategy's Building strand align well with results of this Survey.

([www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/our-vision/buildings-strategy.html](http://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/our-vision/buildings-strategy.html)  
[www.churchestogethercumbria.co.uk/growing-together.html](http://www.churchestogethercumbria.co.uk/growing-together.html))

The Strategy for Growth recognises that the denominational structures cannot and will not force change upon unwilling congregations. Instead it suggests putting in place ways to make it easy for local Church leadership to make informed and good decisions.

One important element of the Strategy for Growth is the grouping of churches (from all three denominations) into Mission Communities. This is to counteract isolation, which is frequently linked to failure, and to create groupings of sustainable critical mass.

Decisions about buildings need to fit in with the evolution of Mission Communities. Indeed one element of the Strategy for Growth and its thinking about Mission Communities is that things need to be devolved as locally as possible - so it is in the Mission Communities that discussions and decisions about buildings will need to happen.



# A ROLE FOR EVERYONE

One of the core objectives of the Churches Trust for Cumbria is to encourage the building of partnerships and community engagement with public, private, and voluntary, sector organisations to develop a partnership approach to realise the potential of Cumbria's faith buildings as community hubs.

There is no easy template for success, and sustainability will require all partners and interests to work together. Church leaders will provide some of the leadership but their fundamental task is to lead Church, not to look after historic buildings.

**Individuals** as volunteers and local leaders are urgently required and welcome at every level to help provide the capacity and energy to move forward.

**Local Government** in all tiers (County, District, Parish, Neighbourhood) and local community organisations are invited to be more proactive in this agenda and integrate their services and the future of faith buildings into their plans and strategies, including in land use and Parish Plans.

**Housing Associations** and Faith communities should develop further partnership working, because Faith communities have a role in providing affordable housing using their building and land assets – because of their care for whole communities as well as for disadvantaged individuals. This may challenge any overriding requirement to obtain best price when disposing of property.

**Conservation and Environmental bodies** have a key role in advising on good and economic practice and in directly developing the skills needed for the maintenance and repair of historic buildings in the traditional way with appropriate materials and techniques.

**Businesses** are asked to step forward to support their local faith buildings and to offer their project management, administrative and planning and organisational skills to individual Churches.

**Faith Based Tourism** has great potential in Cumbria. The North West Multi- Faith Tourism Association is not at present active, but Cumbria Tourism, and the Churches Visitor and Tourism Association (<http://cvta.org.uk/>) and other bodies are encouraged to engage more actively with church and faith groups in Cumbria.

**Individual congregations** need to have an honest conversation about their buildings, in the context of Mission Communities where appropriate, but certainly including neighbouring churches and the wider community. They should use the sustainability Rosette, and should consider whether their buildings are useful for their mission. They need to recognise that all buildings make great demands on resources and therefore that some buildings cannot be sustained, and others need investment and change. They should develop strategies for their buildings for, say, the next ten years.

**Church Leaders** and faith leaders are constructively challenged to bring all interests and resources together in a community to promote sustainability. Church leaders are encouraged to address barriers to sustainability by looking outwards and involving other partners. New partnerships are needed with those addressing similar issues in other parts of the UK.

## Churches Trust for Cumbria and the National Churches Trust

The Churches Trust for Cumbria is not alone in looking at the wider picture of church buildings, and Cumbria is not alone in having churches which face challenges of sustainability. Some areas, (eg the City of London) have many significant churches with low resident populations but large numbers of visitors during the week. Other areas as rural as Cumbria (eg Norfolk and Lincolnshire) have significant churches far beyond the capacity of the very tiny populations around them. Each area needs to solve its own problems, but can learn from other areas.

Appendix III contains some specific suggestions (arising from the Survey, and from the Churches Trust for Cumbria's own experience) which Churches Trust for Cumbria needs to pursue, and in order to do this, it needs to seek further funds. It can then work in partnership with architects, contractors, grant making bodies, amenity groups, county-level church structures and individual churches, to make the wonderful asset of our church buildings sustainable far into the future.



St Ninian's Ninekirks, Brougham



Old St Martin's Martindale



Christ Church Cockermouth  
(Just after the 2009 Floods)



# CONCLUSION

The Churches Trust for Cumbria Survey establishes new and up-to-date facts about the state of Cumbria's places of worship.

Church buildings are essential both to the county's heritage, and to the vitality of its towns and villages. The Survey shows that these buildings bring together thousands of people in a variety of ways that benefit local communities, with church buildings being used extensively for purposes beyond worship. It also reveals that many communities are keen to facilitate wider activities. Open, accessible church buildings provide their communities with a significant resource.

The Survey reveals that a significant number of buildings are in urgent need of help, and provides quantitative information of the costs associated with maintaining these often challenging buildings. Although many are in good or fair condition, churches still require external support to undertake projects, in the form of both money and advice. Good maintenance is vital to sustaining buildings and preventing major structural problems.

Friends' Groups attract many non-worshipping individuals to support church buildings, and the Survey shows both the value these groups bring and the opportunity there is to develop this form of support. The Survey underlines the remarkable contribution of volunteers both in the provision of community activities and maintaining the church fabric. Supporting and strengthening local volunteer organisations is critical over the long-term to maintain church buildings.

This type of Survey is essential to a better understanding and appreciation of church buildings. It is hoped that this and future studies will stimulate further debate on the issues raised in this report. This Survey does not seek to be the final word on the matter. Given the encouraging levels of participation, the Churches Trust for Cumbria believes that the information gathered should be updated in the future, with the aim of increasing levels of participation, strengthening the fact base, identifying possible trends, and closer examination of subjects not included in this Survey. Above all church leaders must follow up to ensure that agreed actions are followed through, and that dialogues are initiated and maintained.

Mission Communities (the new low-level Church structures – sustainable clusters of churches from all three denominations, working together to combat isolation, to create critical mass, and to focus on outreach and new approaches to worship) will be able to draw upon this data to ensure that wise and informed decisions are made. This includes both how to encourage a wider audience to appreciate the very real value of church buildings to their community as places of history and beauty, as well as their fundamental purpose as places of worship and of glory to God, and also how best to ensure that as many as possible of these buildings are handed down in a sustainable condition to future generations.



Viking Cross Bewcastle



Viking Cross Irton



Viking Cross Gosforth

# APPENDICES

## Appendix I: The Survey

The Buildings Survey was conducted over 2012 and 2013, with analysis and write-up through 2014. The Buildings Survey began with pilot Surveys in two Deaneries. Ecumenical Steering Groups were set up in each geographic area, and questionnaires sent out to each church. The data from the questionnaires, together with data available from the local and national Church bodies, was recorded and then re-presented to the churches taking part using "surgeries". Significant lessons were learned about the format and content of the questionnaires. Other lessons were learned about the sensitivities of the churches themselves: when Churches are vulnerable, whether they know it themselves or are in denial, and then that picture is played back to them and to others, people can be understandably defensive. But for some the exercise of completing the questionnaire helped to galvanise communities into facing up to the difficult challenge of ensuring a sustainable future for their church building.

A revised version of the questionnaire was then used as the Buildings Survey was rolled out across the rest of the County/Diocese. Again the data was recorded and then re-presented to the churches using the surgery format. This had clusters of churches (in coherent groupings) meeting together with the staff and trustees from Churches Trust for Cumbria, and local church leaders. Each church's data was checked and corrected appropriately, and then the local Archdeacon and leading church representatives led a wider discussion from the other denominations about the suitability of the buildings in the particular locality. The revised data and notes of the wider discussions were then fed back to the churches, in the hope that this would initiate locally led action and conversations about church buildings.

The feedback sessions proved to be particularly valuable, at times quite revelatory, in shining quite contrasting spotlights upon the sustainability of churches, which did not reflect exactly the raw responses to the questions. For example we came across churches of a similar size, context, age and congregation profile whose only ambition was to keep the church going 'to see out the current members', as against churches that were very attuned to the realities and were inspirational in their determination to maintain their church as a place of worship, of outreach, and as a community facility.

## Appendix II: The Churches Trust for Cumbria

The Churches Trust for Cumbria (Churches Trust for Cumbria) was formed in 2008 as a charitable trust to help secure a sustainable future for Cumbria's churches.

At its heart are five core objectives:

- To help faith communities develop a vision, linked to wider community plans, which puts churches at the hub of the community, with greater use of their buildings for faith-based and other activities.
- To encourage partnership and community engagement linking local individuals, community groups, businesses and public sector organisations with churches.
- To maximise the resources available to repair, maintain and develop church buildings in Cumbria; to help ensure those resources are used efficiently; and to target new funding where it will be most effective.
- To support those responsible for managing churches, particularly through training and sharing of information and best practice.
- To help churches fulfil their potential as part of Cumbria's cultural offer whilst doing justice to their historic and religious roots; to enhance the experience of visitors to churches; and to increase contributions by visitors towards the upkeep of churches.

The Survey has been the major undertaking so far but other projects have included: the provision of extensive training, setting up and maintaining the Churches Trust for Cumbria website, Architects Networking Days, Church Trail Leaflets, the provision of impartial advice and signposting to grant funding for churches.

There is an excellent summary of our first few years available online:

[www.ctfc.org.uk/images/stories/documents/threeyearreport.pdf](http://www.ctfc.org.uk/images/stories/documents/threeyearreport.pdf)

## Appendix III: Ideas worth pursuing

This research has thrown up many ideas or areas for potential future projects: some for Churches Trust for Cumbria, but many for partners - these would be subject to demand and availability of resources.

**1. Open Churches** - ensuring that they are all (where safe to do so), unlocked & accessible to all, with DDA access & security measures.

**2. Attracting Visitors** - There is a huge, untapped opportunity here, branding of Cumbria's churches, faith trails (e.g. Ullswater, Border Churches, St Cuthbert, Wordsworth, Decorative Arts) to attractive an coffee table book, geocache, social media, events e.g. marketing churches for film sets, orienteering in church yards for small children, sound & light shows as well as interpretation material for children & adults including digital reconstructions, signage etc.

**3. Digital Age** - Churches, perhaps reflecting the age group who are responsible for them, have been slow to grasp the opportunities for worship and tourism provided by digital technology and social media. The University of York Centre for Christianity and Culture ([www.christianityandculture.org.uk](http://www.christianityandculture.org.uk)), amongst other things develops Apps like online tourist trails.

**4. Ride & Stride** is untapped and needs a coordinated approach that involves children (and possibly serious cyclists) - it can be used for marketing as well as fundraising. Alternatively, given the context, walking or fell running trails between churches with tea/coffee provision and toilet facilities is worth examining.

**5. Increasing visitor donations** - there is too little advice on this. Churches attracting thousands of visitors per year in tourist or holiday destinations, or with particular special features, should attract greater funding. Potential Cumbria Churches branding scheme, electronic giving, raising awareness to non-church goers that funds only come from congregations (Surveys reveal that not many people realise this).

**6. Weddings** - The County has some of the most picturesque churches in stunning settings. A co-ordinated programme could raise the profile of Cumbrian churches as well as generating revenue.

**7. Friends' Groups** - model constitutions, case studies, help from successful Friends' groups to others. The importance of Friends' Groups will become greater as congregations become smaller or less interested in buildings.

**8. New layouts for churches** (re-ordering) for worship and community use - case studies plus church tours to churches within the county that have had some reordering, with a talk by the architect/people involved, with lunch & fellowship / prayer, perhaps a visit to 2 churches in one day or a walk, to make it more than just a trip to a church, could be tied in with any issues the denominations want to raise. Informative and enjoyable 'away days' for churches & an opportunity to network.

**9. Complementary uses** for church buildings, because worship isn't necessarily the whole answer to sustain these buildings, there has to be a business case so that maintenance & management can continue, e.g. Schools Resource, Music Venues, Art Events, Meeting Venue Directory, Other uses e.g. health, social, community-run or council outreach library, café, retreat etc. - more case studies, courses from 'stakeholders' such as Lakeland Summer Music Festival etc. Also considering starting uses that don't currently happen in Cumbrian churches e.g. climbing wall, home delivery drop off points (e.g. for supermarket deliveries/post offices etc with smartcards).

**10. Future role of the church** - As churches re-examine their role in terms of mission and outreach, buildings and halls may be an asset to be deployed. One example put forward was a food bank depot. Possibly also the need to serve hot food. Churches may also be challenged for ordinary care in the community, e.g. older people needing some help to keep them out of hospital or coordinating other community services and the church may be an obvious building to operate out of, or the obvious group to spearhead these activities (as many churches did during the floods and West Cumbria shootings). A coordinated engagement with the health care trust etc.



**11. Engaging professionals** - more needs to be done to guide people on how and when to do this e.g. tendering process for builders and architects, what to expect from an architect & QI report, comprehensive look at quality of QI reports; put together good & bad examples so that churches know what they should expect; perhaps help facilitate church group 'policing' of DAC approved architects.

**12. Maintenance** - joint working across the denominations to reduce costs of maintenance. Maintenance training, SPAB's maintenance cooperative movement, organised maintenance scheme that the North of England Civic Trust is looking into; shared equipment that could be managed by one church/deanery/circuit/diocese & be made available for all to use for a nominal charge e.g. zip-up staging to access roof spaces, CCTV inspection equipment. Seascale Methodist Church had explored a Circuit contract for PAT testing but churches did not respond to this. The Binsey Team (Derwent) has considered their own gutter clear/window cleaning scheme. Look at other systems e.g. the URC system includes a Quinquennial Inspection as well as a 'soft touch' Church Health Inspection. They support their buildings from their lettings, and they support the Minister from the congregation, and keep those two separate conceptually. Possible variations to the present five year inspection regime for Anglican Churches (Quinquennial Inspections) could be considered - eg for smaller churches, doing a quarter every year, with architect and contractor jointly on site to do most of the simpler work required at the same time as the inspection, and under the supervision of the architect.

**13. Energy Efficiency** including joint purchasing schemes of equipment and fuel & encouraging better management of existing heating systems. Training, case studies & informing people on the possibilities and what to expect, investigating the Government's **Green Deal**. People to involve include the DAC, Cumbria Action for Sustainability and various green architects, Surveyors and various environmental groups and transition towns.

Looking at the possibilities of churches to e.g. provide water butts for the community, heating for communities e.g. air source heat pumps, telephone masts on towers etc. Dave Harris-Jones, Dave@crea.co.uk, (29 Nov 2012 email) would like to see if we could work together to develop a project and secure funding to help the religious buildings within the county to manage more effectively their energy consumption and reduce their carbon footprint. Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency, Redhills, Penrith, 01768 891555.

**14. Church Hibernation** (using a church less intensively - eg having services only a few times in a year, or using a church just for weddings, or not using a church in the winter but instead using the community centre or village hall) - how to do it, fund it, maintain and manage a hibernated church, understanding the legalities, what alternative uses could there be. This will need a better understanding of maintenance regimes for these churches - ie the enemy is damp not cold.

**15. How to do a Church Building Survey Review** for other church bodies within and outside of the county - report/consultancy advice/talks etc.

**16. Viable communities & Housing Issues** - We often hear about the housing issues in Cumbria, particularly in the Lake District, and the church's experiences back this up e.g. Matterdale Parish Church, and Langdale is becoming a depopulated area; 75% are holiday cottages. More could be done to tackle this issue by taking a strategic approach with all of the planning authorities & housing associations, identifying potential land/sites (this information should be in the database) and working with the Community Land Trust and Cumbria Rural Housing Trust. However some churches recorded some positives in that part time residents can put more effort into events & attend church more than the full time residents. The database will establish which churches have sites for housing but examples could be Barrow, St Perrans, Roose, Calder, Keekle Mission Room - land & building, Derwent, Allhallows/Mealsgate, All Saints Hall, Bassenthwaite St John's church room.

**17. Funding** - Continue to research grants available for churches and case studies on joint fundraising e.g. Dacre St Andrews with Dalemain House & Stainton school. Patterdale's Boundary Walk for school & Church (raises £7k/yr. - perhaps to other causes but is also a good community event).

**18. Architects** - Another value added by the Churches Trust for Cumbria has been its work with Architects. In a sparsely populated and geographically large county like Cumbria, Continuing Professional Development can be hard for Architects to access, and networking correspondingly important. The Churches Trust for Cumbria discovered a useful role working with architects and Surveyors, providing some in service training, and also networking between them, tradesmen/contractors and churches.

**19. Quinquennial Inspection** - The Buildings Survey showed that too many churches did not find their Quinquennial Inspection Report sufficiently helpful, or did not take enough notice of it. So these good relationships with Architects are especially important because they would be a platform from which to work with both architects and church councils to bring together their different points of view, and make the Reports more useful, and more valued.

**20. Website** - The Trust's website has proved to be a valuable source of information as well as advertising Churches.

**21. Advice and Support for the Diocesan Advisory Committee** - The Trust could have a valuable role supporting the work of the DAC, and in providing initial guidance to churches contemplating works. Another more radical suggestion would be for the Diocese/Church Bodies together employing someone to advise on/look after buildings so that the burden is taken from clergy/church wardens, to release time for mission.

## Appendix IV Examples

The following list of churches is provided to offer an overview of what is good which is going on, but also so that a church contemplating a particular course of action or problem could be in touch to learn from the experience of others. Churches/congregations are therefore encouraged to be in touch with each other.

### Environmental works (Examples include):

- Watermillock wood pellet boiler.
- Winster, Holy Trinity (Kendal area) - rainwater harvesting (no mains water in area).
- Ings, heating & refurbish.
- Levens, St John's - Eco-Congregation, recycling etc.
- Abbeystown and St Michael's Workington - underfloor heating.
- Abbeystown and Bigrigg - ground source heat pumps.
- Mosser, Mungrisdale and Ravenstonedale - air source heat pumps.
- Cottage Wood Centre (nr Plumpton, Penrith).

### Reordering (Examples include):

- Cottage Wood Centre (nr Plumpton, Penrith).
- Brigham Methodist Church - community refurbish & good fundraising/info leaflet.
- Little Langdale, Holy Trinity - Reordering: lighting, disabled access and WC, small kitchenette. The hall could be a case study of good practice in terms of refurbishment, management & community outreach/mission. As could the ways in which the church is trying to engage with a younger, different potential congregation e.g. through Picnic & Praise.
- Ambleside St Mary's could be a potential Churches Trust for Cumbria case study on reordering & access audit prior to re-ordering. Parish centre is already one on our website.
- Windermere St Mary - substantial reordering - could be a Churches Trust for Cumbria case study.
- St John the Evangelist, London Rd, Carlisle and Christ Church Cockermouth - reordering involving removal of all the pews.
- Grange in Borrowdale Methodist Church - reordering to become community facility, complemented by Grange Anglican Church used for worship.
- Bridekirk, Great Broughton, Gosforth - extensions to provide meeting rooms, kitchen, toilets.
- Cartmel Fell, St Anthony's - gem church with automatic lighting. Plan to build WC & kitchen extension - Grade I, National Park etc.
- Crosby Ravensworth - progressive, as part of major renewal of the building.
- Caldbeck - recent & high quality, kitchen, toilet, quiet room, font moved & some pews out.
- Thursby - following fire.
- Any number of churches have installed toilets and kitchens, removing a few pews at the same time to create a more flexible space.

### Re-Lighting Schemes (Examples include):

- Embleton
- Wythop
- Allhallows, Mealsgate
- Holy Trinity Kendal



**Additional Uses/Community Engagement/Friends Groups** (Examples include):

- Culgaith, All Saints - mother's group, children's choir etc.
- Tebay St James - The Hub (community choir, council outreach library, community space, refurbish, Friends Group).
- Egremont Methodist Church - community consultation, audit, business plan, fundraising, working with others etc.
- Have Age UK & other groups operating out of it following refurbish to multi-functional building. (Contact Katie Bell & Rev Philip Peacock).
- Mirehouse, St Andrew's.
- Alston Aspire.
- Drigg, St Peter's Scarecrow Festival (& also Orton) - The Scarecrow Festival is organised by the church but the whole community gets involved. It started by accident when the church had one for harvest festival; by the third week people had made about 40! It brings the community together and makes it clear that country churches are not just the people who come to church, but the whole community.
- Hawkshead Music Festival.
- Concerts at Crosthwaite, etc.
- Orton, Farmers Markets, monthly.
- Christ Church Cockermouth was used extensively by the wider community, including the library and social services and the council, in the aftermath of the floods when their own premises were out of action.
- There are implications for buildings here - which include the need to modify/reorder buildings to accommodate a wider range of activities.

**Church Redevelopment, community land trust and holding** (Examples include):

- Keswick Methodist - are working at a scheme to re-develop their church land and buildings.

**Promotion & Marketing** (Examples include):

- Grasmere, St Oswald's
- Lanercost
- St Bees
- Cartmel Priory

**Maintenance** (Examples include):

- Grasmere St Oswald
- Sawrey St Peter - does, with other churches, joint services checks and other works

**Geocache in graveyard** (Examples include):

- Levens, St John's - have and would be willing to show how to set it up.

**Growing congregations/changing patterns of worship:**

- National research has shown that the traditional pattern of services in church on Sunday mornings, say, 8am & 10am and evenings 6.30pm does not provide sufficient flexibility and accessibility for those who are new to church; a number of churches are trying services at other times and in other venues.
- There are implications for buildings here - which include questions about links between existing/traditional congregations and new ones, which leads on to the question of whether a new congregation meeting other than in a church would feel any need to maintain the church building.

**H&S, Fire Safety, Guides for hirers of buildings** (Examples include):

- Compliance with continually rising standards/expectations and increasingly litigious "customers" is becoming much more onerous - eg Health and Safety / Working at Height / Fire Safety...
- So, hiring out a building carries responsibilities too; things like letting policies and formal letting agreements are important.
- The Diocese, via its website, provides some model policies and documents for these [www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/our-diocese/buildings-and-property/using-your-buildings/church-hall-policies.html](http://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/our-diocese/buildings-and-property/using-your-buildings/church-hall-policies.html) and other pages, and as importantly, has links to sites like ChurchCare and the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group which themselves offer up-to-date best practice.



Cottage Wood Church



Inside Cottage Wood Church



The signing of the Ecumenical Declaration of Intent







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