



THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

CONSERVATION POLICY

NOVEMBER 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Summary | 3 |
| 1. Introduction..... | 4 |
| 2. Statutory Objective..... | 4 |
| 3. Strategic Aims..... | 4 |
| 4. Significance of Trust Churches..... | 5 |
| 5. Conservation Issues..... | 6 |
| 6. General Approach..... | 7 |
| 7. Policy for Repair and Conservation..... | 7 |
| 8. Policy for Alteration, Adaptation, Additions and Use..... | 9 |
| 9. Procedure for Applications..... | 11 |
| Conclusion | 13 |
| Appendix 1 – Sources..... | 14 |
| Appendix 2 –Current Policies and Guidance Notes..... | 15 |
| Appendix 3 – Standard Application Form..... | 16 |

SUMMARY

This paper is provided to give policy and guidance on the repair, conservation, adaptation, and alteration of Trust churches for:

- members of staff in carrying out their duties;
- consultants appointed to individual churches;
- the Trust's statutory sponsors;
- supporters of the Trust; and
- members of the public.

Churches vested in the Trust are considered to be worthy of preservation for a wide variety of reasons, which can best be described as their 'cultural significance' in terms of architectural, historical, archaeological, social, cultural or landscape significance.

There are many issues that affect the Trust's continued care and maintenance of its churches, including ongoing natural decay, new legislation, requirements arising from increased access and new uses and the financial constraints under which the Trust works.

The Trust wishes to be more pro-active in relation to new uses and has categorised its estate according to type and potential for use. The Conservation Policy informs this process and will also guide Trustees and staff regarding individual proposals for adaptation and alteration.

With proper repair and maintenance the life of most kinds of buildings can be extended almost indefinitely. This certainly applies to the Trust's churches. At its simplest, preservation is care through prudent maintenance – the slow and continuous replacement of that which has decayed and the protection of that which would otherwise decay.

The Trust recognises that from time to time ongoing maintenance will not be sufficient and that more detailed repair and conservation work is required. The Trust's general principle for this work is one of minimum intervention.

In considering adaptation and alteration of its churches to accommodate new uses the Trust will consider the cultural significance of the church and its setting, the impact that proposed adaptations will have on the fabric and how these are relevant to what makes the church important.

Applications will be handled according to a procedure that requires a conservation statement/plan, a statement of need, an options appraisal, an impact assessment and drawings.

1. Introduction

This paper is provided to give policy and guidance on the repair, conservation, adaptation, and alteration of Trust churches for:

- members of staff in carrying out their duties;
- consultants appointed to individual churches;
- the Trust's statutory sponsors;
- supporters of the Trust; and
- members of the public.

Many documents have been written about conservation philosophy and practice, and these are listed in **Appendix 1** as a source of information in the preparation of this document and for further reading. The Trust's philosophy has, however, been guided by its unique position in having responsibility for a large number of important historic, but redundant, churches.

The Trust's Estate Review establishes categories for potential use of Trust churches, and together with this document will inform development of conservation and use.

2. Statutory Objective

The Trust's statutory objective is defined principally in section 44(4) of the Pastoral Measure 1983 and states:

“The Churches Conservation Trust shall have as its object the preservation in the interests of the nation and the Church of England, of churches and parts of churches of historic and archaeological interest of architectural quality vested in the Trust by this part, together with their contents so vested.”

3. Strategic Aims

The Trust has four strategic aims:

1. Conserving and repairing its churches to a high professional standard for present and future generations and promoting best practice.
2. Broadening people's access to, understanding and enjoyment of those churches, through appropriate adaptations, education programmes, promotion and events.
3. Working with local communities to revitalise its churches and through increased use, contribute to community regeneration and social inclusion.
4. Maximising resources and developing the organisation.

4. Significance of Trust Churches

Most historic buildings are useful resources capable of serving a modern purpose. However, churches have been vested in the Trust because they were believed to have reached the end of their viable working life and were considered to be redundant for ongoing parish worship. It was thought that at the time of vesting no acceptable and economical alternative could be found. Nevertheless, the Trust does not consider that they have ceased to be capable of sensitive repair and further use.

All Trust churches are listed, most are Grade I and additionally some are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. All Trust churches are covered by current statutory legislation, which is administered by local authority Conservation Officers and, where appropriate, English Heritage. The decision on whether to vest and which churches are vested belongs to the Church Commissioners, who take advice as to the quality of the building and site from the Advisory Board for Redundant Churches. The Commissioners liaise closely with the Trust during this process concerning its priorities and budgets for new vestings.

Churches vested in the Trust are considered to be worthy of preservation for a wide variety of reasons, which can best be described as their ‘cultural significance’:

Architectural / aesthetic – Most churches are vested because of the quality and beauty of their architecture and of their fittings. They may be examples of a new style of design or type, e.g. St. Mary, Magdalene, Stapleford, which was designed in the ‘Gothick’ style, or All Souls, Haley Hill, Halifax, a church by Sir George Gilbert Scott in the Perpendicular style. Some churches are exemplars of technical innovation, e.g. St. James, Toxteth, with the earliest known surviving use of cast iron columns. Others possess rare or interesting decorative schemes, or notable adaptations and changes.

Historical – Churches are rich in historical associations. Some churches record historic events e.g. St. Mary, Battlefield, built by Henry IV to give thanks after the Battle of Shrewsbury in 1403, or people, e.g. Christ the Consoler, Skelton-cum-Newby, built in memory of a much loved youngest son, Frederick Vyner, killed by Brigands in Greece in 1870.

Archaeological – Churches are significant architectural artefacts by virtue of their below ground archaeology as well as their standing fabric. Many of the Trust’s churches have been vested because they are very old, and therefore rare. The fact that they have survived gives them a special interest. There is a particular atmosphere, which many have experienced, about a church that appears to have remained largely untouched for many centuries. Trust examples include St. John the Baptist, Inglesham and Holy Trinity, Goodramgate, York.

Social and cultural – Churches have great local and cultural significance for people for a wide variety of reasons by virtue of their use pre-vesting and of their continued uses post-vesting. Other churches may have a particular individual significance. For example, St. Helen’s, Little Cawthorpe has been vested because it is a Victorian church that was considered at the time of its building by “The Ecclesiologist” as a

paradigm of the type of church which the Ecclesiological Society commended for parishes with modest resources, and it remains unaltered since then.

Landscape – Churches often have a major significance as features in the rural and urban landscape, particularly owing to their towers and spires. They give communities a sense of identity and locality and are often the most important built feature in villages and towns.

The Trust's estate also contains a number of ruined churches and towers, the latter being the remaining parts of churches that have been demolished. These are often picturesque and provide a pleasing image when travelling through the English countryside.

5. Conservation Issues

There are many issues that affect the Trust's continued care and maintenance of its churches:

- the ongoing natural decay process over which it has little control;
- new legislation - in particular Health & Safety and Disability Discrimination Act compliance;
- the aim of the Trust to provide access to its churches and for its churches to be used as much and as widely as possible as a community resource;
- requirements arising from increased access and new uses, for example the introduction of heating and additional facilities;
- the financial constraints under which the Trust works.
It is accepted wisdom that statutory funding is limited, and may indeed decrease in real terms over future funding periods. In its conservation work, the Trust aims to achieve much with limited resources, whilst also aiming to increase the diversity of its funding sources;
- an acknowledged skills shortage that is putting future repairs at risk; particularly the use and understanding of traditional materials and techniques, e.g. lime pointing of brickwork or ashlar stonework, leading to a lower quality of work on site;
- sustainability - old buildings represent a past investment of energy and materials. The key to conserving them is to understand their materials and treat them with respect. The choice of materials in repairing and adapting the churches must be carefully considered.

6. General Approach

The Trust recognises that in seeking to achieve its strategic aims, work undertaken at its churches naturally falls into two distinct, but related categories – repair and conservation, and adaptation and alteration resulting from or to facilitate increased use.

The Trust wishes to be more pro-active than previously in relation to the latter, and has categorised its estate according to type and potential for use. The Conservation Policy informs this process and will also guide Trustees and staff regarding individual proposals for adaptations, either identified through the Trust's planned projects or from enquiries by external organisations.

Priorities for undertaking work will continue to be established in relation to making churches wind and watertight, but these will be now also be balanced with opportunities presented by notable churches where access and community goals can be achieved through investment in the fabric.

In formulating guidance on all work that affects the fabric and fittings of its churches there is an assumption that the Trust's responsibility will last indefinitely. The Trust will care for its churches in a seemly way as buildings formerly used for public worship. It will care for vested churchyards in a manner consistent with their status as places of burial, as a setting for an important historic church, and in the knowledge that they may additionally be a sanctuary for particular species of wildlife and of valuable artistic merit in their own right.

7. Policy for Repair and Conservation

Maintenance

With proper repair and maintenance the life of most kinds of buildings can be extended almost indefinitely. This certainly applies to the Trust's churches. At its simplest, preservation is care through prudent maintenance – the slow and continuous replacement of that which has decayed and the protection of that which would otherwise decay. The Trust thus places great emphasis on effective maintenance to prevent the causes of decay and thereby reduce costs.

The Trust will:

1. Arrange a regular maintenance contract at every church – the frequency will depend on individual circumstances but at the very least will include the clearing of rainwater goods and emergency repairs to keep the churches wind and watertight.
2. Inspect its churches at least twice a year to identify problems.
3. Deal with issues identified above, including notified vandalism, within an appropriate time scale to limit ongoing decay and minimise costs.

4. Appoint an expert consultant to advise on the detailed condition of each church at least every 6 years.
5. Arrange regular testing of services e.g. electricity supplies and lightning conductors.

More detailed repair

The Trust recognises that from time to time ongoing maintenance will not be sufficient and that more detailed repair and conservation work is required. The Trust's general principle for this work is one of minimum intervention. The Trust is charged with responsibility for what others have considered to be of high preservation value and the original materials are not discarded without thought. Some new work will be needed but this should be limited to the minimum necessary. Conservation is largely the art of controlling change.

The Trust will generally:

1. Undertake only the minimum necessary repairs in order to extend the life of the building fabric – new work will be made to fit the existing fabric, protective elements e.g. string courses will be given priority, discreet changes will be made only where these are necessary for the life of the fabric, patching where viable, e.g. lead roofs, until wholesale replacement becomes necessary for economic reasons.
2. Use traditional materials in preference to modern as they are compatible with the original fabric, tend to last longer, do not rob the church of its authentic features and encourage the continuation of skills and craftsmanship.
3. Use modern materials where necessary, supported by evidence of their longevity and suitability, and from sustainable sources where possible.
4. Prioritise repairs because of limited funds; highest priority being to keep the churches wind and watertight e.g. maintain roofs, walls, windows and rainwater goods/drainage and to slow down as far as possible the mechanisms of decay; the next priority will be given to internal presentation e.g. plaster decoration, floors, pews; and the lowest priority will be given to fixtures and fittings e.g. monuments. However, this is subject to the special circumstances and significances that may exist at individual churches and to priorities for potential use established in the Estate Review. Churches with greater conservation value may attract more resources than those with less notable features.
5. Repair and conserve what exists rather than restore to a previous time. Many past alterations at Trust churches are of interest in their own right and provide an insight into the changing history of that church. In some circumstances restoration of architectural features may be justified when not to do so would put the remaining church fabric at risk, and in these cases there will be careful consideration of original detail. Restoration may also occasionally be justified where the significance of what is lost is very low, and the significance that can be

6. Carry out sensible programmes of repair on the basis of whole life cost and seek value for money in all areas, notwithstanding the requirement to undertake only the minimum necessary. In this respect, repair contracts will generally not be undertaken where the level of consultants' fees is high in proportion to the work done, a minimum figure will be set each year by the Director of Conservation. Work programmes will make best use of any costly access arrangements. The expected minimum life cycle for repairs to towers and roofs will be 50 years.
7. Undertake repairs to newly vested churches as soon as possible to prevent further deterioration and make the building available for local and community use, but always dependent on available resources for this aspect of our work.
8. Owing to limited resources, the Trust will only exceptionally be able to undertake the restoration of fittings e.g. bells, clocks, organs, where the degree of public interest warrants, and generally only where a proportion of funds is available from external sources in "high conservation value" churches.
9. Seek to record any changes so as to provide a clear historical record.
10. Develop a range of technical policies to provide a standard level of care and maintenance of its church fabric and fittings - for full details of existing policies please refer to **Appendix 2**.
11. Obtain specialist advice where appropriate.
12. Include archaeological recording and investigation where appropriate or legally required to develop understanding and knowledge of the churches.
13. Consider the implications of Health & Safety and Disability Discrimination Act legislation, taking reasonable action where appropriate or required, but always bearing in mind the historic nature of the churches in the Trust's care.

8. Policy for Alteration, Adaptation, Additions and Use

The Trust recognises that a building that is unused deteriorates faster, wastes a valuable historic asset, encourages vandalism and lacks a feeling of life. The Trust has therefore adopted the strategic aim of encouraging access and promoting greater use of churches by and for the community, thereby increasing their cultural significance for local people. It is relevant that the present Government stresses the importance of using the nation's heritage as an educational and social resource as a condition of financial support. The Trust has concluded that some of its churches can withstand only minor, if any, changes without detriment to their quality. The adaptation of other churches **can** be acceptable where limited to that which is

essential to beneficial use. The changes must be rigorously justified in terms of impact on the cultural significance of the church and the use for which it is being considered.

New and increased use can contribute towards sustainable, locally supported projects, including conservation, and is therefore desirable from a conservation, as well as a social, perspective. The Trust's Estate Review has identified those churches with such a high cultural value that any changes would be difficult to justify. Likewise it has identified those churches where a compatible alternative use would be acceptable. Decisions on whether consent for adaptations is given will be made initially by the Trust, and then formal consent will be obtained from the statutory authorities. The Trust is uniquely placed with responsibility for the care and preservation of important historic churches.

All proposed alterations to Trust churches require Listed Building Consent. However, just as the Faculty System has a wider remit for live churches than the secular system, so Trustees have decided that the Trust should have its own internal procedures in addition to those of Listed Building Consent procedures.

Principles

In considering the adaptation (including alterations and additions) of its churches to accommodate new uses the Trust will:

1. Consider the cultural significance of the church and its setting to determine that which is important. Without this, there can be no understanding of the impact of the proposed changes.
2. Consider the impact that proposed adaptations will have on the fabric and how these are relevant to what makes the church important. The Trust will consider whether the use can be accommodated by making alternative arrangements, e.g. use of toilet facilities in a next door building rather than in the church itself, and if not, consider alternatives to proposed adaptations and how the impact on the fabric can be minimised.
3. Adopt a procedure for assessing both internal and external applications for adaptations (see section 9).
4. Ensure that where changes are acceptable and justified, they are generally reversible. Judgements about the impact of adaptations on the significance of the fabric are inevitably subjective and circumstances are liable to change. New work will seek to enhance, rather than reduce, the cultural significance of the church and its setting, even if hidden from view.
5. Adopt a high standard of design, materials and workmanship to carry out adaptations, notwithstanding the need for reversibility.
6. Record fabric before changes are made as well as afterwards so as to inform historical documentation.

7. Permit small non-fixed additions to its churches e.g. benches in churchyards, new furnishings or Books of Remembrance in the light of the above principles, but having due consideration for the views of local people in wishing to enhance and support ‘their’ local church and on the understanding that these items are, in relative terms, temporary objects in the life of the fabric. However, such items will be expected to maintain a satisfactory standard of design and materials.
8. Develop policies on specific and frequently requested additions, e.g. headstones in vested churchyards, and provide guidance notes for users of Trust churches to minimise the impact on the historic fabric (**Appendix 2** contains further details).
9. Retain a level of sanctity dependent upon the level of use to which the church is being put – the Trust will place less stringent restrictions on a lease where the user has sole occupancy at all times than on a user licensing the church on a temporary basis.
10. Ensure that decisions on needs/uses requiring change are taken by Trust staff at the appropriate level. Where contentious or novel issues of principle arise, advice will be sought from Trustees.

9. Procedure for Applications

Proposals may be initiated by Development Managers, Conservation Managers, senior managers or by groups of Friends or stakeholders outside the Trust. In all cases, the Conservation Manager will take responsibility for making the formal application and carrying the process through to completion once it is approved.

Applications should be made on the standard application form included as **Appendix 3**, and will include the following:

- (i) A **Conservation Statement** prepared by the Conservation Manager with input from regional team members. This statement will comprise:
 - chronology of the site;
 - an overview of the key surviving elements;
 - a statement of cultural significance;
This indicates why the site is important for architectural, historical, archaeological, social, spiritual, ecological or community considerations. The statement of significance will explain how these relate to the surviving fabric.
 - identification of conservation and related issues.
Issues that put at risk a church’s cultural significance, for example the lack of local supporters to care for the church or continuing environmental damage to the fabric, and relevant policies, such as the listing status and whether Scheduled Monument Consent is applicable, will be identified.
- (ii) A **Statement of Need**. This will define the needs resulting from the proposed use and gives it justification, for example the introduction of heating in a church where a custodian organises a large number of concerts every year but where concert goers frequently complain of the cold in spring and autumn. This might be

justified by large numbers of people wishing to attend, the high profile this gives the church locally, and benefit to the community from holding artistic events. Where others are proposing adaptations as a result of a new use, they will be expected to submit their own Statement of Need by way of justification.

(iii) An **Options Appraisal**. Taking the example above, this would consider the various forms of heating available for a church e.g. wet supply via pipes and radiators or gas or electrical heaters. Each option will be appraised in terms of its affect on the fabric of the church, its aesthetic appearance and cost. Where the Trust itself is proposing adaptations to support new uses, such as part of a Heritage Lottery Fund application, it may prefer to prepare a feasibility study, which will consider alternative options.

(iv) An **Impact Assessment** including the following:

- the amount of loss, if any, of historic fabric;
- the quality and location of the design and materials to be used;
- the impact of the adaptations on the setting or appearance of the church, and/or on the future conservation of the fabric;
- the reversibility of the adaptations;
- the long-term impact of new work, such as increased maintenance; and
- the positive impact of use on sustainability of conservation.

To understand fully the impact of the proposals on the significance of the church, further survey and/or targeted investigation may be required and this must be costed as part of the project.

(v) **Drawings** and other details as existing and as proposed sufficient to describe the work. These should be prepared by a qualified professional, normally, but not necessarily, the Trust architect or the Conservation Manager.

The procedure given above will always be followed in principle, but the degree of detail should be proportionate to the significance of the proposed interventions.

The Trust's regional Conservation Manager will consult with the regional team and make a recommendation to the Director of Conservation.

The Director of Conservation will either approve the application or refer it to the Senior Management Team for resolution. In cases where significant matters of policy or principle arise, the Senior Management Team may refer the case to the Conservation Working Group established by the Trustees for advice.

Where the procedure for applications has identified both damaging and beneficial elements, the Trust will try to find ways of helping the user achieve their objectives by other means resulting in a lesser and acceptable impact on the significance of the church.

Conclusion

In his preface to *Church Poems* (1981) Sir John Betjeman wrote ‘Without a church I think a place lacks its heart and identity’. These are disarmingly simple words but they sum up what for many people is most cherished and valuable about the nation’s historic churches, and the central importance they have in the life of their communities. The Trust’s Conservation Policy aims to inform its continued care and maintenance of these important buildings for present and future generations.

Whilst the Trust’s statutory objective is the preservation of its vested churches, it wishes to encourage positive and creative thinking about new ways of using and interpreting them. The Trust recognises that on occasions there will be a difficult balance to be struck between the cultural significance of a church and the nature of a use, and the Conservation Policy endeavours to do justice to these two issues, by means of a procedure that ensures a consistent approach and a justifiable outcome duly recorded in the documentation of the application process.

Appendix 1 - Sources

References:

Building Conservation Philosophy, John Earl, published by Donhead
Informed Conservation, Kate Clark, published by English Heritage
New Work in Historic Places of Worship, 2003 published by English Heritage
The Australian ICOMOS Burra Charter 1999 for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance
Principles of Repair, The Society for the Protection of Historic Buildings
The Care, Conservation and development of Cathedrals, issued by The Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England 1999

Further guidance:

Legislation

PPG 15

PPG 16

Note that various changes are being proposed under the Governments Heritage Review, on which the Trust is a consultee.

Technical advice on repair and conservation

SPAB technical pamphlets and leaflets

Principles of Repair, Christopher Brereton, published by English Heritage

Appendix 2 – Current Policies and Guidance Notes

Repair and Maintenance

Hot Works Policy
Archaeology
Burials and memorials in Trust Churchyards
Slips, Trips and Falls
Lightning Conductors
Quality Control (internal)
Consultations (internal)
Asbestos
Dealing with Needles and Sharps
Working at Heights

Access and Use

Events at Trust churches
Religious Services at Trust Churches
Use of Candles
Fire Risk Assessment

Appendix 3 – Standard Application Form