



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

## **The Taylor Review: Sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals Icon Statement**

January 2018

DCMS in December 2017 published an independent review, chaired by Bernard Taylor, into the sustainability of Church of England Church and Cathedral buildings.

The review outlines recommendations for creating a more sustainable vision for Church of England buildings. It proposes a programme of change for supporting congregations in opening their church buildings for wider community use and for introducing greater strategic oversight of maintenance and repair works.

The program encourages the discovery of new uses for churches but acknowledges that some buildings are so historically significant that they cannot be adapted. A proposed minor and major works fund will mitigate the risks to buildings when funds for their repair cannot be raised locally. This is an important appreciation of the ultimate purpose of repurposing churches – to ensure their long-term conservation.

The review suggests a network of fabric support officers (FSOs) to collaborate with Parochial Church Councils in the strategic planning and practical execution of major works and routine annual maintenance. The requirement for FSOs to have a “practical building maintenance or conservation background” is essential and welcome.

Church of England churches are an important part of our heritage, representing almost half of England’s Grade 1 Listed Buildings. The conservation of this heritage calls for specific skills and expertise.

An accessible way to source the proposed FSOs would be through professional accreditation registers. The appointment of accredited practitioners gives stakeholders confidence that work will be undertaken with due diligence and competence.

The Church Buildings Council recently consulted on guidance for commissioning Quinquennial Inspections of churches, recommending accreditation as a criterion for Inspectors. I would welcome equally rigorous conditions for FSOs to ensure high standards of practice in the conservation of our church buildings.

Alison Richmond, Icon Chief Executive