

## **SOURCES OF FUNDS FOR THE REPAIR AND IMPROVEMENT OF BERKSHIRE CHURCHES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

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Repairs, upgrade of facilities, and adaptation to extend the range of activities that can be offered in a building are problems for many Christian churches, chapels and meeting houses in Berkshire.

Funding such works is expensive. A multiplicity of grants is available, some with wide remits, others for very specific purposes, and finding the right one(s) can be challenging.

There is a lot of good advice available, both on managing projects and on sources of funding. This short guide seeks to serve as a signpost to the websites of potential funders – and to briefly suggest what you should do before you start submitting applications

### **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

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Most funders will want to see:

- A clearly-defined project
- Well-defined and realistic benefits to be achieved by the project
- A proper assessment of any impact on historic fabric
- Reliable costings
- A clear plan for funding and managing the project
- All necessary permissions

For this you will need

- A clear vision and statement of need (what needs to be done, why it needs to be done, what benefits will accrue?)
- A statement of significance (what are the principal heritage features of your building?)
- Evidence of work with architect(s) and builder(s) to establish costs
- Full permissions – from the DAC (for Anglican churches) or other appropriate regional or national church body for work to the existing structure. If your plans involve alteration to the exterior or extending the footprint of the building you will probably also need planning permission from your local authority.

For any major repair or redevelopment project, funders will want assurance of sustainability - i.e. that the building has an assured future. Your application should include evidence of consultation with all 'stakeholders', both members of the congregation and the wider community, to support the planned future use.

Only then is it appropriate to approach funders.

## **MAKING YOUR APPLICATIONS**

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This note lists some principal sources of funds. Others, mostly smaller, can often be found through references and links embedded in the larger sources. Grants available for individual churches, often founded centuries ago, are not listed. It should be noted that, whilst most of the sources listed are long established, others may have shorter life spans.

Dependant on the size of the project, and to maximise the chance of success, applications should be made to more than one source of grants; but which, or how many, are appropriate and how can they be accessed?

Each entry includes a brief description of the funding available generally, or for particular purposes. Descriptions of the grants available are taken from individual websites. Some websites give advice on fundraising. You should interrogate the information given on these sites, and seek further information on specific eligibilities from the funding sources, to determine which are appropriate for your project. You should also check on the preferred method of application: some funders have very precise requirements.

In particular, check the *timetable for applications* – some funders consider applications quarterly, but other may meet less frequently – and *make sure that funders' requirements are met* before you apply – some, for example, will require you to have secured match funding before they will consider an application.

You also need to understand the impact on your overall project planning. Some funders require that work does not start until the grant has been agreed; most will not support work which has already started. Some major funders also have specific requirements as to how the architect and contractor are appointed.

Finally, the information given below does not pretend to be an exhaustive list of potential sources of funding for churches, chapels and meeting houses in Berkshire. There are bound to be more, particularly local charitable trusts. Please let us (BHCT) know from your own researches of any additions or amendments that we should make to this list.

Many of the Trusts and Foundations mentioned below do not confine their charitable donations to Anglican churches. Churches of other denominations should also make enquiries of sources relevant to their particular needs.

## **SOURCES OF FUNDING**

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This section lists some grant-giving bodies, and several databases of potential funders. Some also give guidance on starting a fund-raising campaign and on identifying sources of funding.

### **Berkshire Historic Churches Trust**

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

BHCT makes funds available to help with the cost of repairs to the fabric of Christian churches, chapels and meeting houses in Berkshire, also for re-wiring, heating and lighting, for the repair and preservation of monuments, fittings and fixtures and stained glass, and for roof alarms. The Trust will also consider applications from churches, chapels and meeting houses for schemes to achieve a sustainable future as the centre of every community in the county, making use of their buildings for the benefit of the

community at large, and may help to fund facilities necessary for that purpose, if this can be achieved without compromising the historic or architectural quality of the buildings and their settings in the local landscape.

Grants are also given towards surveys and other preparatory requirements prior to making applications for grant funding.

However, as funds are limited, the Trust can only grant aid works other than to the worship area, if they are of architectural or historic importance. The Trust does not give grants for bells, organs, AV systems, or liturgical re-ordering.

## **The Diocese of Oxford**

[www.oxford.anglican.org/capital-fundraising/](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/capital-fundraising/)

General information on sources of funding and advice on planning a campaign.

[www.oxford.anglican.org/parish-support/parish-finance/development-fund/](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/parish-support/parish-finance/development-fund/)

The Diocesan Development Fund can give grants to some projects to improve buildings, where this will help the church's mission in the community.

[www.oxford.anglican.org/environment-and-social-justice/environmental-action/net-zero/](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/environment-and-social-justice/environmental-action/net-zero/)

Some funding is available through the Diocese for projects to improve energy efficiency and to work towards Net Zero Carbon

[www.oxford.anglican.org/parish-support/church-buildings/minor-repairs-and-improvements-fund/](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/parish-support/church-buildings/minor-repairs-and-improvements-fund/)

A further tranche of funding for minor repairs will be open later in 2026

[www.oxford.anglican.org/parish-support/church-buildings/permissions-and-how-to-apply/](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/parish-support/church-buildings/permissions-and-how-to-apply/)

Includes advice on the faculty system, preparation of Statements of Need and Statements of Significance, appointment of a project architect etc

## **ChurchCare (Church of England)**

[www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/conservation-grants](http://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/conservation-grants)

Grants are available for conservation of bells, books and manuscripts, church plate, clocks, monuments, organs, paintings and textiles, and churchyard monuments.

## **The National Churches Trust**

[www.nationalchurchestrust.org](http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org)

Details of a range of large, medium and small grants available to keep both listed and unlisted church buildings, chapels and meeting houses in the UK in good repair, open for regular religious worship and community activities, and allow them to continue to serve people, communities and visitors in all sorts of ways. Grants will be made for structural repairs; maintenance; construction of new, or improvement of existing facilities such as kitchens and toilets. A detailed questionnaire will determine eligibility for grants.

## **National Lottery**

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) is the largest funder of heritage projects, and its 'Heritage 2033' programme includes a specific focus on the repair of places of worship. The NLHF principles and processes impose detailed requirements for applicants, which the average church may find daunting. Potential grant seekers are advised to seek the assistance of a professional fund-raiser to help with their application.

## **The Benefact Trust**

[www.benefacttrust.co.uk/grants/building-improvement-grants](http://www.benefacttrust.co.uk/grants/building-improvement-grants)

Previously known as All-Churches Trust, which owns Ecclesiastical Insurance, this Trust has a Buildings Improvement Grants programme, which will support capital costs for essential urgent repairs, purchases to meet operational or accessibility requirements (eg hearing loops, ramps), conservation of historic features such as stained glass, furnishings, bells or organs, and energy efficiency/renewable energy measures.

## **Garfield Weston Foundation**

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

Supports a wide range of charities

## **Laing Family Trusts**

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

Support evangelical Christian projects, including new buildings and improvements. The Beatrice Laing Trust is currently (May 2026) closed to new applications.

## **Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation**

[bernardsunley.org/](http://bernardsunley.org/)

Gives grants to churches for capital funding of improvement projects, provided these will be primarily of benefit to the wider local community.

## **Places of Worship Renewal Fund**

[historicengland.org.uk/advice/grants/what-we-fund/places-of-worship-renewal-fund/](http://historicengland.org.uk/advice/grants/what-we-fund/places-of-worship-renewal-fund/)

The Government is providing £23 million a year for four years, to support urgent repairs and essential improvements to places of worship in England which are listed buildings. Grants will be awarded for capital works that keep buildings safe, open and in public use. Priority will be given to areas of England with the highest level of deprivation (most of Berkshire will not qualify) and projects which bring the most community benefit. The fund is administered by Historic England.

## **Cornerstone**

[www.churchofengland.org/resources/building-generous-church/generosity-resources/cornerstone](http://www.churchofengland.org/resources/building-generous-church/generosity-resources/cornerstone)

A comprehensive on-line database of some 650 sources of grants available to Church of England churches, covering a range of purposes, with a search and filter function to

identify those most relevant. The database is updated weekly. It includes a description of each grant, with a link to the grant-making body for further information and to make an application.

Access is free of charge. In the first instance contact your Diocesan Giving Advisor (currently [joshua.townson@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:joshua.townson@oxford.anglican.org))

The Cornerstone website also provides guidance on 'Building a Case for Support' and 'Applying for Grant Funding'.

## **Church of England - Net Zero Carbon**

[www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/fundraising-for-net-zero-carbon](http://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/fundraising-for-net-zero-carbon)

Includes a list of funders for environmental projects (e.g. heating and lighting)

## **Ecclesiastical Insurance**

[www.ecclesiastical.com/church/fundraising](http://www.ecclesiastical.com/church/fundraising)

A list of grant funders for the repair and alteration of church buildings including:

- Preserving Heritage Buildings
- Repairs and Conservation
- Decorative Features
- Windows
- Sculpture
- Furniture
- Paintings
- Textiles
- Bells and Organs
- Monuments and Tombs
- Plumbing, Heating and Wiring

Also:

- Information on Regional Grants
- Advice on fundraising and making application for grants

## **Heritage Alliance**

[www.heritagefundingdirectoryuk.org/](http://www.heritagefundingdirectoryuk.org/)

Managed by the Heritage Alliance and The Architectural Heritage Fund. The Heritage Directory is a guide to financial support for those undertaking heritage projects. A comprehensive list of some 400 funders supporting inter alia:

- Conservation
- Archaeology
- Archives
- Capital Development Projects
- Historic Buildings

Details are given of an extensive list of grants available for historic buildings, including Churches and Chapels.

## Church Grants

[www.churchgrants.co.uk](http://www.churchgrants.co.uk)

A database of hundreds of UK-wide funders for repairs, alterations and improvements to your church, as well as for social and outreach programmes. An annual subscription is payable for access.

## SPECIAL PURPOSES

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**The British Institute of Organ Studies and the Institute of British Organ Building**

[bios.org.uk/a-guide-to-grants/](http://bios.org.uk/a-guide-to-grants/)

[www.ibo.co.uk/help/index.php](http://www.ibo.co.uk/help/index.php)

Working for the preservation and faithful restoration of historic organs in Britain.

## LOCAL SOURCES

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The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 confirmed that parish and town councils can give grants to churches (of any denomination), to help church buildings, halls and churchyards provide benefit to the community.

There are a number of local charitable trusts in Berkshire which can give grants for particular purposes, these include:

### **The Greenham Trust**

[www.greenhamtrust.com](http://www.greenhamtrust.com)

Supports local charities for people in West Berkshire and North Hampshire; it has given a number of grants for repair and improvement of church buildings, where these have wider community use, often in the form of match-funding of other donations.

### **The Good Exchange**

[thegoodexchange.com/](http://thegoodexchange.com/)

The Greenham Trust's on-line funding platform is designed to best match those organisations and individuals who give money to good causes to those who need it most. By listing your project on The Good Exchange you are maximising your chances of securing multiple donations and grants from different sources.

### **The Iliffe Family Charitable Trust**

email to [ifct@yattendon.co.uk](mailto:ifct@yattendon.co.uk)

Gives grants to charities for purposes including the preservation of heritage and community development, mainly in West Berkshire.

### **The Payne-Gallwey Charitable Trust**

[pgct.co.uk/whatwedo](http://pgct.co.uk/whatwedo)

Gives small grants to support charitable purposes, mainly in Berkshire, including for the repair and maintenance of Anglican churches.

## **FUNDRAISING ADVICE**

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There are a number of organisations which can advise on fundraising. It is advisable to check to see if they charge a fee. Among those available are:

### **Ecclesiastical Insurance**

[www.ecclesiastical.com/church/fundraising](http://www.ecclesiastical.com/church/fundraising)

A free fundraising hub tailored for churches with hints and tips for applying for grants.

### **Parish Resources**

[www.parishresources.org.uk/giving/funding/](http://www.parishresources.org.uk/giving/funding/)

Guides to the various stages of developing and delivering a large fundraising project, and ideas for fund-raising events.

### **Action Planning**

[actionplanning.co.uk](http://actionplanning.co.uk)

A specialist consultancy for charities and other not for profit organisations, with a dedicated team for Christian charities and churches. Enquire about a fundraising feasibility study or to hire a fundraiser.

### **Church Grants**

[churchgrants.co.uk](http://churchgrants.co.uk)

Alongside their database of funders (see above), Church Grants are also able to offer a consultancy about planning and running a fundraising campaign, and can be hired to do your fundraising for you.

## **CROWDFUNDING**

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A method of raising funds for a project by collecting small amounts of money from a large number of people so expanding your reach beyond traditional funding sources. See [www.crowdfunder.co.uk](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk) and [www.gofundme.com](http://www.gofundme.com)

*June 2026*