

Press release: Government report highlights English cathedrals' community spirit

A new report commending England's 42 Anglican cathedrals for their continued importance as places of worship, their wider community work and their commitment to promoting local economic growth has been published today (29 December 2017) by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The report, "[Cathedrals and their communities](#)", is the culmination of a year long tour which saw the Minister for Faith, Lord Bourne visit all of England's 42 Anglican cathedrals to better understand their continued importance both to local communities and wider society.

The report highlights cathedrals as diverse churches that are not only important sacred centres of worship but also places of valued social support and community and interfaith engagement. This includes:

- the interfaith projects delivered by Chelmsford and Norwich Cathedrals which build on the shared interests of different faith communities
- the unifying response of Manchester and Southwark Cathedrals in the wake of the terrorist attacks in both cities
- Carlisle, Durham and Hereford Cathedrals' support for Syrian refugees, including providing vital English language lessons
- the extensive work undertaken by many cathedrals across the country together with local authorities to help rough sleepers
- cathedrals, such as Blackburn and Bradford, driving regeneration in town and city centres through collaborating with local authorities, developers and the local community
- the continuing efforts of cathedrals including Chester, Chichester, Lichfield and Liverpool to attract visitors through well-thought out themed events such as arts festivals and Christmas markets
- the dedication of cathedral staff across the country in preserving the architectural splendour and heritage of their buildings

Minister for Faith Lord Bourne said:

There is no better time to remind ourselves of the strong role cathedrals play in our national life than at Christmas, as worshippers gather in naves across the country to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

This year-long tour has given me a real understanding of how the innovation and vibrancy displayed by cathedral staff and their congregations is ensuring that these important churches continue to play a crucial role at the heart of local communities now and for centuries to come.

The report highlights a number of great examples cathedral staff working hard at preserving our local cultural heritage, engaging with a diverse range of communities while continuing their spiritual duties. I look forward to hearing about further successes in the future.

The Very Reverend Adrian Dorber, Chairman of the Association of English Cathedrals, said:

Lord Bourne's report is a really helpful endorsement of all that our English cathedrals are trying to be and do. We want to continue as places of welcome and be able to offer spiritual hospitality and friendship to all. We're grateful to the Government for taking the time and trouble to conduct such a thorough programme of visits and investigation and for finding out what we do and what our ambitions for the future are. I hope the report will be widely read.

Our cathedrals and churches are crucial to the present and future of local communities and the government is committed to helping them open up further to community, cultural and heritage use, to safeguard their position at the beating heart of our towns and cities.

The government set up the First World War Centenary Cathedral Repairs Fund 2016 to 2018 to provide cathedrals across England with funds for essential repairs, from heating systems to stained glass windows.

The [English Churches and Cathedrals Sustainability Review](#), set up in 2016 in collaboration with the Church of England, will consider how best to ensure that England's 16,000 cathedrals and churches remain at the centre of civic life while also ensuring that these unique and historical buildings are sustainably maintained and funded.

There were 9.4 million visitors to cathedrals in 2015; a further 1 million people visited Westminster Abbey. 75% of the UK's churches and cathedrals are listed. Two thirds of church buildings and 75% of grade I listed churches are in rural areas where only 20% of the population lives.

See where Lord Bourne has visited using #CathedralTour. A list of cathedrals in the order the Minister visited them is as follows:

2016

- Bradford – 27 October
- Ely – 4 November
- Southwark – 8 November
- Portsmouth, Chichester – 25 November
- Leicester – 8 December
- St Albans – 16 December
- Chelmsford – 20 December
- Salisbury and Winchester – 23 December

2017

- Peterborough – 20 January
- Carlisle, Newcastle and Durham – 16 to 17 March
- Gloucester and Hereford– 31 March
- Guildford – 10 April
- Manchester – 29 May
- Norwich and Bury St Edmunds – 29 June
- Lincoln, Southwell and Derby – 7 July
- Lichfield, Coventry and Birmingham – 13 July
- St Paul's – 20 July
- Worcester and Oxford – 21 July
- Liverpool, Chester and Blackburn – 27 to 28 July
- Bristol, Wells, Exeter and Truro – 8 September
- Ripon, York, Wakefield and Sheffield – 14 to 15 September
- Rochester and Canterbury – 22 September