

## The Real Cost of Heritage: Preserving our Gothic Buildings

We are all aware of how much it costs to heat, light, and maintain or repair our home, be it anything from a flat through to a detached house to a massive country pile. If we think our domestic heating and maintenance bills are high, the cost of running and maintaining, let alone repairing, historic buildings is almost unfathomably large.

Most churches in Britain are free to enter and they rely upon donations to help maintain them. Manchester Cathedral (**Fig.1**), for example, costs over £1 million a year to maintain and keep it open to the public, see [here](#), and entry is for a recommended voluntary donation.

Canterbury Cathedral in Kent (**Fig.2**) requires around £19,000 a day to keep running, see [here](#)—that is a staggering annual figure of nearly £10 million!

In an effort to cover their operating costs, some churches and heritage sites have decided to implement entrance fees, including Westminster Abbey (**Fig.3**) in central London that charges £24 per adult [ticket](#) if purchased on the day at the church.

On a wholly different scale is the restoration and refurbishment of the Palace of Westminster, commonly known as the Houses of Parliament (**Fig.4**). Largely built after the devastating fire of 1834, this Grade I listed seat of government is in desperate need of restoration. The budget for completing this more than decade-long project is currently set at £4 billion!—see [here](#). A video about the restoration programme is available [here](#).

Not all heritage sites have the tourist footfall and attraction as Canterbury Cathedral and Westminster Abbey (the current COVID-19 outbreak excepted) to operate and undertake capital projects of restoration or refurbishment.

This is where other schemes to support British architectural heritage comes into play. One particular success story is the Taylor Review Pilot Scheme. Funded by the UK Government Department of Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS), and run by Historic England, the £1.8 million Pilot Scheme was open to places of worship (of any faith) in Greater Manchester and Suffolk. See [here](#).

Further requirements for each site stipulate that it has to be:

- An active place of worship that is open for public worship at least six times a year
- Listed on the National Heritage List for England (any grade)
- Open (or willing to open) for some form of public access in addition to regular worship times (special considerations may apply for buildings with security issues or where there are clear health and safety concerns)

With access to experts on maintenance and repair plans, as well as being able to apply for minor repair grants, the scheme supported 27 sites in Greater Manchester. Sites to benefit from this scheme include Monton Unitarian Church in Salford and St Paul's in Halliwell, Bolton.

The grade II\* listed Monton Unitarian Church in Salford (**Fig.5**) benefitted from the scheme by securing a grant to help cover the cost of repairs, including a restoration of the Philomena stained glass window. The church is also working with the team on a five-year maintenance and community engagement plan.

Reverend Anna Jarvis, Monton Unitarian Church, Salford said that:

The workshops that the Taylor Review Pilot has been running have been absolutely invaluable – we have learnt about repair and maintenance issues, community engagement and good governance structures. We are currently converting to a CIO and so the governance workshop gave us a lot of guidance. And Historic England have been brilliant—brimming over with advice, support and enthusiasm—we can't thank them enough.

The grade II listed St Paul's in Halliwell, Bolton (**Fig.6**), used funds from the pilot scheme to replace missing roof slates and repair stone copings. The church café was also turned into a 'Place of Welcome', helping to create a place for activities and programmes to engage the local community.

Mandy Rushton, Church Warden at St Paul's Church, Halliwell, referring to the project, said that:

The grant has enabled us to complete urgent repairs, make our church watertight and preserve it for future generations. These works would not have been addressed without the pilot scheme and we can now plan the next stage of our maintenance work. The team at Historic England are very knowledgeable and have been friendly and enthusiastic.

Referring to the scheme, the Heritage Minister, Helen Whately, said that:

I am delighted that so many buildings in Greater Manchester have benefitted from this funding. Our country has a rich and fascinating religious history and places of worship have been at the heart of communities for centuries. The Taylor Review pilot scheme is helping to protect and preserve these important places of worship and keep them central to our communities

And Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive of Historic England, said that:

We are delighted that the Taylor Review Pilot has successfully repaired and restored 54 listed faith buildings in its inaugural year. We look forward to continuing to work with local communities nationwide to help maintain some of our most important places of worship.

Through this scheme, the futures of a number of Manchester's historic places of worship, in need of access to expert consultation, and funds to undertake repairs, has been received well and helped secure their futures.

A report of the scheme can be found [here](#).