

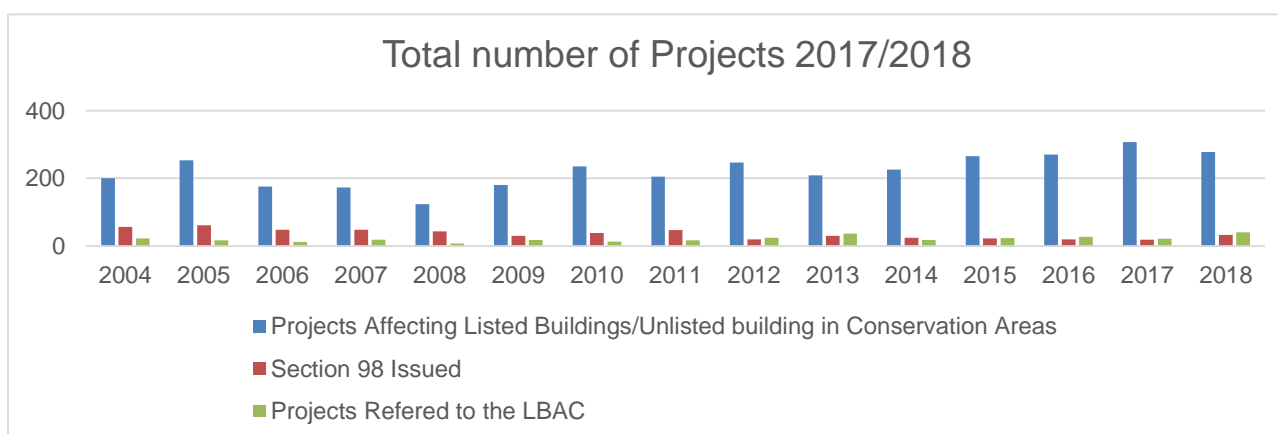
## ECCLESIASTICAL EXEMPTION

### Report on the work of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee and Conservation Officer and the operation of Section 98 Procedures, 2017/2018

#### Background

1. This is the annual report on the operation of the adopted procedures of the Methodist Church in respect of Ecclesiastical Exemption for the Connexional year 2017 – 2018. The legal basis of Ecclesiastical Exemption is outlined in Appendix A.
2. The Methodist Church is responsible for around 4063 church buildings and 660 listed buildings<sup>i</sup> (breakdown by District in Appendix B). It is believed that 1200 of our churches are located within conservation areas. Although this report is primarily concerned with projects that had to be considered under Section 98 of Standing Orders during 2017/2018, this represents only a "snapshot" of the work of the Connexional Conservation Officer. The full picture is one of a process which may stretch over a number of years as many of the projects approved in any one year started the process in the previous year or years. Similarly, the visits and preliminary discussions carried out during 2017/2018 will often result in projects being submitted in later years. It is also true that many enquiries received by the Conservation Officer relate to works of repair, which do not result in projects, but have to be assessed in case they alter the special interest of the building.
3. During 2017/2018, we were notified of 278 projects via the consents website, a 10% decrease in the number of projects in 2016/2017 (307). 143 of those affected listed buildings and 135 in Conservation Areas. These all had to be checked to determine whether Section 98 would apply. The Connexional Conservation Officer visited twenty-five chapels (listed in Appendix C) during the year, either to discuss ideas for projects or potential projects or to see completed projects.
4. One visit was made by a sub-committee of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee (LBAC) during the year (Four Oaks Methodist Church) and various other meetings were held with a member of the PDC and/or DPS's. Each of these cases was complex and it was decided a site visit and discussion with the managing trustees would be beneficial in understanding all of the issues involved. These initial pre-application discussions are an important element of the process. It is often possible to advise churches not to proceed with inappropriate options at an early stage and thus save time, energy and money. Similarly, projects can often be modified to reduce the impact of changes to historic fabric. This is much easier for everyone to accept if discussions are held before the project is finalised.
5. Thirty-three (19 in 2016/2017) projects successfully completed the procedures set out in Section 98 of Standing Orders during 2017/2018 and these are listed in Appendix D (For examples of completed works see Appendix F). It should be noted that successful completion of these procedures does not grant full project consent. A project is only approved when all outstanding matters, e.g. financial viability and grant submissions have been resolved and Section 98 only relates to the listed building or conservation area element of a project. Final consent is given locally by authorised District bodies but only when the conservation issues have been completed successfully.
6. **Table 1** shows the total number of projects affecting listed buildings and highlights how these have increased steadily since 2013. This also shows that Managing Trustees continue to fulfil their responsibilities to repair and maintain our historic building stock (see also Tables 2 & 3 below).

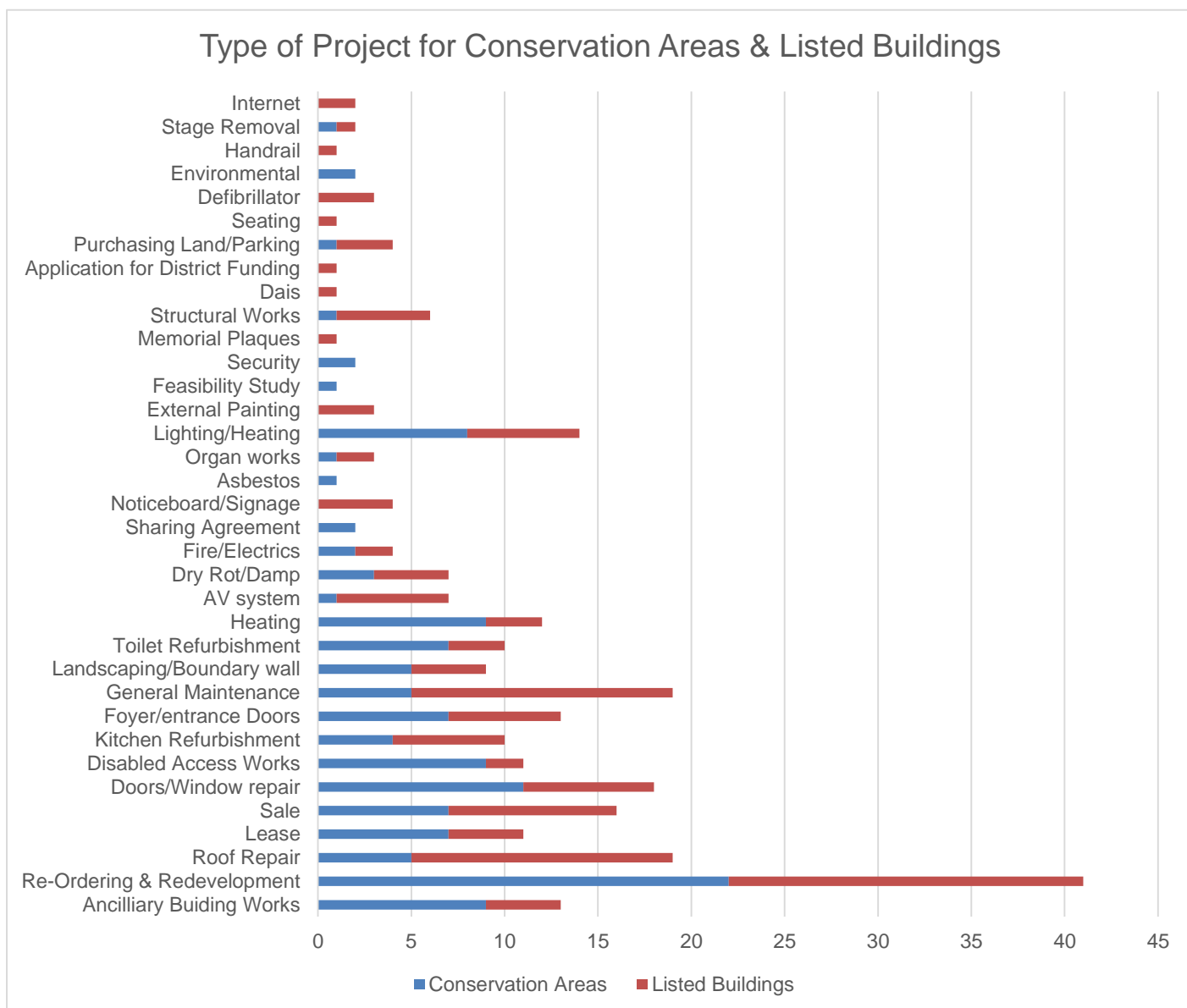
**Table 1 – Total number of projects per Connexional Year and the number of Section 98's issued.**



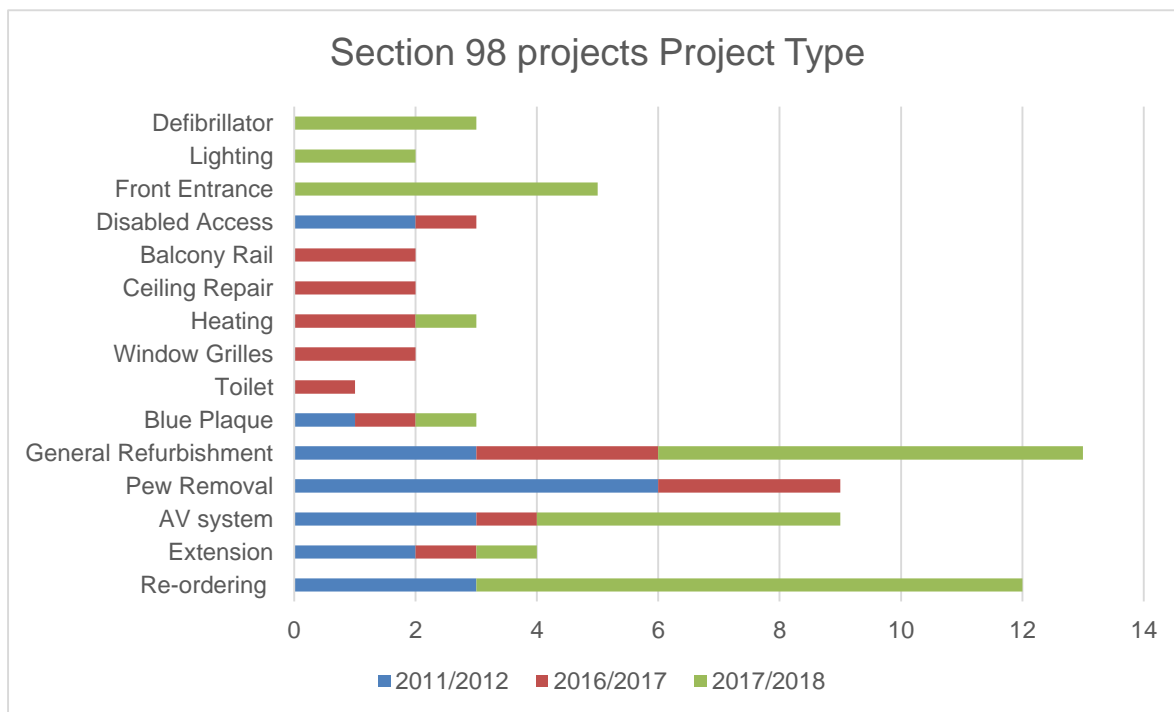
**Project Type**

7. The following table (**Table 2**) illustrates the type of project received relating to listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas. **Table 3** below shows the types of project given approval under the Section 98 process in 2011/2012 (22) compared with those in 2016/2017 (19) and 2017/2018 (33). From this information it is possible to identify themes when compared with previous years, and helps us develop guidance notes to assist managing trustees when undertaking alteration works. For instance, it is clear that pew removal and the re-ordering of the worship space remain a significant project type for historic places of worship. It is also evident that change, often major change, is permissible in our older buildings which can clearly be adapted for sustainable ecclesiastical and community use.
  
8. What is also encouraging is that we continue to repair and refurbish our buildings' fabric (dry rot/damp/roof repairs/structural etc.), principal fittings (organ repairs) and to install modern facilities, such as toilets, heating and Audio Visual Screens. Addressing window and roof repairs remain prevalent for our trustees, despite a lack of internal and external funding for fabric repairs. Our older building stock clearly remains at the heart of our communities as they are being identified as good locations for defibrillators and are becoming more open, transparent, accessible and welcoming with an increased number of open door schemes being submitted and approved. From this information we shall look to update our guidance on re-ordering and pew removal (included in re-ordering for 2017/2018 figures), as well as how to sensitively alter our facades to become more welcoming. We shall link to third party guidance on the introduction of new facilities (lighting, heating, toilets and kitchens) and we shall write guidance on war memorials and plaques as this is long overdue.

**Table 2 – Type of Project Received**



**Table 3 – Project Type 2011/2012, 2016/2017, 2017/2018**



**Listed Buildings Advisory Committee**

9. The Listed Buildings Advisory Committee is the independent body set up as a statutory requirement of the Ecclesiastical Exemption. Membership includes experts in conservation, architecture, architectural history, archaeology and art, but it also includes two Chairs of District and a Supernumerary Minister who offer comment on the proposed mission of the local church. One of their main functions is to provide general advice to the Conservation Officer on policy matters regarding listed buildings and unlisted buildings in conservation areas.
10. The established procedure of the LBAC is that projects that only involve minor alterations of limited importance to the character of historic chapels do not need to be individually considered by the LBAC, providing they fall within policy guidelines specifically approved by the LBAC or established by previous LBAC decisions. As a result, twenty-nine of the projects completing the procedures during the year were considered by the LBAC. More projects in total were referred to the LBAC (32), but not all of them completed the Section 98 procedures during the year. Moreover, some of those projects referred to the LBAC were informal, or concerned unapproved listed building works or may have been referred to them on multiple occasions (indicated in Appendix E).
11. The LBAC was notified, however, of all of the projects received and was free to request details of any of them. This occurred in several cases.
12. Members total thirteen, Revd Anthony Parkinson continues as Chair of the Committee and Dr Peter Forsaith as Deputy Chair. Ian Hume re-joined the Committee to provide specialist advice on structural engineering. Terms of Reference and an updated Appeals Procedure were agreed by the Methodist Council during 2017/2018. The former provides clear procedures and are intended to act as a policy document to sit behind SO 332 and Section 98. They set out the requirement for the LBAC to approve this Annual Report before it is submitted to Council in October of each year.
13. The Committee’s performance is not evaluated in terms of the numbers of times that individual members attend meetings. Some will be present only when items requiring their specialist knowledge (e.g. stained glass, archaeology) are under discussion; unavoidably absent members will frequently submit comments in advance.
14. Members accompanied the Conservation Officer to Four Oaks Methodist Church (see Para. 4 above) and have occasionally given guidance outside formal meetings on architectural and structural engineering matters as well as guidance on the appropriateness of stained glass repairs. The Committee has been trying to work with related Committees across the Connexion, including the Property Development Committee and Heritage Committee, with a view to identifying areas of cross-over and making relevant input into their work areas. Indeed, there is a meeting of the three chairs held on a regular basis, with a short report presented to each meeting. It has also been agreed

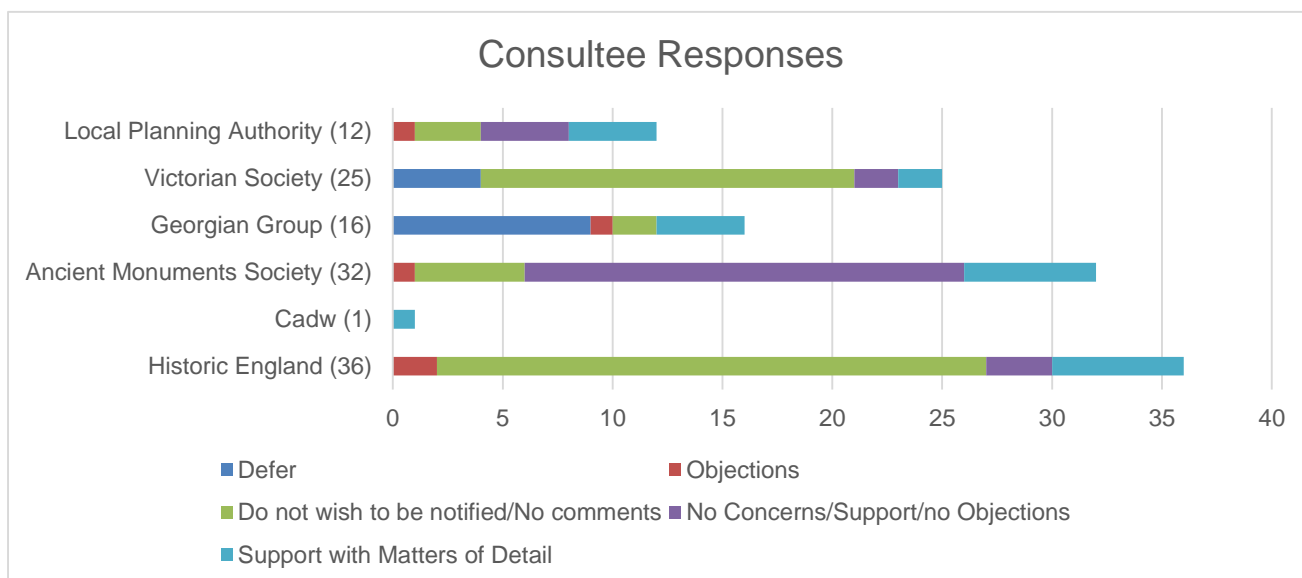
that one member of the LBAC will sit on the PDC and another on the Heritage Committee to provide a link between the three committees.

15. In an attempt to be more transparent the Committee began a series of open meetings, with one held in May 2016 in Northampton and another in Cornwall in April 2018. A further open meeting is planned for Hertfordshire in October 2019. The open meeting and subsequent site visits within the Cornwall District in 2018 were well received, with a number of observers attending. Furthermore, the Committee has now established a means of working that saves on the use of paper, with plans only being printed and posted, making significant financial savings on postage. We have also been trialling the use of web based data sharing using WeTransfer and Dropbox.
16. They regularly visit churches and offer feedback on any completed schemes. Furthermore, the Chair has occasionally attended meetings, such as the Historic England Places of Worship Forum, as a delegate for the Conservation Officer. The Committee regularly considers policy items such as pew removal, and replacement chairs discussed in 2017/2018, and the Chair continues with his research on the significance of remaining interiors to help with better and informed decision making. Members occasionally research architects to better understand the significance of our historic places of worship, such as Alan Brace, the designer of High Street Methodist Church, Harpenden.
17. They also note the quarterly list of historic chapels sold and have asked that we include a request for photographs of closing churches as standard, and that all war memorials for closed churches are recorded in the proper manner. In line with our Code of Practice, once a church is sold a letter is sent to the Local Planning Authority by the Conservation Officer informing them that the Ecclesiastical Exemption no longer applies.

### Consultations

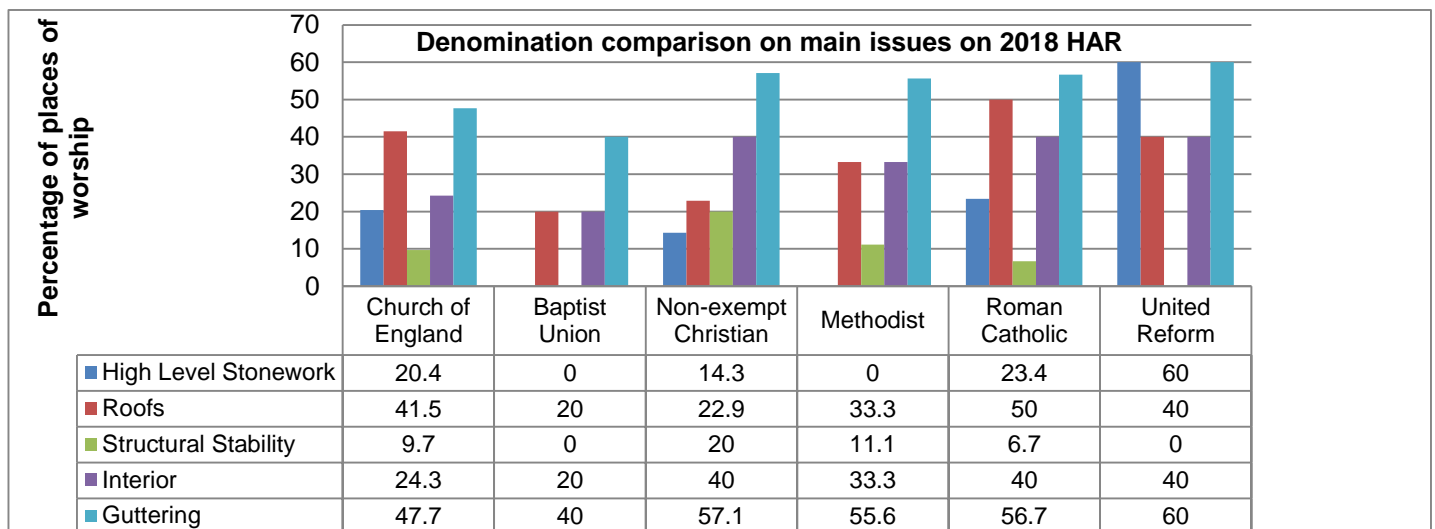
18. Under Standing Order 982, in addition to the advice of the LBAC, the Methodist Church has to consult with the Local Planning Authority, the National Amenity Societies and either Historic England or, in Wales, Cadw. In addition, a public notice has to be displayed for 28 days outside the affected building and a similar notice published in a local newspaper so that interested parties can comment on the proposed project.
19. Where we receive advance notice of a project which it is thought may be controversial, an informal consultation may be carried out to obtain preliminary views. This is often helpful in refining a project before it is formally submitted to the Connexional Conservation Officer of the Methodist Church.
20. During 2017/2018 only one approved project involved churches in Wales and the remaining thirty-two were in England. The table below (Table 4) shows the level of representation received from the statutory bodies and amenity societies. The consultees were asked for representation on thirty-eight occurrences, the total number of responses appears in brackets below.

**Table 4 – Level of Representation from statutory bodies and amenity societies 2017/2018 (Section 98 Projects)**



21. The figures show that Historic England/Cadw and the Ancient Monuments Society are particularly good at responding to consultation requests, and are generally supportive of the proposals presented, or do not wish to be notified. We have relatively few Georgian buildings which may explain the low response rate from the Georgian Group. In most cases any concerns raised by consultees were dealt with by negotiation with the managing trustees, resulting in revisions to the submissions, or by imposing conditions on the approvals. The number of objections are low.
22. Working relationships are generally very good, helped by the Connexional Conservation Officer's membership of the Historic England Places of Worship Forum, the Places of Worship Forum for Wales, and the Historic Religious Buildings Alliance. We continue to work with these bodies to identify and take care of buildings 'At Risk', of which we currently have nine on the 2017/2018 Historic England Register. Three 'At Risk' churches have been removed from the register since last year. The table below (Table 5) shows the number of 'At Risk' Methodist Chapels in England compared to the buildings of other religious groups. It also shows that the majority of our 'At Risk' churches are primarily at risk from defective roofs and rainwater disposal systems.

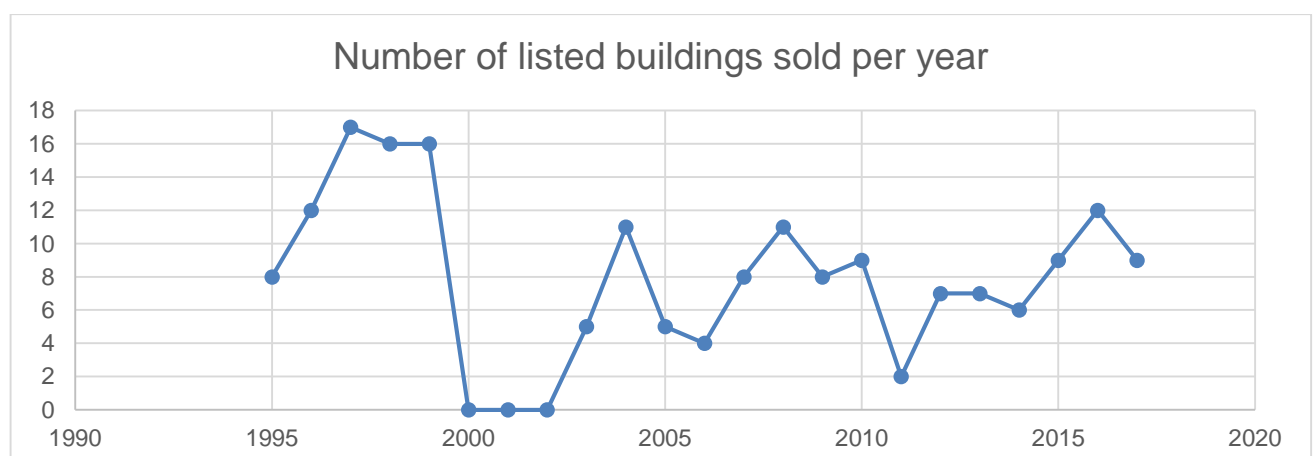
**Table 5 – Number of Churches on the Historic England 'At Risk' Register**



**Redundancies and Closures**

23. Cadw have requested to be informed annually of closures and redundancies; hence the information in the table below (Table 6 – Total Number of Listed Buildings Sold), albeit we should note that these are those churches whereby permission for sale has been sought, they may therefore be currently for sale or a sale is being negotiated. Two of these are in Wales, including Soar, Talsarnau and Llanidloes.
24. Even without the data for 2000-2002 we can see the average is eight listed church buildings sold per year; whilst the number of sales was significantly lower in 2011 the number is relatively stable. We are currently unable to calculate what percentage of all churches sold are listed buildings.

**Table 6 – Total Number of Listed Buildings Sold**



## **New Listings**

25. Wath Methodist Church (Harrogate) and Townhead War Memorial (Outside Townshend Methodist Church) have been added to the list of buildings of national architectural and historic interest and given a Grade II designation. Victoria Methodist Church (Weston-super-Mare), Parliament Street Methodist Church (Nottingham), Hyssington Chapel (Powys) and Radstock Methodist Church have not been included on the list following a similar assessment. Ellerton Methodist chapel, in the East Riding of Yorkshire retained its Grade II listed building status following a re-grading assessment and the entry for Trinity United Reformed/Methodist Church and Hall, Cheam Road, Sutton was amended. Many of our churches have been added to the Local Authority's list of locally listed buildings and/or included in Historic England's Heritage Action Zones during the 2017/2018 Connexional year.

## **Time-scale**

26. One of the concerns regularly expressed about the Section 98 procedures is the delay that it may create, and it is true that the procedures do build-in an automatic delay for small projects because of the four-week consultation period. However, Trustees are informed of the statutory consultation period early on in the process and therefore they can factor this into their project timescale. Sometimes delays are caused by the applicant trustees because correct procedures aren't followed or fail to respond promptly to requests for more information or delay posting the site notice. In addition, the standard of the application is sometimes poor. However, due to the volume of work of the Connexional Conservation Officer there can be some delay in the processing of applications but they are continually looking at processes/procedures to reduce delay. If everything runs smoothly, all the information provided when the project is registered and no objections or comments are received, delays can be minimised. the Conservation Officer continues to encourage trustees to make contact at the earliest opportunity to begin pre-application discussions and this has led to major projects being dealt with in a relatively short timescale such as the open doors scheme at Lidgett Park.

## **Refusals and Appeals**

27. No projects were refused during the year and no appeals have been logged.

## **Listed Building Fund**

28. One grant was offered in 2012 to meet the additional costs resulting from the need for authentic materials on a building of special architectural and historic interest.

## **Other activities carried out by the Conservation Officer**

29. A number of other matters have been dealt with by the Conservation Officer in 2017/2018 including drafting a Strategic report on our listed buildings, and representing the Methodist Church in matters such as *The Taylor Review: Sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals* and the pilot study work resulting from this. We have also provided formal consultation on Ecclesiastical Exemption guidance in Wales and Scotland and given representation on the reforming of the whole of planning law for Wales.
30. We continue to develop the Conservation section of the Methodist Church website and are working with other organisations to tailor grant funds to the needs of historic places of worship by providing formal representation on the future grant programme of the National Lottery Heritage Fund. We continue to work with the National Churches Trust to develop and promote the MaintenanceBooker initiative and regularly contribute to the Property Matters publication.
31. The advent of the Methodist Church's Property Strategy has meant we have had to rethink how we can use our historic buildings to better serve the mission objectives of our trustees. To this end we have drafted a Strategic report on our listed buildings, and are looking at ways to assist our colleagues in the Cornwall district where we have a large distribution of high graded buildings (See Appendix B). This work is ongoing and attending conferences, such as *Reimagining our Churches* and *Conservation to Co-operation* conference has enabled us to understand the work of other denominations in this area. We also continue to help Cadw work through their action points on the Strategic Action Plan for Historic Places of Worship in Wales.
32. We continue to work with colleagues in the Property Development Committee to assist individual churches on sustaining and achieving the mission objectives, such as at St Paul's in Shaw and at Victoria Hall in Bolton. We continue to liaise with the Organ Advisory Service to ensure the sensitive and appropriate care of our historic

organs. And we continue to address unauthorised works so that we are shown to be taking our responsibilities under the Exemption seriously. We undertake a regular exercise of discharging outstanding conditions as is required under our Code of Practice and we continue to provide advice on new listings and assist churches with discussions over applications being processed through the secular system, such as at Ridgeway Methodist Church.

33. We are keen to identify ways which we can improve our processes and procedures so we can focus more on strategic issues relating to the care of our buildings. This is because it is evident that our building stock is getting older and therefore its needs, in terms of maintenance and repair, are greater. It is hoped therefore that we can look at our current processes and information and makes improvements in these areas in 2018/2019 so that we can continue to work with colleagues throughout the connexion to build on a strategic response to the changing demands of church care.

## **Conclusion**

34. In general terms the system appears to be working well. Continuing publicity seems to have been effective and there is a general recognition of the way the system works. It must be recorded, however, that despite regular reminders, there is still ignorance in some quarters about the correct procedures to be followed. It is vital that District and Circuit Officers continue to give procedural guidance as appropriate to improve the level of awareness, but it may be that we need to think about training for Managing Trustees.
35. The use of the electronic consents system is working well but it is not clear whether any monitoring is taking place to ensure that all those projects requiring consent are included on the system. Also, the need to obtain District consent and to secure funding often means we have to give conditional approval to listed building works, sometimes with too many conditions.
36. It continues to be the case that most projects considered under the Ecclesiastical Exemption procedures are uncontroversial and can be approved without any appreciable delay. Where the concerns of the conservation bodies and the LBAC have been raised it has generally been possible to find a way forward which respects the character of the building and still meets the aspirations of the congregation. This has been achieved as much by the ingenuity of architects as the commendable willingness of the Managing Trustees and congregation to consider other solutions.
37. Inevitably there are aspects of some projects where it is not possible to reconcile the requirements of the local congregation and the wishes of the statutory consultees. To help minimise such areas of potential conflict we recommend early consultation with the Connexional Conservation Officer whenever a project is being considered.

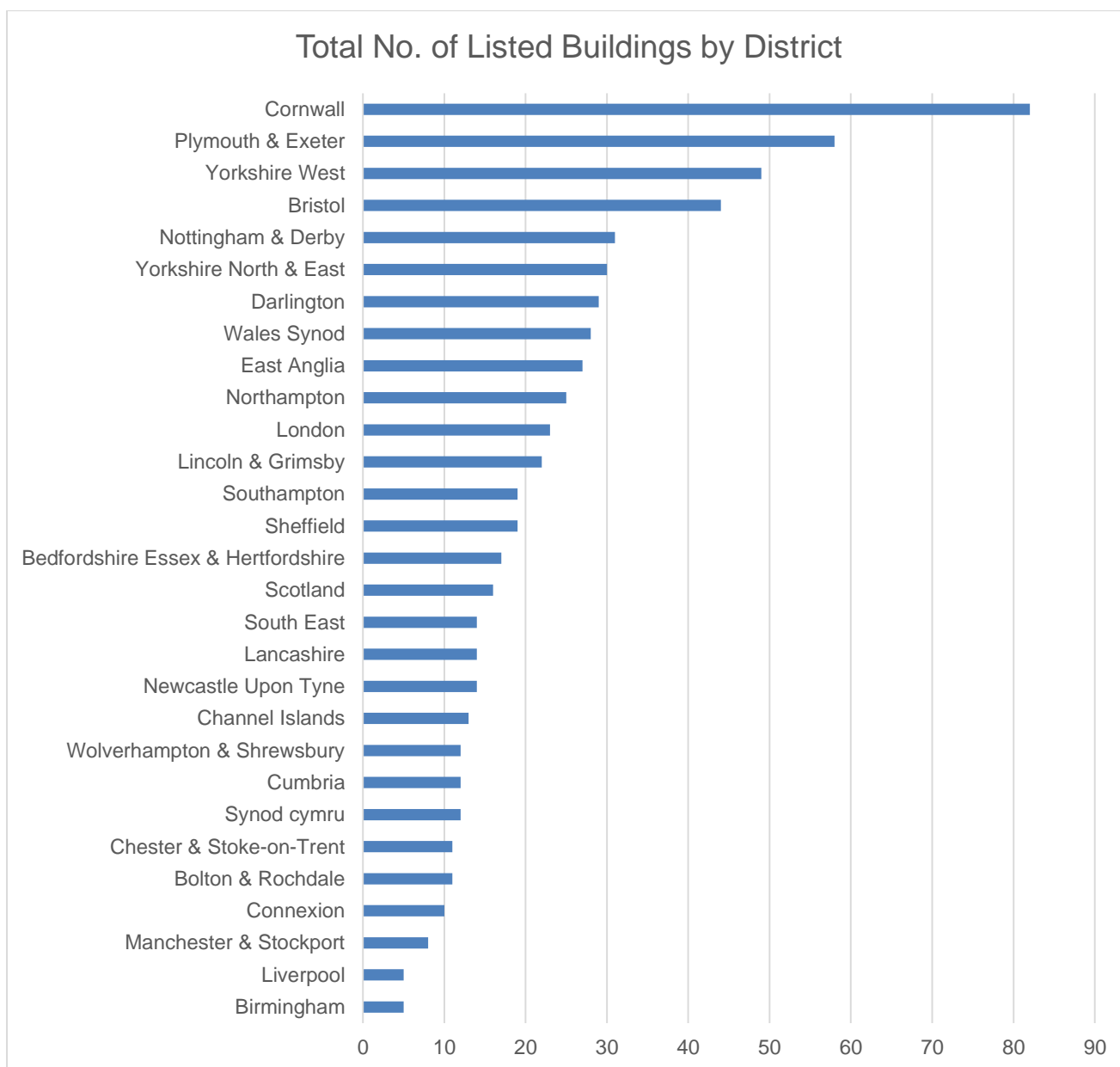
JB 30<sup>th</sup> August 2018

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

38. In December 1992 the Department of National Heritage issued a Code of Practice for the control of works to places of worship which are listed buildings or are within conservation areas and indicated that those Churches which adopted the Code would continue to enjoy ecclesiastical exemption from listed building and conservation area control by local planning authorities. Subsequently, The Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Order 1994 came into force on 1 October 1994. This has now been superseded in England by The Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (England) (Order) 2010. In Wales the original Order is currently under review. Section 98 of Methodist Standing Orders sets out the detailed procedures to be followed before the Methodist Church considers whether to approve a project for "listed building works".

## Appendix B



## Appendix C

### Visits 2017/2018

Hall Street, Llanelli, Trinity, Sutton, Bramhope, Lidgett Park, Victoria Hall, Bolton, Four Elms, Cardiff, Gomersal, Heptonstall, Penrith, New Room, Victoria, Bristol, Wath, Malton, Stowmarket, Various Sites in Cornwall, Talbot Lane, Fernilee, Four Oaks, Longholme, Christ Church, Grantham, Barnby Gate, Easton, Conway Road, Belper, Cornerstone, Bradford, Darlington District churches, Edale

### Appendix D - Section 98's issued in 2017/2018

Church	Designation	Proposal
Indian Queens Methodist Church	Grade II	Replacement of Doors
Penrith Methodist Church	Grade II	Defibrillator
Broad Street Methodist Church	Grade II	Modification to Side Entrance
Trinity Methodist Church, Biggleswade	Grade II	Blue Plaque
St Saviourgate Methodist Church, York	Grade II*	Carecent Refurbishment
Central Methodist Church, Bude	Grade II	Refurbishment of Church
Tiverton Methodist Church	Grade II	Replacement of Kitchen Windows
Trinity Methodist Church, Barton Upon Humber	Grade II	Pew Removal
Coads Green Methodist Church	Grade II (DL)	Upgrade Sound System



Firth Park Methodist Church, Sheffield	Grade II	Taking down of the chimney
Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, Oxford	Grade II	Replacement of Windows
Caistor Methodist Church, The Wolds and Trent	Grade II	Works to resolve problems with damp
Trinity Methodist Church, Gosforth, Newcastle	Grade II	Defibrillator
Brunswick Methodist Church, Newcastle	Grade II	Defibrillator
Fore Street Methodist Church, St Ives	Grade II	Three Flat Screen Monitors
Westminster Central Hall, Westminster	Grade II*	Replacement of Door
Holsworthy Methodist Church meeting room & toilets	Grade II	Repair/Refurbish existing schoolroom,
Green Street Methodist Church, Aberdare	Grade II	Prayer Corner Development
Lidgett Park Methodist Church, Leeds	Grade II	New External Doors
High Street Methodist Church, Harpenden	Grade II	New Handrails
Brimscombe Methodist Church	Grade II	Intentional Community Association
Southwell Methodist Church	Grade II	Extension
Penrith Methodist Church	Grade II	Refurbishment of Church Lighting
Golcar Methodist Church	Grade II	Safety Improvements to Loft Access
Malton Methodist Church	Grade II*	Creation of a Community Hub
Swaffham Methodist Church	Grade II	Sanctuary Regeneration
St Just Methodist Church	Grade II*	New Central Heating & Lighting System
84 Queens Road, Reading	Grade II	Ground Floor Refurbishment
Four Oaks Methodist Church	Grade II	Bench Removal and AV System
Appleton Wiske Methodist Church	Grade II	AV System
Minehead Methodist Church	Grade II	Digital Projection System Installation
Wesley Hall Methodist Church, Crookes, Sheffield	Grade II	Sanctuary LED lighting Installation
Trinity Methodist Church, Barton Upon Humber	Grade II	Open the view into the sanctuary

#### Appendix E – All Projects Referred to the LBAC 2017/2018

Church	Designation	No of Referrals (2016/2017)	Formal/Informal Referral
Malton	Grade II*	3	Update/Formal
Westminster Central Hall	Grade II*	1	Formal
Newland Trinity	Grade II	1	Formal
Penrith (Defibrillator)	Grade II	1	Formal
St Saviourgate	Grade II*	1	Formal
St Paul (Abergele)	Grade II	1	Formal
Caistor	Grade II	1	Formal
Mumbles	Grade II	1	Unauthorised Works
Trinity (Sutton)	Grade II	2	Unauthorised Works
Lidgett Park	Grade II	2	Informal
Holsworthy	Grade II	1	Amendment
Ashbourne	Grade II	1	Formal
Leedstown	Grade II	1	Formal
Penrith (Lighting)	Grade II	2	Formal
Trinity (Gosforth)	Grade II	1	Formal
St Martha's	Grade II	1	Formal
High Street	Grade II	1	Formal
Edale	Grade II	1	Formal
Four Oaks (AV)	Grade II	2	Formal
St Andrew's	Grade II	2	Formal
Green Street	Grade II	2	Formal
St Just	Grade II*	1	Formal
Fore Street (Brixham)	Grade II	1	Formal
Trinity (Barton)	Grade II	1	Formal
St Ive (Cross)	Grade II	1	Formal
Barnard Castle	Grade II	1	Formal
84 Queens Road (Reading)	Grade II	1	Formal
St Ives (Fore Street)	Grade II	1	Formal

Brimscombe	Grade II	1	Formal
Southwell	Grade II	1	Formal
Innis	Grade II	1	Formal
Brunswick	Grade II	1	Formal
Totals		40	

Average no. of times a scheme is presentation to the LBAC is 1.25

**Appendix F - Examples of Projects given listed building approval and completed in 2017/2018**

**Capel Pendref, Denbigh Ceiling Repair**

**Before**



Copyright – The Natural Building Centre Ltd

**After**



Copyright Medwyn Jones

## Re-ordering of Central Methodist Church, Bude

### Before



### After



Copyright George Jose

## Four Oaks Methodist Church – Redevelopment of Halls





Copyright – KKE Architects

## Gunwen Methodist Church – New Facilities and Repairs

### Before



Copyright Explore Churches

**After**



**Copyright Ryearch**

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<sup>i</sup> This figure was 582 in 2016/2017. The figure has increased significantly because we have carried out a complete audit of the number of listed buildings recorded on our property database. This includes all listings, owned by the Methodist Church and is not limited to churches and chapels. Each list description counts as one listing, so where a list description includes one or more building or monument only one is recorded.