

POLICY FOR REDUNDANT CHURCHES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

Introduction

From time to time, churches are declared redundant. This is because the local congregation, through its Parochial Church Council¹, has concluded that it can no longer sustain the particular church. Often this is because the costs of repair cannot be met or it may be because the church no longer serves the needs of the worshipping congregation.

Sometimes local community groups seek to acquire the redundant church to save it for the future. This policy sets out how the Representative Body will respond to such requests in future.

A local community group is a not for profit organisation or charity which seeks within its objects to promote local community activity or services, promotion of local heritage or public access to buildings.

Overall Policy

The Representative Body will seek to work cooperatively with local community groups to transfer redundant churches to their care subject to being satisfied that the transfer represents best value for the Church in Wales.

Detailed Approach

In considering a request by a local community group to acquire a redundant church, the Representative Body will take the following steps:

- 1) Seek clarification of the objects of the local community group to ensure that it meets the definition above.
- 2) Obtain a formal expression of interest from the Community group in the form of a statement setting out their purposes and intentions and aspirations for the property. The

¹ The term "Parochial Church Council" is used within this document to describe the local church trustee body responsible for the management of the hall. These bodies may also be known as the Ministry Area Council, the Local Ministry Area Council, Rectorial Benefice Council, Mission Area Conference, or any other term designated by diocesan policies.

Representative Body will consider in consultation with the Bishop of the Diocese concerned whether, in principle, the group's proposals should be explored further.

- 3) Consult the local parish/congregation for their views on the proposed use in particular whether they have any interest in retained use of the building within the group's proposals.
- 4) If Parish and Diocese are satisfied about the proposal, in principle, further discussions will take place. If not, the property will be marketed for sale following agent's advice.
- 5) Discuss with the group the type of tenure they are seeking i.e. lease or freehold purchase.
- 6) Ascertain the market value of the property from a chartered surveyor for:
 - a) the freehold sale of the church subject to the Church in Wales' standard covenants and reflecting any planning potential for alternative uses.
 - b) the market rental value for a fully repairing lease of the premises with or without restrictions over community use.

The best financial value for the property will be the starting point for discussions based on the agent's advice.

- 7) The value information will be shared with the Community group as a baseline for their proposals.
- 8) The RB will give the group a clear period of 12 months to put forward a firm offer for the purchase or lease of the premises.

If the proposed use can be shown to have clear benefits to the mission and ministry of the Church in Wales and these can be protected in the long term, some discount from best financial value may be agreed by the Representative Body at its absolute discretion.

- 9) The Representative Body will meet costs of repair and insurance of the premises during this period. If the Community group is to be given further time beyond 12 months to finalise their bid, the Representative Body will expect some financial contribution from the community group towards such costs in the interim.