

Footfalls: the effect of visitors

For people who love church buildings





ExploreChurches

The National Churches Trust

We are the charity for people who love church buildings. Our work is dedicated to supporting places of worship of historic, architectural and community value used by Christian denominations throughout the UK.

We do this by:

- Providing grants for urgent repairs and community facilities
- Helping keep their buildings in good repair through maintenance
- Making it easy for everyone to discover the wonder of the UK's sacred heritage through ExploreChurches

We don't just want to increase the number of visitors : we want those visitors to have a positive impact on churches and communities.



Visitors to churches

There are over 40,000 Christian places of worship:

- over 10,000 faith sites of medieval origin
- all are different
- all with a unique story to tell
- all have a unique experience to offer
- all offer a warm welcome

Visitors come from all backgrounds and for many reasons:

- local people, day trippers, staycationers, international
- heritage, culture, green space, art, peace

Post Covid19 we have a lot to offer:

- epitome of local
- we already know our communities
- domestic tourism will see a boom
- people want positive stories
- virtual tourism will continue



In memory of what is mortal of
Thomas Williams of Nantcall, who
departed this life on May 6: 1794
Aged 69. Also MARCRED wife
of above named T.W. See died
September 1^d 1813. Aged 79 year^s.

Activity one : know thyself

Open your door... and they will come

It's not rocket science!

Welcoming visitors doesn't have to be complicated, or take a lot of planning and expensive preparation.

BUT, to best reduce their negative impact, and safeguard your building and the people within it (visitors and volunteers) there are some steps you can take.

As your visitor numbers grow, so you can develop your preparations.



People considerations

Make it special

- create a special atmosphere
- tell your stories

Make it relevant

- remember your friends
- talk to your congregation and regular users about visitors
- encourage them to get involved



Building considerations

General inside

- minimise dirt from feet
- make vulnerable or problem areas inaccessible
- protection of vulnerable or fragile features
- minimise threat of theft or vandalism
- personal safety of volunteers
- food and drink: carefully consider what to serve

General outside

- close mow grass paths and ask visitors to keep to them
- minimise risks of damage to headstones by keeping paths at a reasonable distance



Minor alterations

- might include: temporary signage and interpretation
- be careful of fixings, and where possible make free standing

Major alterations

- might include: welcome desk, display boards, kitchen, access improvements
- reversible, and not directly or indirectly harm architectural or historic character
- talk to the DAC first



Whilst in wonderland

Again, it's not rocket science!

Start small and pay attention.

Learning about your visitors is the best way to both provide what they are looking for and minimise any negative impact they might have.

Always count numbers, encourage them to sign a visitors book and talk to them about their visit.

#GreatChurchVisitorCount

Some of these suggestions will be useful for general days when the church is unlocked, others for open days or events.



People considerations

Sacred space

- most visitors will respect and appreciate your spiritual places, practices and traditions
- empower your volunteers to challenge any who don't, be kind but firm
- make time for worship



Activity two :
encouraging
spiritual
engagement



Building considerations

General inside

- label light switches, and encourage visitors to use them and turn them off
- discourage visitors from all doing the same thing
- keep guided tours to small groups
- time guided tours and other activities to avoid other busy times

General outside

- curb appeal
- safety
- consider your community: parking



The after effects

Once again, not rocket science!

Always review and evaluate all activities and events.

Even if the church is unlocked every day, take time to review it regularly.

Consider all the effects of visitors and what can be done to negate them in the future.



People considerations

Local community

- opportunities for partnerships and wider community benefits are huge
- if you are getting lots of visitors or planning a large event then make sure you consult your community

Potential visitors

- the effects of a 'bad review'



Building considerations

General

- address all damage immediately
- assess wear and tear regularly
- consider and make changes to procedures and activities as you learn





Activity three : how regular are you?

End on a positive

Welcoming visitors to your church can bring a great number of positive benefits:

- share your church and its stories
- encourage wider engagement with local people
- encourage volunteering
- increase income
- engender long term support
- increase access to grants and other funding
- reduce theft or vandalism
- benefits to your wider community



And finally...

Don't forget:

- always have a donation box
- Gift Aid envelopes
- online or digital giving
- opportunity to become a 'Friend'
- opportunity to become a volunteer
- information about events and activities
- count visitors to special events and activities

ENJOY YOUR VISITORS



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ExploreChurches:

www.explorechurches.org

ExploreChurches tourism update signup:

email sarah.crossland@nationalchurchestrust.org

National Churches Trust website:

www.nationalchurchestrust.org

House of Good:

<https://www.houseofgood.nationalchurchestrust.org/>

Visit Britain visitor site:

<https://www.visitbritain.com/gb/en>

Visit Britain corporate site and insights:

<https://www.visitbritain.org/>



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National Churches Trust maintenance advice:

<https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/caring-your-building/regular-maintenance>

National Churches Trust, SPAB & HE maintenance videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6hpkslgL1SAVh28RtSY6KDPQtbJptZvf>

MaintenanceBooker:

<https://www.maintenancebooker.org.uk/>



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Covid19 advice:

NCT Covid19 building advice:

<https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/news/grants-and-looking-after-your-church>

NCT Covid19 opinion poll:

<https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/news/churches-and-covid-19-opinion-poll>

Ecclesiastical Covid19 guidance:

<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/church/coronavirus/>



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Ecclesiastical links:

Guidance on opening your churches:

<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/open-churches-guidance.pdf>

Guidance on running events in church buildings:

<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/church-events/>

Ecclesiastical Fundraising Hub:

<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/church/fundraising/>



Keep in touch

Sarah Crossland

Church Tourism Manager

sarah.crossland@nationalchurchestrust.org

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