

Hi All,

Below, is the latest statement from the Historic Chapels Trust. It appears that this organisation will close down in favour of new ownership, which is unknown at this time. It could be an interesting time ahead.

Thanks,
Derek

Dear Chapels' groups and supporters

I wrote to you all two months ago to explain, so far as I could, why you had heard nothing about the future of the Trust, despite my promise that we would be in touch by the end of July. (For those who do not readily have that note to hand, it is attached once more).

After a further delay caused by the period of mourning for the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, I am now able to explain the situation better. Previously I referred to negotiations with public bodies without naming them for reasons of confidentiality. I can now reveal that we had applied to the National Heritage Memorial Fund's Cultural Assets Fund (CAF) which is designed to address the problems faced by heritage charities afflicted, like HCT, by events since early 2020. Our application was accepted because our situation had deteriorated and we had established that there remained no grant-giving body willing to sustain our existing financial model. We undertook the lengthy and demanding application process with the support of consultants. Negotiations were known to Historic England who understood our new and very challenging circumstances and, we believe, promoted our case with CAF.

As was announced yesterday (go to NHMF's home page and click News), we were successful in attracting an offer of c.£3.6million. This is a remarkable outcome for which we feel very grateful. Regrettably, however, it is not available to sustain HCT as we know it, but to ensure that we can find new homes for the chapels before ceasing to operate.

The money can be spent on the repair of some chapels which meet CAF criteria. That work will be carried out on our behalf by the Churches Conservation Trust, with whom, as you know we have a long-standing strong working relationship, who will also be funded to manage the maintenance of the chapels for the three-year period of the grant.

We are also on the cusp of completing negotiations with HE who understand that we face costs not covered by CAF and that our reserves are limited. Sadly, they agree with our assessment that all avenues of long-term revenue funding have been explored and found wanting - so their further and exceptional grant aid is only to enable us to achieve the process outlined above and, eventually, to close down.

So, this is a bittersweet moment. We have avoided the danger of immediate closure and all the chaos that would have brought. But we have only achieved funding to disperse the chapels to safe and appropriate long-term ownership by others.

Trustees meet next week and we will be in further touch shortly. We will be writing to you all with more details and to explain what this means for the sector, the chapels generally and the one with which you have a particular affinity. We will also begin to set up the programme of meetings I promised in my previous note.

Yours

Chris Smith - Chair, Historic Chapels Trust