



Virtuous Circles 2: Sustainable Tourism for Sustainable Churches **Brief for a Project Development Worker:**

Vowchurch & Turnastone PCC, in partnership with the Diocese of Hereford, is seeking to appoint a self-employed development worker for the Virtuous Circles Project. We have secured a fund from the National Lottery Heritage Inspiring Ideas Programme to carry out some preparatory work to allow the project to move forward.

The Concept

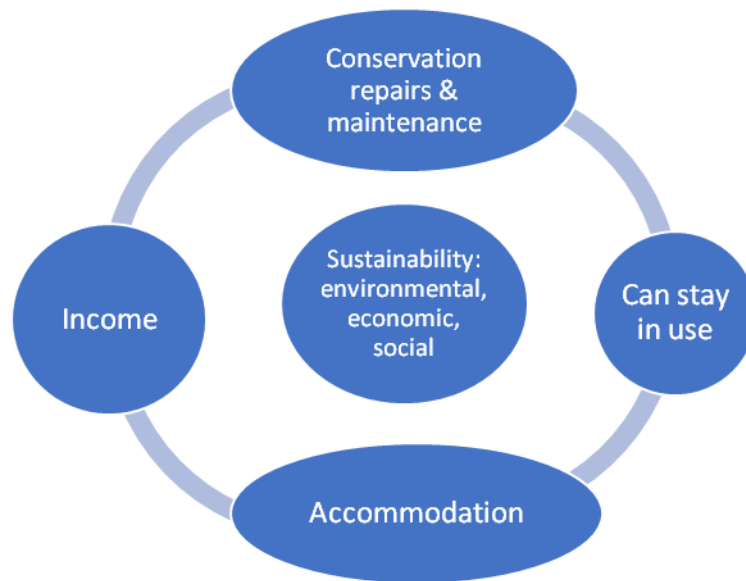
Virtuous Circles is an innovative new model for sustaining historically important places of worship.

Many rural church buildings are beautiful and ancient, set in areas of great beauty and tranquillity, but are often underused and increasingly under threat. The project was devised to find a sustainable use for some of these churches, including the insertion of holiday accommodation into the building to generate an income that will support the care and maintenance of the church building and the church community.

The idea is that a sympathetic and energy efficient, reversible timber structure (pod), designed to provide self-catering holiday accommodation, is inserted within the church, in the most appropriate place, whilst allowing the church to still be used as a place of worship. So, for example, retaining the chancel as a space for contemplation and prayer, while retaining sufficient seating in the nave to allow worship services to continue. Rental income from the letting is then fed back into the conservation of the building fabric and to provide revenue for the PCC, thus creating a virtuous circle and ensuring that the church remains open for future generations.

The project not only provides extensive opportunities for local engagement, skills training and investment in the rural economy, but it also has significant potential to be developed as a national project.

With around 15,000 rural places of worship in England the reversible pod system has the potential to provide a valuable model, adaptable for broader community uses beyond holiday accommodation, providing a much needed economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for these isolated heritage assets.



The Project to date.

The project received first round funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and underwent a development phase at a church in Dulas, Herefordshire, culminating in an unsuccessful 2nd stage submission in the autumn 2017. The second stage funding application was unsuccessful, with the main reasons for refusal being the substantial uplift in the conservation costs for the original church, combined with an increasingly competitive funding environment. HLF Committee members also felt that the model for rollout needed more clarity.

However, the HLF Committee remained positive about the project’s ambition to develop a model for replicable rollout. They praised the concept and felt it had real potential to offer sustainability to closed and open churches and were pleased to see the involvement of the Churches Conservation Trust as a partner. In addition, they felt the market research was good and the business model robust.

Next Stage

Despite the lack of a second-round pass from HLF the issues for rural church buildings still remain. In fact, the situation is more urgent now than it was when the original application was submitted. HLF has announced the removal of a ring-fenced fund for Places of Worship and the overall reduction in their available funds. Congregations across the country continue to struggle with repair bills and finding funding to keep the building in use. Churches are still vital to community life, often as the last remaining public building. There remains huge potential for a replicable, self-sustaining model for which a fully developed business case, further market analysis, fully worked up plans and identification of other interested churches is required. We have established a partnership with the Churches Conservation Trust as a managing partner, and there is a growing awareness of the model. For these reasons Hereford Diocese, with the support of the Cathedrals and Church Buildings Division, are keen to pursue the pilot using a different church in the same area, but without the conservation

costs associated with Dulas. Hereford Diocese will lead the next stage of this development and there are two church buildings proposed as suitable for this project.

Building on the considerable success in delivering the Champing Model in CCT churches, The Churches Conservation Trust will be bringing their considerable expertise and knowledge in the sustainability of church buildings.

The Diocese has decided to continue to develop the project using a new location. St Mary Magdalene, Turnastone (Grade II*) which is a beautiful but underused parish church in the Golden Valley. It is still open for regular worship in one of the smallest parishes in Herefordshire, with a handful of dwellings and mostly farm pasture land. The name derives from a Norman settler, Ralph de Tournai, and an early chapel dedicated to St Leonard is thought to have been near the bridge further up the Slough valley, south-west of the present church. St Leonard is commemorated in a 20th-century stained glass window in the chancel. The church building dates from the late 12th/early 13th century with a handsome barrel roof dated about 1500. Having fallen into a poor state of repair, it was restored in the late 19th century. The most current QI was carried out in 2016, and highlighted the need for repairs to the fabric and monuments, recently completed by the PCC at a total cost of £33,623. The building would therefore be very suitable for this project.

The Diocese is currently developing a church buildings strategy and this project will be used to inform this process, providing a model of alternative use with the lessons learned embedded into a new strategic approach to church buildings. A further advantage of using Turnastone Church is that it is still open as a place of worship, thereby providing a more realistic test of the model, as the main aim of the project is to offer a solution that allows church buildings to remain open, and complement their use as a place of worship.

We are seeking to appoint an experienced development worker to deliver the following outputs:

1. To work with the parish, taking the lead on all aspects of project development and to facilitate the entire process including securing the appropriate permissions, completing funding applications, updating the business plan, exploring local models of engagement and delivery of the project.
2. To act as the main point of contact between the architect, the parish, other stakeholders and partners.
3. To legally secure all necessary partnerships, between the parish, Diocese and CCT, ensuring that all partners are working together to develop and deliver the project.
4. To update and build on the existing documentation already produced in relation to Dulas, and adapt and amend it to the new context of Turnastone, making it suitable for submission to funders, stakeholders and partners in the project.
5. To feedback and provide progress and project reports to All Churches Trust and other funders, to other relevant stakeholders and to seek their support for the ongoing funding of a rollout.
6. To take the lead in the identification of funding sources, to include producing a funding strategy for the project, writing and submitting funding applications, securing the capital funding for the Turnastone Pod and to identify and develop a

future funding plan for the future role out of the Virtuous Circles Project, including the submission of any funding applications relating to that future work.

7. To input and help build a sustainable and scalable business model for further development and rollout of the project and to collate information that will form the basis of a National Guide for other open parish churches who may consider the Virtuous Circles approach.
8. To work with the CCT to develop a recognisable branding for the Virtuous Circles Project.
9. To work with the project evaluator, including helping to identify baseline data and statistics and implementing agreed evaluation processes.
10. As this is a new and emerging project, any other activities that become evident as the project develops.

Desired Expertise and Experience:

1. Experience of working with heritage buildings.
2. Sympathy for working with people with faith.
3. Working knowledge of rural community-led social enterprises.
4. Ability to facilitate partnership working.
5. Experience of applying for grant funding and delivering such funded projects.
6. Excellent motivation and communication skills.

This work is to be completed by June 2021, with a significant funding application being submitted to National Lottery Heritage Fund in time for the 1st June 2020 deadline, at 12 noon. As a guide we estimate the project would require, on average, approximately 1 - 2 days a week. There is a fixed budget for this work.

All Documentation updated to reflect the new project by end of May 2020.

Working Arrangements

The client will be Herefordshire Churches Tourism Group. The project will be managed by an Executive Group with representatives from the Diocese, CCT and the parish, who will be working with us to develop the project on behalf of the Funder. The post will be line managed by Wendy Coombey, Chair of Herefordshire Churches Tourism Group.

Timescales:

Full tender quotes and methodology together with details of relevant experience must be submitted by noon on Monday 28th October 2019

Shortlisting: 30th October 2019

Interviews: Friday 8th November. Venue to be advised, but likely to be in Turnastone, Herefordshire.

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Tenders will be evaluated by a panel drawn from HCTG against:

- Quality Assurance
- Project Delivery and Methodology
- Track Record
- Cost

Timetable:

Project Start: Immediately – or as soon as possible.

Project Finish: June 2021 (provisional)

Financial parameters.

We would expect invoices to be submitted on a monthly basis, but subject to outputs and activities being satisfactorily delivered.

End: 8th October 2019