

Executive summary

Faith groups, including the Church of England (CofE), share many objectives with Government, including that of providing communities with high quality public services. The CofE, for example, has an estate of church buildings that gives them a presence in every community in England, with the potential to act as a service delivery point for all those who live within the parish, whether they are churchgoers or not. However faith buildings are not always suitably adapted for wider community use.

Following dialogue with the Bishop of London, the Prime Minister agreed that whilst there would be **no new funding following the agreement of CSR settlements, there should be consideration of how faith buildings might be better plugged in to existing Departmental programmes.** HM Treasury has co-ordinated work amongst DCMS, CLG, OTS and DEFRA to identify such programmes.

This paper **does not consider the funding of the general upkeep of historical buildings** for activities such as worship. However, a range of funding sources have been identified that may be appropriate for the physical alteration and modification of faith buildings to ensure that they are fit for community use. In particular, the work of the group has identified:

1. the **Empowerment fund**: CLG have created a £7.5 million fund over 3 years (from 08/09–10/11) to support existing third sector organisations operating across England which are helping local communities turn key proposals into practical action on the ground in such areas as community leadership, community involvement in planning and social enterprise. The purpose of the support is to help selected third sector organisations, which includes churches and faith-based organisations to achieve to a greater extent than otherwise their own goals, and those selected to receive assistance will be organisations that have, and are pursuing, goals that further the empowerment of local communities;
2. the **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**: a proposed new charge which local authorities in England and Wales will be empowered, but not required, to levy on most types of new development in their area. CIL will

provide local authorities with extra resources to be spent on local and sub-regional infrastructure to support the development and sustainability of an area. The detail for the setting, delivery and operation of CIL remains under consideration and will be set out in draft regulations on which the Government will consult in Spring 2009;

3. the **Communitybuilders Programme**: a £70m programme being led by CLG supported by OTS. Informed by wide consultation exercise undertaken in 2006 and published in February 2007, the aim is to create long-lasting sustainable community led organisations delivering a range of services to the whole community based around a building. It will be launched in June 2009.

Whilst there are many good examples of faith groups accessing existing funding streams, discussion has identified two barriers that may be hindering access to funding streams by faith communities in some cases:

- 1 **clarification amongst funders** of the role of faith groups in delivering public services, and their eligibility for public funding; and
- 2 the **limited capacity of faith groups** to engage directly at a strategic level with the local and regional structures within which funding priorities and decisions are made.

To overcome these barriers, a number of actions have been identified by the working group, including:

- work aimed at clarifying the eligibility of faith groups for funding, including by **addressing any ‘squeamishness’¹ that funding providers may have in allocating public funds to faith groups** and other third sector groups; and
- **action points** to be taken forward by both Government departments and faith communities to develop their capacity to engage with the delivery of local priorities and to access funding allocations at local and regional levels.

¹ The term ‘squeamishness’ in this context was first used by the report of the Commission on Integration. See paragraph 3:11 on page 27.

Clarifying the eligibility of faith groups for funding

- **CLG** has committed to **convene a panel of experts**, including representatives from faith communities, in 2009 to consider how faith groups can be better understood by funding providers and address squeamishness as outlined above. It is hoped that this will lead to a Charter for Excellence in public service delivery by faith communities. Faith communities will be consulted about who will represent them on the panel;
- the **Local Government Association (LGA)**, in partnership with the Improvement and Development Agency (IdeA), CLG, the Inter Faith Network for the UK, the Faith-based Regeneration Network, the Community Development Foundation and the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action has already actively begun to review *Faith and Community* guidance, originally published in 2002 for local authorities and their local partners on how to work effectively with faith groups. Planning meetings have already taken place, as has a consultation with local authority chief executives. A small conference, mainly for the public sector, took place on 5 March. A further conference focused mainly on faith communities is likely towards the end of 2009;
- a **consortium of faith communities**, convened by Churches Together in England, is leading on work to develop a programme of '**religious literacy**' training² to improve the knowledge and skills of public agencies to work with faith communities. CLG is committed to supporting this work actively when the working group feels it is ready;
- the **Office of the Third sector** has commenced the **National Survey of Third sector Organisations**, which will be published in March 2009. This survey will include the identification of faith-based organisations and the types of activity they carry out in their

² The terms 'religious literacy' and 'faith literacy' are often used interchangeably. However, the group working on the 'religious literacy' proposal has noted: 'It is recognised that there are other forms of belief [than religious belief] and other important factors in identity. However, this proposal focuses on religious belief and practice because religious communities have distinctive aspects of belief and culture which lead local authorities to need and wish to take these into account, both in the context of service delivery and consultation, and also in terms of partnership working for the good of the local community.' This paper on faith buildings therefore uses the term 'religious literacy' to ensure consistency with the practice of this parallel strand of work.

community, as well as the funding and other support that is available to them in their local area. This will provide a clearer picture of the work of churches and other faith-based organisations throughout England.

At Regional level:

- **Government Offices for the Regions** will, in each of the 9 English Regions, convene a **network of local authority leads** by 2011 on faith and cohesion to share best practice and better equip them to work with faith communities. This will include the production of a toolkit which builds upon learning from successful approaches led by the Government Offices (GOs) in London and Yorkshire and the Humber;
- **North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA)**, as the recently appointed RDA lead on faiths on social action, is currently developing a work programme to support all RDAs in working effectively with faith communities. NWDA have recently commissioned **research from an independent consultancy on the added value of faith**, identifying the value which faith-based organisations bring to service delivery;
- **CLG** has begun a programme of investment in the **Regional Faith Forums (RFFs)** with £70,000 per annum being allocated over the three year comprehensive spending review period to each region. RFFs will work with regional decision making bodies, including the RDAs and GOs to ensure that faith groups have a presence and effective say at the local and regional level. The investment has in part been made to help every RFF to focus on support for local faith-based action.

Further actions to help engage faith groups:

- a **series of visits by Civil Servants** to a range of faith-based projects will take place in 2009 to improve knowledge in Whitehall of what is happening on the ground. A programme of visits will be made by HMT, DCMS, OTS, CLG and DEFRA officials;
- the final meeting of the **working group for Local Area Agreements (LAAs)** and the community sector **included a faith representative**. At the time of writing it is not clear whether any further work in this area will be conducted through a formally convened working group;

- **English Heritage** launched **Historic Places of Worship Support Officers**³ in December 2008, offering part-funding to partner faith organisations for up to 30 officers who will help to build capacity in faith-groups to care for their historic buildings. The Minister for Local Government at CLG will write to Local Authorities to encourage them to support this initiative; this is open to any faith group with a role in using, managing or conserving numbers of listed places of worship. Ecumenical and multi-faith projects are welcomed;
- CLG has produced a **short guide to guidance**, which explains the wealth of guidance available to small community organisations, and suggests websites and publications explaining how to access relevant resources;
- in 2009 **DCMS** will consider the **value of places of worship** in the cultural life of England and as tourist attractions, and explore how places of worship could be further supported in the provision of such activities;
- **DCMS** will examine, with its partner bodies, the **support that could be given to places of worship which are considering adaptations** and alternative uses, to facilitate access to appropriate advice on good design, sustainability and funding;
- DCMS is part funding a member of staff seconded to the Churches Tourism Association to **help faith groups to make the most of secular tourism resources**, including websites, helping to draw visitors to their buildings;
- both the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage have made grants to support the development of the Sacred Britain Tourism Partnership's 'ASPIRE' (Audience Development for Sacred Places in the Regions of England) project. The objective is to **take the experience of recent successful faith-based tourism projects and apply best practice methods and resources across other areas within a sustainable network model**. Starting with five 'Pathfinder' areas, this is supported by national coordination, communication and marketing activity.

³ For more information, see www.english-heritage.org.uk/inspired/

Action to be taken specifically by the Church of England which other faith communities may wish to take forward in similar ways:

The CofE is taking forward a number of work streams to ensure that dioceses have the skills, expertise and guidance to build the capacity of parishes to work at a sub local level and enable parishes to think more strategically. In particular, the CofE will:

- explore the potential for CofE Officers to act strategically with the regional consortiums for Capacitybuilders;
- determine the most effective way to disseminate the note provided by CLG, ‘a guide to guidance’⁴ to their dioceses and parishes. It will also appear on the www.churchcare.co.uk website under the section on How to Develop your Church Building;
- review its involvement in LSPs across the country and examine what positive benefits these have brought churches working with and for their local communities;
- review its involvement with Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) Leader Local Action Groups to see whether they can contribute to, and thus benefit from, the Local Delivery Strategies;
- continue to engage with ACRE and the Rural Community Buildings Network (convened by DEFRA), as an effective means of building alliances with other community-level partners and of sharing experience and best practice in rural communities;
- review how effectively it is engaged with the county level Rural Community Councils, so that they might share experience and best practice;
- review its current engagement with RDAs to see whether they can play into their Regional Economic Strategies;
- consider whether there are any cases where it would wish to make use of DEFRA’s Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund to meet particular needs;

⁴ See appendix A

- respond to the public consultation to be run by CLG in Spring 2009 on the Community Infrastructure Levy.