

Dear .....MP,

I am sure you are aware of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme which enables listed places of worship to claim back 100% of VAT incurred on repairs and maintenance to the building, professional fees and repair works to fixtures such as bells and organs. This Scheme has provided great relief to places of worship faced with raising enormous sums for maintenance and repair, and has enabled those who look after these valuable heritage and community buildings to maintain them for future generations.

This grant Scheme was introduced by Gordon Brown, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, in April 2001 as an interim measure while the European Union was holding a review of the Directive covering VAT rates. Although a reduced VAT rate has not yet been agreed with Europe, the Scheme is due to come to an end in March 2011, along with the Memorial Grant Scheme.

We are hugely grateful for **the over £107 million paid** out to places of worship across the United Kingdom since 2001 through the Scheme. However, even with the English Heritage and Heritage Lottery Funds Joint Repairs Grant Scheme for Places of Worship, congregations still need to find 66% of the £110 million spent annually on the up-keep of their buildings. The ending of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme will therefore, have a huge impact on those congregations who will now have to find an extra **20%** of the total costs of repairs works.

Many listed cathedrals and churches have very significant maintenance and development programmes ready to launch if they have money. The programmes tend to be quick to start, and labour intensive. A £100,000 project in a parish church can produce eight or nine jobs for 6-12 months. A £500,000 project in a cathedral is even more effective. The multiplier for construction sector jobs is that one basic job can maintain or create up to eight in support services and suppliers. In terms of job creation, that makes repair programmes very much cheaper, quicker, less bureaucratic and simpler than any government scheme, as well as enhancing the national patrimony. In other words, the assistance given by the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme is quickly effective, low cost for the employment result, and produces beauty and better tourism!

(Here you can describe your own situation)

My own church recently carried out repairs costing £xxx. We were able to claim back £xxx from the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme which made a huge difference to our ability to undertake these works. The Scheme was very easy to apply to and the service we received was extremely efficient. This means that the building is now watertight and in good repair/ and we can continue to use the building for numerous community activities/the venue for an outreach post office/support group for the homeless /we are also now intending to use the building for an education centre for the local school/a farmers' market/a café/ etc..

Please can you add your voice to support an early commitment to extending the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme beyond March 2011?

Yours