

Chancellor George Osborne hails £22.9million for places of worship

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The setting of TV comedy *Rev* and a London church painted by French impressionist Camille Pissarro are among hundreds of historic places of worship receiving funding for urgent repairs, it was announced today.

A total of 401 places of worship will benefit from a share of £22.9million to address urgent roof repairs through the Government-funded Listed Places of Worship: Roof Repair Fund.

Across all four corners of the UK and from a variety of faiths and denominations, the buildings will now be made weather-tight, safe and open for use.

Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne said: “Churches and cathedrals are a pillar of British life and we are committed to ensuring future generations will be able to admire and use these historic buildings.

“Thanks to the work we’ve done over the last six years to secure Britain’s long term economic security, we are able to support the upkeep and repair of places of worship across the UK.”

Among them is St Leonards Church in Shoreditch, which was first immortalised in the nursery rhyme *Oranges and Lemons* with the line ‘when I grow rich, say the bells of Shoreditch’. It went on to become the striking setting of BBC Two sitcom *Rev*, starring Tom Hollander and Olivia Colman as the Reverend Adam Smallbone and his wife Alex.

A much-loved local landmark, the building is in need of urgent repairs and is on English Heritage’s *At Risk Register*. St Leonard’s has been awarded £95,400 to make it watertight and keep it open for the congregation, events and work with vulnerable members of the community.

Another church receiving funding is St Bartholomew’s in Sydenham – the focal point of Camille Pissarro’s 1871 painting *The Avenue*, Sydenham which hangs in The National Gallery. The popular Grade II* listed church has received £95,600 to repair its roof, drainage system and choir vestry.

Heritage Minister Tracey Crouch said: “Churches and cathedrals are the jewel in the crown of our national heritage and it is vital they remain in good repair and are accessible for all. These buildings are at the heart of communities across the country and I am delighted so many will benefit from this important fund.”

The places of worship will receive between £10,000 to £100,000 to meet the costs of urgent repairs to roofs and rainwater disposal systems. Money is also being provided for structural investigations; specialist reports and bat surveys.

Sir Tony Baldry, Chair of the Church Buildings council: “It is fantastic that a further 400 church buildings will receive significant help with roof repairs from government and we are hugely grateful to the Chancellor. We now need to ensure a sustainable way of funding church buildings in the future and this is a question for which I hope the Department for Culture Media and Sport Taskforce on Church Buildings will find viable and deliverable answers.”

Today’s grants have been awarded through the Government-funded Listed Places of Worship: Roof Repair Fund. The fund was launched by the Chancellor in his Autumn Statement in December 2014 and the funding package has now seen a total of 903 places of worship across the UK receive a share of £55m.

The Fund is administered by the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) on behalf of the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS).

The Government has also launched an English Churches and Cathedrals Sustainability Review to help put these buildings on a more sustainable financial footing. Chaired by Bernard Taylor, a panel of church and independent experts will develop tools and resources so the important heritage buildings can be maintained and protected for future generations. The first panel meeting will be held on Thursday (7 July) and is expected to report back in April 2017.

A full list of awards can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) or the [Listed Places of Worship: Roof Repair Fund website](#).