

Diocese of East Anglia – Historic Churches Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on 14th April 2026

at The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption and the English Martyrs (OLEM), Cambridge

Present: Moira Goldstaub (Chair), Fr David Bagstaff, Fr Christopher Smith, Dcn Paul Raynes, Rowan Easter, Priscilla Latham, Nicholas Jacob.

In attendance: Matthew Champion (HCSO) (MC), Eva Burnett, Henry Freeland (Church architect - item 4 only), Charles Gillott (Hon Secretary).

1. The meeting began with a prayer.
2. Apologies received from Fr Martin Hardy and Richard Halsey were accepted.
3. The minutes of the last meeting (13.1.26) were approved and signed by the Chair.
4. Completed, Continuing and Future Works at OLEM

The meeting was taken on a tour of the Church, led by Henry Freeland and MC. Completed repair and renovation of the ornate stonework on the eastern tower was noted. The tower has been cleaned and looks splendid. Repairs to the south aisle vaults are complete. Plans are being made for the repair and renovation of the central crossing tower, the apse and the Lensfield Road frontage. There is extensive decorative stonework which needs conservation. Heavy sulphate pollution masks the true state of some of the stonework, which is ornately carved, at a high level and fragile. There is some roof damage to deal with. An assessment of scaffolding requirements is taking place, so that the extent of access can be determined and a decision made on the scope of works to be included in the contract. This assessment is expected shortly. Internally, water ingress from heating pipes within the vaults above the sanctuary has been addressed temporarily and a permanent solution is being considered. Historic England is involved in consultation. Cracking within the porch at the Hills Road entrance is being monitored. Cleaning trials are taking place inside the Church.

A 3D high resolution photographic model of the Church was demonstrated. This was created using a drone and is a very useful tool, obtained at reasonable cost.

Elevations can be produced from the model, assisting in the specification of further works. The final specification should be completed within the next two months. The rate of progress with the necessary works will be determined by the success of fund-raising. The parish and local communities have been very generous to date. The matter will return to the committee when a Schedule of Works is ready and a faculty can be requested. The Church is located on an exceptionally busy site, so a cautious view must be taken. Experience gained in restoring the eastern tower is informing the new project and will also inform work being done to other churches in the Diocese. Mr Freeland was thanked for his contribution and left the meeting.

5. Annual Report 2025

A draft circulated before the meeting was approved and signed by the Chair. The report will be posted on the Diocesan website and copies forwarded to Historic England and the Bishops' Conference.

6. Quinquennial Reports

There were no such reports for consideration today. The report on Our Lady Immaculate, Kirtling is overdue. MC advised that preparation is in hand.

7. Cathedral Church of St John the Baptist

A report from MC, circulated in advance, included a confidential matter. This was discussed and the committee was reassured that the issue is receiving urgent attention.

Significant cracking has been identified in the spiral staircase leading from the sacristy to the gallery and roof above. A structural engineer is visiting on 16 April to assess. Crack gauges are in place in the meantime. MC will report further.

The Historic England project has concluded and the final instalment of the grant has been paid. A final evaluation report is being prepared and will be circulated to committee members when complete.

Windows removed from the south aisle chapel for conservation will be reinstated later this month.

The main issue at the Cathedral is rainwater management. The architect is working on a new and simplified system, which should solve the problems. Specialist contractors are being consulted.

MC advised that the size of the Cathedral necessitates the provision of a larger maintenance team.

8. HCSO's report.

MC had circulated this in advance and summarised as follows:

- Trinity Church, Norwich: a consultation on possible uses for this newly acquired set of buildings is commencing and members of the committee were shown a draft consultation document. Initial surveys have been carried out and reports are awaited. The early impression is that the Church is in good condition with a good copper roof. The frontage has been cleaned. There is a lift in the church, which needs some repairs. The Hall is in reasonable condition, including the roof and electrics. Work is needed at the cottage, including re-pointing. The boiler room needs attention but the boiler itself is functional. Once the consultation is complete, the Diocesan Trustees will decide on the future use of these buildings, which have great potential.
- St Peter and All Souls, Peterborough: a Project Manager and a Heritage Consultant have been appointed subject to National Heritage Lottery Fund approval. A steering group involving the parish is being set up.
- Our Lady of the Annunciation, King's Lynn: no progress to report.
- Our Lady and St Joseph, Sheringham: the priority is the presbytery, in which living conditions are less than ideal. MC has met the parish priest and architect to plan improvements. The architect is in contact with the local planning authority. Some plaster has fallen in the church hall because of water ingress. This is being investigated and like for like repairs will be carried out as soon as possible.
- St Felix Felixstowe: CG reported that he had been asked to approve the installation in the St Joseph Chapel of a small plaque marking the restoration of the rosary window in the church. He had decided this fell within the List B procedure and could go ahead if approved by the Dean. He understood that such approval had been received. The meeting was informed that the restoration of the window had been successful and the appearance of the window is excellent.
- Our Lady of Consolation and St Stephen, Lynford: the Norfolk Churches Trust has confirmed that although the Diocese paid for recent electrical and lighting

works, it will accept financial responsibility for future works to the main fabric. The chapel is now open every day and is receiving visitors.

- The Sacred Heart, North Walsham: there is no permanent access to the tower or to the flat roof of the church, so maintenance is impossible. The roof is nearing the end of its useful life and needs repair. The architect is devising an access scheme for both the roof and the tower. Temporary roof repairs have been carried out, pending fund-raising.
- St Nicholas, Pakefield: MC had circulated his report on the church pending its disposal. This had been approved by Historic England and the Bishops' Conference. The local authority has been informed of the Diocese's intentions. The meeting noted Richard Halsey's emailed comments approving MC's report and the disposal of the church. Nicholas Jacob described the building as striking but in need of attention. Deacon Paul informed the meeting that there is a potential buyer.
- Our Lady Immaculate and St Joseph Lawshall: render and window works will begin soon, subject to parish approval.
- St Mary, Great Yarmouth: A plan to add additional rainwater outlets to the tower is being developed and a parishioner's offer of funding is progressing.
- The Sacred Heart, Southwold: The installation of a new heating system, for which a faculty has been granted, was delayed and costs increased after asbestos was found in the under-floor heating ducts. The asbestos had been removed and the new heating system is awaiting testing and final approval. The parish is back in the church.
- Our Lady, Star of the Sea, Lowestoft: The seabird problem is much improved and the site is much cleaner. The parish has installed new gel packs.
- St Benet's Minster, Beccles: substantial private donations have helped fund some of the smaller projects, while more substantial works, which will require grant funding, are planned. The join between the church and the hall (currently used by the school) is receiving attention. The extensive archive has been

assessed by Worcester Archives who have quoted £1600 to undertake all conservation and digitisation of the material.

- St Peter the Apostle, Gorleston: The HCC has expressed the wish that the original timber windows from 1939 be retained and repaired as they are part of the original fabric. Contractors have been approached. One has declined but another is due to visit. The parish is being consulted and has been advised to install CO2 monitors in the church and the hall. The windows in the tower are no longer leaking. Funding remains a serious issue on this site.
- Changes to grant funding: MC noted that the Listed Places of Worship Scheme, which allowed listed churches to reclaim VAT on qualifying works has now ended. A new Places of Worship Renewal Scheme administered by Historic England, which is focused on project-based work and will be competitive, has begun this month. One criterion for eligibility will be where the parish sits on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. There will also be a Heritage at Risk Capital Works scheme. No details of how these new schemes will work are yet available.

9. Committee Membership

An enquiry with a possible successor to Dr John Maddison had not come to anything. Fr Martin Hardy is the new Dean of the Cathedral and has joined the committee but was unable to attend today.

10. Other Business: The Chair mentioned two events organised by the Bishops' Conference – a visit to Preston and Stonyhurst on 29/30 May and the AGM for HCCs to be held at Southwark on 20th May. The Chair is considering whether to attend the latter.

Next Meetings:

Tuesday 14 July at Our Lady and St Joseph, Sheringham (11.30 start)

Tuesday 13 October at Poringland.