

## Economic, social and environmental challenges threaten the future of Catholic places of worship (PoWs) legally designated for their heritage value in the UK

Responding in 2020, the Archdiocese of Cardiff launched the 'Building Resilience' project jointly funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. A team with expertise in volunteer management, fundraising and built heritage have developed a 3-year collaborative relationship with four target churches and their communities. Project outputs include:

- 4 x Resilience Reports for each PoW, including Feasibility / Options Appraisals; Consultation & Community Engagement Plans; Business Case Analysis; Energy Audits
- 38 x Training workshops open to the public (Fundraising, Health & Safety, Heritage Tourism, Volunteer Management)
- 4 x "Resilience Teams" of volunteers at each of the sites taking ownership of the project

Evaluation is ongoing but lessons learnt to date include:

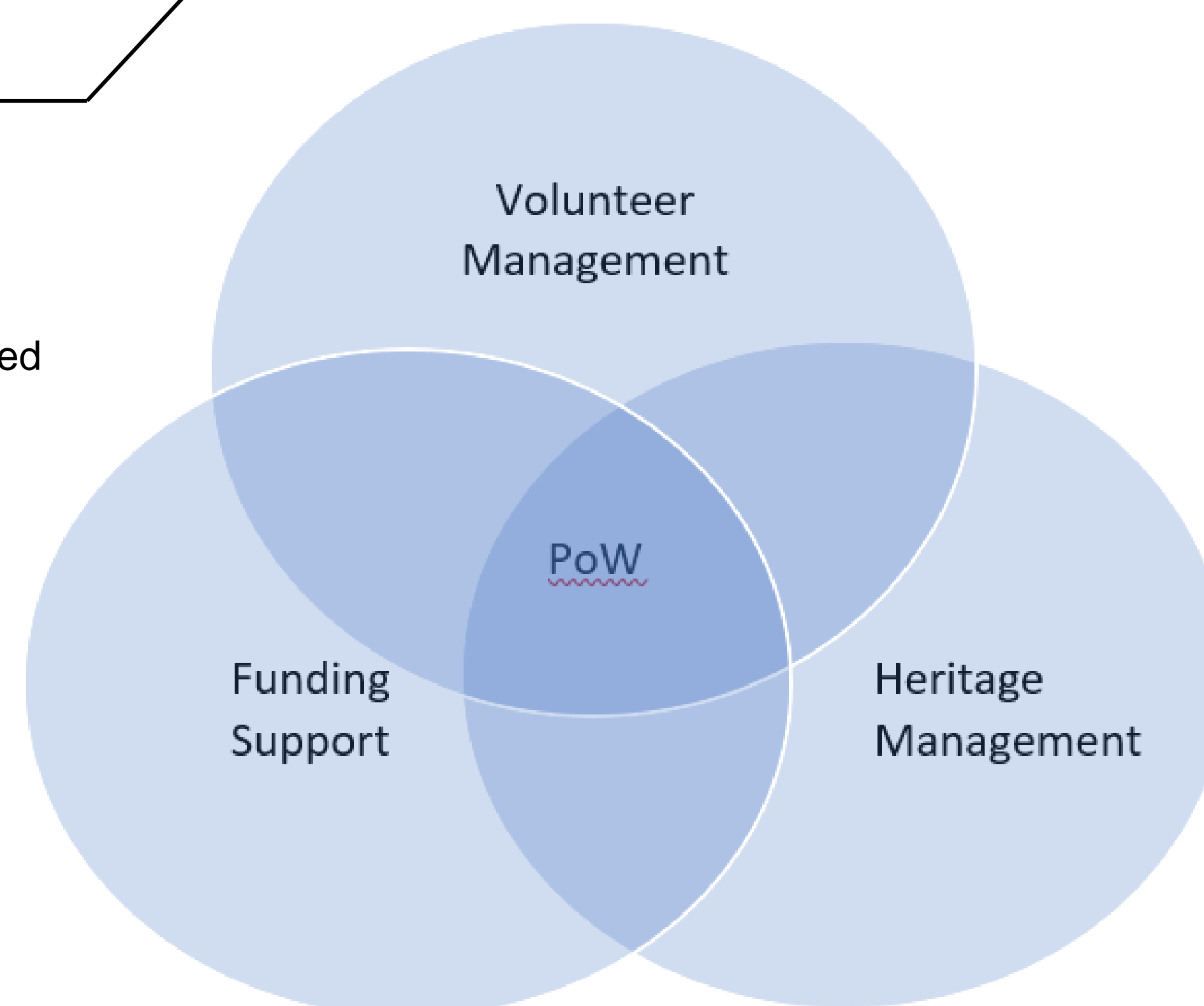
- *Developing 'whole' site plans invites creative thinking to use assets more effectively*
- *Decision making at a local level remains an obstacle unless a conducive environment is created by the parish priest*
- *Acknowledging problems does not automatically lead to changes in behaviour*
- *Clergy need to support initiative for them to succeed, yet demands of day-to-day activity mitigate against strategic planning*
- *Don't run a community engagement project during a global pandemic!*

## Funding Support

While funding for PoWs is difficult to obtain in the UK, the project has raised **£190,868** to undertake essential capital repairs at the four target sites.

### Lessons Learnt:

- Community consultation is essential to establish 'need' and avoid duplication of local services
- Community partnerships are difficult to maintain post-funding award
- Expectation management is required when working with volunteers



## Volunteer Management

While hampered by the pandemic, to date the project has recruited **40 new volunteers** for the four target PoWs. Given the need to self-isolate the majority of training has been offered online. This situation has excluded some groups from engaging with these activities.

### Lessons Learnt

- While acknowledging that there are not enough volunteers, PoWs were reluctant to reach beyond their existing faith community
- Tensions can arise between 'new' and existing volunteers requiring mediation
- Working with external organisations, such as Universities, for start-and-finish projects proved most successful
- Volunteer recognition and thanks has proved invaluable to retain and motivate volunteers



## Heritage Management

Catholic heritage is poorly understood and frequently underfunded in the UK. While the requirement of maintaining 'built heritage' is largely accepted the significance of 'movable heritage' remains underdeveloped.

### Lessons Learnt

- Without formal structures that are monitored externally, movable heritage is at risk from damage or loss
- The interests of safeguarding heritage can be viewed as of secondary importance compared to other organisational demands
- The heritage value of buildings and artefacts is often poorly understood by their custodians

