DIOCESE of WINCHESTER

Church Building Survey

Introduction
In November 2025 Diocesan Synod passed the below motion:

This Synod:

- ***Takes note of the proposal from Christchurch Deanery Synod and their highlighting of the Hereford Diocesan Toolkit, Crossing the Threshold, due to be updated in 2026.***

- ***Requests all Deanery Synods to review and collate the current usage and facilities of all church buildings across their deanery, reporting back to Diocesan Synod within 9 months.***

- ***Instructs the Diocesan Team, to support Deanery Teams in this work, providing templates and guidance to aid the process, and for collating the final results at a diocesan level.***

This was an amendment to the Christchurch Deanery Synod motion:

Christchurch Deanery Synod calls upon Diocesan Synod to adopt the strategy set out in the paper Crossing the Threshold, a Hereford Diocese Toolkit, and consider the Use of Church Buildings as Community Assets.

Following this the Parish Support Team created a questionnaire for PCCs to complete to survey the buildings across the diocese. The questionnaire particularly focused on the types of buildings PCCs are responsible for, how they are used for community engagement and their contribution or impact on PCC budgets. Deaneries were asked to encourage members to complete the survey, we're grateful to deanery leadership teams and PCCs for they help in collecting this information.

Responses
We received responses form 152 parishes listing 255 church buildings, 103 church halls and 24 other buildings.

Lettings and Community Engagement
The survey shows that most church building are not let during the week, however most church halls are let throughout the week. For many PCC's our buildings act as assets not just for mission but for their wider community. Both church buildings and halls support missional and wider community engagement activities such as food banks, support groups (debt/employment/addiction support, etc), uniformed groups (Scouts, Guides, etc) or other community groups.

Only 28% said letting their church building makes a positive contribution to the PCC's budget. This might be expected given most PCCs do not let their church building during the week. Encouragingly 75% of respondents said their church hall makes a positive contribution to their budgets.

Visitor Engagement and Car Parks
Many of our buildings and parishes are custodians of history for our villages, towns, city and country. One area for future development in our church buildings is visitors engagement (outside of services). This presents an opportunity for further community engagement and income generation. 68 respondents said they don't currently make provision for visitors (outside of services) and 104 don't record visits (visitor book, etc). Our Church Building Support Officer has recently formed a Visitor Engagement Group to explore how we can support churches to engage with this area further.

As noted below, 104 respondents said they had 10 car parking spaces or more. Depending on the usage of the building, this can present an opportunity for income generation is renting car parking spaces. The Parish Support Team are in touch with Just Park to explore this further.

Heating
While this survey has shown our buildings are often assets for community engagement and income generation, they also present financial challenges. This survey could not explore all building related cost pressures, but it did ask about heating. 157 respondents reported church heating systems over 15 years old, compared with 63 for church halls. Systems between 15-20 years old are more likely to fail and require repair or replacement, meaning a significant cost.

Part of the cost for PCCs can be exploring the most effective system when balancing effectiveness, comfort, capital costs, running costs and carbon emissions. Recognising this, a £2,000 grant is available to PCCs to help fund heating feasibility reports.

Next steps:

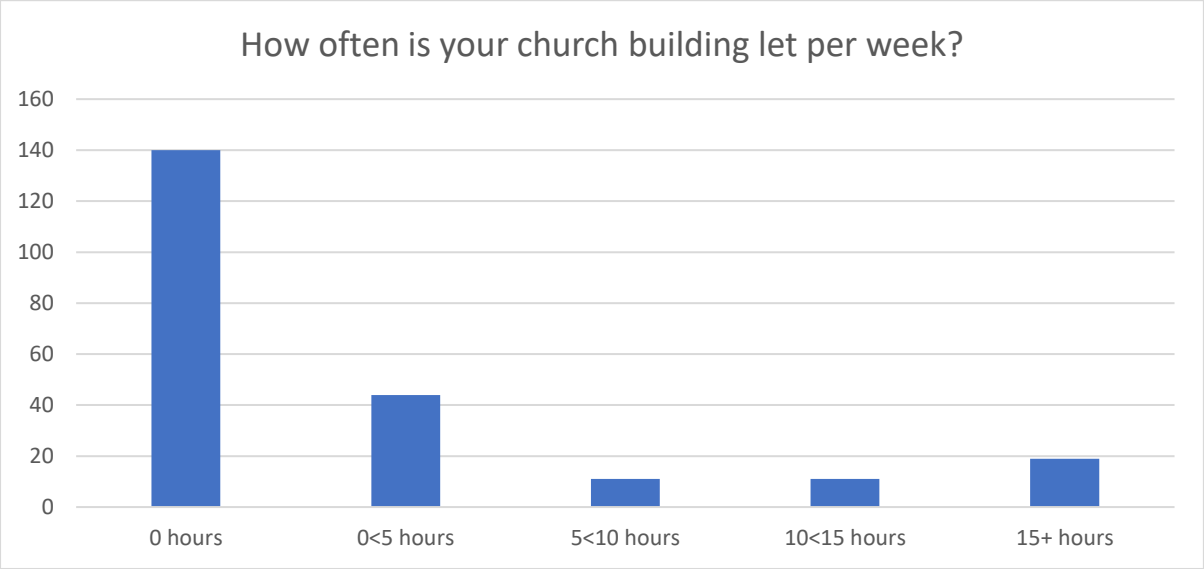
- Organise building use training event (supporting PCCs with the legality of letting buildings, visitor engagement and car park use).
- Develop the work of the Visitor Engagement Group.
- Work with Just Park to identify opportunities and contact relevant PCCs.

Survey Results
Further detail from the survey results are below:

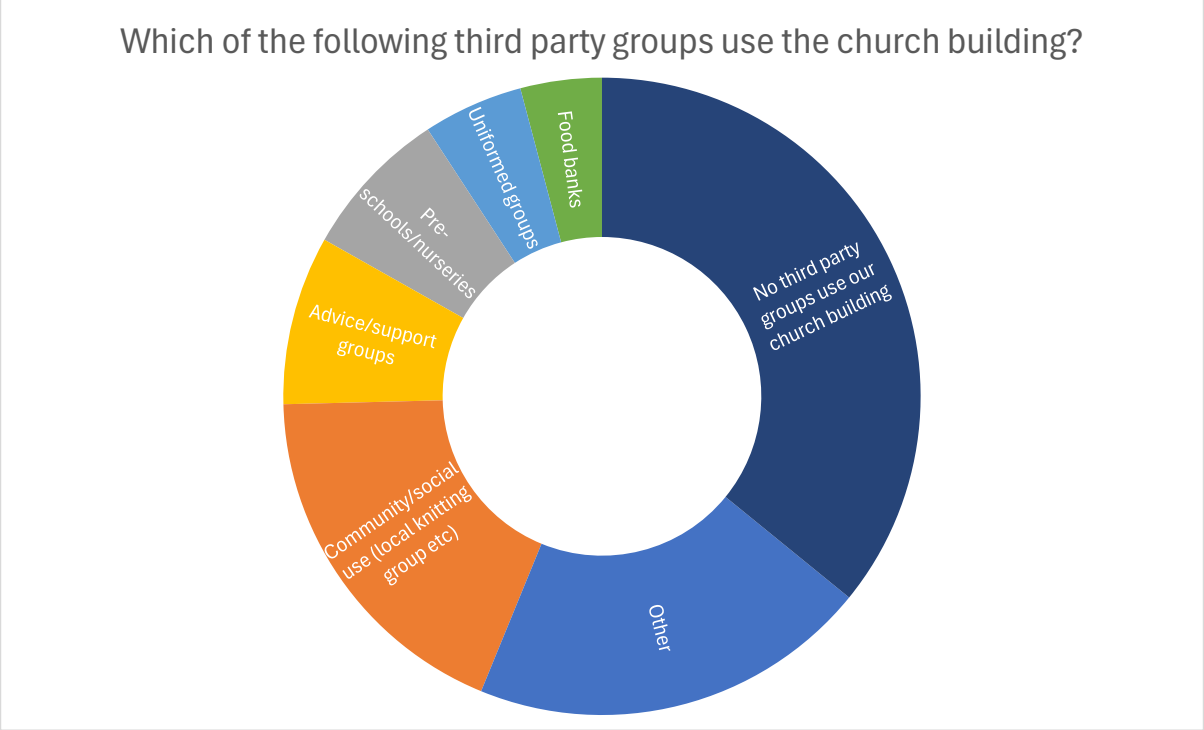
Church Buildings (225 responses)

Use of Buildings

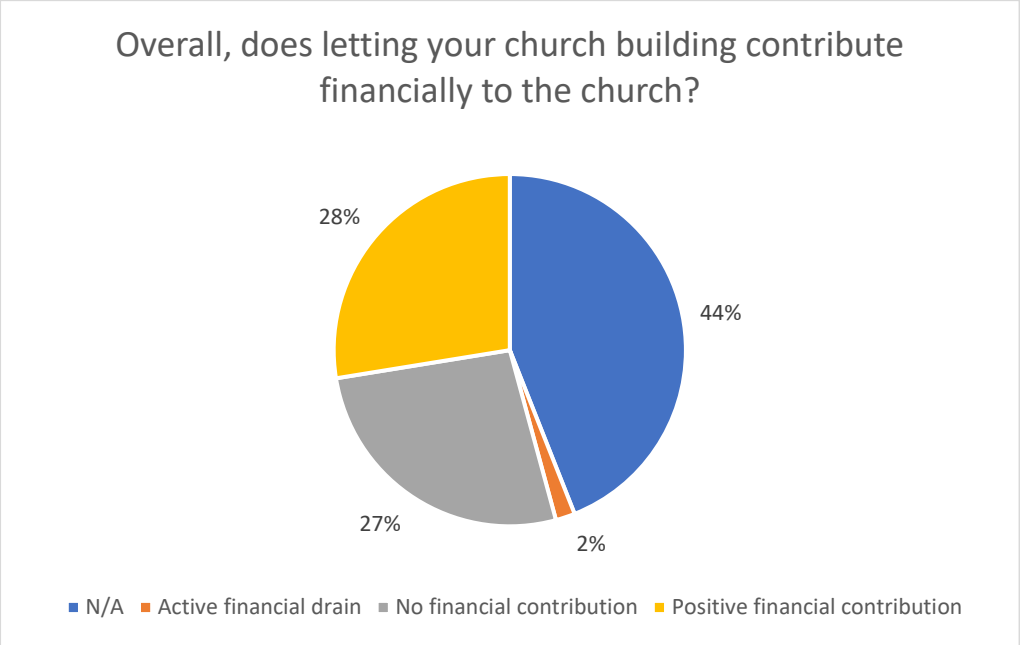
How often is your church building let per week?



Which of the following third party groups use the church building? Tick all that apply

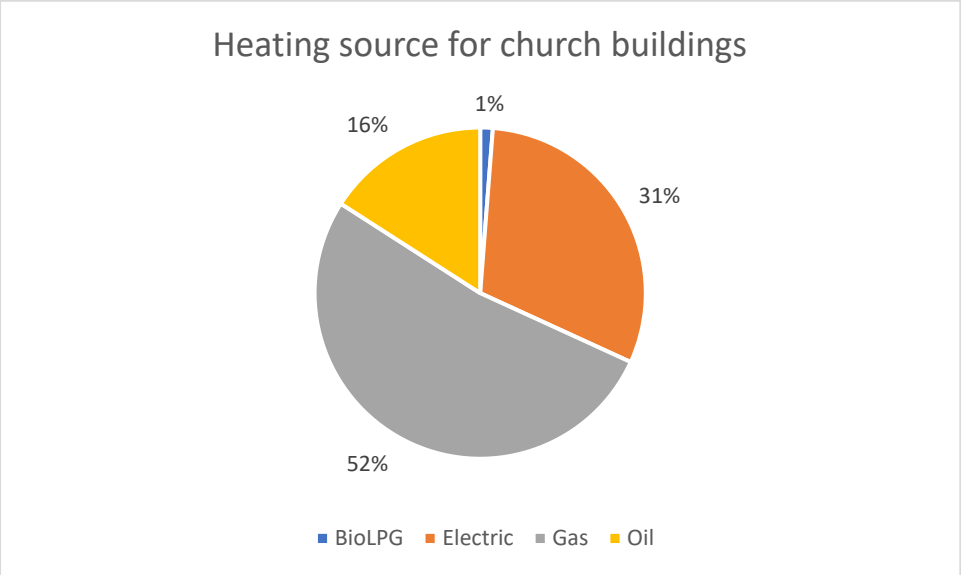


Overall, does letting your church building contribute financially to the church?

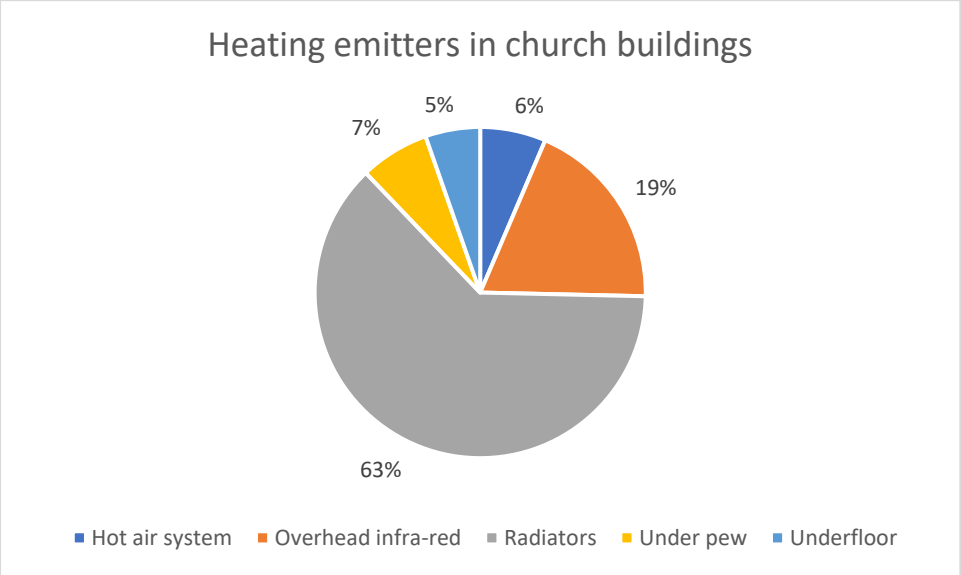


Heating

What is the heating source for your church building?



What are the heating emitters in your church building?



What year was the heating system in your church building installed? (Please give an approximate/estimated year if the exact date is unknown)

12% of heating systems were installed in 2022 or more recently. 88% of systems were installed more than 4 years ago (before 2022).

Is the heating system in your church building regularly serviced?

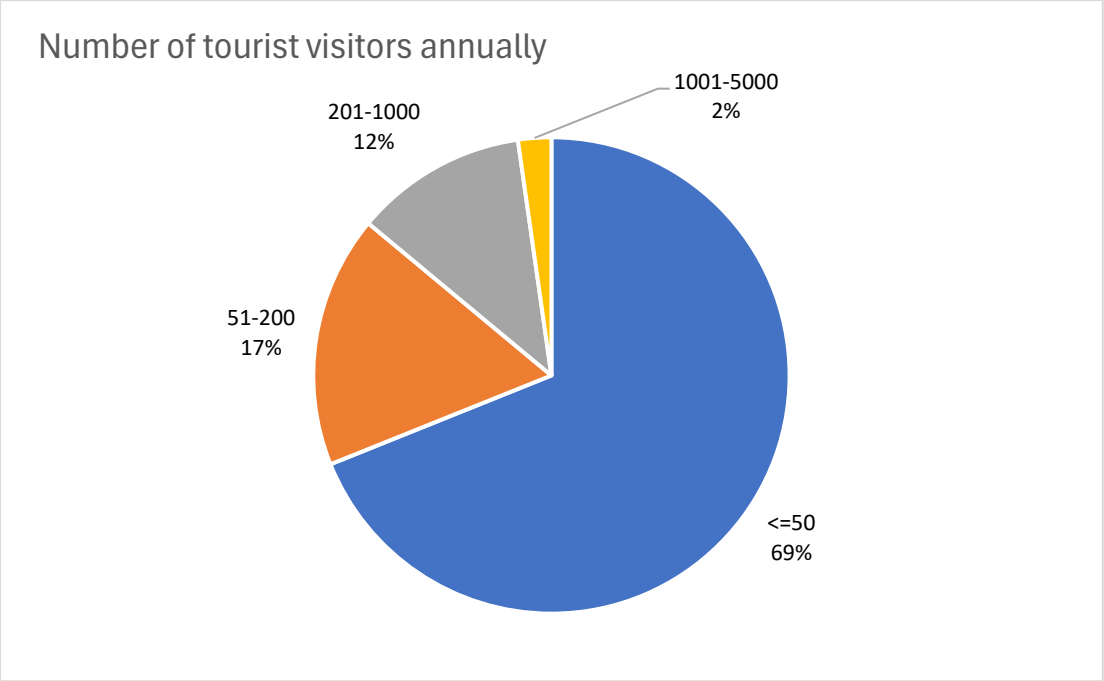
83% of responses indicated that the heating system is serviced regularly. 17% of responses indicated that the heating system is not serviced regularly.

Visitors

Do you currently monitor tourist visitor numbers to your church building, and if so, how?



How many tourist visitors visit your church building per year?



Note that the above graphic excludes Romsey Abbey (50,000 visitors), St Michael the Archangel, Southampton (13,000 visitors) and St Michael & All Angels, Lyndhurst (5,200 visitors) as these are outliers with significant numbers of tourist visitors annually.

Do you currently have anything in place specifically for visitors? (E.g. information about the history, somewhere for visitors to sit, tea/coffee facilities)

Please note – CoPilot was used to assist in producing this summary.

Responses indicate that churches primarily support visitors through the provision of historical information, hospitality, and spaces for quiet reflection, while many face challenges associated with building access, security, and limited resources.

The most common visitor offer is heritage interpretation. The majority of churches who provide information provide history leaflets, guidebooks, information boards, displays, or self-guided tours. Many also highlight specific historical features, memorials, notable individuals, stained glass, churchyards, and connections to local history.

A second key theme is hospitality and welcome. Numerous churches offer tea, coffee, water, biscuits, community cafés, or designated welcome spaces. Several also emphasise the value of a personal welcome, with volunteers, stewards, clergy, or church members available to greet visitors, provide information, and answer questions.

Many respondents described their churches as places of rest, reflection, and prayer, with seating areas, prayer spaces, chapels, and quiet environments available to visitors.
A smaller group of churches provide additional visitor facilities, including toilets, card donation points, visitor books, multilingual information, children's activities, pilgrim resources, and guided tours.

A significant number of responses highlight barriers to visitor access. Common challenges include:

- Buildings being locked outside services or events due to security concerns
- Limited volunteer capacity to supervise visitors
- Shared use of church buildings with schools or pre-schools, creating safeguarding restrictions
- Lack of modern facilities such as heating, toilets, or community spaces
- Ongoing building works, reordering projects, or financial constraints

Parking

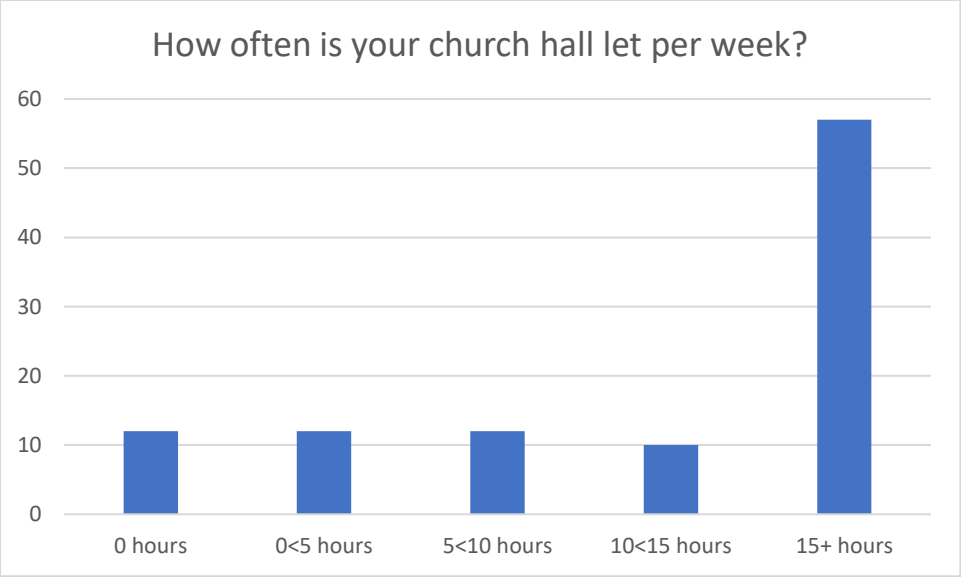
How many car parking spaces do you have for your church building? (these may be the same parking spaces as for other buildings you have, please still answer with the same number)

Of the 225 responses received, 104 churches indicated that they have 10 or more parking spaces.

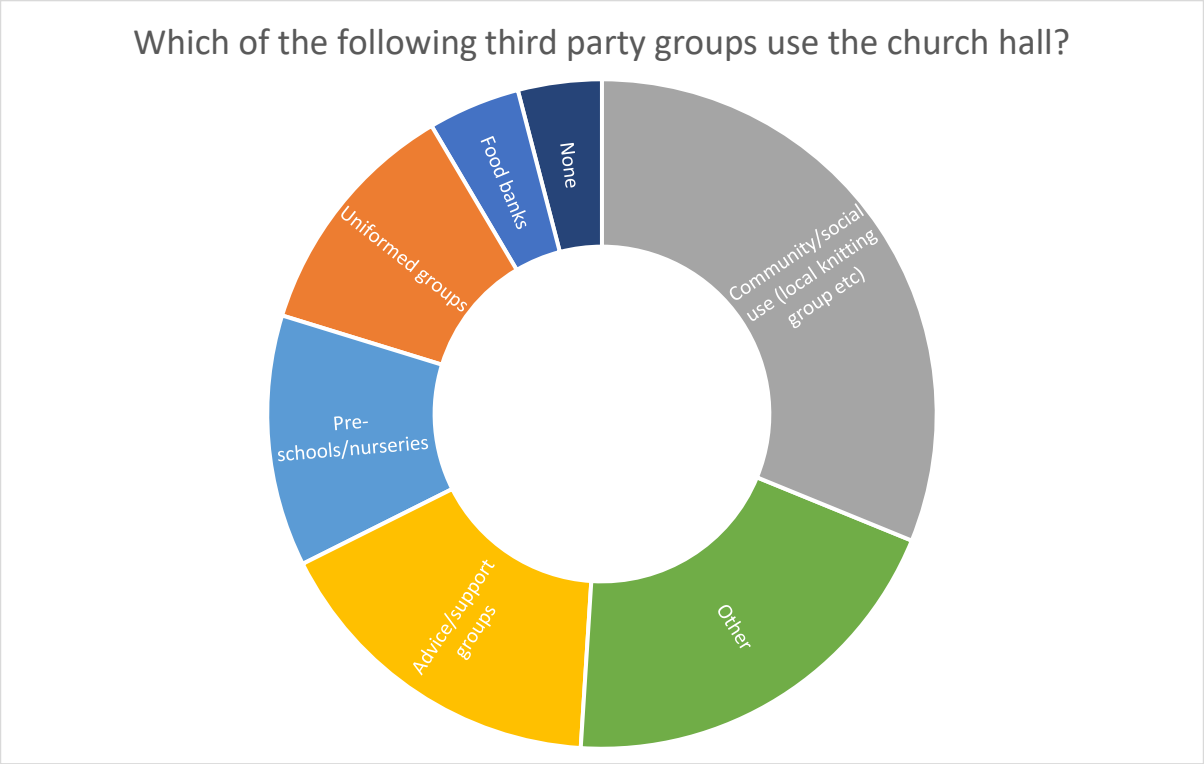
Church Halls (103 responses)

Use of Buildings

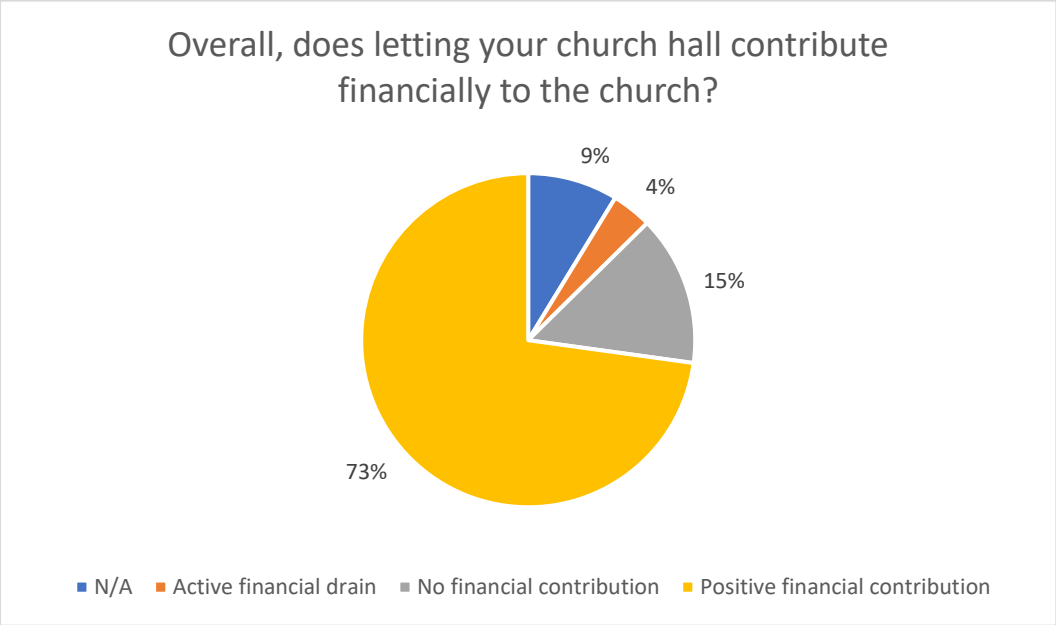
How often is your church hall let per week?



Which of the following third party groups use the church hall? Tick all that apply

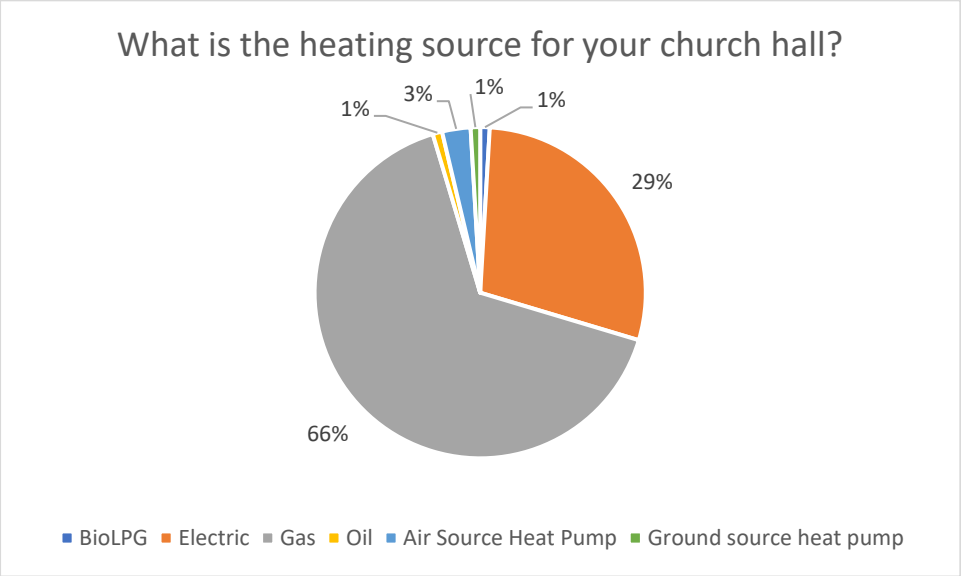


Overall, does letting your church hall contribute financially to the church?

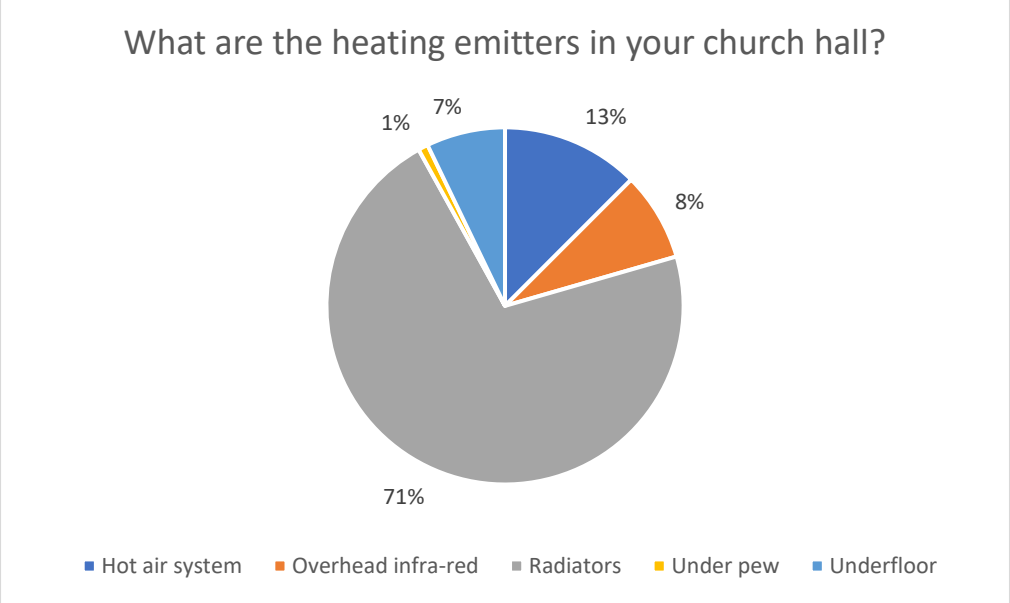


Church Hall Heating

What is the heating source for your church hall?



What are the heating emitters in your church hall?



What year was the heating system in your church hall installed? (Please give an approximate/estimated year if the exact date is unknown)

17% of heating systems were installed in 2022 or more recently. 83% of systems were installed more than 4 years ago (before 2022).

Is the heating system in your church hall regularly serviced?

89% of responses indicated that the heating system is serviced regularly. 11% of responses indicated that the heating system is not serviced regularly.

Other Buildings (24 responses)

Use of Buildings

Do you have any other buildings or spaces independent of your church building(s) or hall(s)?

Type of building	Number reported
Office	7
Shop	1
Cafe	3
House (PCC owned - not the vicarage)	3
Other	15

Do these other buildings contribute financially to the church?

