

# The Cost of Looking Away

## What Historic England’s research reveals about delayed maintenance - and why early inspection changes everything

In 2019, Historic England commissioned a detailed analysis of 30 listed churches, tracking every defect and repair cost across multiple inspection cycles to answer one question: what does delay actually cost? The findings were unambiguous.



### Delaying Repair Cost and extra £1.2million across 30 churches

The extra **£1.2m** is entirely avoidable  
Total repair cost if fixed immediately £6,950,000  
Total cost after repair £8,150,000

### Cost Escalation

Between the first and last inspection reports, total defect costs increased by £1,800,000 - purely from unresolved issues getting worse



### One Gutter. Five Years. A 16x Cost Increase

A lead parapet gutter with minor splits was flagged for repair at £1,250  
After one 5-year inspection cycle with no action: £20,000 - A 16x cost increase in five years



### The Tipping Point Finding

Once a building reaches a critical level of disrepair, costs escalate so rapidly that no regular maintenance programme can bring it back - only a major capital scheme



### Roofs & Gutters

Roofs and rainwater goods were found to be the primary cause of defects in masonry AND interiors. Keeping these two elements maintained prevents the majority of all other defects



### The Maintenance Payoff

One church with a regular maintenance contract (a few hundred pounds per quinquennium) had no issues attributed to water penetration - the fewest defects of any church in the study

### The 18% Figure

Nearly 18% of total repair costs - over £1.25m arose directly from lack of maintenance. This is avoidable cost.

### Cost of a Well-Maintained Church

Medieval church: budget up to £35,000 per quinquennium  
Victorian church: budget up to £20,000 per quinquennium

### The Domino Effect



The report repeatedly identifies inaccessibility as a core reason maintenance is missed — high-level gutters, parapet valleys, tower parapets. Three Weave provides scheduled aerial inspections for heritage buildings, delivering roof-level visibility without the cost of scaffolding. Early inspection doesn't just find problems. It changes what they cost.

See the Unseen. [threeweave.co.uk/heritage](https://threeweave.co.uk/heritage)