

## Katie Toussaint Jackson

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**From:** Green, Elizabeth <Elizabeth.Green@nationaltrust.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 08 December 2025 08:10  
**To:** Paul Britton; rogerevans; peterscott323; 'alex barrow'; Kirstie Robbins; catherinecullis; 'simon evans'; john vigar; 'John Edwards'; georgebulmer@gmail.com; 'Tom Lloyd'  
**Cc:** Richard Halsey; Rachel Morley; Agata Eltman; Katie Toussaint Jackson  
**Subject:** RE: BISCATHORPE

This sounds like a thoughtful and grown up approach, which would hopefully actually place us in some sort of harmony with the Commissioners, rather than antagonising the situation.

I would be supportive of this, if it is really doable.

Best wishes,  
Liz

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(Pronouns She / Her)  
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**Subject:** BISCATHORPE

Roger

When we discussed Biscathorpe at Tuesday's council meeting, Catherine, supported by Richard, suggested that we should ask the Commissioners for a contribution to the cost of its repair, given that their neglect of the building over such a long period will add to our costs. I thought that that would be tactically unwise. I ought to explain to colleagues why I take that view. Richard has subsequently emailed me about this and we have discussed it. What follows has been agreed with him.

I agree entirely that the Commissioners have treated both Biscathorpe and the Friends shoddily and, in an ideal world, they would contribute to the cost of repairing it. But that is not the world we inhabit. The Commissioners, as Richard pointed out to me, care about redundant urban churches because they can make money out of them but they don't care much about rural ones, have no strategy for them now that the CCT is not an option for most of them and they do the minimum necessary to find other uses. Even in these cases, selling for domestic conversion is a leading option, at least for the smaller ones. In the past they have been dismissive of the Friends, regarding us as an irritant. I have heard them refer to us as "impractical idealists" whose philosophy they just don't understand or accept. Where they have transferred churches to us, they think that they are doing us a favour, not the other way round. They feel no obligation to us and would simply turn down any request for financial help.

Our approach has to be to try to change the Commissioners' view of us so that we are seen as a useful part of the solution to their rural redundant church problem. When we saw the then Third Estate Commissioner and the then chief executive (both have now moved on) two years ago, you will recall that we said that we had more resources than in the past and therefore more capacity to help with problem churches and wanted to be part of the solution. We emphasised that we had not come to ask for money. They listened politely and seemed supportive but nothing ever came of the meeting. We had a further opportunity when the Churchcare team were merged with the closed churches team at the Commissioners, under Emily Gee's leadership (Emily herself is one of our members). Rachel saw her and David Knight and had a much warmer reception. Periodic meetings have resulted and it was Emily who took the initiative to offer us Biscathorpe, a church which she had long known that we were interested in. This is quite a big step forward for us and our priority should be to build our credibility with them by showing that we can be useful to them. To ask for money now would embarrass Emily and undermine what we have achieved so far.

I think our approach should be to take Biscathorpe and make a really good job of repairing it with our own funds. We could then offer it to Robert Buckland, the new Third Commissioner, as an example of what we can do to rescue a building so badly treated by the Commissioners. I suggest that you should at that point ask for a meeting with him at which to raise the broader issue of what their strategy for closed rural churches is to be and what our role can be in that strategy.

Meanwhile, we should certainly complain about Sturmer and I will take this up with Emily Gee if Rachel will kindly provide me with the basic facts.

Paul

Sent from [Outlook](#)

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