# Hudswell church to become hostel for walkers after government backing



The historic transformation of St Michael and All Angels Church in Hudswell, North Yorkshire, exemplifies community resilience and innovative reuse of heritage properties. Once a vibrant centre of worship, the church became defunct in 2017, leading local residents to band together to preserve its unique character. With former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak offering his endorsement, the village’s efforts are now bearing fruit as plans to convert the church into a hostel for walkers and cyclists gather momentum. This pioneering initiative reflects a broader trend in the UK, where communities seek to repurpose closed churches rather than allowing them to fall into the hands of developers.

The village of Hudswell, with a modest population of just 350, has deep historical roots, being recorded in the Domesday Book. Local fears that the church would be sold off to become a private home prompted the formation of the Hudswell Community Charity. This organisation, which boasts a history dating back to the reign of Charles II, has successfully repurposed various community assets, including the village pub and shop, making it well positioned to undertake such an ambitious project as converting the church.

Plans for St Michael’s Lodge, as the new hostel will be named, include transforming the church’s pews into bunk beds, reconfiguring the interior to accommodate 18 guests, and enhancing the space with modern amenities such as en-suite bedrooms and secure bike storage. The charity received a £50,000 grant from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, followed by a significant £250,000 from the UK government’s Community Ownership Fund, pushing the total funding closer to a £1 million goal necessary for the conversion. Trustee Martin Booth expressed excitement regarding the support, emphasising the project's significance in both preserving a slice of local heritage and catering to the burgeoning tourist economy.

Support from local stakeholders, including Sunak, underscores the potential economic boost this project could provide. Sunak has hailed the initiative for its dual purpose: preserving the historical integrity of the church while generating new opportunities for local tourism. The initiative comes at a time when the area's walking trails, including the renowned Coast to Coast path and the recently developed Finchale Camino Inglés, are increasingly attracting visitors. These trails are not only significant for their stunning scenery but also for their cultural and spiritual connections; the latter path leads pilgrims on a journey akin to the famous Camino de Santiago in Spain.

This community-driven effort to retain the church’s legacy while providing affordable accommodation for visitors highlights a growing resolve among villages across the UK facing similar challenges. As more rural churches close or diversify their functions, successful examples like St Michael's illustrate the importance of local involvement and creative thinking in sustaining community bonds and historical sites.

The anticipated opening of St Michael's Lodge in spring 2025 could position Hudswell as a key resting point for pilgrims and adventurers, playing an essential role in revitalising not just the church itself, but also the broader community and its economy. Local leaders and residents remain optimistic; by intricately connecting the church's past with its future, they are ensuring that it continues to serve as a place of gathering, solace, and community spirit for generations to come.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062536/pretty-little-uk-village-church), [[4]](https://www.rishisunak.com/news/government-funding-dales-church-conversion-backed-rishi-approved)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062536/pretty-little-uk-village-church), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-64901065), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c206zvpe0xyo)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-67801699), [[6]](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/heritage-and-retro/heritage/turning-a-redundant-yorkshire-dales-church-into-a-hostel-for-pilgrims-with-pews-to-be-made-into-bunk-beds-4055954)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.rishisunak.com/news/government-funding-dales-church-conversion-backed-rishi-approved), [[7]](https://www.leeds.anglican.org/new-pilgrimage-route-walked-and-new-life-for-closed-church.php)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/heritage-and-retro/heritage/turning-a-redundant-yorkshire-dales-church-into-a-hostel-for-pilgrims-with-pews-to-be-made-into-bunk-beds-4055954)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062536/pretty-little-uk-village-church> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-64901065> - In 2017, St Michael and All Angels Church in Hudswell, near Richmond, ceased its religious services. The Hudswell Community Charity aims to convert the church into an 18-bed hostel for walkers and cyclists, with plans to repurpose the pews into bunk beds. The project has received a £50,000 grant from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority to support this transformation. Trustee Martin Booth highlighted the church's proximity to popular walking paths, including the Coast to Coast path, and the potential to attract pilgrims. The charity is confident in the hostel's viability due to the area's demand for such accommodation.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-67801699> - The Hudswell Community Charity has been awarded a £250,000 government grant, bringing them closer to their £1 million goal for converting St Michael and All Angels Church into a hostel. The funding, from the Community Ownership Fund, will allow work to commence early next year. Trustee Martin Booth expressed delight over the grant, emphasizing the project's aim to retain the church's original condition while providing accommodation for walkers and cyclists. The charity has previously applied for similar funding without success but remains optimistic about the hostel's potential.
4. <https://www.rishisunak.com/news/government-funding-dales-church-conversion-backed-rishi-approved> - Rishi Sunak, the local MP, has supported the Hudswell Community Charity's plan to convert St Michael and All Angels Church into a hostel. The project has received a £250,000 grant from the Community Ownership Fund and £400,000 from the Shared Prosperity Fund. Sunak praised the initiative, stating it would preserve the church's heritage and provide accommodation for tourists, benefiting the local economy. The charity aims to complete the conversion by the end of the year, with planning consent granted and the building purchased for £20,000.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c206zvpe0xyo> - St Michael and All Angels Church in Hudswell, North Yorkshire, is being converted into a six-bedroom hostel named St Michael’s Lodge. The Hudswell Community Charity, which owns the church, plans to open the hostel in spring 2025 and is seeking a manager to oversee its operations. The conversion includes en-suite bedrooms, a lounge, dining area, kitchen, and secure bike storage. Chair of trustees Susan Ferns-Williams emphasized the importance of preserving the historic church for future generations and providing sustainable accommodation for visitors to the Yorkshire Dales.
6. <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/heritage-and-retro/heritage/turning-a-redundant-yorkshire-dales-church-into-a-hostel-for-pilgrims-with-pews-to-be-made-into-bunk-beds-4055954> - The Hudswell Community Charity plans to convert St Michael and All Angels Church into an 18-bed hostel for visitors and pilgrims. The project has received £50,000 in grant funding and aims to repurpose the church's pews into bunk beds. The hostel will cater to hikers, cyclists, and pilgrims, offering affordable accommodation and supporting the local economy. The charity is working to raise £1.1 million for the conversion and has secured planning permissions and support from local MP Rishi Sunak.
7. <https://www.leeds.anglican.org/new-pilgrimage-route-walked-and-new-life-for-closed-church.php> - A new pilgrimage route from Durham Cathedral to York Minster, via Ripon Cathedral, includes a segment through Hudswell, where walkers stopped at St Michael’s Church. The church, closed in 2017, is being converted into a hostel for walkers and cyclists. The inaugural walk highlighted the church's potential role in the new pilgrimage route and the community's efforts to repurpose the building for future generations.