

# Radical reforms could see 900-year-old St Fillan's church in Aberdour 'disposed of'



By Neil Henderson

April 13 2022, 11.22am



St Fillan's church, due to celebrate its 900th anniversary in 2023, could be sold off.

One of Scotland's oldest churches, St Fillan's in Aberdour, could be sold as part of a radical programme of reform by the Church of Scotland.

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The historic church, which dates back to 1123 and is due to celebrate its 900th anniversary in 2023, is one of a number of religious buildings earmarked for disposal.

Church of Scotland agreed at its National Assembly in 2019 to push on with reform which would see presbyteries in Scotland reduced from 43 to around 12.

New networks, hubs and other new local church structures will be developed, they say.



St Fillan's pre-dates both Dunfermline and St Andrews abbeys.

A draft list of church buildings deemed surplus to requirements has emerged, which would see the number of Church of Scotland buildings across Fife slashed by over a third if approved.

That list includes [Culross Abbey](#), which dates back to 1217, and St Monans Parish Church from 1346, which would also be sold off

In addition Burntisland, Kinghorn, Dunfermline St Leonards and North Queensferry parish churches would also be lost as part of the reform.

## **Presbytery reform**

A full list of closures in Scotland has not yet been revealed but in February it was [announced a third of church in Perth and Kinross are at risk](#). Congregations may also be merged [under the plans](#).

## **Anger in Aberdour**

The fate now facing St Fillan's has been met with shock from members of the congregation, as well the wider [Aberdour](#) community.

A public meeting has been hastily arranged for next week in a bid by church elders to galvanise support and plan a campaign to save St Fillan's.

The church hall will be retained under the reform plans.



A public meeting to discuss how to save St Fillan's has been organised by members of the congregation.

A spokesperson for St Fillan's described the possible sale as "very sad".

He said: "St Fillan's pre-dates both [Dunfermline](#) and [St Andrews](#) abbeys so we are talking a lot of history here.

"To sell would be very sad for all concerned.

"Our church hall in Main Street meets the criteria that Church of Scotland trustees are measuring the use of each building by and is to be retained

"However the church itself has been put on a list that will see it sold, let, or otherwise disposed of within the next five years.

"That's why we have organised a public meeting to inform locals of the plans and to galvanise public support to save the church from closure.

"We want to explore the option of a 'right to buy' as well as seek other ideas that may help safeguard St Fillan's future."

## **‘Needs have changed and we have to change with them’**

[Church of Scotland](#) said it will continue to consult with congregations and has stressed a final list of buildings to be disposed of is yet to be agreed.

Neil Campbell, mission director for Fife Presbytery, said: “It’s vital in these challenging times that the church continues to have a presence in our communities and offers much needed resources.

“We have a fantastic heritage of churches across Fife, but communities have changed and populations have shifted.

“Needs have changed, and we have to change with them.

“That means we have to concentrate our resources on the right spaces in the right places.”



The 800-year-old Culross Abbey, one of the Church of Scotland buildings earmarked for disposal.

He added: “Going forward, it is hoped that congregations will work together, sharing resources and opportunities, encouraging co-operation and team working.

“Fife Presbytery has nearly 140 church buildings within its boundaries and the plan asks some congregations to consider closing buildings which are not needed to support the church’s mission at some stage within the next five years.



St Monans Church could also be sold off as part of radical reforms.

“What happens to buildings is going to take account of which are sustainable and which can realistically be afforded against a background of financial contributions and falling membership.”

A public meeting to discuss the future of St Fillan’s takes place at the church at 7pm on April 19.