In forty minutes HeartEdge London Launch attendees were invited to record and share information about assets they believe they had at their church to draw on as they worked developing mission. Attendees were invited to repeat the exercise and to identify obstacles – the issues that generate inertia and prevent development and change. Flipchart, pens and Post-it Notes were distributed, with instruction to write down as much as possible.

Notes below are a commentary on the information returned. Edited with reference to any individuals or church removed, the annotation provides a brief summary of the opportunity and challenges HeartEdge London attendees are confronting.

# ASSETS

**Buildings:**

* Beautiful acoustic, lovely acoustics, stained glass. Great Hall
* Excellent acoustic. It's historic role in the landscape. City of London location. Building. Wren church. Building and location. Community hall. Large worship century 60% funded for redevelopment. Ock Street Centre cafe and rooms available. Countryside. Near tube station. Beautiful historic building high-profile city landmark and visitor destination and gardens. An iconic building - 2 million visitors. Building assets – hire out for events. Large warm space spectacular organ. Church hall well used by community
* Open building. The church is open will visited. It's warm! Warm
* Flexible space, which can be wide and open or more formal twin
* Place with a strong story. Place of welcome and safety for clients links community and services and church. Is the churchyard. Heritage building a special space – 900 years. Space and position big building. Good place! The building it's a large grade 2 listed building. Wonderful large Medieval church - how can we utilise our assets of space and people? The building is used in creative and vibrant ways number of people training for various ministries has increased staff team.
* Lots of occasional offices. New community centre on church grounds
* Re-ordering of church open in April. Wonderful building location. Location. Location connecting possibilities with the wider community. In the heart of Vauxhall. Location, location, location. High proportion of visitors (location)
* Civic profile it's "my church". A relatively cohesive civic context
* Local goodwill. Historic reputation (for past) and (current)
* "Place of welcome" large healthy expression. Diversity of use. Beautiful post great fire church. Modern toilets and kitchen for catering standard. Extraordinary building / community concert venue. Good location. Lots of space. Lovely buildings open daily for prayer. Café, Café. Historic church. Tourism. Buildings. Charity shop. History and profile equals asset and a milestone. History and positive and negative. Beautiful ordered liturgy building main church. Physical assets church building, Grade 2 listed building. History - unique patronage. Collective memory. Place in town historical tourist attraction, collective memory.
* Grade 1 listed building. Committee rooms, shop and café

**Culture:**

* Music. Intermission youth theatre. Rich musical resources
* Excellent musical tradition history
* Concerts/arts festivals. Hospitality serving delicious food
* Musical tradition. Musical and liturgical tradition

**Prayer and worship:**

* Mid-week Tazie services. The diversity of worship. Praying lay community
* Wide-ish styles of worshipping. People warmth and welcome.
* Vocations. Core member generosity and commitment to mission
* A heart for the poor and a place for beautiful worship.
* Place of prayer, which draws people to God.
* Messy Church once a month 4pm till 5pm on Sunday.
* Growing attendance church family is bringing friends.
* Family brings lots of children - 90 in the Sunday school
* Loyal people who frequently come
* Lots of young people – I am in the older group (at 60+).
* Loads of new people just looking
* Family embedded in local commercial life
* Considered as the parish church for many outside immediate parish boundary
* Mostly supported congregation

**Congregation:**

* Attracting and often keeping new people especially families
* Small committed congregation live very locally
* Tradition of offering hospitality and belonging
* New leadership (A) emerging (slowly!)
* Loads of children! Our diversity
* People – lots of people with many gifts
* Professionals, artists, musicians Has huge Christmas attendances
* How can we utilise our assets of people and space well regarded by the public?
* Pulling together when necessary.
* Small groups are growing and flourishing
* Pastoral care in and beyond the congregation
* Wisdom and time of festival people. Informed congregation. Large Numbers of families with children part of church congregation. Very diverse wide range of gifts and abilities. Good charitable giving
* Liturgical life. The willingness of folk
* Committed people who want to be part of this work. Everybody has come into you at some point we can do welcome
* How to be together when one church closes.
* Clear vision drawn from members and friends of church. Vision for the future development project on track.
* Open and inclusive vision. Infusing/enabling under participation

**Staff and Team:**

* Some excellent employees. A small dedicated core of people
* Staff objectives include regular reflection days. Vicar. Varied key staff team. Strong staff team. Dedicated and committed staff team. Dedicated choir, bell ringers, flower people. Lack of trained educated staff. Great churchwardens
* Rector and clergy team
* PCC – committed and courageous
* Churchwardens. Popular priest. Staff team. Skilled team members. Adventurous PCC. Carpenter Church volunteers
* Rector and team and staff. Loyal staff
* Musicians paid. Great priest in charge. The organ and the organist
* Creative thinkers to keep seeing possibilities. A willingness to be out of step indeed sometimes a pride in it. A few conservatives who wish to restrict developments.
* Appointing good people into key posts

**Engagement:**

* Boys brigade, Toddler group, Messy church and Shared space with Food bank.
* Good cafe with regular clients. Mindfulness and meditation tasters.
* The three voices within the church that goes outside listen to with respect - arts festival, beer festival, peace festival. Church engaged in the community. Diversity of community Partnerships. Hospitality partnerships. Into relationships.
* Night shelter, Good community networks/businesses. Soup kitchen.
* Connection with schools through education project.
* Well regarded by the public and. How to relate to a large number of visitors?
* Lots of love. Interfaith relations are going well. Outward mission. Community links. Hospitality. Our history/ministry to the poor in our DNA. Good Guild connections
* Commercial chaplains. Congregation have very busy lives harder to get volunteers. Food bank. This fulfils a community need.
* Volunteers from outside church happy to help. Social action citizens UK, CAP Centre. Contact with local companies through e.g. livery, memorials.
* Ministry to homeless and distressed. Relationship to local Muslim community. Living tradition of ministry among those on the margins – LGBT

# OBSTACLES:

**Buildings:**

* Parish has two churches. The building is limited. Big empty church
* Size and layout of the building. Only one toilet etc, poor kitchen
* Costly building to maintain. A lack of visibility. Accessibility
* Lack of commercial opportunities and low income locally
* Lack of space for silence in the midst of a busy church life and building
* Distance between church and town (not physical distance)
* The scale of the challenge is very great can we do what needs to be done?
* Welcome centre needs replacing – whole major scheme multi millions.
* Church QQI says ‘spend £700,000’.
* Running out of money. No easy answer to difficult questions.
* Where to put church office?
* Location - no one can find the church
* Lack of hall space. Sustainability.
* Ock Street 20 years old and needs a new vision – a new purpose
* Huge building. Leaks. Building – lack of space and loo's
* Church building feels oppressive and grim

**Funding:**

* Finance – little income capacity. Income – aging congregation.
* Declining income from smaller congregation
* Meeting the priority of the financial stream. Finance (!) Funds that are restricted in ways that are not helpful to new ventures
* Need to solve problem of constantly to raise money
* Finance and natural ceiling from how much you can make from the building Need to diversify funding base
* Lack of PCC funding
* Makes no profit / money for other mission

**Congregation challenge:**

* Lack of social justice awareness
* Binding in greater numbers of people who only attend on Sunday morning is challenging. Fragile congregations – old.
* Few professional retired skilled folks to assist (mostly just about surviving)
* Entrenched views. Giving everybody ownership of what we are doing.
* Fear of change. Ageing congregation. Lack of young people.
* Rivalry between two churches
* The old guard!
* High churn in congregation - especially family
* People away and weekends. Difficulty keeping people on board / on track with so much going on
* Aspects of congregation know risk
* New congregations are a regular in attendance and give little!
* Relatively low skill base in present congregation
* Loyal older members but have difficulty finding younger ones to pass things over to. Transitional nature of the congregation and community leads to constant need to rebuild. Congregational grasp
* The inbuilt conservation of elderly congregation bringing the building into the 21st-century. Varied levels of commitment, which don't coincide with active commitment. Internal conflict. Some cultural divide/tension white middle-class/BAME. Very diverse congregation also an obstacle. City church harder to make long-term connections as people move on frequently. Perceptions of congregation i.e. we need youth worker.
* The way we do things keeps us from doing new things.
* Complacent congregation few young families. Too much mission talk – not enough serving. Inward looking. Tied up with governance rather than mission and service. Tendency to think ‘we’ve arrived’, ‘it's done!’ ‘We're great!’ – a bit smug Subsequent suspicion change or movement will threaten what's been done to date. People coming forward for ministry realising that it is a vocation. Inflexibility especially with liturgy
* How to relate to a large number of visitors?
* Sometimes a gap between staff vision and congregation engagement
* Gathered congregation connecting with local community is challenging
* People willing to take the responsibility. (Too little) spirit of adventure.
* Lack of younger people (under 60!)
* Lack of will to imagine a different way of being church
* Long until willing to get involved in anything new
* Energy sapping conflict. Small attendance. Time poor congregations.
* Mission strategy "artists, pilgrims and activists"
* Who / where to focus? More volunteers needed.

**Overstretched:**

* Professionals working long hours
* People are overcommitted there is not much capacity for new things
* Chaotic culture including struggling to get people to commit
* Lack of time in people’s lives to take on roles and volunteer.
* Time poor people hard to rely on volunteers.
* Busy, busy people.
* Trying to have an active rather than as simply reactive ministry
* Managing the competing demands
* Staff fatigue difficult motivation and commitment to the vision complexity of those who call in. Voluntary board so time constraints.
* Small group of people who help. People are very busy change management
* Unplanned demand of casual visitors
* Impact on Vicar of complex church set up. No retired/skilled people
* Rector has Tower Hamlets Inter-faith Responsibility, so not enough time and no people!
* People's willingness to get involved at church

**Numbers:**

* No people.
* Fear about Sunday AM numbers.
* People – lack of.

**Leadership:**

* Conservative trustees.
* Organisational structures and processes creaking at seams!
* Development is potentially diverting attention
* Risk of vision. Worry about church reputation. Reputation.
* Meeting overload and governance complexity
* Leadership: more vision needed.
* No clear vision lack of lay leadership capacity.
* Failure to be aware of skills of congregation
* More inspiration.
* A lot of things done on the shoulders of a small few. Low confidence
* Lack of skills in the congregation and confidence in leadership
* Need to harness the involvement of church members
* Building up volunteers / lay leaders so this ministry isn't dependent on the clergy entirely.

**Community challenges:**

* Hard to get into local schools
* Coping with the transience of the population
* Lack of "neutral" spaces
* Gentrification

# Generally

The Diocese:

* Diocesan management speak
* The diocese is not encouraging ministry tends to always work to clergy strengths
* Diocesan vision / gives us permission to take risks