

Dear Churchwarden (and those who look after your Church Buildings) ,

This update once again gives you some bits of information that I have come across which I hope you may find useful as you look after your church buildings

Church Building Support Officer

I am pleased to inform you that our new Church Building Support Officer, Chris Young, started in the middle of February. Below Chris introduces himself

As the new Church Building Support Officer, I am looking forward to helping in the work of preserving so many beautiful places of worship. Each church I have visited in the first couple of weeks has its own unique characteristics and challenges. If I can help support these amazing spaces so they are more accessible for mission while respecting their heritage, then I know I will have made a positive difference for people in the diocese.

To give a background on what I bring to the job, I have worked initially in the civil service then as a museum professional for ten years at the leading museum in the Tees Valley. Last year I worked as both Exhibition Officer part time and as the Diocese Mission Pastoral Committee Secretary at Newcastle Diocese. This combination of experiences has helped me identify a cross section of skills I am looking to apply to the role. In my spare time I am working on a book on the arms and armour of the Spence Collection and I have a personal project to translate the Collectanea Satis Copiosa, one of the founding documents of the Anglican Church.

I don't get lots of spare time though, as I have a two year old who gobbles it up and a wife who would rightly judge me if I always had my head in a book.

Accessing Support from the Church Building Support Officer (CBSO)

To ensure that support from Chris is distributed fairly across the diocese, any parish wishing to access support will need to complete a simple application form which outlines the type of support that you would like for your building project. After the form is submitted, the support is reviewed by the Church Building Panel who will decide if the support can be offered to the parish. Further guidance on accessing support will be available shortly on the "Church Building" page of the diocesan website, or you can contact me directly

Church Hall Survey

Thank you to everyone who completed the survey over the last couple of weeks and we now have details of most of our church halls. If you haven't managed to fill it in yet, the survey can be found by clicking on the following link <https://forms.gle/giS3GrwD41zpR63s8>

Training Opportunities 2024

Below is the list of training sessions that have currently been planned to support you as you look after your church buildings. I would however like to draw your attention to a couple of sessions that are coming up. You may remember me mentioning that the fire risk management expectations have recently changed so on 21st March via Zoom we have Heather Ford from Ecclesiastical Insurance joining us to explain a little more about what needs to be in place in our churches.

Understanding our buildings can make it much easier to spot potential problems before they arise and hopefully save us a lot of time and money. With this in mind I am running a session on 16th April where we will look at a church building that has changed quite a lot over the years and the impact that these changes could have on maintenance.

You can book a place at any of the sessions by clicking on the booking link.

Date	Time	Venue	Event	Booking Link
Tuesday 5 th March	7.00pm	All Saints, Lobley Hill	Achieving Net Zero in your Church Building	https://bit.ly/47MRM57
Tuesday 12 th March	7.00pm	Holy Trinity, Darlington	Achieving Net Zero in your Church Building	https://bit.ly/46OGJHa
Thursday 21 st March	6.30pm	Zoom	Fire Risk Management and Health & Safety	https://bit.ly/3TFf1to

Tuesday 16 th April	7.00pm	All Saints, Preston on Tees	Understanding your buildings	https://bit.ly/3S0m8vD
Wednesday 15 th May	12.00pm	Zoom	Faculty Workshop	https://bit.ly/3GSAbNq
Thursday 16 th May	6.30pm	Holy Trinity, South Hetton	Churchyard Management	https://bit.ly/3SvkmBu
Wednesday 3 rd July	1.30pm	Cuthbert House	New Churchwardens Training	Please contact your Archdeacon
Thursday 4 th July	7.00pm	Zoom		Please contact your Archdeacon
Monday 16 th September	2.00pm	St Peter's, Jarrow	Annual Maintenance Schedule	https://bit.ly/48st1v4
October	TBC	TBC	Faculty Workshop	TBC
November	TBC	TBC	Undertaking Church Building Projects	TBC

Martyn's Law Tier 1 consultation

A reminder that the consultation for Tier 1 of Martyn's Law remains open until 18 March. Please encourage response from churches, as the questions work well for a response based around one building. The consultation is at [Martyn's Law: standard tier consultation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Church Building Grants

We are currently trying to put together an updated grants database to allow us to provide parishes with information on which grants they can apply for. Many of you have provided this information to me in the past but if you haven't then it would be really useful if you could complete a simple survey form at <https://forms.gle/P7xsdZhxohShdngxw5>

Energy Footprint Tool for 2023 Energy Usage

The energy footprint tool (EFT) is now open for you to enter your 2023 energy date. The EFT is accessed via the parish returns website and guidance documents are available on the website.

We have currently had data entered from 10% of our churches and it would be great to reach at least 50% by the end of the month.

If you require any support in entering the data, please contact Bethan Still (Diocesan Environmental Officer) or myself.

Cost of electricity supply upgrades

For parishes looking to connect to an electricity supply, or upgrade from single phase to three phase, the cost changes brought into force on 1st April 2023 through Ofgem's *Significant Code Review* can make a huge difference. The changes mean that while we still pay to connect to the electricity network, we no longer pay for improvements to the network (e.g. upgrading substations). The details are explained on the [National Grid's significant code review webpage](#). If a quote for connection looks extremely high, it is a good idea to check that the parish is working from a quote obtained since 1 April 2023 – the difference could be tens of thousands of pounds.

Church Heating Systems

Over the last couple of months we have had a number of churches experiencing problems with their heating systems. In some cases this has been due to boiler issues but in some it is problems with the other parts of the heating system. We have our boilers serviced on a regular basis but how often do we get the rest of the heating system checked. A build up of sludge in our systems can prevent the effective flow of water around our systems and can block valves. This means that the heat that we are producing is not getting to all parts of the building and can not only put strain on the boilers and pumps but also result in much higher gas / oil usage. Whilst, it may not be necessary to have the whole system checked every year, it is something that needs to be carried out on a regular basis, perhaps every 4 or 5 years, particularly if the pipe system is old.

Oil Boilers

As part of the routemap to Net Zero Carbon the Church of England has stated that no new oil fired boilers should be installed from 2026 onwards. If you have an oil fired boiler, now is a good time to start exploring alternative options for heating your church so that you have a plan in place when the boiler eventually does need to be replaced.

Church of England: Updated grants directory

Are you looking for grants to help fund a local environmental project? Their extensive online directory has been updated and lists organisations which may be able to help

you. <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/fundraising-for-net-zero-carbon#finding-suitable-funders-to-apply-to>

Durham Diocese Churchwardens Forum

We have an online Churchwardens Forum using Google Groups to allow you to ask questions and share information with other Churchwardens. If you would like to sign up and you can do so by clicking on the following link.

[DDChurchwardenForum - Google Groups](#)

If you are already on the Churchwarden Forum, why not ask a question. The more it is used the more useful it becomes.

Finally if you need any support regarding work on your buildings, please get in touch with me and I will do my best to find you the information that you require.

Kind regards

Martin

Martin Howard

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