



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

I would be grateful if you could take some time to look through this update as it has a few important bits of information that I have come across. If you are no longer the churchwarden following your APCM please forward to the relevant person as it takes a few weeks to update our database.

Energy Footprint Tool for 2024 – Over 90% Completed

A big thank you for those of you who have complete the EFT or reminded fellow PCC members of the need for it to be completed. As it closed we had received information from 91% of churches. Whilst the online system is now closed I will spend a few days checking for any errors, so I may be in touch if I spot anything is missing.

Update to Online Faculty System

The Online Faculty System is being updated this year and as a result the appearance of the system will look different although the faculty process will remain the same. I have arranged a number of sessions to go through the new system and explain how it will now work. The sessions currently planned are on 3rd July & 13th October and can be booked via the links on the training calendar below. I am hoping to arrange an additional session in late August or September as well.

The transfer to the new system is planned for early October but final details are still to confirmed, at that point the old system will close and any faculties in progress will be transferred. We have a large number of faculties that were started some years ago but have not proceeded beyond the initial stage. Therefore any started before 2024 will be removed unless you have told me otherwise.

Church Building Training 2025

Please find below the Church Building Training that has so far been planned for the year.

Date	Time	Venue	Event	Booking Link
Thurs 3 rd July	7.00-9.00pm	Cuthbert House	Faculty Workshop – New Online System	https://bit.ly/4bvGKUf
Mon 7 th July	1.30pm	Cuthbert House	New Churchwardens Training	Contact Archdeacons PA to book
Tue 8 th July	6.30pm	Zoom		Contact Archdeacons PA to book
September	TBC	TBC	Annual Maintenance Schedule	TBC
Mon 13 th October	1.30-3.30pm	St Gabriel's, Sunderland	Faculty Workshop – New Online System	https://bit.ly/4hSowyN

If anyone would like to host the Annual Maintenance Session in September, please let me know.

New Guidance on Church of England Website

Two new guidance notes are available on the website. A [brief guide to the use of drones around churches](#) is helpful if you become aware of drones being used around a church and also if you want to use a drone either for survey work or professional photography.

[Ventilation and draughtproofing in historic churches](#) will particularly help parishes considering their progress on the [practical path to net-zero](#). The guidance explores what ventilation is, what it is trying to achieve and successful strategies for managing it while caring for historic furnishings in a church building. If a conservation report is needed as part of a net-zero project, for example if a change in heating may impact on historic furnishings, please contact us through our [report grant programme](#).

[Security advice updated](#)

The security advice on the Church of England website has been updated with new content on Martyn's Law, the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025. The update introduces the key concepts of the Act and includes links to advice on the ProtectUK and government websites. It will be updated when the government publishes more faith-specific guidance.

Church of England – Buildings for Mission funding renewed

The Fund launched in 2023 has been renewed for the next three years, with an indicative intention that it will be further renewed thereafter. This is the funding that has provided the Minor Repairs and Improvement Grants and our Church Building Support Officer. Details on the <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/major-investment-local-churches-and-parish-clergy-ps16bn-three-year-national-spending-plans-unveiled>

Tree Council Grants

The Tree Council has announced a range of grants to support tree, hedgerow, and orchard establishment. Churchyards are publicly accessible spaces which fulfils the first eligibility criterion, although other criteria will need to be checked with each grant as there is a wide range of scale between the funds.

- The Tree Council's successful and long running [Branching Out fund](#) is now open for applications for planting projects throughout the UK, valued between £250 and £2,500.
- The [Network Rail Community Planting Fund](#) is available for planting projects in England, Scotland and Wales, providing grants between £2,500 and £10,000. Successful applicants must show clear community benefit and involvement, and the planting must take place on publicly accessible land.
- [National Highways' Three Million Trees programme](#) is a partnership with National Highways, The Tree Council and Greenwood Plants. Unlike the other funding opportunities, this programme provides free UK grown trees - with applications invited for projects seeking to establish between 2,500 and 50,000 trees, in England only.
- The new [£1m Trees Outside Woodland Fund \(TOW\)](#) is available in England, offering grants of up to £40,000 for local authorities and larger charities to grow trees on land that is publicly accessible, or of benefit to the public.

Expert advice and support is available from The Tree Council where needed; from application, to planting, to ensuring the trees have the best chance of establishing successfully.

Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) Meetings

The DAC meets 10 times during the year and as well as providing formal advice to the Chancellor on Faculty Applications, the DAC can also provide informal advice to parishes on any projects that they are considering. If you would like anything including on the DAC Agenda, please let me know two weeks before the meeting so that I can ensure that it can be included. Dates of the DAC meetings can be found on the website.

If you have any projects that you are considering in the coming months, please do let me know so that we know when faculty applications are likely to come to the DAC. The DAC are also more than happy to offer initial informal advice on proposals that you may be considering. Engaging the DAC early in the process can avoid delays at a later stage.

Quick Wins Grant Fund

The Church Building Panel have now allocated all of the Quick Wins Funding currently available and therefore no more grant applications are being accepted. We still have in excess of £40k in the Minor Repairs & Improvement Fund which can cover much of the same works but only to church buildings. We hope that the new round of funding from the Church Commissioners will allow these grants to continue in 2026 and I will let you know when this has been confirmed in the autumn.

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Thank you for all the work done by so of you to draw attention to the importance of the LPW Grant Scheme. It is still helpful to continue to write to MPs or other parliamentarians about the scheme and the importance of its continuation. The DCMS will be considering the scheme alongside its other expenditure following the recent Comprehensive Spending Review, and ongoing political awareness and interest is helpful.

Updated guidance on writing Statements of Significance & Need

The Church Buildings Council has updated its guidance on statements of significance and needs following a year-and-a-half review process with stakeholders. The new guidance is parish-focused and provides a holistic approach to defining significance and needs within a church setting. As part of the new guidance, new templates for statements of significance and needs are provided and should be used for ongoing faculty applications. These will be available when the Building Management Portal is released later this year, and the current Online Faculty System will turn off access to the old format.

These statements are required where proposals involve making changes to a listed church or other listed building. The statement of significance should be produced as one document, setting out the significance of the church or other building in terms of its special architectural and historic interest (including any contribution made by its setting). It should include any significant features of artistic or archaeological interest that the church or other building has. The statement of needs should be treated as a separate document and should set out the justification for the proposals.

The new guidance and templates provided are [available on the CofE Website](#) and also on the diocesan website.

Durham Diocese Churchwardens Forum

It has been really good to see this forum being used more regularly to share or request information or advice. . 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.

Due to holidays the next monthly update will be in September unless anything urgent appears during August. I will also be taking some annual leave 26th July – 12th August, so will not be available to respond to emails and phone calls during that period. 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

Buildings for Mission Secretary,
Diocese of Durham
Phone: 07586090996