



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

I hope that you have all managed to get a break over the summer months. The autumn can be a busy time, ensuring that our buildings are ready for the winter weather. I have listed some useful information below, but if you would like any specific advice regarding your church buildings then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Energy Footprint Tool for 2024 – 94% Completed

A big thank you for those of you who have completed the EFT or reminded fellow PCC members of the need for it to be completed. I have not done a full analysis on the data but the headline figure is that our total carbon from church buildings in 2024 was 2383 Tonnes CO₂e compared with 2385 Tonnes in 2023. Not a huge drop but heading in the right direction.

Update to Online Faculty System

The introduction of the New Online Faculty System has been delayed from the planned October implementation and is now likely to be early in the new year but I will keep you updated. The appearance of the system will look different although the faculty process will remain the same. I have arranged one more session to go through the new system and explain how it will now work. The session is planned for 13th October and can be booked via the links on the training calendar below. I will also provide further support when the new system comes online.

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
Tues 30th September	1.30-3.30pm	St Peter's Church, Stockton On Tees	Annual Maintenance Schedule	https://bit.ly/4kAJMKc
Mon 13th October	1.30-3.30pm	St Gabriel's Church, Sunderland	Faculty Workshop – New Online System	https://bit.ly/4hSowyN
November	TBC	Cuthbert House, Durham	Grant Funding Workshop	TBC

If you have any training sessions that you feel would be useful in your roles looking after your buildings then please let me know. I will be putting together next year's training programme later in the autumn.

Contractor Recommendations

Have you had a really good contractor working on your Church Building? If so, then please send me their details so that I can share them with other parishes.

Many of you have asked me for details of suggested contractors over recent years, however I can only share the information that I have!

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 for the rest of the year are shown below and dates for 2026 will be available on the website shortly.

- Tuesday 7th October
- Tuesday 4th November
- Tuesday 9th December

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 and Minor Repairs & Improvement Grant Funds

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 a small amount in the Minor Repairs & Improvement Fund which can cover much of the same works but only to church buildings, however once this is allocated we will not be able to award further grants until further funding is received.

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 later in the autumn.

Are you ready for the colder weather?

Sorry if I keep pestering you about heating but it is really important that you have a plan in place should your heating system fail this winter. Starting looking at different heating systems is much more stressful if you are trying to make decisions quickly. If your heating system is over 20 years old it may be difficult to obtain spare parts. If you would like me to visit your church to discuss the different types of heating system which might be suitable, then please let me know.

If you have an oil boiler this is particularly important as you will not be able to replace an oil boiler after the end of this year.

Heritage Open Days

If your church is taking part in the Heritage Open Days later this month, it is important that you are prepared for the increased number of people entering your building. Ecclesiastical Insurance have lots of guidance to support you in making sure that these events take place safely and that you are covered by your insurance. Some useful links are:

- [Church Fundraising Hub | Ecclesiastical](#)
- [People on Church Premises | Ecclesiastical](#)
- [Managing Safety at Your Church | Risk Management | Ecclesiastical](#)
- [Fire risk articles for churches | Risk Management | Ecclesiastical](#)
- [Church Slips & Trips | Risk Management | Ecclesiastical](#)
- [Church events | Risk Management](#)
- [Food safety for churches | Risk Management](#)
- [Bouncy castle safety | Risk Management | Ecclesiastical](#)
- [Tower Tours | Risk Management](#)

Theft of stone

We have been made aware of a couple of significant thefts of York Stone and whilst this has been in the northwest it is something that I thought you should be aware of.

- Engage with local neighbours asking them to keep an extra watch over the church premises, reporting any suspicious activity to the police immediately. Take a note of the vehicle registration numbers.
- Communicate with your neighbours, send flyers telling them they will be informed if any work is planned at the church. Often, offenders appear to be genuine contractors wearing high viz jackets and using builders vans.

- Review security to the churchyard perimeter. Ensure all gates which can be, are locked when the church is not in use to restrict access.
- Consider introducing security lighting to illuminate unlawful visitors where there is a reasonable level of surveillance from neighbouring properties.
- Mark stonework with a forensic security marking solution, such as SmartWater
- Work with local police and ask your community support police officer to include the church in his daily duties.

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.

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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