

Some words of advice from a DAC Secretary

THE DAC AND THE PCC

The Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DAC) of each Diocese exists to assist in the process of planning permissions relating to Places of Worship (known as Faculty), and to provide education and training for churchwardens, PCC members, incumbents and architects. DAC members serve on a voluntary basis and are appointed by the Bishop's Council. The committee members include a range of specialists on architecture, liturgy, archaeology, engineering, and representatives from Local Authorities, Amenity Societies and the Archdeacons.

The DAC advises the Diocesan Chancellor (who has the authority to grant Faculties) on the suitability of schemes of repair and alterations. The DAC is happy to advise PCCs on the maintenance and care of the buildings, how to petition for faculty, and where to seek funding. It is also available to advise on the commissioning of new work in churches, for example WC and kitchen facilities. From 1 January 2016, new faculty rules were introduced enabling many routine items of repair and maintenance to be undertaken by consent from an archdeacon rather than a full faculty. This enables important and urgent repairs to be undertaken without delay. Eligible items may be found under list A and list B of the faculty rules.

The DAC secretary (and in some Dioceses, the Church Buildings Support Officer) can put PCCs in touch with other PCCs, contractors and other specialist organisations to help at the feasibility stage of any development. The DAC will usually maintain a list of exemplar sites for PCCs to visit to review works ranging from WC installations to heating and lighting systems. It is good to see real examples to get a feeling for what might be suitable/ appropriate in your church; there is no "one size fits all" and what works well in one location may not in another.

Contact between the DAC and Parishes is to be welcomed and encouraged; regular training events enable PCCs to draw upon the knowledge and experience of each DAC. Similarly it is a good opportunity for the DAC to hear of the things that frustrate PCCs; minor changes in processes can often bring about significant improvements in the way we do things. Site visits by DAC members to meet PCCs at the early stages of major project planning are important; usually the DAC will encourage the PCC to think about the "bigger picture" rather than focussing on one single issue – it is good to have a vision for the entire building even if works have to be phased.

The DAC will provide the liaison between the PCC and the statutory consultees e.g. The

Church Buildings Council, Historic England, The Victorian Society etc. The DAC secretary will advise at what stage of planning consultation should take place; generally this should be as early as possible to minimise delay and frustration at a later stage.

The DAC secretary is available to support incumbents, churchwardens, and PCC members and should normally be the first point of contact with any query relating to your church building. The secretary is unlikely to know the answer to every question, but is able to draw on advice from DAC Consultants (on such matters as bells, clocks, organs, furniture) and the Diocesan Registrar (on legal matters). The secretary is there to help all; from those unfamiliar with Faculty Jurisdiction to those seeking straightforward advice on basic housekeeping and maintenance. In many Dioceses, a Church Buildings Support Officer will track the progress of projects and offer support to PCCs at "staging points" during the faculty petition.

It is important for PCCs to view the DAC as its support resource; the DAC is there to help PCCs achieve their ambitions for their buildings with a friendly, guiding hand.

Stephen Challenger, Property and DAC Secretary, Hereford Diocese