The Chair was taken by Sir Tony Baldry, Chairman of the CBC. Officers of the Council were in attendance.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the 59th Annual Meeting were approved.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Chairman, Sir Tony Baldry commenced proceedings by thanking the Bishop of Salisbury for his welcome and the conference sponsors for making the event possible.

His term as Chair of the CBC finishes next July so this would be his last DAC Conference. He therefore hoped it would be helpful to highlight the main policy questions and issues that his successor would need to take forward.

Firstly, there is a need for an unconditional annual Government grant to a Repair Fund for Listed Places of Worship. We would have to be realistic about the amount for such a Fund each year, but £25 or £30 million a year should be attainable. Otherwise, the only significant source of funding for church building repairs is the Heritage Lottery Fund and the National Lottery has less to distribute to the HLF. As a consequence, the amount that they can allocate for projects has been reduced. This is not sustainable in the long run.

Sir Tony felt that in setting up the Taylor Review, Treasury officials hoped that it would be possible to demonstrate that if the Church of England was more efficient, or were fleeter of foot in adapting church buildings, there would be no further requirement for Treasury funds. Not surprisingly, the Review Group did not come to that conclusion. Two pilot projects have been set up: they are welcome projects and the fact that they have been funded by DCMS is also welcome, but this may just be postponing the time when a decision is going to have to be taken about how the State gives some consistent, and regular, financial support towards the repair and maintenance of Listed church buildings. We should not forget that in many other European countries, such as France and Germany, the State fully maintains church buildings.

The second issue relates to the Listed Places of Worship Scheme, or to VAT. The UK will leave the European Union in March 2019. Existing VAT legislation is entirely EU based legislation. A tax on goods and services is perhaps one of the easiest taxes for the Treasury to collect so it may be inevitable that the Treasury will replace the EU VAT
regime with a UK VAT regime, determined by Parliament. This will provide an opportunity for all those who feel that particular goods and services should be exempt from VAT, or have a reduced rate, to campaign and we need to seek to ensure that under the new UK VAT legislation, repairs on Listed church buildings are zero rated.

The third issue is that we have to recognise that even if we succeed in getting some funding direct from the State, the overall budget for maintaining our 16,000 church buildings is still going to require considerably more funding. Many parishes are grappling with the need simultaneously to pay their Parish Share and also find the money necessary for church maintenance and repair. We need to do a lot more to recruit these members of the community who are not regular church goers, but who nevertheless care about the building, into local Friends Groups to raise money for church repairs.

The next policy issue is whether or not it is going to be possible to establish a new statutory Church Buildings Commission. In 2015 a Working Party was set up which was chaired by the Bishop of Worcester, and which had representatives from CBC, Archbishops’ Council, Church Commissioners and others. This group concluded that the CBC and those parts of the Church Commissioners dealing with closed, or closing churches, should be brought together in a single statutory body which would be called the Church Buildings Commission. This proposal was subsequently accepted by the Archbishops’ Council, the Church Commissioners, and by General Synod. One would have thought in those circumstances fairly speedy progress would have been made to the setting up of a new Church Buildings Commission. In fact, practically no progress has been made towards the Church Buildings Commission over the last four years. The Archbishop of Canterbury has recently appointed a new Third Church Estates Commissioner and it is to be hoped that with her appointment, some progress can now be made.

The next issue concerns a growing tension that is going to need to be resolved between the need to preserve heritage and the need for sustainability for church buildings to adapt for wider community or other uses. At present there are far too many church buildings that are locked for most of the time. If we cannot get this balance right, we are simply in years to come going to see more churches applying to close, because very often an ageing and dwindling PCC no longer feel up to the task of maintaining the building.

It is also noticeable that many of the new church congregations being set up under the “Reform and Renewal” programme are eschewing setting up in established church buildings but rather taking over large spaces, such as former department stores or industrial buildings which they feel gives them suitable adaptability. Getting the balance right between heritage, mission and community relevance is exactly the sort of task that a Church Buildings Commission needs to undertake.

General Synod has passed legislation that in the future will enable, in respect of a Benefice, for there to be a single Benefice Council, rather than each parish within the Benefice having its own separate PCC. This will obviously be of enormous benefit to clergy who have multi parish Benefices. Another of the consequences of Benefice Councils should be Benefices collectively deciding which church buildings within their Benefice want to hold regular services, which church buildings might become Festival Churches or Chapels of Ease, and which they may wish to suggest for closure.
At the present moment, decisions about churches being used tend to be taken by PCCs and we are going to need to see Dioceses with the DAC and the Mission and Pastoral Committees working together to produce strategic reports for the future use of church buildings in their Dioceses, particularly if we are going to ensure that scarce resources are best utilised. It is surprising how often the CBC is looking at proposals for church closures of church buildings that have quite often received not insignificant grant funding within recent years. I think the policy conundrum is how are we going to be able to maintain those buildings as places of worship for those who wish to worship, whilst at the same time spreading the burden of the cost of maintaining them more widely throughout the community. And this may result in many new patterns of responsibility and indeed ownership of church buildings: Joe Elders has been doing some excellent work with the lawyers on devising structures for leases whereby Trusts, or local organisations, can take on the responsibility for caring for a church building.

Although his term as Chair of the CBC finishes next summer, Sir Tony would be very happy to continue to work with the Association of Festival Churches as that is a part of the policy mix going forward. Sir Tony thanked all the DAC Secretaries, and also all those who volunteer their time on DACs, for their individual and collective contribution, which is much valued and much appreciated.

3. REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Becky Clark, Director of Churches and Cathedrals, gave a review of the year.

We are in a new phase of potential risk, not just to our buildings, but to the Church of England as a national institution. There is a new template to help DACs coordinate a strategic approach to managing church buildings. This incorporates missional planning and ministerial deployment and looks at buildings in a context wider than just their parish. Many DACs are of course already do this: as ever, all our best initiatives are in one way or another inspired by what is already happening.

One of the concepts behind the strategic approach is that we are seeing a number of different responses to the need to provide a mixed landscape of Church: i.e. the provision of different modes of delivery, from medieval village church to large Victorian town church to a new church in a new town, all offering different forms of worship and community activities. In this model different offerings are made within one locality. These churches work together, each having information on the others, making an effort to connect and engage, to point people in the right directions. The buildings are open, and they contain information on the Christian faith which people can choose to engage with if they wish. They are, in other words, an integral part of whatever diocesan strategy exists to promote growth.

So what is CCB doing to help? The Taylor Pilots, which finish in March 2020 in Manchester and Suffolk, represent government’s continuing interest in helping us achieve sustainable care for our buildings. We sit on the project board, and have been involved in setting the evaluation criteria to ensure what is measured is helpful to our longer-term case. In addition, we are looking at what we can do to amplify the effects of having two extra officers working closely with the pilot dioceses by putting some of our team resource into supporting new diocesan initiatives, again with the idea that these could form a model for future work.
In a few weeks we will be advertising for a new officer for the team, due to the retirement of Anne Locke, our Cathedrals Officer. The new role will span cathedrals and major churches, looking at how we can better support that category, using some of the learning from our work with cathedrals, including developing joint policies and guidance on things like managing major projects.

In the first half of next year we will be setting up a task-and-finish project to look at how the process of church closure is managed, and what could be done to improve it, particularly in the light of strategic approaches to buildings management. This project will engage all DACs, as well as Archdeacons, DMPC Secretaries, and the Church Commissioners pastoral and closed churches team.

We continue to deliver our grant schemes, both for buildings fabric and conservation of interiors. We have just secured funding for the 2019 conservation grants from the Pilgrim Trust. Janet Berry has worked incredibly hard to ensure the standards of decision-making and scrutiny of applications are at an extremely high level, giving major funders the confidence to continue working with us. These grants are worth up to half a million pounds a year to parishes. We don’t charge any administration fees, ensuring maximum benefit for churches.

We are now in a position to offer advice to the Strategic Development Funding board on applications for funding that include buildings elements. The idea of this is to give applications the best chance of success, and to pool information brought together through the Church Heritage Record and Online Faculty System.

We continue to develop the OFS through our user group. There will be an increase in cost as we have developed many new functionalities, all at the request of the user group, and 33 dioceses are now signed up. Chancellors are very supportive of the OFS.

Our policy work continues to focus on issues DACs tell us are important: lead theft continues to be an issue, and the new Telecommunications Code gave rise to a new piece of guidance in August. Some of these issues are long-term and have no obvious resolution but we carry on pursuing them. Please keep on talking to the CBC. Tell us about the issues you and your parishes are facing, and what we might be able to do to help. We are here to serve the needs of the local Church. Finally, thank you to all present for everything you do.

4. **REVIEW OF KEY INITIATIVES**

**Dr David Knight**, Senior Church Buildings Officer, reviewed the key initiatives he had been involved in:

**Faculty Rules Consultation**

David thanked DACs for engaging with this consultation. Over 200 responses had been received including a useful number from Churchwardens. The latter revealed instances where there are frustrations with the end users of the rules. The responses indicated that there is no room for complacency, but within it there are satisfied users and an acknowledgement of good advice received from DACs. Some respondents wrote as if church buildings were specially identified for regulation (and other buildings were not). Some responses showed a lack of grasp of a place of worship as a public place. Efficient
discharge of quick items when there is nothing to be gained by waiting is noted by users, an undue delay undermines good work in the majority of cases.

**Wider issues**

Lists A and B need to be used in the spirit of simplification, taking account of restrictions in Part 3 of the Rules. There remains a need to show why Faculty is for the benefit of the churches. It should be self-evident, but it is not. The value of the professional is not widely appreciated, especially in projects that are not considered to involve new design. Statements of significance and need are required for changes to a listed building. Please be consistent with wanting these. They are an enormous help to consultees and essential to understanding the mission and worship impact of the proposal.

Once respondent requested a service level agreement: what would this look like?

**Policy and Precedent**

One element of the Getting the Best out of your DAC initiative launched by Sir Tony was to have some consistency of response to similar issues across DACs. The Policy and Precedents paper can be found online with the conference papers: http://www.churchcare.co.uk/images/CBC_Policy_and_precedents_September_2018.pdf.

It has helped the Council to have this list drawn together and it helps keep us consistent in approach and in terms of what we demand of churches. Fairness is important. We know that there is not a standard answer to each question as the strength of the need will be taken into account, but there are opportunities for being consistent in, for example, what is needed to make the case for something.

**NOA by DAC Secretary** – legislation to allow the NOA to be sent by the DAC Secretary, following agreement with the DAC over when this can be done, is still making its way through the legislative process. Enactment in January 2019 is the first likely opportunity. This has the potential to be a big help with simplification, maybe in particular with matters not affecting the character of a building but also not appropriate for inclusion on the lists.

**Engagement on metal theft**

It has been a mixed year on metal theft, with intense pressure in some places around the country – generally the Midlands. The Historic England guidance now aligns with that of the CBC on alternative materials. There is understanding, and pressure for action, but also a realisation that progress is still needed (particularly in relation to disposal routes). Sentencing guidelines now give an increased tariff for heritage crime so it is essential that it is reported as such.

**Length of service of DAC members**

The proposal for 2 terms of service before a break received a lively response. Thank you to those who wrote in detail. The synod legislative process will take time and in reality it will be over a decade for this to have an impact. The DAC as a ‘closed shop for architects’ was a subtext to responses to the rules consultation and this also informed some of the QI responses. Some churn in DAC membership will help greatly with the perception of this. We can help with central advertising for replacement DAC members.
5. UPDATE ON HISTORIC ENGLAND CHARGES FOR PRE-APPLICATION ADVISORY SERVICE

Diana Evans, Head of Places of Worship, Historic England, provided an update on what charges had been incurred. Only two parishes have so far paid for advice for casework. When DAC Secretaries get involved in all party meetings it is beneficial to the parishes. Statements should be in place before the meetings.

Separately, HE has found the Online Faculty System very beneficial in increasing transparency and improving the availability of documentation. This facilitates a better quality of response.

6. UPDATE ON ONLINE FACULTY SYSTEM AND CASEWORK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Rupert Allen, Leicester DAC Secretary, provided an update on the development of these systems. DACs are asked to feedback on the proposals for the latter.

7. GUEST SPEAKERS

The conference was pleased to welcome the following guest speakers:

Church plants and resource churches
Sarah Jackson, CEO & Andrew Parsons, Project Manager, Church Revitalisation Trust

Churches Conservation Trust Regeneration Team
Isabel Assaly, Head of Regeneration and Consultancy

Achieving permission – what will help your chancellor?
Ruth Arlow, Salisbury Diocesan Chancellor

Conflicts of interest – what do they look like and how to manage them
Timothy Briden, Chancellor of the Diocese of Truro and, Bath and Wells, Chair of the Ecclesiastical Judges Association

Copies of the presentations we have received can be found online at:
http://www.churchcare.co.uk/about-us/past-events/1076-annual-dac-conference-2018