

CHURCH BUILDINGS COUNCIL
Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CHAIRS AND SECRETARIES OF THE
DIOCESAN ADVISORY COMMITTEES FOR THE CARE OF CHURCHES

Minutes of the 62nd Annual Meeting, held online via Zoom, 9th September
2020

The Chair was taken by Jennie Page CBE, Chair of the CBC. Officers of the Council were in attendance.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chair, Jennie Page, opened her review by noting the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. These included the closure of church buildings and the need to produce guidance in many areas – including closing churches – that were never anticipated. She paid tribute to the work of the DACs and CBC team to respond so well in such difficult circumstances.

Despite worship moving online the importance of church buildings was not forgotten. 300 casework referrals were still received during this time, 200 of which came from DACs, mostly for reorderings and extensions (105) with conservation cases coming second.

There have been significant changes to the online faculty system this year to support the new faculty rules. 38 dioceses are now online and annual investment means it is being continually refined.

This year the DAC Conference is joining with the DEO conference. Environmental issues are a key consideration nationally and within the church. We have been working hard since the February General Synod proposed that the Church create plans to reach net zero by 2030. The environmental team has provided new resources to help churches. Thanks to all who contributed to the consultation over the definition of net zero.

At a strategic level, what is the impact of lockdown? The Church is collaborating with the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture at York University on a project called ‘Where do we go from here’, looking at three things – what measures, what priorities and what information could help inform future strategy in the event of a second wave or another pandemic. We will circulate a link to the survey in the coming days. Please share with others and respond yourself.

One of Council’s priorities is that models of caring for buildings needs to change. Things will not go back to the way they were before, even with a vaccine. The economic hit will cast a shadow. Parish share has dropped. Some cathedrals are facing extreme financial pressure. In recent years, models have been proposed as ways of releasing resources. New legislation has allowed greater flexibility. This has led some to question whether reopening is worthwhile but it gives us the opportunity to look at management. Making long term decisions in such an atmosphere is likely to be difficult and divisive. CCB is

focusing on questions that are priorities for 2021. Throughout this they will support the faculty process and the work of DACs. Closing churches is not easy, rightly so, but there is a need for change in patterns of ministry to serve all. The Strategic Review process can help identify strengths and weaknesses that allow buildings to be part of a future planning process. There is more on this in the conference booklet.

For CCB, the next 4 months will be planning for 2021, in discussion with you and committees, the heritage sector and government bodies – funding reviews, guidance, are all on the agenda.

Thank you for the questions for the annual meeting sent in advance.

1. Strategic planning – Will the summary of discussions be available to all dioceses around strategic planning?

Becky Clark: This will be one of the main strands of work going forward. All dioceses are able to have an online surgery with staff who can discuss options. We can disseminate more of that in the future – we didn't know the world would go so virtual, so in future we will plan for that.

2. Priorities of CHR and Festival Churches – will there be online training for DAC and parishes?
3. *Becky Clark:* very good idea indeed. We focused training on the OFS as a statutory system, but we are looking at how we can extend that. Not immediately but certainly in 2021. That would be a good focus for 2021.
4. What is the difference between Chapels of Ease and Festival Churches?

Becky Clark: they get called a variety of different things, but a Festival Church is still a parish church, they have all the responsibility and still have to pay parish share. A Chapel of Ease was put in place in the parish boundaries for people who could not reach the church. The decision to become a Festival Church can be made without needing a pastoral scheme as the parish remains the same. Festival Churches can offer fewer services but it is hoped they would still do some and meet the need for occasional offices in the parish.

5. Will CCB put out its own guidance on graffiti?

Becky Clark: we are not planning on doing this, the HE guidance is comprehensive and there is nothing in there that does not apply to historic churches – we can send a link after this session.

6. Some DACs are sending consultations under the new rules that make it clear that the DAC has already reached its view. What can the CCB do to make sure they are interpreting the rules correctly:

Becky Clark: I can't comment on specifics, but the intention was to take the views of all consultees into consideration when a DAC gives its advice. This year we are going to have some online surgeries to see how this is working. There will be a

chance to feed that back to us. There will be different ways of implementing it, but we hope the spirit of it, to inform decision-making, is at the heart of the process.

This is the end of the formal business of the Annual Meeting

2. CONTESTED HERITAGE PANEL DISCUSSION

Becky Clark, Director of Churches and Cathedrals, introduced the discussion on contested heritage.

Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests continue to have repercussions, and the lockdown made their effect broader. The issues raised have differed. In the UK, public memorialisation of those involved in slavery came to the fore. The Colston statue incident led to an extended debate and it is an issue people feel strongly about. Statues, memorials and gravemarkers are not public statues like Colston. Their reason for existence is different. They have a different legal structure around them. But churches are part of this debate. St Botolph's Aldgate removed a statue leaving an empty plinth, Bristol Cathedral has applied for permission to remove a Colston window; and the Scipio Africanus gravestone was vandalised as a 'retaliation' for what happened to the Colston statue. Our society is not an equal one.

Nothing is unknown or new – the national church has recognised this and has committed to a new working group against systemic racism. We are not formally linked into that, and we want our work on monuments to feed into other marginalised groups. This is an invitation to conversation and understanding, and we must seek to model inclusiveness. As to our roles, we are here to protect what is significant so that they are relevant and have purpose. This does not mean 'no change'. But we need to make the effort to understand the wider issues. We are not going to discuss individual cases, or getting detailed feedback on the document, which is in draft. We will do that another time. But we will hear from others about contested histories and discuss where that fits into our wider work.

Becky: Turning now to Novelette Stewart and Chris Newlands. First question: What does contested history mean to you?

Novelette: The best way of looking at it is to take a personal stance on it. We all have experiences, a historiography. It's defined by how we perceive or interpret things. What is contested history in cultural matters is when people feel they don't have a shared citizenship in history, because a dominant narrative has been formed. So it's a way of including those voices, and integrating both sides, so we have a comprehensive understanding of our place as individuals, and a sense of ourselves as Christians.

Becky: so it isn't about removing elements, but adding.

Novelette: yes. History is very much interaction of everyone. You cannot have a singularity. History is a pluralistic event, chains of events. We speak of monuments like Colston, but when you don't have a particular knowledge of yourself or your history because things have been taken away from you, those contentions objects act as a negative space. It's about finding a way where we can integrate so that we have a true reflection of history and what went on in it.

Chris: Building on what Novelette said, history is written by those who are victorious. That is what is memorialised. The 18C made memorials to their own greatness. When we do have memorials who have been perpetrators of evil, that raises a huge challenge. In eastern Europe, statues of former leaders were removed and put in a park, far away. How we do this in our churches, to keep seeing things that remind us of the past, but look to the future, that is the challenge that we face.

Becky: People say this is a temporary thing, and what if we do damage that can't be repaired. This past, present, future is one of the points being made – about if we do something now and views change, how will that affect the future? Novelette, you discussed the idea of contested objects, the question is why do we care about this in churches now and what is it about memorials that are relevant today? Chris, you had an experience at Lancaster Priory.

Chris: yes, we had a memorial that was vandalised during the peak of the BLM protest, and 'Slave Trader' was sprayed in red paint. The person wasn't a slave trader, so it was misunderstood, but the fact remains we have many other memorials to people who were, and this is something we would want to condemn. We must regard it as utterly repugnant. Where we are now, we wish to repent of this. How we do this, how we express ourselves in a way that future generations will see where we stand. We will look at putting a memorial in the churchyard here, with the help of David Lammy. Lancaster was the fourth largest slavery port in the UK and much of it was built off the back of the slave trade. Some were active in the slave trade, and some benefited from it. We have tombs here to the Gillows family, with the finest examples of woodwork all imported from the West Indies off the back of the slave trade. We have lots of Gillows pieces. We have to understand the reality of the world they lived in, and how we today see those objects and place them within a living church. We have to live with that and make the best we can of repenting.

Becky: Sometimes furniture or the buildings themselves were paid for by slavery. Novelette, in terms of your background as a conservator, what do you feel is the relevance of this?

Novelette: some church monuments, depending on whether they were perpetrators or beneficiaries, through omission (as Christian we can't look away when we see injustices – we have had a history where when we know there have been injustices, we have not dealt with them. So, it comes back to, what do you want to be in this generation? Someone who is stymied by the legacy, or a real part of the living church – a church who has changed, and accepts, and incorporates the narratives that were suppressed? When you have a monument that venerates someone and you have to pass that every day, in your sacred space, you do feel a little estranged. Which gets back to, does the church wish to have co-citizens in this, or continue in this nebulous space. Why do we care? Because new narratives have been established. And they reflect a congregation, and that congregation is our family. In our not too distant past, in the 50s and 60s they came here and thought of themselves as Anglicans and they weren't accepted. If we know what we know and we choose not to do anything about it, go through an assessment and look at our own vulnerabilities, we would be falling short of our mission. And I see the church as a very living church.

Becky: both of you have said why this matters now. Chris, in Lancaster, you made the decision to leave the vandalism there for a short period to recognise it. What has happened so far in dealing with this has been very reactive. There is a proactive way of doing this as well. I am interested in the opportunities there are in raising contested

histories with PCCs and the church at large. What do you think the opportunities might be?

Chris: it is a wonderful opportunity to be explicit about the responsibility given to us to treat all people as unique, it gives us the permission to be explicitly in how we present that in our outward-facing work. By doing so we can make a public witness. We can present to present and future generations our commitment to that. We need to think about how we provide policy, advice and guidance for best practice that seems consistent right across the country and the church. This would be useful for PCCs to have and to use. These are the people who are affected, and having taken on the anger, it allows us to express repentance and creating something that is appropriate to the times.

Novelette: Just to say that I agree with Chris, but also I want to say about internal growth. We have weathered a lot of storms, in terms of the church of England. Since '91 I have seen our fellowship fraction over women being ordained, over LGBT people being married, and I feel when we come out of it we come out stronger. We become more a church of the world. There are those who still disagree with these things but what we must be, what I would like the church to be, is a sum of our parts. These are our congregation, and we have to have an infrastructure in place so that when the next storm comes along, we will have grown.

Becky: I have a question from the Chair of Bristol DAC. 'I am white, and not disabled, and cannot know the intrinsic issues in the same way, I can only think of things in the abstract –when assessing individual cases, is there merit in applying positive discrimination in order to counter bias?'

Novelette: I have seen how positive discrimination can work. It doesn't stem from a communion of people. There is an argument that it can be a positive measure, but I have seen it work against, where it is casually adapted by people. But you can't apply one remedy for every issue. How would you come up with the criteria for applying this? It's about examining it. There will be objects that are grossly offensive. I might try to find a way to rehabilitate it, but how do we approach it? By interpretation? There are so many things, and I would be cautious about saying yes we will use positive discrimination across the board, because it becomes artificial. It's not a level playing field. What we want to do is not replicate imbalances – their voice also matters. If you have a committee together, with the FACs, with the PCCs, the DACs, you will get different experiences on different levels. That is the way forward, to create the most heterogeneous space and work through that.

Chris: We are all trying, and all learning, and we want to do the right thing. And those from a white background often need help. What was normal when I was a child is unacceptable now. So a lot of older people need a little bit of help. We are trying to find the right vocabulary. But it comes down to, the old mantra: don't talk about us without us. It's understanding how we can work together to find something that works for everyone, and it's that journey that will help us all, to talk with one another without fear, trying to make sure we listen to one another. We all want to get to the same point, and it's how we present that to the outside world. We have to try to work together and that is how we will make our mark in the present, and not repent our decision but we proud that we turned the corner. How we express ourselves to the outside world and those who see us as a church.

Becky: To pick up on fear, our last question is whether it's too much of a burden for parishes? I'm interested, Novelette, we have discussed fear, and what the perceived burden is, how can we help? What if we get it wrong?

Novelette: We are trying to get it right, even if we get it wrong we are trying. It's when you don't do things, that is when we become rooted to the spot. The only intractable thing is the fact that we are all brothers and sisters whether we have different skin colour, sexuality, and that that is the only thing that is immovable. It is never a burden. To get personal, I think a lot of people will not... I spoke to a member and she said, 'don't you believe in forgiveness?' and I thought I forgive every day, every week, for example when I go to a restaurant wearing a white shirt when I am mistaken for a waitress... why should one group always be apologising? We need to say we are ALL ill at ease, let's all work through this together.

Chris: Here in Lancaster, we pride ourselves on being an inclusive church, but we don't have anyone on the PCC who isn't White British. We don't have that internal diversity that I would love to have. We have diversity in the wider church. We would hope to find that diversity to be truly representative. Justin Welby referred to the House of Bishops as Male Pale and Stale. We need to lose that staleness. To bring life to the community. The wider that you open the gates to opinions and interest, the greater the opportunity to have a deeper understanding of who we are. Parishes would appreciate that, where they don't have that diversity, we need to rely on the wider forum to help us to do the right thing. Not every PCC wants to reinvent the wheel, that is why the guidance will help to reap the benefits of bringing others together. That this is the whole church putting that together.

Becky: the risks of not doing something outweigh the risk of doing something. It's necessary to engage with a wide range of voices. It's a huge opportunity to diversify. Having fear isn't a bad thing. The document isn't a call for every PCC to assess every memorial in their church, it's if you are going to tell a story, tell it all. We have a strong set of statutory processes, we need to get to a place where we have equal engagement with communities of all kinds. The main thing to say is, it isn't someone else's job. This is our job because we are Christians and supporting Christian organisations.

Poll: 74% welcomed guidance on this issue (yes), 3% no, 23% not sure

3. A 'ZERO CARBON' CHURCH: Learning from St Michael, Withington

Speaker: **Matt Fulford**, Director, Inspired Efficiency, and Gloucester DAC Sustainability Advisor

I want to share the challenges of what we did, with the benefit of hindsight and give you a virtual tour.

St Michael and All Angels Withington

At first I thought: Is this building an impossibility to treat and convert? It's a Grade I listed building in an area of outstanding natural beauty, in a conservation area, and 900 years old. It is typical in that it is predominantly used for Sunday worship, it had an oil-fired boiler located in a cellar, cast iron radiators, and normal reflector spotlights mounted high up. The oil emissions were contributing heavily to climate change. Its boiler was on its last legs and needed to be changed, and they wanted to look wider and

do whatever was truly sustainably, environmentally and economically, to continue to afford to fuel itself, and also for fuel security, and not having oil nicked but also where it came from. The other things they wanted was to be a catalyst, stick their neck on the line and say, could it do something that others could follow? It's interesting to look back – this was ten years ago – and I can point to one or two examples that may have been inspired by them – the cathedral for example has a large PV array. There are other examples, but I think I do look back and think I can't think of the hundreds that have followed, but maybe the time is now coming. It was also to be an exemplar to demonstrate the possibilities of integrating the sustainability agenda with historic buildings.

What did we do? We did make it the first zero carbon church in the UK. Possibly the world. How did we achieve that? There were three main parts. The first part often gets missed. Yes we did put in a biomass boiler, and we did put in a large solar PV array, but we couldn't have got zero carbon with just those. We had to reduce the amount of electricity it was using.

Lighting

The very first thing was to look at its exterior lighting. They had been donated and they were much cherished. They were part of the church. They went off at 11:30 at night. We asked the whole community how they felt about them, whether they could be turned off etc, and when. The answer was unanimously, they thought it should turn off at 10pm, even earlier than we thought, so that was a substantial saving (13%). We could easily change the internal lighting. Ten years ago we didn't have the LEDs we have now, I have to admit now I was a bit naughty I went and quietly changed a couple of lights without telling anybody, and then I asked everyone, and they hadn't even noticed. So we changed all the lighting, and that gave a 24% saving. We then ended up over-generating and the old oil boiler was changed to biomass.

The biomass boiler

The biomass boiler is in the cellar where the old boiler was. The existing oil boiler was failing, and we replaced it like for like. The output was similar. It integrated itself well with the existing wet radiator system. The heating demand was only for 8 hours a week. Sunday service, a school assembly and a little more. So the system of operation of this boiler was that the biomass pellets are delivered in bags, stored in the undercroft, and then loading it into a hopper every two weeks. We got enough grants that the church got it for free (at the time). The financials were strong. It was producing less carbon and saving money. The biomass was sourced from waste product from manufacturing.

The solar panels

There is a low- pitched roof on the nave, and the roof is not visible from the ground because of a parapet. There is a self-weighted system, it does not penetrate the historic copper roof. There is going to be surface generation which is fed back into the grid.

What did we learn? The challenges over the design and installation – firstly the boiler. Biomass boilers are much larger and heavier than oil or gas counterparts. Getting it into the undercroft was a challenge. It had to be sized so it just about fit in. That is a key part in planning. There were misconceptions about the pellet usage, and that you need to heat 24/7. The big challenge with the PV system was how to fix it, or how not to. Historic medieval timbers and a copper roof – it was a no-holes approach, it is self-weighted,

designed by Sinclair Johnson, it has metal channels and concrete lintels acting as ballast. The clever bit was the design of the pads that distributed the weight and ensured there was no bimetallic corrosion. That slots on top and does not move, even in strong wind. We also needed to get the cable from the roof to the system, and it is behind the rainwater goods – there is only one small section of visible cable.

Thoughts now

The lighting went very well. It was instantly accepted and barely noticed. We only had one lamp failure in ten years. That has been a big success. The solar PV has been a strong success, it's been largely maintenance free other than a little bit of cleaning. When this was done, the church received a considerable income from it and they have outperformed themselves by 10% and the degradation of the solar panels has been less than 1% per year.

The biomass boiler was not a success. It wasn't the boiler, it was the overall heating project that wasn't a success. There were frequent minor issues on the pellet feeds. Sometimes you get longer pellets or clumps that would block the feed system, and someone has to go down and poke at it to free it. That happens a little bit too often. There was only one case where the engineer got called out, but there were frequent small issues. The other issue is the operational system was having the pellets delivered in bags and manually added. We didn't use as much pellet as we thought, and we put in a large hopper so we only had to do it once a month. We started off with enthusiastic volunteers but some went away or became physically unable to do it, so it was increasingly difficult. But the major failing was that it didn't seek to address the issues with the rest of the heating systems throughout the church. There are large column radiators at the back of the church, so the thermal comfort had not improved. It wasn't worse but it wasn't better. This highlights that we can't look at heating projects as – it's a boiler and I need to replace the boiler – we need to focus on thermal comfort and ensure that is achieved.

Where are we now? It has gone on to install electric under-pew heating. The church hasn't had a great deal of time to assess it but initial impressions were good. It is under all pews, apart from the rear two. The church at the time chose not to remove its existing biomass boiler but wanted to keep it for background heating. The PV panels continue to generate and work well. There are virtually no maintenance costs. It has continued to maintain its zero carbon status because it is over-generating.

Another example is St Andrew's church up the road – now zero carbon – it had the same heating system, it needed to replace their boiler and they went fully electric. Under-pew heaters, two different styles, and they installed some discreet panel heating (behind the altar) and overhead panel heaters. The new panels were much smaller and discreet, easy to fit in. This is the advantage of really going for it, taking out the system and freeing up the space for other uses. At Withington they still sit side by side. So the lesson from St Andrew's is that the brown heaters are preferred because they distribute heat well. You need to heat the whole length of the pew. Simple controls.

Poll – The visibility of solar panels. Do we think they should be visible?
Yes 55% / No 27% / Not an issue 18%

4. FINAL COMMENTS

The Chair, **Jennie Page**, closed the meeting.

The engagement of the group was commended, with three speakers dealing with difficult issues. The message to everyone is that there are ways we can change, with the overall narrative that we must change. If Withington as a 900-year old building can be the first zero carbon church, it's a lesson to everybody. Listening to Novelette and Chris is that we need to open the debate. The message for today's session is the ability to respond to climate change and to contested heritage (quotes the poem, *Archaic Torso of Apollo*, by Rilke: 'For here there is no place that does not see you. You must change your life').