Church Buildings Support Network

Meeting Notes

Date of Meeting: 20th November	**Focus**: Open Q&A; future of network

Open Q&A

Insurance bills are often out of proportion with congregation numbers. Has anyone any experience on reducing insurance cover on their churches to hopefully reduce the premiums as well?

Many churches have done this. Ecclesiastical often advice you should only insure a church to approx. 25% because if it were destroyed, you would not rebuild in exactly the same way, using the same materials etc. Samuel Pedlar can put people in touch with PCCs who have successfully done this.

The 2 main church insurers are Trinitas and Ecclesiastical, but there are a few others. It can help to get more than 1 quote.

Is the reduction split between fabric and contents?

It is different for individual churches, but in our experience the insurance reduction is on fabric; contents cover is separate.

The Church of England is currently producing official guidance on this, which should be released in 2025. We can review this guidance at a future meeting.

Do you hold a list of churches in the area who have already tackled problems/completed projects so we can contact them, particularly regarding heating?

We have a NZC Officer who is trying to collate examples of heating, lighting projects etc. to build up a list of case studies and contacts. *Contact details at the end.*

Samuel and Holly are also trying to compile a list of completed projects, but it can be difficult as we rely on parishes to send us the information. It is something the department is looking to improve on.

Has anyone got any expertise with housing relics in their church – insurance, security etc.?

Keyston church have a unique wooden cadaver, which was being threatened by general environmental conditions and a large population of bats. The PCC received a grant from Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust for a display case.

There are DAC specialist advisors who could help.

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Future of the Support Network

Holly explained how this network had been a pilot project this year, as an alternative to in-person training which can be difficult to provide consistently across the Diocese, and thus tends to attract low levels of attendance. The pilot has been successful and will continue next year, but Samuel Pedlar is going to take it forward. This is mainly because, as the Church and

Church Buildings Support Network

Community Support Advisor, the network is more aligned with many other initiatives Samuel is working on. Samuel briefly outlined his plan for training and support over the next year:

In-person events: these will take place in the Leightonstone Benefices* but will be open to all from within the Diocese of Ely to attend. These may include sessions on heritage skills, such as learning the basics of re-pointing.

Surgeries: drop-in sessions on a set theme with members of staff from the Church Buildings Team. Themes will include:

- Faculties and List B
- Fundraising and Grants
- Administration and Compliance
- Net Zero Carbon

Online Support Network: will continue in similar format. Themes suggested:

- Heating, Lighting and NZC
- Ecology, Bats
- Community Engagement
- Maintenance
- Festival Churches
- Clock, Bells, Wallpaintings, Organs
- Handrails and Ramps
- Route map to Managing a Project.

Open to anyone involved in looking after church buildings, including Friends groups.

Feedback on the Online Support Network

Format: the format is fine, particularly when starting with a presentation from a guest speaker (often from a church talking about a completed project) followed by Q&A, then time for AOB.

Online conversation and chat is very, very valuable even if it doesn't have a set focus, the fact that you hear somebody else talking about the same sort of problems that you are suffering with or even mention a problem and you think, well do we have that? It has enormous value.

Online great when the weather is terrible.

Notes from the sessions are very valuable.

Promotion: not very well promoted, tends to be right at the end of the very lengthy weekly M&M mailing. Not everyone gets the newsletter or reads it in time. A mailing list for the group would be great to keep people up to date with meeting dates and details.

Timings: evening agreed to be the best, but advised slightly later start time of 7:30pm.

Link: no preference as to whether you need to 'book' to get the link or publish it on the website and in adverts.

Email/Chat group: asked if it would be useful to have a way to ask questions/contact people between meetings.   It was agreed it would be useful to have a list of experts at the DAC to contact on certain issues. Holly highlighted that as DAC members are volunteers, their details are not made available for PCCs to contact directly, but a list of the specialisms covered could

certainly be made available. It was agreed that it would be helpful to list specialist areas so people knew what advice was available. There was a brief discussion about adding names of other 'experts' and Holly highlighted that the team does have a list of suppliers and contractors, which we are more than happy to add names to. It's not a very full list and we are looking at how to develop it.

The Leightonstone Benefices are the focus of the Church Buildings Management Partnership, a pilot project exploring ways to support parishes to look after church buildings. The project was launched at the end of November 2024, more details and updates will be released next year.

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Contacts

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DAC - all queries please use the main email in the first instance.

DAC@elydiocese.org or contact Sam Reeder on 01353 652718

Holly Robinson, Historic Church Buildings Support Officer

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Next Meeting:

Wednesday January 15th, 7:30pm – 9pm

Theme: Heating, Lighting and Net Zero with presentations from Sacha Watson and Nigel Cooper (Diocesan Net Zero & Environment Officers)

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