



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

This month I have quite a few pieces of information to share with you and I would be grateful if you could take some time to look through this longer than usual update as it has a few important bits of information that I have come across.

Energy Footprint Tool for 2024

Thank you for those of you who have completed the EFT over the last couple of months and so far, almost 40% of churches have entered their data. The EFT closes at the end of June but we would really appreciate an early response to this so that we can check the data well before the deadline. With this in mind I would be grateful if you could remind treasurers, as they finalise the end of year church accounts, to put the energy bills to one side to complete the EFT.

Church Building Training 2025

Please find below the Church Building Training that has so far been planned for the year. If you would like to attend a session but the time or location do not work for you, please let me know and I can look at running an alternative session that would work for you. I try to host sessions around the diocese so if your church would like to host a session, then please let me know.

Date	Time	Venue	Event	Booking Link
Thurs 10th April	6.00– 8.00pm	Cuthbert House	Grant Workshop	https://bit.ly/4bbJmGI
Thurs 15th May	2.00-4.00pm	Cuthbert House	Achieving Net Zero in your Church Building	https://bit.ly/4gYilCF
Wed 11th June	10.00am-12.00pm	All Saints, Lobley Hill	Faculty Workshop – New Online System	https://bit.ly/4karBMd
Thurs 19th June	1.30-3.30pm	St Peter's, Stockton	Understanding your buildings	https://bit.ly/4k5tutL
Thurs 3rd July	7.00-9.00pm	Cuthbert House	Faculty Workshop – New Online System	https://bit.ly/4bvGKUf
Mon 7th July	1.30pm	Cuthbert House	New Churchwardens Training	Contact Archdeacons PA to book
Tue 8th July	6.30pm	Zoom		Contact Archdeacons PA to book
September	TBC	TBC	Annual Maintenance Schedule	TBC
Mon 13th October	1.30-3.30pm	St Gabriel's, Sunderland	Faculty Workshop – New Online System	https://bit.ly/4hSowyN

Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) Meetings

The deadline for the April agenda is a little earlier this month due to the Easter weekend and any items to be included in the agenda need to be with me no later than 12 noon on Wednesday 16th April.

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 can be found on the website.

Building Projects & Grants

If you are planning a building project over the next year or two, I would like to draw you attention to the following session.

On Thursday 10th April we will be joined to colleagues from the Heritage Lottery Fund who will explain about the grants that they can provide. The session will also provide general information about applying for other grants and the information that you will need to have in place.

To book, please use the following link <https://bit.ly/4bbJmGI>

Durham Community Action have also planned a range of virtual funding information sessions with a range of grant providers that might be of interest to some churches. Details of the sessions can be found at [Virtual Funding Information Sessions April - September 2025: more funders added](#)

Emergency Planning Resources from Historic England

The Emergency Planning team at Historic England invites all places of worship to take part in the [training needs analysis survey](#). The aim of the [survey](#) is to help Historic England identify where gaps exist in the provision of training and guidance on emergency preparedness, response and recovery within our historic environment and the heritage sector.

You can find out more about the emergency planning, fire, flood and heritage crime guidance and advice provided by Historic England, as well as its current training offer and Emergency Planning Training Centre, by following these links:

[Emergency Planning, Fire Advice and Emergency Planning training](#)

[Flooding and Older Homes](#)

[Flooding and Historic Buildings](#)

[Heritage Crime](#)

The survey will close on Friday 4th April at 23:59

Appointing a new Quinquennial Inspector

A number of our longstanding Quinquennial Inspectors have decided to retire or reduce their workload and as a result a number of parishes will be needing to appoint a new inspector this year. I have been in touch with all of the parishes that I am aware of, but many have not yet requested DAC advice on their proposed appointment.

In the appointment of a person to carry out a quinquennial inspection, churches are encouraged to interview prospective inspectors. It has been brought to my attention of an issue elsewhere in the country when a PCC has asked questions that are not relevant to the appointment of an inspector. I would therefore like to remind PCCs that it is not appropriate to include interview questions around [protected characteristics](#) as this could leave the PCC open to challenge under the [Equality Act 2010](#).

Details on the appointment process and a list of inspectors currently working with parishes in the diocese can be found on the website [Church Buildings Resources - Diocese of Durham](#) and scroll down to "Quinquennial Inspections"

Disability Project

All of the large grants allocated to our diocese have now been awarded, however applications for the small grants of up to £5,000 remain open. They are awarded on a first come first served basis, so if you have a project that might qualify, I would suggest that you get applications in as soon as possible. Further details can be found at [Disability Project Parish Grants Scheme | The Church of England](#).

Online Faculty System Update

The Online Faculty System is currently being redesigned and the new system will hopefully remove some of the issues that people have found with the current system. The faculty process itself will not change but how it appears on the online system will look different. The transfer to the new system looks likely to occur early in the Autumn but final details are still to be confirmed. I will be doing some training over the summer and will confirm dates as soon as possible.

The current system for Durham Diocese currently has over 130 active faculties, however 80 of those have been issued and are waiting for parishes to confirm that the work has been completed. I would be grateful if you could check your parishes faculty records and update these as soon as possible. We also have a large number that were started some years ago but have not proceeded beyond the initial stage. I will remove those started before 2024 from the system unless parishes confirm that they are still planning to proceed with the work.

Heating

If your church boiler is over 20 years old, now is the time to start considering options for the future. A boiler can fail at any point but if you have a boiler over 20 years old the chance is much greater and it is also more likely that parts may not be available for them. Since 2022, in line for the Church of England's Net Zero Carbon pledge, any new boilers have required a faculty application and as part of that application you have to be able to justify the replacement of a gas boiler rather than moving to a lower carbon heating solution.

If you have an oil boiler these cannot be replaced after 2025, so looking at alternatives now will save time when you need to find an alternative.

If you would like me to visit to discuss the options with you then please get in touch.

Net Zero Webinars

If you are struggling to get your head around how your church can possibly get to Net Zero by 2030, you are not alone. We have no magic solution as every church building in the diocese is different and the usage of every building is different. The webinars are a good place to start and they can be found at [Webinars on getting to net zero carbon | The Church of England](#). I am always happy to come out and visit churches to help you look at some of the things that you could consider first and those things that will take a little bit of time to plan. I am also running a session in May and you can find further details at <https://bit.ly/4gYilCF>.

National Churches Trust

1. The House of Good: Local calculator Calculate the social and economic value your church brings to its community using a free online tool from the National Churches Trust. By using this tool, you can highlight the crucial role your church plays in supporting local people, as well as strengthen your case for fundraising, motivate volunteers, and contribute to the future planning of your church's mission. To use the tool, please visit: www.nationalchurchestrust.org/houseofgood-local.

2. National Church Survey

The future of church buildings is the greatest heritage challenge facing the UK, but their contribution to society is often underappreciated, and the volunteers who support them are seldom heard. The National Churches Trust is conducting a major new survey to give a voice to those whose dedicated service cares for the country's 38,500 churches and presents an opportunity to celebrate the heritage and role of church buildings, bringing them to national attention. At a time when their future and funding is in jeopardy, this landmark study will reveal the current status of church buildings, how they are maintained, funded, and the support they provide for local communities. The survey will go live at the start of May 2025, and we encourage you to register in order that we can include your church in this study. So you don't miss out, please register your interest here and, in May, you will receive an invitation to participate: <https://www.research.net/r/NCT2025>.

Living alongside bats in churches grant

The next round of the Living Alongside Bats in Churches grant is now open and will close at **9am on the 28 April**. These grants are especially intended to help churches who are facing another summer of lots of cleaning get the help they need. Grants can be awarded for:

- Pew covers
- New hoovers
- A telescopic brush
- Specialist cleaning
- Bat detectors for future events (in addition to cleaning equipment)

A requirement of the grant is that the church holds a positive community event inspired by nature. Examples of these include:

- Local schools having a bat day
- Several bat walks/evenings with local bat groups
- Bat inspired flower show
- Community event making pew covers

Part of the grant can be used toward the costs of the event. Applications and more information are [online](#). If you have questions about the scheme please contact the Bats in Churches adviser, [Hazel Tocock](#)

Durham Diocese Churchwardens Forum

It has been really good to see this forum being used more regularly to share or request information or advice. The online Churchwardens Forum uses Google Groups to allow you to ask questions and share information with other Churchwardens. 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

Buildings for Mission Secretary,
Diocese of Durham
Phone: 07586090996