



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

This update once again gives you some bits of information that I have come across which I hope you may find useful as you look after your church buildings.

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme (LPWGS) Update

On Wednesday, 22nd January, at a special Westminster Hall debate, Chris Bryant MP, the minister for Culture, Media and Sport announced that the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme will continue for one year from March 2025 as follows:

- The Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme will be renewed for one year – until 2026,
- A spending cap will now apply. There is now a limit of £25,000 that can be claimed through the scheme – this is how much VAT you would have paid on £125k vatable work which can be reclaimed in maximum by an individual place of worship during that year.
- The overall budget of the scheme has been reduced to £23 million. (last year £29m was spent).

Whilst this is good news for the majority of our Listed Churches, it will be disappointing news for those with larger projects, who will find a significant shortfall in their project funding.

The Church of England response to the news can be found here [Comment on the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme announcement | The Church of England](#)

Energy Footprint Tool for 2024

Thank you for those of you who have completed the EFT over the last few weeks and so far, almost 20% of churches have entered their data. We would really appreciate an early response to this so that we have the data in the first part of the year. With this in mind I would be grateful if you could remind treasurers, as they start collating the end of year figures and documents for church accounts, to put the energy bills to one side to complete the EFT.

Church Building Training 2025

Sorry for the delay in sending out this year's training calendar, I hope to be able to publish it in a few weeks' time. I try to host sessions around the diocese so if your church would like to host a session, then please let me know.

Date	Event
Jan	Producing a Net Zero Carbon Action Plan
March	Undertaking Church Building Projects
April	Grant Workshop
May	Achieving Net Zero in your Church Building / Heating Fair
June	Faculty Workshop – The new Online Faculty System
June	Fire Risk Management and Health & Safety
July	Understanding your buildings
July	Faculty Workshop
September	New Churchwardens Training
October	Annual Maintenance Schedule
November	Faculty Workshop

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 by the end of February. 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 myself or Bethan Still to visit to discuss the options with you then please get in touch.

Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) Meetings

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 at [2025-durham-dac-meeting-dates-deadlines.pdf](#)

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

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