

Dear Churchwarden,

Below are some bits of information that you may find useful as you look after your church buildings that I have come across in the last couple of weeks.

Resources on the Diocesan Website

A number of people have told me that they have found it difficult to find resources on the Church Building pages of the diocesan website. I have now created a resources page so that everything is on one page which will hopefully make it easier to find what you want. The resources page can be found at the following link [Church Buildings Resources - Diocese of Durham \(durhamdiocese.org\)](https://www.durhamdiocese.org).

Contractor & Supplier Lists

I am regularly asked for information on contractors who can do certain tasks. Unfortunately, we are not able to recommend particular contractors as we do not have the capacity to check the quality of their work on a regular basis. However, I am more than happy to share recommendations from individual parishes with others and have compiled a database based on this. If you have used a particular contractor that you have been happy with, why not share that with others. Details can be entered on a simple online form by clicking [here](#).

Training Opportunities 2024

I am currently beginning to put together some training sessions to support the work of Churchwardens and hope to have full details available in December.

The sessions planned will cover the following topics :

- Achieving Net Zero in your Church Building
- Faculty Workshop
- Understanding your buildings
- Undertaking Church Building Projects
- Health & Safety – Your responsibilities
- New Churchwardens Training
- Annual Maintenance Schedule
- Churchyard Management
- Fire Risk Management

I am currently looking for venues for each of these sessions (they can be repeated in different parts of the diocese), so if you are able to host one or more of these please let me know over the next couple of weeks so that the programme can be confirmed.

Church Heating Plans

If you haven't done so already, now is the time to start thinking about what heating systems are available to you that will allow you to reduce your carbon output. I have put together a simple flow chart which will hopefully help you to consider the options that might be suitable for your church. Don't wait until your heating fails to consider the options!

Fire Risk Assessments

The law changed on 1st October and it is now a requirement for all public buildings to undertake a full Fire Risk Assessment which should be kept on file and updated regularly. Further details can be found [here](#). I am planning to organise a training session on this in the new year.

The Ecclesiastical Insurance website has some good information about fire risk assessments including a fairly comprehensive template. [Church Fire Safety Risk Assessment | Risk Management](#)

Net Zero Carbon Grant Funding

I have regularly been asked if there is any funding available for NZC Projects. The CofE has committed £190M but as yet none of this is in the form of grants for churches.

I have just been given details of the following net zero funding stream (not CofE related) which has just been announced: <https://www.neynetzerohub.com/projects-and-events/delivering-programmes/c/>. Faith groups are eligible, as are registered charities. Funding applications have not opened yet but worth bearing in mind.

Advice from Ecclesiastical Insurance

With the colder months ahead of us I thought it was opportune to forward the links to their winter weather guidance.

[Church Cold Weather Advice | Risk Management | Ecclesiastical](#)

[Church Storm Advice | Risk Management \(ecclesiastical.com\)](#)

[Flood Safety For Churches | Risk Management \(ecclesiastical.com\)](#)

Buildings for Mission Project Board: vacancy for external member

Buildings for Mission is an £11m project funded by the Church Commissioners and administered by the Archbishops' Council over the 2023-25 triennium. The overall aims are:

1. to provide specialist advice on the care and repair of building fabric, fundraising, community engagement and wider use of church buildings;
2. to give grants towards the cost of small-scale urgent repairs and high priority improvements; and
3. to reduce the burdens on hard-pressed PCCs and congregations by offering a means of pooling responsibility for maintenance and insurance.

The project is overseen by a Board with internal (NCIs staff) and external representation. The Board wishes to recruit another external member to strengthen its understanding of the experience at parish level of managing and maintaining church buildings, adapting them for contemporary needs and making them available for wider community use. Now that the project has moved into its delivery phase, it will be necessary to scrutinise the outputs of the project's interventions and advise on the shaping of the latter phase of the triennium. There will also be the need to evaluate the impact of the project and consider the potential for renewal in the next triennium.

Short expressions of interest are invited. This vacancy is open to anyone who can provide a grassroots parish perspective, whether lay or clergy. The experience of PCC office holders and/or the rural context would be highly relevant. The Board would particularly welcome approaches from those in underrepresented groups.

Members can expect to attend meetings approximately four times a year and provide specific advice on relevant issues that arise. Meetings are normally online but, should there be any event where in-person attendance is invited, travel and subsistence expenses will be paid.

Expressions of interest should be submitted to [Buildings for Mission](#) by 1 December.

For further details, including the Board's terms of reference and current membership list, or to discuss the role, please contact the Grants Manager and acting Project Manager, [Guy Braithwaite](#).

Maintenance and building services: [what do churches do?](#)

Parish Buying are working to develop the offer of maintenance. To understand what is currently being done by way of building services and maintenance [a short survey has been set up](#). Please can you share this widely and quickly so we can have a good spread of responses to work with

Winter wonderlands, markets and big events?

For churches that have busy Christmas events, there is some advice on [ProtectUK](#) about the [Counter Terrorism winter campaign 2023/24](#). This is focused on keeping the public safe at big events, looking out for each other and being confident to report anything that looks suspicious.

Durham Diocese Churchwardens Forum

We have an online Churchwardens Forum using 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