



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

Please find below information that I have come across over the last few weeks that will be useful for you to know as you look after your church buildings.

Diocesan Heating Day – Saturday 6th June - STILL TIME TO BOOK



Our Diocesan Heating Day will take place on Saturday 6th June (10.00am – 4.15pm).

Open for anybody to attend, this day will provide attendees with the information they need to begin developing plans for a low carbon heating system in their church. Workshops will include:

- Designing and delivering a heating project
- Getting your church on board
- Heating options
- Grant Funding

PLUS there will be stallholders and exhibits from heating companies.

Please put the date in your diary and register [here](#).

Places of Worship Renewal Fund

On 20 May, Historic England launched the new Places of Worship Renewal Fund. A summary is found below but all the relevant information can be found at <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/grants/what-we-fund/places-of-worship-renewal-fund/>.

- The new fund will focus on capital works that keep places of worship open, active and safe
- It will support urgent fabric repairs, without a requirement for buildings to be on the Heritage at Risk Register
- Applications can be made for essential improvements, such as electrical upgrades, heating, facilities and step-free access
- The in-year spend for each of the four years will be £23m per year
- All listed places of worship of any faith or denomination in England, including listed buildings that have been repurposed as places of worship, are eligible for funding; the key thing is that the building is an active place of worship

The PWRF is divided into 3 streams: small grants of £10,000 to £50,000, medium grants of £50,001 to £350,000, and large grants of £350,001 to £1,000,000. The fund is competitive, and not all applications will be successful. It is a new programme and should not be seen as a direct replacement for the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme (LPWGS) and the amount of the grant is not in any way linked to the amount of VAT to be paid. The first deadline for submitting Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for the first round of grants is Sunday 14 June, 2026. A second round will follow soon after in September 2026. Historic England will assess EOIs and provide a response by Friday 3 July to let you know if you're being invited to make a full application. If invited to apply, you'll need to submit an application by 5pm on Sunday 26 July 2026.

Full details of the information needed, according to the size of grant requested, are on the Historic England website.

- There will be future opportunities to apply - two rounds each year - and the next one will be September 2026. Future rounds will appear on the website.
- The Government wants the funding to reach where there is the greatest need for investment and the most community benefit. Priority will be given to projects in areas of England with the greatest need for investment, or those that bring most community benefit.

The overall advice is to read the detailed guidance very carefully. The website provides over 38 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), as well as detailed guidance for completing the Expression of Interest. The details and conditions which must be met are under FAQ 11 of the PWRP's website:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/grants/what-we-fund/places-of-worship-renewal-fund/#2f834d16>.

One point of interest is that in Year 1 of the PWRP, a limited amount of funding will be available to 'projects that have lost anticipated match funding'. Eligible projects must meet certain conditions. We presume that the now-closed LPWGS would be regarded as match funding in this context. That scheme paid out an amount equal to the VAT which had been incurred. All other PWRP eligibility criteria must be met, and we would encourage a careful reading of the website before pursuing this opportunity.

A note on VAT

Following the closure of the LPWGS there is a much greater need to engage with VAT reliefs that are available for some works to churches in certain circumstances. There is a [page on the Church of England Website](#) and a separate guidance note [Zero-rated VAT for churches](#) to download.

Energy Footprint Tool (EFT)

The Energy Footprint Tool (EFT) is open until 30th June for you to enter your 2025 energy data. Thank you for everyone who has already done this, we currently have only had data entered for 65% of our church buildings. If anyone has problems accessing the EFT on the Parish Returns Website, please let me know and I will do my best to help. I appreciate that in many parishes it is the Treasurer who enters this data and I would be grateful if you could remind them to do this. The completion of the EFT is a requirement of any funding allocated from the various Net Zero Grants.

NEW Faculty Management System

As you will know by now all faculty applications are made via the new Building Management Portal. As the new system is a more secure system than the previous system, all users will need to re-register for access. To do this please visit <https://buildings.churchofengland.org/> and make sure that you are registering for the Building Management Portal via the main CoFE Portal. When registering for a role please select "Applicant" and you can then select your church(es). Details of how to do this can be found on the diocesan website at [Faculty Guidance - Diocese of Durham](#) and a video is available at the following link <https://vimeo.com/1169685892/0bd8808daa>. I will be running another session on the new system on Thursday 2nd July, you can book a place by clicking [here](#).

Requests for Archdeacons Permission – List B works

With the launch of the new Faculty Management System, we have now moved to processing all List B through the Online system as is currently done by most other dioceses. The system will be very straight forward and will allow all works to church buildings to be processed through the same system. As the system automates much of the process it will hopefully allow requests to be processed more quickly. It also allows the both myself and the Archdeacons to be move requests to a faculty application if it is outside of the scope of List B without you having to resubmit documents. To submit a List B request please register as above.

DAC Awards

Thank you to all those churches who have submitted projects for the DAC Awards. The deadline was 1st June but if you haven't quite had time to submit yours yet due to the half term break, I have extended the deadline to Friday 5th June.

Lightning Protection Advice

The advice on lightning protection on the Church of England website was updated earlier this year. The page is [here](#) and a direct link to the guidance note is [here](#).

Church Building Training 2026

The Church Building Training Programme for the remainder of 2026 is shown below

Date	Time	Venue	Event	Booking Link
Saturday 6 th June	10.00am-4.15pm	Cuthbert House	Diocesan Heating Day	https://tickets.myknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My0xMDY/t
Tuesday 23 rd June	6.30 – 8.30pm	Zoom	Health & Safety and Fire Risk Management - EIG	https://tickets.myknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My0xMDU/t
Thursday 2 nd July	1.30-3.00pm	Cuthbert House	Faculty Workshop – New Online System	https://tickets.myknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My0xMjA/t
Thursday 9 th July	6.00 – 8.00pm	Cuthbert House	Grant Workshop	https://tickets.myknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My05OQ/t
Tuesday 28 th July	1.00pm	Cuthbert House	New Churchwardens Training	Please see information from Archdeacons nearer the time
Wednesday 29 th July	6.30pm	Zoom		
September	TBC	TBC	Annual Maintenance Schedule	TBC
Tuesday 6 th October	1.30-3.30pm	St Mary's Church Hall Whorlton	Faculty & Grant Funding Workshop	https://tickets.myknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My0xMTA/t

Great Big Green Week (6-14th June)

During the week, more than a million people from across the country will take action for their communities, for nature and the climate, to make their neighbourhoods better places to live, protect the natural world and show politicians and decision makers that there is widespread support for positive change. Churches have arranged to host community activities, including repair cafes, nature walks, community clean-ups, family crafts and activities, and film screenings. There is a guide specifically for churches:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V0F_o1kLoDvIKQppeKcr5x45ObutY3o/view

Under that broader environmental umbrella, churches are familiar with National Cemeteries Week/Love Your Burial Ground Week, promoted by the National Federation of Cemetery Friends and Caring for God's Acre. Every year the week celebrates the richness of the natural world to be found in burial grounds, and this year's focus is swifts.

<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/about-love-your-burial-ground-week-with-churches-count-on-nature/>

Robert "Mouseman" Thompson

This may be of interest to those of our churches who have "Mouseman" furniture. 2026 marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson, whose carved rodents can be found in churches throughout and far beyond his native Yorkshire. Thompson described the mouse as 'a symbol of industry in a quiet place'. An article in the *Church Times* provides inspiration for a summer of mouse-hunting:

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2026/1-may/features/features/the-enduring-popularity-of-the-ubiquitous-carved-church-mouse>

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

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