



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

There is a lot of important information to share with you this month, so I would be grateful if you could take time to read through this email and let me know if you have any questions

NEW Faculty Management System

Some of you will be aware that the Online Faculty System (OFS) is being replaced by a new Faculty Management System as part of a new Building Management Portal. The system is due to go live across all churches later in the year, however Durham Diocese has been chosen as part of a pilot of 4 dioceses to launch the system earlier. The system has been in development and testing for a number of years; I have been using the test system for almost 12 months and I am confident that it works and will be a much better system than the current one. It is planned that the new system will go live for our diocese on Monday 13th April 2026.

I have already written to all users of the existing system explaining the changes and will provide further updates during the next month.

Requests for Archdeacons Permission – List B works

With the launch of the new Faculty Management Portal, we will be moving 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 move requests to a faculty application if it is outside of the scope of List B without you having to resubmit documents. I will send out more details on the process nearer the launch of the new system.

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme – Now Closed

Although we have not yet got to the 31st March unfortunately all of the £23M funding for the scheme has now been allocated or is being processed and no further claims can be made. I appreciate that this will be a disappointment for many parishes and will also impact financially on your parish.

The new scheme that was announced by the government is currently being developed by Historic England and below is what has been released by Historic England about the scheme:

- The new scheme will be called the Places of Worship Renewal Fund.
- The new Fund will be for urgent capital repairs and will be administered by Historic England, with a focus on areas of greatest need but with flexibility to support those places of worship that play a vital role in their local community.
- Only listed places of worship in England, in active use (minimum six services per year), are likely to be eligible.
- Projects that are predominantly focused on routine maintenance will not be eligible for support under this Fund.
- The Fund is currently being designed in consultation with the sector and will need to go through a Treasury approval process before it is launched. Further details of the Fund will be made available as soon as they are approved. We hope this will be in the Spring.
- The objectives of the Fund are to target support to where it is most needed and where it will have most impact. Considerable thought is being given to make the application process as streamlined as possible and to ensure arrangements are in place to support potential applicants.

Energy Footprint Tool (EFT)

The Energy Footprint Tool (EFT) is open for you to enter your 2025 energy data. Thank you for everyone who has already done this, we currently have had data entered for 28% 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 whilst they are completing the 2025 accounts.

Diocesan Heating Day – Saturday 6th June

I am currently in the process of planning a Diocesan Heating Day which will take place on Saturday 6th June (10.00am – 4.15pm). The morning will provide information on the types of systems, how to manage a heating project and how to fund the project. During the day we will have a market place type event with a range of companies present who will be able to provide you with specific information on their products. During the afternoon we will have some workshop sessions focussing on different types of heating. **Put the date in your diary.**

DAC Awards

The Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) appreciate all of the hard work that goes in to maintaining your buildings but also the significant extra time and effort that goes into delivering a significant building project. The DAC therefore would like to celebrate the many projects that have been undertaken by parishes over the last 10 years. I will be sending out a letter shortly from our DAC Chair which explains more about the awards, along with an application form and example. We look forward to being able to celebrate the various projects that have been undertaken.

Achieving Net Zero in your church building

For those churches who are still uncertain about how you can reduce your carbon output and ultimately reach Net Zero Carbon, please join us for a session on Tuesday 17th March at 6pm in Cuthbert House. We will look at some of the quick wins as well as explore the larger and longer-term projects to replace your heating systems. To book a place please click [here](#) or contact me directly.

Security and Insurance

With a number of issues of thefts from church buildings over recent years, I would encourage you to attend the zoom session on Monday 9th March which is being delivered in conjunction with Ecclesiastical Insurance. The session will look at how you can make your buildings more secure and reduce the risks to the building; as well as giving you the opportunity to ask general questions about insurance. To book a place please click [here](#) or contact me directly

Church Building Training 2026

The Church Building Training Programme for 2026 is shown below

Date	Time	Venue	Event	Booking Link
Monday 9 th March	6.30-8.00pm	Zoom	Church Insurance & Security -EIG	https://tickets.myiknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My0xMDQ/t
Tuesday 17 th March	6.00 - 7.30pm	Cuthbert House	Achieving Net Zero in your Church Building	https://tickets.myiknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My0xMDE/t
Monday 20 th April	6.00 – 7.30pm	Cuthbert House	Faculty Workshop – New Online System	https://tickets.myiknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My0xMDI/t
Wednesday 13 th May	10.00 – 11.30am	All Saints Church, Lobley Hill	Undertaking Church Building Projects	https://tickets.myiknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My0xMDc/t
Saturday 6 th June	10.00am-4.15pm	Cuthbert House	Diocesan Heating Day	https://tickets.myiknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My0xMDY/t
June	TBC	TBC	Faculty Workshop – New Online System	TBC
Tuesday 23 rd June	6.30 – 8.30pm	Zoom	Health & Safety and Fire Risk Management - EIG	https://tickets.myiknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My0xMDU/t
Thursday 9 th July	6.00 – 8.00pm	Cuthbert House	Grant Workshop	https://tickets.myiknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My05OQ/t
July	1.30pm	Cuthbert House	New Churchwardens Training	Please see information from Archdeacons nearer the time
July	6.30pm	Zoom		
September	TBC	TBC	Annual Maintenance Schedule	TBC
Tuesday 6 th October	1.30-3.30pm	St Mary's Church Ha Barnard Castle	Faculty & Grant Funding Workshop	https://tickets.myiknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My0xMTA/t

If you have any other suggestions of training that you feel would be useful in your roles looking after your buildings then please let me know. I try to host sessions around the diocese, so if you are willing to host a session then please let me know.

Updated DAC Heating Guidance

The DAC has recently updated its Heating Guidance which includes details of how to apply for a faculty to replace your heating system. In particular it explains the term “Due regard” and what this means in terms of any heating applications. This guidance comes into place now and it is expected that all new applications for heating will follow this guidance. Copies of the documents can be found on the diocesan website.

Faith Security Training

The Home Office is pleased to announce the launch of Faith Security Training (FST) – a free security awareness scheme designed specifically for faith communities across England and Wales, which will be delivered on behalf of the Home Office by CDS Support. This training will help you strengthen security practices, mitigate threats, and ensure your places of worship remain safe and secure.

The training is for faith leaders, trustees, facilities managers, volunteers, and anyone with responsibility for security at a place of worship. The training is also suitable for any member of a congregation with an interest in improving security at places of worship.

Face-to-face or virtual classroom sessions will be offered with direct access to security experts. The scheme is intended as an additional, fully optional resource that participants may draw on if helpful. It is designed to complement any existing security training that individuals or organisations have already undertaken.

[Register now](#) and take the first step towards a safer future. There is further information and a contact email on the [training website](#).

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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