



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

I can't believe that we are already a third of the way through 2026, however we still have plenty of the year left and as we head into the summer months, now is a great time to get on top of those jobs to the church buildings that have appeared over the winter. If you also have a quinquennial inspection due this year, now is the time to get that booked in.

Diocesan Heating Day – Saturday 6th June



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](#).

NEW Faculty Management System

As you will probably be aware the launch of the new Faculty Management System didn't go quite as smoothly as we had hoped, but all of the key issues have been resolved and the system has been functioning well for the last couple of weeks.

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/Obd8808daa>.

I will be running some more training sessions, so please look out for further details.

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

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 have already sent out a letter from our DAC Chair which explained 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. An application form and further details can be found on our [resources page](#).

Church Building Training 2026

The Church Building Training Programme for 2026 is shown below

Date	Time	Venue	Event	Booking Link
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 Hall, Whorlton	Faculty & Grant Funding Workshop	https://tickets.myiknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzY5My0xMTA/t

Places of Worship Renewal Fund

We hoping that the details of this fund would have been released by now however this has been delayed. I have been informed today that we are expecting full details on the new scheme and how churches will be able to apply for funding, by the middle of this month.

Full details of the fund will appear on [Historic England has published a notice about the new Places of Worship Renewal Fund](#) as soon as known.

The scheme is for equal amounts of funding in each of the four years. It is therefore important to have a strong round of applications ready when the scheme opens, which we expect to be soon.

For a church considering making an application it will be able to proceed promptly if it has to hand:

- A current quinquennial inspection
- Photographs of the building
- Photographs of the area where work is needed, for which the grant is sought
- A letter of support for the application
- Assurance that any consents needed are granted or soon will be
- The basis on which the cost of the project has been estimated
- Assurances that the proposed works can be delivered in a timely way

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 had data entered for 53% of our church buildings.

If anyone has problems accesses 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 finalising the 2025 accounts for APCM meetings.

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Resourcing Church Administration (Beta version)

With thanks to the contributions and guidance from national, diocesan and parish teams across the Church, the groundbreaking 'just-in-time' video training resource, [Resourcing Church Administration](#), is now available to explore. This open library of 120+ videos is ready on-demand to support anyone whose role includes church administration. It includes a 'Buildings administration' series of videos, offering practical suggestions for how churchwardens and PCCs can be supported.

There are no login walls or linear courses to follow - officers and volunteers can watch what they want in their own time. Since this is in a beta-testing stage, feedback forms are provided throughout.

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.

Fire Safety Risk Assessment

A letter in *Church Times* just before Easter drew attention to the need for PCCs to undertake a fire safety risk assessment. Guidance on how to do this is available from the Ecclesiastical website [here](#).

Counter-terrorism security and the heritage sector. An introduction to Martyn's Law

Join Historic England for the first in a webinar series looking at the application of counter-terrorism security at heritage sites. This first webinar will introduce the [Terrorism \(Protection of Premises\) Act](#), also known as Martyn's Law, and how it applies to the heritage sector. With support from the National Counter-Terrorism Security Office, it will also look at the current terrorism threat in the UK, how and where incidents might happen, and the types of threats you may need to protect against.

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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