

Annual Report 2018

The DAC is a statutory body whose functions are set out in ecclesiastical legislation. Its role is to advise the Chancellor and parishes on proposals for works to church buildings and churchyards and church furnishings, and to advise more generally on the care and development of churches. In line with statutory provision and the priorities of Living God's Love, the Committee has regard to churches as local centres of worship and mission, in which

- *people can encounter God and be drawn into a worshipping community*
- *parishes can reach out in mission*
- *local communities can be transformed.*

Chairman's View

Funding the care and improvement of our church buildings becomes ever more challenging. Sources of dedicated funding have diminished in recent years and parishes find themselves competing with many other interests for what remains. Making successful grant applications is a rare skill. The demands and expectations of grant awarding bodies are quite complex and parishes can find it difficult to know how to meet these requirements. The DAC is well aware of the difficulties that parishes face and is here to advise. A key element in this advice is encouragement to prepare a Statement of Need and a Statement of Significance. These are documents in which a parish can set out a clear vision of its aspirations and a clear understanding of the resources with which it must work. Such clarity is what grant awarding bodies need. It's also vital in dealing with statutory bodies that are involved in scrutinising proposals – the local planning authority, Historic England and others. The DAC has always stressed the importance of Statements of Need and Significance and has always offered guidance on their preparation, but in the last couple of years help for parishes has become much more proactive. In 2016 the Diocese appointed an Historic Church Buildings Support Officer and in this role David Bevan now works closely with individual parishes to provide expert advice as they develop proposals and funding strategies. If your parish is looking at new ways of using your church building, the DAC is here to help you realise your vision.

Main achievements and themes in 2018

- The DAC noted the publication of the **Taylor Report** on the sustainability of parish churches and the launch of pilot projects appointing pairs of Support Officers in the diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich and in Manchester and awaits developments that may arise.
- The continuing **theft of metal** – with major cases including Houghton Conquest, Wrestlingworth and Broxbourne – was a major concern for the DAC. The Committee continued to work with the Beds & Herts Historic Churches Trust to encourage parishes to install roof alarms. The Committee and its officers also continued to engage in national forums on issues such as insurance conditions and replacement materials, contributing to research by Historic England and receiving advice on a local example at Aldenham.
- The DAC, through the work of our Historic Church Buildings Support Officer, provided two **Maintenance workshops for parishes**. A first workshop in conjunction with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings [SPAB] in April 2018 provided advice about the benefits of regular church building maintenance and what can be done by volunteers, including maintenance planning. A second workshop held in November 2018 introduced the National Churches Trust's **MaintenanceBooker** initiative and focused on maintenance by professionals, including a highly informative talk by specialist cleaning consultant Claire Fry (Spencer & Fry)
- The DAC supported parishes in developing **major projects** including preliminary onsite meetings, discussions with external bodies such as the local planning authority, and technical site visits to seek solutions to unexpected issues arising from building work.
- The DAC made recommendations to the Diocesan Chancellor about **Additional Matters Orders** to provide a less onerous process for certain matters: investigations; defibrillators; WW1 silhouettes; filming in churches and churchyards. In 2018, routine work took an average of 21 days to be authorized by Archdeacon's Letter either under the national Minor Matters List B or an Additional Matters Order.

Going Deeper into God

- Through site visits and advice on applications, the DAC continued to encourage parishes to consider ways to **improve access**. Accessibility might include:
 - properly accessible composting toilets with firm level access to the facility
 - Improvements to entrances and levels within the church, as at *Stevenage St Peter*
 - Reviewing wheelchair and ambulant disabled parking and access routes into the church (*Streatley, St Margaret*) as part of the parish's vision of making the church building open and accessible to all inside and outside the church
- *Childwick, St Mary* – the DAC considered issues around the proposed installation of an automatic locking system and supported the proposal, to enable the church to be left open for visitors and those wishing to find a place of peace and prayer
- The DAC advised on many projects to commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War, including:
 - *Commonwealth War Graves Commission project* to introduce signage at all churchyards with war graves (total 95 so far)
 - WWI memorial refurbishment and additional researched names at churches such as *Westmill, St Mary*
 - Temporary introduction of *There but not there* “Ghostly Tommy” silhouettes in churchyards including *St Peter's, Harrold*
 - Commissioning of a stained glass window by artist Tom Denny (who spoke compellingly about designing stained glass at the national DAC conference) to commemorate a local soldier awarded the VC for *St Bartholomew's church, Wigginton*

Making new disciples

- *Watford, St Mary* – As work proceeded on the major scheme to re-order and develop the church building for the 21 century, the DAC considered detailed designs for texts on the reredos stonework and glazed screen etchings on the themes of welcome and worship
- *Amptill, St Andrew* – The DAC discussed proposals for a new portable font to enable baptisms to be visible to all; the DAC encouraged the parish to explore how the font could be kept securely in a visible location
- *Stevenage St Nicholas* – repositioning of timber screens; new floor & heating; upper room and opened-up existing meeting room – The DAC supported and encouraged the detailed development of this coherent scheme to enable the church to make the most of its building for its growing congregation and to engage with those outside the church, including the increased local population in new housing

Transforming communities

- As a committee and through the work of its officers, the DAC supported parishes in making **external funding bids**. These included supporting *Flamstead, St Leonard and Houghton Regis, All Saints* in making successful Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bids; *Flamstead, St Leonard* in developing proposals for LEADER funding for providing meeting space, kitchenette and toilet; *Shefford, St Michael and All Angels* in implementing its HLF-funded tower repair project; *Ashwell, St Mary the Virgin* in early planning of a project to conserve the tower stonework and provide updated facilities
- Responding to a priority in the Luton Deanery Mission Action Plan, the DAC continued to work with a number of individual **Luton churches** to make best use of their plant. This included continued discussion at site visits at *Luton, St Matthew; Luton, St Mary; Luton, St Saviour; Marsh Farm, Holy Cross* and *Farley Hill, St John the Baptist*, in each case looking at how the parish's vision could be met by using and developing the church building as a centre of worship, mission and community

The DAC supported parish projects to transform their local communities including:

- *Bedford, Christ Church* – Work has been completed on site to provide a replacement halls complex, providing Christ Church with a base from which to give effect to its mission statement *To enable everyone to be maturing followers of Christ, who experience and live out God's love in every part of their lives.*

- *Great Gaddesden, St John the Baptist* – A new kitchen is a significant step in the church's journey towards encouraging additional uses of the mediaeval village church and making it a place the wider community would want to use
- *Hatfield, St Luke* – The DAC supported an application for the temporary removal of pews to allow use of church as a winter Night Shelter
- *Bromham, St Owen* – The parish decided to divide the north extension project into phases to enable ground works to be started whilst fundraising continued. This proved useful, as there was much greater archaeological impact (particularly in the number of skeletons excavated) and cost than expected.

Plans for 2019

As part of *Living God's Love*, we would like to see more churches open outside the times of services, as places where people may encounter God; and more churches with access and basic facilities, to enable them to be used for wider purposes to serve and transform local communities.

The DAC's priorities are:

Responding to parishes' MAP priorities for church buildings by providing advice in site visits and when considering individual cases, to find the most appropriate way to make changes

Working with individual parishes to develop maintenance plans and access external funding to improve the condition of church buildings

Identifying churches at particular risk of metal theft and encouraging a range of measures to reduce this risk

Providing training for those involved in the care and use of church buildings, to enable people to maintain and repair church buildings, access external funding and develop wider use of churches. For 2019, events will have a focus on encouraging churches to be *open and engaging*.

2018 Statistics (2017 in brackets)

- **6** (6) DAC meetings
- **70** (82) visits by DAC members and staff
- **462** (420) cases completed

Resulting in:

Notifications of Advice for Faculties	152 (180)
Archdeacons' Letters of Authority	297 (232)
Archdeacons' Temporary Re-ordering Licences	12 (2)

For matters including:

Extensions/New Build	6 (7)
Re-ordering/alterations	41 (41)
Repairs	79 (99)
Furniture/fittings	56 (59)
Services/M & E (mechanical and electrical)	66 (44)
Churchyard (incl. trees, benches, signage)	169 (113)
Other (e.g. bells; organs, clocks)	44 (51)

Chair: Dr Christopher Green