
Making changes to your church building

Reordering, alterations, extensions, additions and repairs

What permission do we need?

The Church has its own legal system, through which you obtain permission for any work to or in your church building or in your churchyard, and by which the introduction or removal of furnishings or fittings is authorised. For major works this permission is called a Faculty; for minor works, it is an Archdeacon's Letter of Authority. Some works will also require planning permission,

How do I get the appropriate permission?

Start by consulting The Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (the DAC). Their role is to give informal (and free) advice to PCCs as well as formal advice for the legal process. If you need to apply for a Faculty, the DAC will issue you with the paperwork necessary for this. Once completed, you send this to the Diocesan Registrar, who in turn sends it to the Diocesan Chancellor for determination. He alone has the authority to grant Faculties.

What is the DAC?

The DAC's members include professional people with expertise in areas including architecture, art history, liturgy, archaeology, heating, lighting, sound, bells, organs, etc., as well as parish clergy and, ex officio, the archdeacons. There are also representatives appointed by Diocesan Synod. A third group of members are nominated by other bodies which are involved in the care of church buildings; these include the Local Planning Authorities, Historic England, and one individual appointed by a group known as the "Amenity Societies" – the Ancient Monuments Society, the Council for British Archaeology, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Georgian Group, the Victorian Society and the 20th Century Society. The Committee can also call on a number of consultants with detailed knowledge of stained glass conservation, clocks, and other matters.

Members of the DAC give of their time and expertise without remuneration (other than travel expenses, where claimed). The Church's system means that parishes are able to obtain advice and comments on proposed schemes of repair and improvement without incurring the sort of costs which would be payable on lodging a planning application under secular building controls.

The DAC is supported by the Pastoral & Advisory Secretary and her team based at the Diocesan Offices. They should be your normal first point of contact with the DAC. Their contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

How does the DAC work?

Meetings

The Committee meets six times a year to consider a range of faculty applications and general matters. Many other requests for advice or comment on schemes, especially straightforward repairs, are dealt with between meetings by a standing committee procedure. The Archdeacons and the DAC staff are happy to advise on the procedure in particular cases.

Visits

Whilst many projects can be assessed by consideration of written proposals, some require site visits. In cases where this seems to be the best way of understanding what the PCC wishes to achieve in a particular context, the DAC will ask some of its members to visit a church building and listen to the PCC's ideas. The visitors will subsequently report back to the Committee and written advice will be offered to the PCC for consideration. All sorts of ideas can be considered on site but the advice is always sent in written format so the PCC is sure what the DAC actually said. The opportunity can be taken to draw in other interested bodies such as the local authority or Historic England, so that a way forward can be agreed which is likely to be feasible and acceptable to all parties.

The DAC actively encourages on-site preliminary consultations in suitable cases, involving the PCC and their professional adviser. In some circumstances, this might even take the form of an 'ideas' examination of the building simply to see how it can be used more effectively. Such meetings can usefully:

- familiarise DAC members with the church building and its surroundings
- discern or review objectives and tease out possible problems
- explore options
- identify matters needing further investigation

Advice Leaflets

Whilst each case is dealt with on its merits the Committee has developed some basic policies and guidance notes to help PCCs. The principal areas are legal and practical requirements, information on how to get permission to do work and specific notes on particular types of work. DAC guidance notes are available, free of charge, from the DAC office as paper copies or electronically. You can also download them from the diocesan website at

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/dac/dac-advice-leaflets/>

Quinquennial Inspections and Architects

The Inspection of Churches Measure 1955 requires that all church buildings be inspected by an Approved Architect or Surveyor once every five years. PCCs are responsible for appointing an Approved individual to undertake the inspection and the Churchwardens must organise it. The list of those authorised to be appointed and guidance notes on how to go about this are available from the DAC office.

The DAC will:

- ensure that an approved individual is appointed,
- send out a reminder to that person at the start of the year in which the inspection is due, and
- ensure that copies of the inspection report are received.

Records

The DAC holds records relating to church buildings, including their listed status, previous quinquennial inspection reports, Faculty histories and inventories, and the DAC Team are happy to reply to enquiries from parish clergy and PCC officers. Sensitive documents such as inventories are generally stored securely at the County Record Office in Hertford, but may be accessed by DAC staff and parish officials.

When should the PCC contact the DAC?

Early consultation is best; it saves wasting time (and money) in developing one idea when a better and perhaps cheaper option may be identified.

Contact the DAC office (details below) if you have any queries whatsoever, no matter how minor they may seem; if there is no immediate answer to the telephone do leave

a message, send an email or write a letter or fax so the DAC Team can respond to you as soon as possible.

What information will the DAC need?

In order to give soundly based advice, the DAC needs to know:

- what is proposed
- how it is intended to benefit the life and mission of the church
- what is the historic and architectural significance of the building
- how the building and existing arrangements would be altered
- how the proposal relates to the rest of the building and any longer term development plans

For major proposals, a Statement of Significance and a Statement of Need will be required. An advice leaflet is available to help you write these.

When the DAC has a proposal to consider, whether at a preliminary or formal stage, it needs all the information so that it can form a view. There must be clear (written, drawn and/or photographic) statements on which it can confidently base its advice to the parish and/or the Chancellor. This kind of evidence is normally required by the Local Planning Authority in applications for Planning Permission, which might also be needed for certain kinds of church schemes.

Can I come and present my case at a DAC meeting?

The DAC welcomes observers to meetings but believes that complex or contentious issues are best discussed during site visits, not at DAC meetings. There are two reasons for this: firstly it is better for DAC members to come to the church building or churchyard in question so that they have a real understanding of the situation.

Secondly, the Chancellor deals with the final decision about works on the basis of a written submission. If the written information provided for the DAC meeting is inadequate for the Committee it will certainly not be good enough for the Chancellor's consideration. Verbal presentations at a DAC meeting would therefore not be helpful in the development of submissions that the Committee will recommend for a faculty application.

If you would like to attend a DAC meeting as an observer, please contact Debbie Cochrane to reserve a place.

Additional information and advice is available from The DAC team:

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