

Using church buildings to boost broadband and mobile phone coverage

Many people will have seen the coverage of the recent accord between the national Church of England institutions and the Government, supporting the use of church buildings to host equipment providing broadband or mobile phone coverage. You may wish to read the full text of the accord, which is available

here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/682176/2018_02_18_Church_of_England - HMG Accord.docx_1 .pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/682176/2018_02_18_Church_of_England_-_HMG_Accord.docx_1_.pdf)

In the Diocese of St Albans, we already have examples of mobile phone masts sited on church towers and a more recent installation of broadband network equipment. St Albans DAC supports the use of church towers for relatively unobtrusive equipment, particularly to ensure rural communities can access a good broadband service. There are mission opportunities, both from the church supporting the local community in this way, and in allowing the possibility of the church offering an internet café or similar.

The national accord provides guidance that if parishes wish to consider hosting digital connectivity infrastructure, *they should do so within the context of their own priorities for mission, relevant planning controls, and their legal obligations both as an organisation and relating to the care of Church property, and appropriate guidance provided by the Church Buildings Council and Historic England... and ...the parties will need to put in place a suitable and commercially robust agreement.*

In line with the national accord, in the Diocese of St Albans each application is considered individually by the DAC and the Chancellor, to ensure the installation will be appropriate in the context of a particular church building and that the agreement is right for the PCC.

There is detailed guidance about telecoms installations on the DAC pages of the diocesan website at: <https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Telecoms-Guidance-Note-November-2016.pdf>.

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