

DIOCESAN SYNOD – 5 March 2022

Question raised by Mrs Rebecca Cowburn, General Synod Lay Diocesan representative, under Standing Order SO86

Highlighted answers from Geoffrey Hunter, Head of Church Buildings and Pastoral Department and Coordinator of the Diocesan Environmental Task Group (DETG)

To ask the Bishop, in light of the changes approved by General Synod in February to the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules to help meet the 2030 Net-Zero Carbon target, and in particular the new requirement for churches to submit a full faculty application when seeking to replace their fossil fuel boiler on a like-for-like basis, whether the Bishop's Council has any plans to recommend that Diocesan resources be applied:

(1) to develop, resource, and implement measures to help churches, especially small rural churches, who need a new boiler, to enable them:

a) to have timely access to Diocesan experts, at no, or minimal, cost to the church, to assess the optimum low carbon strategy for the whole of that church, including its heating;

The Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) has a volunteer heating adviser who can provide advice to churches on behalf of the DAC free of charge, as part of the Faculty process. We have to accept that there is likely to be a considerable increase in the heating casework going through the DAC as a result of the new rule changes. During 2021 the Church of England published a suite of guidance documents and checklists for the use of PCCs. The Diocesan Environmental Task Group plans to hold a training event on heating for church members and volunteers during 2022, in part to guide them through the processes already published on the C of E website.

b) to receive expert assistance in drawing together the relevant technical information needed for a faculty submission, in a timely manner;

In addition to the published advice, the officers of the Diocesan Advisory Committee offer advice on the information required to accompany Faculty petitions. The information required for a Faculty petition – in terms of technical detail, is no different than that required for a List B (Archdeacon's consent) application as at present. In cases where a PCC is seeking to justify extending their use of fossil fuel heating, it is actually to their benefit that the permission should be via Faculty. The Chancellor can take account of matters (financial, pastoral) which are outside the DAC's core remit.

c) where a faculty is required, to be able to have their boiler replacement faculty consultation and faculty decision fast-tracked, where necessary, to help ensure that churches are not without heating for an extended period; and

Before List B was introduced in 2016, all boiler replacements required Faculty consent. In those days it was common for such petitions to be granted an interim (emergency) faculty, particularly if a heating system failed during the heating season. Therefore, a

Faculty petition will not necessarily take longer than a List B, particularly in cases where urgent need can be demonstrated. Where statutory external consultations are required (eg cases where new underfloor heating is proposed) there is a 42 day statutory response period, which is unavoidable unless there is a further change to the rules.

(2) to develop tools for PCC members and for those involved in making decisions on faculty submissions that will help them to evaluate which replacement boiler option is best when set in the wider context of the individual church's overall low carbon strategy (and ensure that, if a church's use of fossil fuel heating is very low and it makes better environmental sense, for example, to use the church's available finances to install photovoltaics on the church roof to generate renewable electricity, than to install low carbon heating in the first instance, all relevant factors are considered).

We believe that these tools are already available on the Church of England website, and we plan to provide training to help churches to use those tools.

It is absolutely the case that "all relevant factors" should be considered. The scenario laid out in this question is akin to local version of carbon off-setting; but in due course it would be even better to replace the fossil fuel heat source as well, where that is feasible. This theoretical church would then become sub-zero rather than net zero, and enhance its contribution to the overall goal.

Supplementary Question:

- To ask the Bishop whether he has considered expanding the Quinquennial Inspection of churches so that it is not only used to ensure that the church building is kept in good repair, but also to provide a timely route to assess and identify the best low carbon options for the church (in liaison with the church PCC), by having the 5-yearly inspections undertaken by both an architect/surveyor and also a Diocesan low carbon expert, and for the findings to be used to support the fast track approval of fossil fuel heating boilers, where necessary, where this has been identified as the most sensible option within the low carbon strategy for the church at that time?

The Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association has recently published two best practice notes advising Inspectors on how environmental matters should be incorporated into both inspections and projects under their oversight. The keeping of a church building in good repair itself contributes to reducing a church's carbon footprint by excluding draughts and reducing moisture levels in the building fabric. The best practice notes take this several steps further.

The question proposes that an additional professional should be employed to undertake this, working in parallel with the QI system. Based on the costs of the QI system that would cost something in the region of an additional £50k per annum. Many of the off-the-shelf solutions for retrofitting buildings (external cladding, double glazing, insulation) require very careful consideration when dealing with historic buildings, lest their installation should cause more harm than good. That expertise is much better catered for in the architectural and surveying professions. It may be better



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to continue the EASA approach of training up our existing professionals in environmental matters, rather than introducing new.

Link taken from recorded Zoom Chat on the morning of the meeting of Synod

Very good advice and assessment tools here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/heating> . You have to click on the '+' signs and download

documents to get all the info. From Simon Taylor

[END]

RC/GH/SEPB
7 March 2022