

Durham DAC Environmental Policy

The DAC is committed to encouraging best practice in every matter relating to church buildings. Increasingly, this includes environmental sustainability and energy efficiency, reflecting the Diocesan Environmental Policy and the General Synod commitment to reaching zero carbon by 2030.

The DAC will apply the following policies in forming its advice on faculty applications, where an application involves any of the identified areas. These policies aim to encourage PCCs to think about how they might apply best practice in works to church buildings and churchyards, whilst recognising that all measures will not be suitable or affordable for all parishes.

Guidance is available from the Buildings for Mission Secretary and Diocesan Environmental Officer, to help PCCs to respond to these policies and to help them better understand environmental sustainability.

Building materials

The DAC will positively view applications where it can be demonstrated that any materials used in any works are sustainable, in that they are: - ethically and/or locally sourced; or - reclaimed; or - have minimal emissions in the production process.

Churchyards and church land

The DAC will positively view applications for works within a churchyard which incorporate measures to encourage biodiversity.

The DAC will require applications for the felling of healthy trees or hedge clearance to demonstrate that the PCC: - has explored options for compensatory planting either within the churchyard or as part of a tree-planting scheme; and - has a clear proposal for the disposal of the waste timber and brush.

The DAC will positively view applications for paths and hardstanding where surfaces are in natural stone or permeable material, and/or where it can be demonstrated that the design is detailed to prevent run-off to sewers and increased flood risk.

Heating systems and heat loss

The DAC will positively view applications for the renewal or replacement of heating systems which utilise sustainable sources of energy, for all or part of the system. Additionally, it will positively view applications where the PCC can demonstrate that it: - is purchasing its energy from renewable/green tariff supplies; - has considered the possibility of zoned heating and whether this is appropriate for the current use of the building; and - has considered the incorporation of smart controls.

The DAC will positively view applications for measures to minimise heat loss where it can be demonstrated that the proposals: - have been prepared with reference to current heat loss calculations; and - minimise the impact on the historic fabric and character of the building.

Lighting

The DAC will positively view applications for lighting schemes (both internal and external) which reduce the overall energy consumption through use of more energy-efficient fittings and light emitters. Additionally, it will positively view applications where the PCC can demonstrate that it has considered the incorporation of smart controls.

The DAC will require applications for the introduction of external floodlighting to demonstrate that: - the additional energy consumption has been minimised as far as possible; - any additional energy consumption is outweighed by the public and missional benefits of the proposals; and - the installation will not negatively impact local wildlife or contribute significantly to light pollution.

Renewable generation

The DAC will positively view applications for renewable energy generation, particularly if it can be demonstrated that the PCC has already implemented improvements to the energy efficiency of the church, churchyard and associated buildings.

Sustainable design

The DAC will positively view applications which incorporate sustainable design, particularly where this can be demonstrated by: - a Statement of Needs which sets out how the proposed works will mitigate or reduce the impact on the environment; and - an accompanying energy audit. The DAC will set higher expectations on new build works (including extensions and detached buildings), which should meet with the highest standards of energy efficiency or give clear justification why these standards cannot be met.

Transport and access

The DAC will positively view applications to improve transport accessibility to the church which are supported by a travel plan that sets out ways that any new provision or enhancement for car parking is to be combined with encouraging use of environmentally sustainable transport forms.

Water management

The DAC will positively view applications that use measures to minimise water waste and reduce pressure on local sewerage networks hence reduced run-off into rivers.

Summary

Faculty rules require that “where proposals involve making changes to a listed church ... applicants must provide the Diocesan Advisory Committee” with Statements of Significance and Needs. The CBC Guidance on Statements of Needs says that this is the place to answer “How is it reducing the carbon footprint, contributing to the Church’s commitment to reduce [to net zero by 2030]?”

The DAC will advise whether the proposals could be developed to provide more public environmental benefit and whether the environmental proposals could be adjusted to minimise any detriment to the significance of the building.

The Durham Diocesan Advisory Committee supports General Synod’s commitment to Carbon Net Zero and will support parishes so that all appropriate applications address environmental issues in a proportionate way, and it will give due weight to this when weighing up its advice.

September 2023

To be reviewed every two years