

Emergency heating system or boiler replacement

Background

Sometimes, despite best laid plans, heating systems break down, usually just as they are most needed!

In many instances a holding repair, which enables the church to be heated for a short time, whilst longer term solutions are found, will be the most appropriate approach. This allows time to identify and fundraise for the most environmentally sustainable, technically effective, approach to heating the church.

However, sometimes a holding repair simply isn't possible. Parts may no longer be available, or the repair may not be financially practicable.

Mindful of the climate emergency, the Faculty Jurisdiction (Amendment) Rules 2022 were issued, to encourage parishes to transition from fossil fuels. The legislation now requires that proposals to which net zero guidance applies, including heating system and boiler replacement, must be accompanied by an explanation within the faculty petition to the Chancellor stating how the applicants have had due regard to the net zero guidance in formulating the proposal. This remains the case even in an emergency. The guidance documents to which regard must be had are available on the ChurchCare [website](#). This is national legislation, and national guidance.

This note is produced by the Oxford Diocesan Church Buildings and Environment Action Teams and is intended to help parishes by explaining what the permissions process is in an emergency situation (where the heating system has failed) and what information should be included within an application to enable swift review and processing by these teams.

In each instance where a boiler fails, the Church Buildings Team and Environment Action Teams will work together with the PCC to establish the appropriate course of action. This will vary in each situation and what may be suitable for one church may not be for another. However, the following guiding principles will be considered when assessing proposals for emergency heating system or plant replacement. Parishes are provided with this guidance and asked to provide the information outlined below so that the Diocesan Teams can support appropriately. All efforts are made to progress these cases as quickly as possible, in full recognition that periods without heating can be detrimental to mission and building care, and affect the welcome offered by the church to its congregation and community.

The net zero guidance advises against the installation, or replacement of, fossil fuel systems. Where a parish proposes a fossil-fuel system it must provide cogent reasons for doing so.

Permissions

Proposals	Type of permission	Who grants permission
Repair of an existing boiler, whether oil, gas or electric	List A1.6a - does not require any permission as long as the specified conditions are met	N/A
Replacement of a boiler, utilising an existing non fossil fuel supply	List A1.7a - does not require any permission as long as the specified conditions are met.	N/A
Replacement of a fossil fuelled boiler, with a non-fossil fuel boiler	Requires List B1.5 permission not a faculty, as long as the specified conditions are met.	Archdeacon with Church Buildings Team advice
Introduction of temporary heaters, such as fan heaters which are suitable for use on a single phase electrical supply	Requires List B4.10 permission not a faculty, as long as the specified conditions are met	Archdeacon with Church Buildings Team advice
Replacement or introduction of fossil fuel based systems	Faculty permission	Chancellor

Information to provide with all applications:

- Please include details on the existing boiler including fuel type, age, filter type, output in KWh, location in the church, and flue arrangement as well as a report from a boiler engineer on the condition, and viability of repair. Photos are also very helpful.
- Please also provide information about the existing heating system. What is the existing heat distribution system? For example, radiators - how many are there? How effective are they?
- To help us understand your heating needs and what an economically viable fuel source for the building may be, please tell us what the use pattern of the building is, who is it used by, for what, and how often, and for what kind of services. How many hours per day and days per week do you run the heating?

- Photos of the church interior are very helpful to provide for us to understand your building as well as possible. Details as to whether the church has pews, and if so whether they are moveable or not are also very helpful.
- Finally, from a conservation perspective, it's helpful to know: Do you have very significant historic building fabric which may be sensitive to temperature and moisture level changes? An example of this may be wall paintings.

For applications where a fossil fuel-based system is being proposed the following information will need to accompany all applications, even in an emergency. If you are installing a non fossil fuel based system you will not need to provide these.

- A completed checklist of the [Practical Pathway to Net Zero](#). This should be realistic and proportionate to the size and use pattern and energy consumption of the church. An example from a parish in the diocese [can be found here](#)
- A copy of an energy audit produced by Inspired Efficiency under the [diocesan scheme](#), or advice from the Environment Action Team if they do not feel an energy audit is required in this case. If the advice of the energy audit is not being adopted please explain why that is the case.
- A long term decarbonisation plan for the church.
- A completed [heating checklist](#)
- A heating options appraisal which demonstrates that all options, including the technological and financial viability (including capital and consumption costs) of each, have been considered. The Church of England guidance [here](#), explains how to produce this, or it can be carried out by a professional such as a Building Services Engineer, or in some cases the energy audit may fulfil this requirement.
- A copy of the [Energy Footprint Tool](#) submission for the church.
- An explanation of the cogent reasons for not following the net zero guidance, with evidentiary support for these, for example a report and costing from a boiler engineer.

The above information may take a while to gather together - parishes should consider, and demonstrate that, bridge technologies have been investigated to assist in an emergency whilst the above details are obtained and options considered.

Should the parish not be able to supply this information the DAC, or its officers, will have to assume that 'due regard' has not been had, and a Not Recommend NOA will have to be issued. You can find out more information about the types of Notification of Advice in [our guidance document here](#)

In some instances, it may be possible to progress this as an emergency faculty permission, without the need for the statutory 28-day public notice period which is a requirement of faculty permission in the usual instances. This is at the discretion of the diocesan

Chancellor, not the Church Buildings Team or the Archdeacons. The Church Buildings Team member managing your application will send any request for dispensation on your behalf.

To provide its advice to the Chancellor as swiftly as possible, The Oxford Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DAC) has adopted a delegated authority policy. These cases will be eligible for consideration under this policy in most instances, avoiding the need for the scheme to be discussed at a full meeting of the DAC. In the rare cases where it will remain appropriate for the proposal to be considered at a full meeting of the DAC your case officer will alert you to this as early as possible in the process.

In every instance the Church Buildings Team member will consult with the Archdeacon and Environment Action Team to make them aware of the situation so that a cross departmental approach can be taken. Pastoral and missional factors will be considered within the decision-making process, alongside environmental and practical architectural and conservation factors.