

GUIDANCE NOTE

Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of
Churches



'GIFT HORSES'

**“Do not look them in the mouth” –
but equally, do not leave your powers of discretion behind!**

- Do not make an instant response.
- How is the offer likely to come?
Either (a) by letter
(b) in conversation with incumbent, officers of the church, etc
(c) by invitation at a PCC – by a member of the council or someone who is a friend of the council
- THANK the donor, but explain that there is a PROCESS and that you, as an individual or PCC, have not the authority to say “yea” or “nay”.
- Bring in the Chancellor’s remit at the earliest possible stage (that is, the need for approval and authorisation by Faculty).
- Encourage the PCC to form a sub-committee to look at the proposal with care:
 - ... Do you need another stained glass window? What effect will it have on the light / quality of the building?
 - ... Do you need another organ, albeit electronic – when already you have a perfectly good working instrument?
 - ... Are there sensitive issues around the gift? Is it a memorial to someone well-known in the parish? Is it the kind of gift that could cause offence to some? Would the gift stick out like a sore thumb?

BASICALLY – would the gift enhance the building and mission of the Church or would it compromise either?

- Have an alternative “gift” list on offer. A five-year appraisal of parish needs will result in a properly drawn up programme that could advertise the priorities of particular concerns in the parish, and would act as an alternative list to offer enthusiastic donors! **BE PREPARED**, in other words!
- Despite the above warnings, always act enthusiastically if donors are about. You will wish to encourage the right sort of gift. If this does come your way, make much of it - by acknowledgement, services of dedication, magazine thanks and so on. Others are encouraged to follow good examples. “We are very pleased with X. The next thing it would be a joy to have is Y” approach.
- Good communication is essential in parish life – and gift horses are no exception!!
- Are any other consents necessary?
e.g.: Planning permission for a notice board or flag pole