

ARRANGING A DAC SITE VISIT

Guidance note

from the Church Buildings Office
2019

The DAC visits churches and churchyards so that it can get a better understanding of what works the PCC is proposing to undertake. Visits also give PCC members the chance to make their case clearly and ensure that the various views of the parish are represented. There are two main sorts of visits:

1. Where a parish is seeking pre-application/informal advice on their proposals.
2. Following a submission of an application for a DAC Notification of Advice.

INFORMAL ADVICE VISITS

Who will attend?

These will be undertaken by either an individual committee member or adviser (where the works concern a specialist area such as bells, or heating), or by a delegation of committee members. The latter type of visit is usually convened when the proposals are for a major reordering or alteration, and are also likely to involve other external consultees. Such a visit should take place early on in the PCC's discussions of options, before they are committed either financially or pastorally to a specific scheme.

Visit by an individual: If a PCC has requested an Informal Advice visit by a particular specialist, then that specialist will be provided with the details of the relevant PCC contact to arrange a mutually convenient time to visit. A written advice report will be produced after the visit by the specialist, which then has to be ratified by the DAC Committee (or Sub Committee) before it can be sent to the parish. This is as advice has to come from, and be agreed by the committee, not an individual.

Visit by a group

If the PCC is considering a major reordering of the church, or an extension to it, then they



are advised to make contact with the DAC at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss their ideas. A site visit with all interested parties is likely to be suggested in such circumstances. If a PCC is at the very beginning of their discussions and thoughts about reordering, it may be appropriate to arrange a visit from the relevant Archdeacon and/or one of the Church Buildings Advisers, who can explain in more detail the process for reordering, and issues to consider.

PROCESS FOR REQUESTING A GROUP VISIT

- The Church Buildings office staff will make the arrangements for such a visit, and invite all of the other necessary consultees. The parish will be informed of which other bodies are being invited to attend. Those organisations that may need to be consulted, and why they need to be involved, are detailed below. It can take some time to organise such visits due to the number of people involved, so PCCs are advised to request such a visit well in advance. A draft Statement of Significance and Needs and any sketch plans that have been produced must be sent to the DAC and relevant consultees prior to the meeting.
- At the visit, the PCC (and their architect, if they have appointed one by this stage) will be asked to outline their proposals, and explain the thinking behind their ideas. DAC members and other consultees will then need to look around the building at the areas under consideration, ask questions, and will offer verbal suggestions to the PCC on issues to consider.
- A written advice report summarising the meeting and any suggestions made will be produced by a DAC representative after the visit, which will then need to be ratified by the committee before being sent to the parish. There may be a few weeks between the visit and the PCC receiving the committee's written advice to enable the report to be written and verified before it is sent. Once the PCC have received this report, they can use it to consider the issues raised at the meeting, and to help them formulate their plans further.

This report will be the views of the DAC, and not of all of the other consultees. It is usual for each of the other bodies to write to the PCC after such a visit with the views of their particular organisation. In some cases, the views of all of the varying organisations may not be the same, and it may not be possible to get agreement, in which case it will be up to the Chancellor to make the final ruling on a PCC's proposals when they come to petition for a faculty. Equally, a PCC does not have to accept the DAC's advice, given in its Notification of Advice. The DAC is an advisory body but if the PCC does not agree it is entitled to proceed with a faculty application without the DAC's support. Again, it will be up to the Chancellor to make the final ruling.

DAC NOTIFICATION OF ADVICE APPLICATION VISITS

When a parish wishes to petition for a faculty to undertake works to their church or churchyard, they first need to obtain a DAC Notification of Advice (see Guidance Note on 'How to Obtain a Faculty'). Once a completed

application for a Notification of Advice has been submitted to the Church Buildings office, it is sent to relevant committee members or advisers for assessment. Some applications will not require a visit. However where a member needs to visit to speak to the PCC and look at the proposals in more

detail, they will make contact with the named parish representative to arrange a mutually convenient time to visit. All DAC members and advisers are asked to ensure that they have made contact with the parish representative concerned before visiting. After they have visited, they will report back to the next DAC committee meeting, following which the written advice of the committee will be relayed to the parish.

ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION

Under the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules, when making proposals for changes that may significantly affect the character, fabric or setting of a church, parishes may need to consult Historic England, the Church Buildings Council, their local planning authority, and/or the relevant National Amenity Societies, in addition to the DAC. This consultation process should start as early as possible, with papers submitted when they are also submitted to the DAC. If any such bodies need to be consulted, but this is not carried out until the Faculty is being applied for, this can lead to delays and frustration.



The types of works that parishes may need to consult the above bodies on include extensions, major reordering, alterations that entail removal of, or other interventions into the historic fabric, the introduction of different constructional materials or features, alterations to the exterior of the building or

the churchyard, and works affecting the archaeological importance of the church or archaeological remains within the church and its curtilage. All consultation will be carried out as part of the faculty process by the church buildings office staff.

[Historic England](#) is the government's statutory adviser on the historic environment. Their pre-application consultation form (obtainable from their website) details the types of works that they need to be consulted on (depending on the grade of the church).

The [National Amenity Society](#) that needs to be consulted depends on the date of the church, and the date of the fabric to be affected. [The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings \(SPAB\)](#) concentrates on buildings or fixtures/fittings that date from 1720 or before; [The Georgian Group](#) covers buildings or fixtures/fittings from the period 1700 – 1837; [The Victorian Society](#) covers buildings or fixtures/fittings of the period 1837 – 1914; and [The Twentieth Century Society](#) covers buildings or fixtures/fittings from 1914 onwards. Each DAC has a nominee of the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies who is available to advise on and discuss consultation with Amenity Societies in outline. Exeter's nominee is Dr Stuart Blaylock, who can be contacted on (01884) 33966.

The [Church Buildings Council](#) is a permanent commission of the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England. It advises on the conservation of church furnishing and administers grants from charitable trusts for their conservation, and also advises parishes on new works of art. They usually need to be consulted on the introduction, conservation, alteration or disposal of items (fixed or moveable) of historic, archaeological, or

artistic interest, or significant alteration of or extension to a listed church, and re-ordering of any church.

The [Local Planning Authority](#) will need to be consulted where any changes are proposed to the exterior of the building or the churchyard (including headstones/monuments, paths, walls and lychgates), as planning permission may be needed in addition to a faculty. They also

need to be consulted where works (a) involve demolition of a listed building of any grade or its alteration or extension to such an extent as would be likely to affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest; (b) are likely to affect the archaeological importance of a building or archaeological remains within the building or its curtilage; or (c) involve demolition affecting the exterior of an unlisted building in a conservation area.

CONTACT DETAILS

Historic England (South West) 29 Queen Square, Bristol, BS1 4ND
(0117 975 0700) <http://www.historicengland.org.uk/>

Church Buildings Council, Fifth Floor, Church House, Great Smith St, London, SW1P 3NZ (020 7898 1866) www.churchcare.co.uk

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, 37 Spital Square, London, E1 6DY
(020 7377 1644) www.spab.org.uk

The Georgian Group, 6 Fitzroy Square, London, W1P 6DX
(087 1750 2936) www.georgiangroup.org.uk

The Victorian Society, 1 Priory Gardens, Bedford Park, London, W4 1TT
(020 8994 1019) www.victoriansociety.org.uk

The Twentieth Century Society, 70 Cowcross Street, London, EC1M 6EJ
(020 7250 3857) www.c20society.org.uk