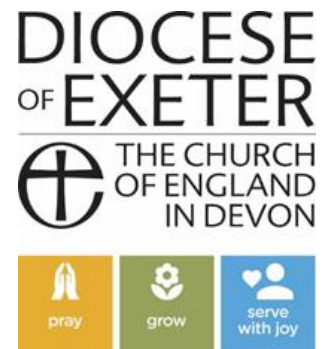


The Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches **ANNUAL REPORT** for 2021



The Diocesan Advisory Committee at work – The Chair’s view



The year 2021 has been another extraordinary one for us all. I have spent most of it shielding with my wife and trying to manage our risk as best we can. Science has given us vaccine protection but there are still situations where we feel the need to follow government guidance and to stay safe. Such challenges face us all.

This does not mean that the work of the Exeter Diocesan Advisory Committee has stalled – far from it. Our excellent professional team led by the Senior Church Buildings Adviser and DAC Secretary, Nigel Pratt, assisted by Church Buildings Adviser Alex Copey, has ensured that the functions of the DAC have continued, that faculty applications have been processed and have progressed and we have carried out informal advice visits, where possible.

I am profoundly grateful to the way that they have both adapted to mainly working from home, have continued to strengthen the links with individual PCC’s and have supported me in my role as Chair. Bi-monthly DAC meetings have been organised and run on a virtual platform, with our wide-ranging membership bringing their huge expertise and knowledge base to bear – albeit in a different format. I do personally still prefer the traditional face-to-face meetings and hope these can resume as soon as possible. We held a successful hybrid meeting in December 2021.

I believe that as we strive to help those who seek our assistance, we are continually improving the quality of advice and guidance given and I am encouraged that the strong message of early involvement seems to be getting across. Our informal advice is helping hard pressed PCCs and their professional advisors to ensure that their applications have the best chance of a positive faculty approval from the Chancellor. Informal advice visits resumed early in 2021 and have continued. We have taken all Government and Church Buildings Council advice and have ensured that we work as safely as possible.

The wider church continues to face increasing challenges and to meet these in the future, the buildings must also adapt to be sustainable. The new ways of mission have increased applications for improved audio-visual facilities and the drive to inclusive and wider commercial uses has resulted in many applications for accessible toilet facilities, servery and food preparation areas and flexible space for

community activities. The DAC recognises its responsibility to advise the Chancellor on the appropriateness of change to these special buildings. Of the 605 churches in our care, many are listed either Grade I or II* and are nationally important heritage assets. Whilst respecting this, we also understand the needs of the mission, when balancing our advice. I pay tribute to the hard work of the 4 Archdeacons of Exeter Diocese, whose respected advice and input, ensure that the focus of the DAC stays on the mission.

We have had some changes on the DAC this year and have welcomed The Venerable Verena Breed as Archdeacon of Barnstaple and The Reverend Marc Kerslake as Diocesan Synod nominee. We augmented our consultant expertise with David Curry, natural environment, and Andrew Johnson, stained glass, joining the list. We also said goodbye to James Clarke, our bells and clocks consultant, who had given many years valuable service to the DAC and welcomed Neil Deem who will now assist David Hird with bells and clocks advice. I should add that all the DAC members and consultants provide their time and expertise free of charge. The DAC could not function without this tremendous support and goodwill, which is never taken for granted. Many members run successful commercial practices and giving time to the DAC diverts their attention from their main work. We are all immeasurably indebted to them for this selfless input.

The overall levels of activity have remained remarkably high, given the constraints imposed upon everyone. The requirement to have received the feedback from all national consultees before Faculty consideration has introduced some delay. This is mitigated by the possession of the full responses thus avoiding the need for subsequent late changes or provisos. We continue to seek the earliest involvement for informal advice and are very happy to meet with church representatives and their professional advisors at the initial stages.

A significant challenge for all our buildings, their users and professional advisors will be the ability to respond to the General Synod declaration that the Church will be carbon neutral by 2030. We are already seeing this forming part of the brief for churches who are considering their future needs. The demands for efficient heating systems provide a huge challenge, particularly for our very rural churches. Here, heating with oil and electricity may be the only available solution. Existing electrical supplies may not support some of the more modern electric heating solutions. The impact of externally located plant such as air source heat pumps can also raise concerns. The capital investment required to change primary heating systems may preclude individual PCC's from realising their ambitions. We must ensure that we act upon the most appropriate available advice to ensure targets are not just 'greenwashing' exercises. We must appreciate that net-zero targets can be risky and to focus on cutting carbon emissions without resorting to unproven new technologies or unsustainable land use requirements.

Looking forward, I see an increased need for our church buildings to become more flexible community assets and to operate on commercial basis. Revenue streams, however small, may make the difference between sustainability and obsolescence. We must also guard against a backlog of essential maintenance to the historic building fabric.



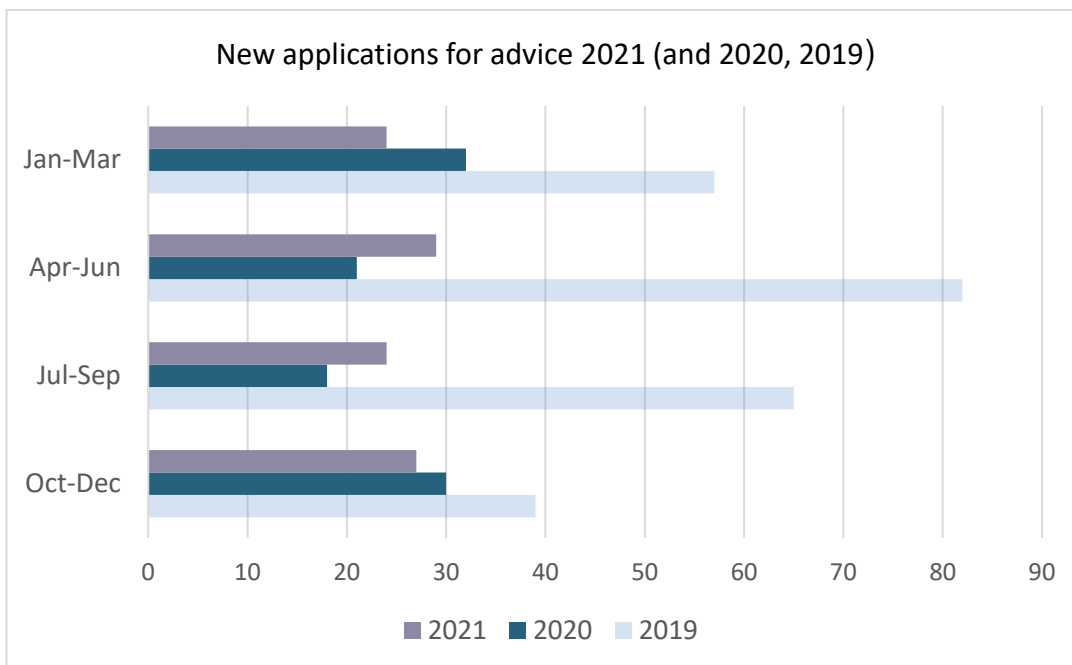
Walker Lapthorne, Chair of the DAC

DAC Review of 2021

DAC advice

The Diocesan Advisory Committee dealt with **139** items of casework at the six full committee meetings and weekly email subcommittees held in 2021. This included formal and informal advice, outline proposals, amendments to faculties, discharge of provisos attached to faculties, and discussions involving the issuing of Archdeacon's Permission for Temporary Reordering (APTR).

During 2021, the DAC considered **104** new applications for advice. Of these, **54** were for formal advice - the first step towards a Faculty application - and **50** for informal advice. The DAC strongly encourage PCCs to apply for early informal advice on all proposals to help guide them through the process and save time and unnecessary expense. Informal advice is available on all matters relating to the alteration, repair and conservation of church buildings and the DAC is particularly fortunate in having access to expertise spanning many disciplines including, bells and clocks, organs, timberwork, heating, lighting, audio-visual and trees. The further **35** cases considered by the Committee were made up of applications submitted before the start of the year, resubmissions for advice, and amendments to existing faculties.



Overall, casework numbers in 2021 were comparable to 2020, but still down on the last 'normal' year of 2019. This may suggest that churches are delaying larger projects during times of uncertainty. This might also be reflected in the **88%** of cases progressed at first review by the Committee, which may be indicative of more straightforward cases being brought forward, compared to 2019 when only 64% of cases were progressed at first review.

In 2021, the average (median) time taken for the DAC to issue a formal Notification of Advice was **32** days, which compares 41 days in 2020 and 45 days in 2019. Again, this might indicate less complex cases that did not require statutory consultation, which can introduce an additional 42 days between the application being made and the DAC advice being issued.

Once the Notification of Advice was issued, it took an average of a further **93** days for the Chancellor/Deputy Chancellor, to issue a formal decision. This period includes the statutory 28 days for

the public notice display and it should be noted that the PCC can delay for up to 2 years before submitting their Petition once the DAC has given its advice. PCCs are currently advised to allow a period of up to 4 months between submitting their application on the Online Faculty System and the Faculty decision issued being issued.

Site visits

A large part of the work of the DAC is making visits to parishes to offer informal advice on proposals. There is no cost to PCCs for such visits, and parishes are encouraged to contact the Church Buildings Advisers at an early stage in their plans to make use of this service. The Church Buildings Advisers are also available to visit parishes for initial discussion on how to start a project, including advice on funding, and how to make a Faculty application.

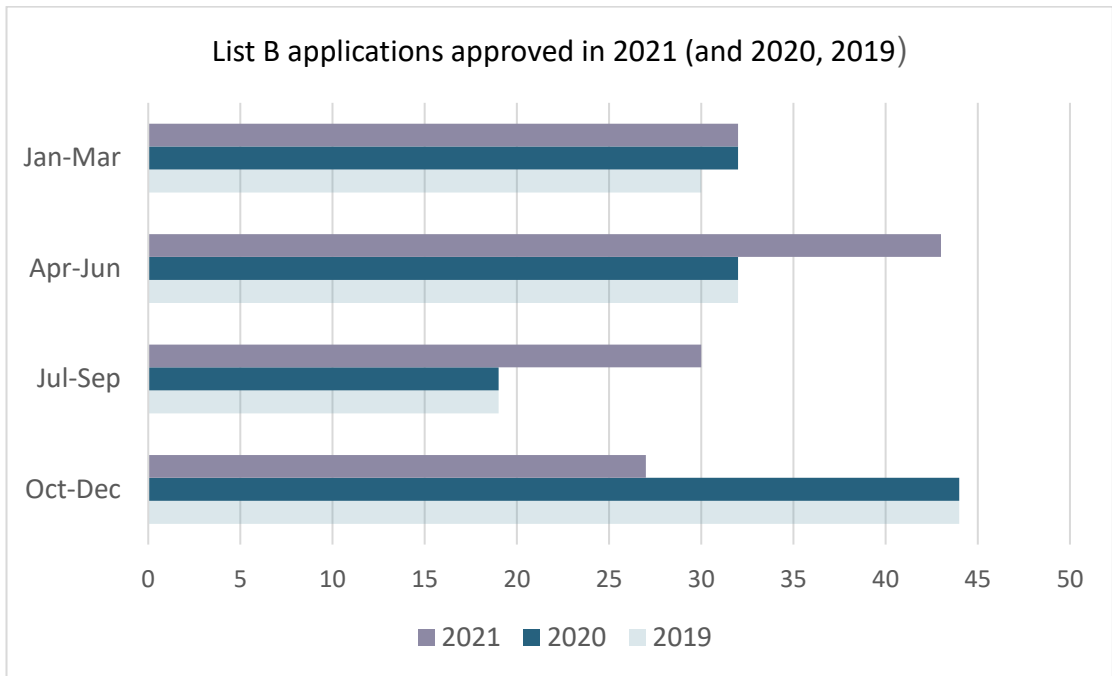


Covid-19 protocols continued to be observed at visits through 2021. Culmstock, All Saints.

The restrictions imposed by the pandemic reduced the number of site meetings early in the year, but the DAC managed to visit a total of **58** churches during 2021. As expected, this was higher than the 33 visits made in 2020 but still lower than the 118 visits made in 2019. As the backlog of visits was cleared in 2021 this year's figure represents reduced demand from PCCs. Early indications are that this will pick-up in 2022.

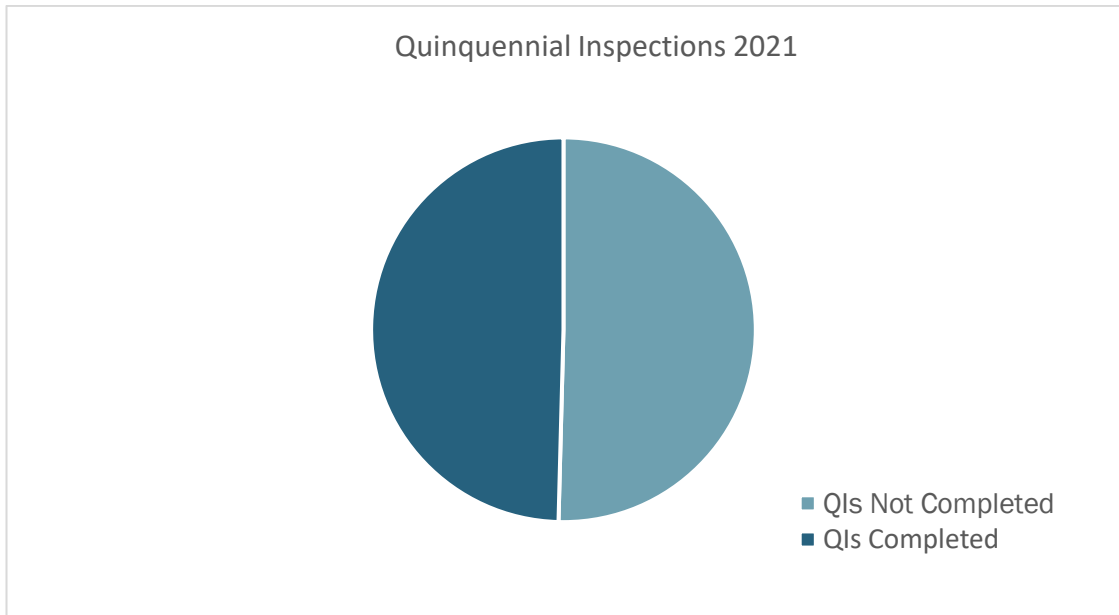
List B approvals

A total of **136** List B applications for minor works were received and approved by the archdeacons in 2021. This is comparable to the 127 in 2019 and 129 in 2019. This consistency in numbers demonstrates that the requirement for essential maintenance and repair work, that makes up the bulk of List B applications, is ongoing. The 2021 total included **8** made under the Temporary Additional Matters Order to help churches deal with COVID-19. Since November these items, along with others unrelated to the pandemic, have been permanently added to List B by the Chancellor. The average (median) time to process a List B application from submission to archdeacon's approval in 2021 was **12** days with almost half of the applications received being processed and approved in less than one week.



Quinquennial Inspections

Up to the end of January 2022, **60** of the 121 reports of the Quinquennial Inspections that were due to have taken place in 2021 had been received. While it is possible that a few reports completed late in 2021 will continue to be submitted into 2022, it appears that around half of the churches that were required to complete their 5 yearly inspections in 2021 have done so.



In 2020, the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure meant that PCCs no longer need to choose an inspector from the Diocesan approved list. So far, only one PCC in the diocese has taken advantage of this relaxation in the legislation and appointed an architect not on the approved list.

Other work

The DAC Chair and Church Buildings Advisers participated in 4 webinars hosted by the Growing the Rural Church Project. The aim of these was to introduce the DAC and the services it can offer to PCCs and to explain the procedures necessary to gain permission for work. Recordings of these events are available on the GtRC website <https://www.growingtheruralchurch.org/working-with-the-dac/>. Further webinars and video tutorials in collaboration with GtRC are planned for 2022.

In September, the DAC submitted a detailed response to the national Net-Zero Carbon Faculty working group consultation for proposed changes to the Faculty rules to help achieve net-zero carbon. This feedback acknowledged that, particularly with rural churches running oil fired and LPG heating and with insufficient electrical supply for heat pumps, there are limited alternative heating options currently available. This is likely to present a significant challenge in meeting the 2030 target. The Faculty rules revisions are set to become legislation in summer 2022.

At the October DAC meeting, it was unanimously agreed that the DAC should adopt the national framework for contested heritage – which may be defined as historic objects, structures, buildings, or places that are seen as symbols of injustice and sources of pain. This includes memorials and other heritage associated with racism and the slave trade. It is important that such symbols are acknowledged, and the DAC Secretary and archdeacons will continue to work in this area and liaise with the PCCs and other stakeholders to ensure a consistency of approach and communication.

Dr Nigel Pratt
Senior Church Buildings Adviser and DAC Secretary
January 2022