

The Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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



It has been another year of change and challenge for the Exeter Diocesan Advisory Committee. In July, our excellent and popular Buildings Advisor, Alex Copsey, left to become the Historic Buildings Officer at Plymouth City Council. Alex had given continued support to our Senior Church Buildings Adviser and DAC Secretary, Nigel Pratt. Despite three recruitment drives, we have yet to find a suitable successor. Nigel is working wonders, coping alone, to keep the Faculty System running in Devon. We hope for better fortune in our recruiting in the New Year. Post Pandemic, we are still aware of the issues around the continuing Covid crisis and continue to manage risk. We held our first full in – person DAC meeting since February 2020, in June 2022.

The Diocese continues to work flexibly, and we continue to strengthen the support given to individual PCCs by advocating early contact in the Faculty process. I am indebted to Nigel for his continued support to me in my role as Chair. We held five DAC meetings over this year, which have striven to deal with Faculty Applications in a timely fashion, but we have found the longer 42 day consultation period with the Amenity Societies has still resulted in delays. I feel that resources are also stretched in these organisations.

The DAC is elected to serve for a fixed time period and a new committee was elected in August to serve a further 6-year term. This saw the retirement of my Vice Chair Jeremy Pearson, Sasha Chapman our archaeology advisor and Jo Hibbert, one of our architectural advisors. I thank them all for their service and support. I am very pleased that John Scott has agreed to become my Vice Chair. We have also welcomed Jane Jones-Warner to the Committee, and Andy Crabb (archaeology), Patricia Eyres (accessibility) and Andrew McSmythurs (surveyor) were all appointed as DAC Consultants in 2022. We also heard of the recent sad death of Mike Hope, a former committee member and our DAC Arts Consultant.

I am encouraged by the level of activity within the churches under our care, that have resulted in requests both for advice and subsequent Faculty Applications. We have also worked hard to change the erroneous perception that the DAC is a block to change and is not proactive in understanding the changing needs of the mission. We have worked with the Growing the Rural Church project to participate in live webinars, we continue to present at Church Warden Training days. I aim, as Chair, to attend as many of the informal site visits as I can. We hosted the South West Regional DAC meeting in July, which was very successful.

With regard to the nature of the works for which advice is sought, we still see an increasing need for the creation of more flexible internal space. Hard pressed PCCs need to ensure that their church building works as an asset and

provides facilities to ensure a good welcome. It is not unreasonable to expect, in a public building, to have accessible toilet facilities and places where refreshments can be prepared and served. We fully understand this.

The advice to our Chancellor, as to whether a scheme merits a faculty, has to be considered against the background that a high proportion of our 605 churches fall into the highest category of Listed Buildings, either Grade II* or Grade I. We have a duty of care to assess the harm to historic fabric caused by any significant changes and to assess if the needs of mission should outweigh this loss. The removal of pews is often a challenging aspect of such proposals and can only be considered if supported by a very well-presented Statement of Significance and Statement of Need. The enabling role of the Church Architects and other professional advisors in guiding the church through this, cannot be underestimated.

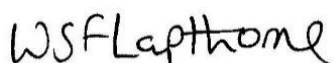
There will also usually be a presumption that rather than externally extending a building, which will also involve secular planning control, a fully considered options appraisal of the interior of the building will have been completed and presented. We consider that most objectives can be achieved by well-reasoned and creative architectural solutions.

I am always astonished by the breadth of matters that we are asked to comment upon. This last year has included replacement of bell frames, new systems of protective glazing for stained glass windows, introduction of new works of art, disposal of books and artifacts and permission for memorial stones. We would not be able to attend to these without the support of our various specialist consultants. They, like the main committee members, give their precious time for free, to assist the church with its mission. We would not be able to function without this huge quantum of goodwill. Many advisors still run or work for commercial practices who generously permit this vital work to continue.

One of the biggest challenges facing churches at present is the rising cost of energy. This must be set against the Church of England's stated goal to become carbon neutral by 2030. The medieval church buildings do present significant challenges with regard to meeting these objectives. The other building estate such as schools, halls and vicarages are sometimes more achievable. On 1st July, the Faculty Jurisdiction (Amendment) Rules 2022 came into force. These were issued by The Church Buildings Council and introduce a requirement to have "due regard to net zero guidance".

Some dioceses are already refusing to grant faculties for the like for like replacement of fossil fuelled boilers. We at Exeter feel that the nature and existing servicing of our buildings is not so straightforward. We feel that each individual case must be considered on its merits and in some circumstances, a fossil fuelled boiler may remain, still, the only viable option. I pay tribute to our long serving and very hardworking Services Consultants, Keith Dodd and Dave Farnham. Their input with both wide experience and up to date knowledge, enables the DAC to provide the best advice we can in this ever-changing field.

In conclusion, I am optimistic that with the ongoing support of the committee, consultants and employed staff, we can continue to provide the vital strategic advice to help our buildings remain sustainable and fit for purpose. Given the rising commercial pressures, our watchword should be sustainability. We will continue to advise our Chancellor of the respective merits of each case. We will respect the historic fabric that so many of our wonderful churches are blessed with but will try to facilitate change where the needs of mission demand.



Walker Lapthorne, Chair of the DAC

The DAC Secretary's Report

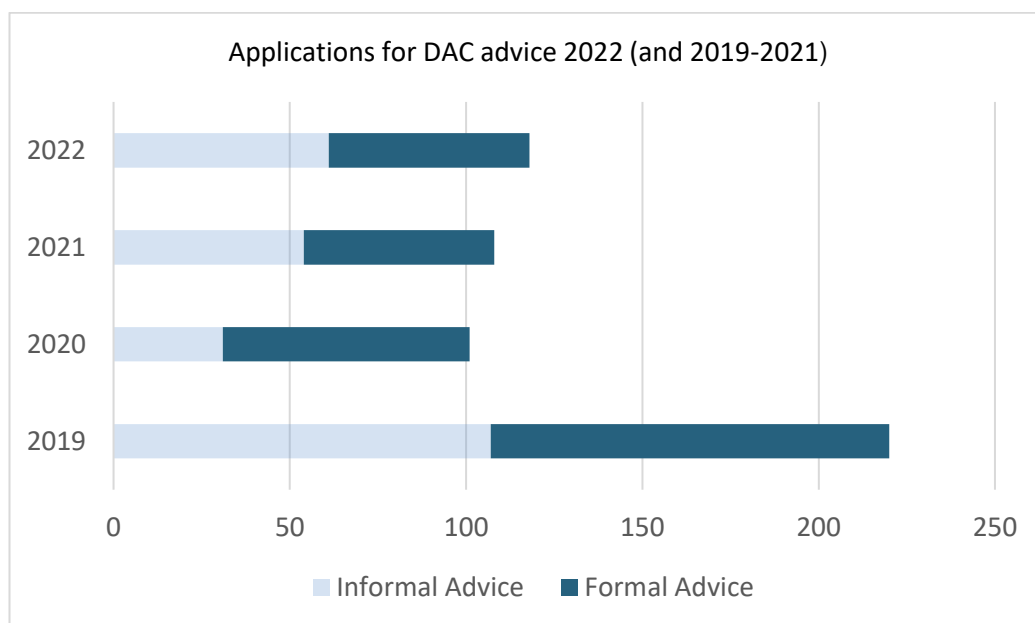


DAC advice

The Diocesan Advisory Committee dealt with **148** items of casework at the five full committee meetings and weekly email subcommittees held in 2022. This included formal and informal advice, outline proposals, amendments to faculties, and the discharge of provisos attached to faculties.

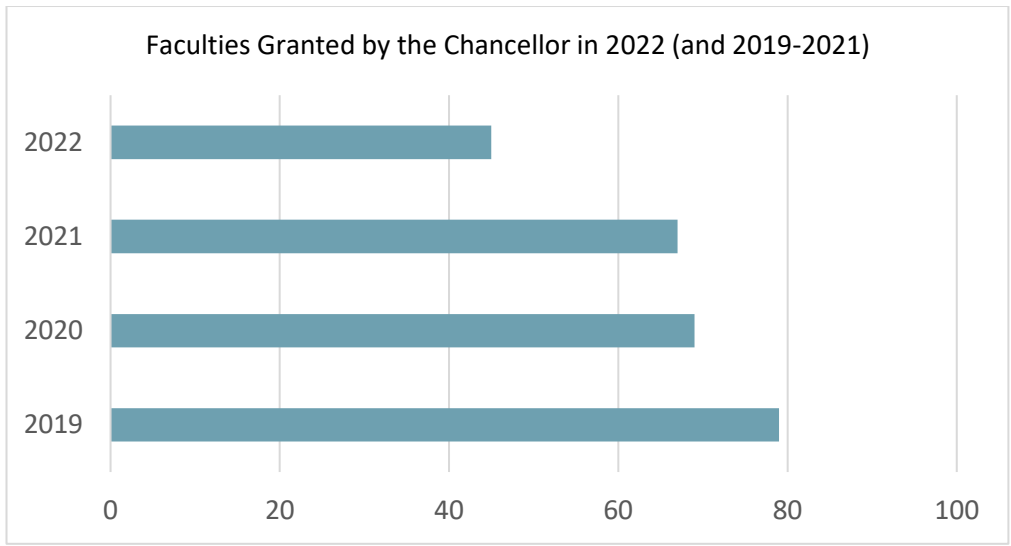
During the year, the DAC considered **118** new requests for advice. Of these, **57** were for formal advice - the first step to a Faculty application - and **61** for informal advice. The DAC strongly encourage PCCs to apply for early informal advice on all proposals to help guide them through the process and save time and unnecessary expense later down the line.

Overall, casework numbers in 2022 were above 2020 and 2021, but still down on the last 'normal' year of 2019. This may suggest a slow recovery from the pandemic disruption but also that churches are delaying larger projects during times of economic uncertainty. Proportionally more work is also being dealt with through List B archdeacon's written advice – see below.



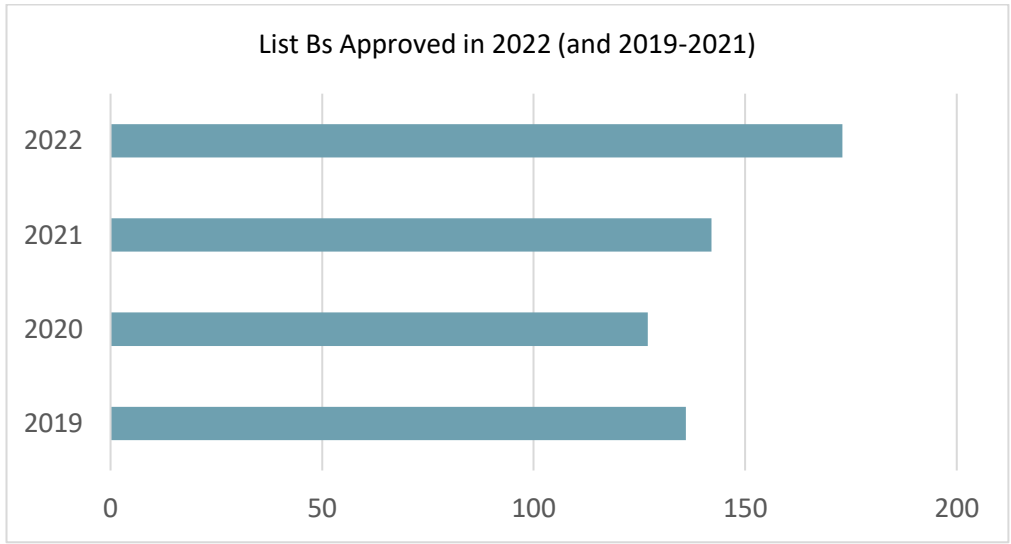
In 2022, the average (median) time taken for the DAC to issue a formal Notification of Advice from the receipt of a Faculty application was **39** days. It should be noted that since the legislation changed in 2020, this can include up to an additional 42 day consultation period with the statutory consultees between the application being made and the DAC advice being issued.

Once the Notification of Advice was issued, it took an average (median) of a further **77** days for the Chancellor or 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 to the Chancellor after the DAC has issued the Notification of Advice. **45** Faculties were issued by the Chancellor/Deputy Chancellor in 2022. 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 being issued. Where there have been objections, or the issues are complex, the Chancellor may wish to visit the church for an informal hearing and four of these visits took place in 2022, two of which were attended by DAC representatives.



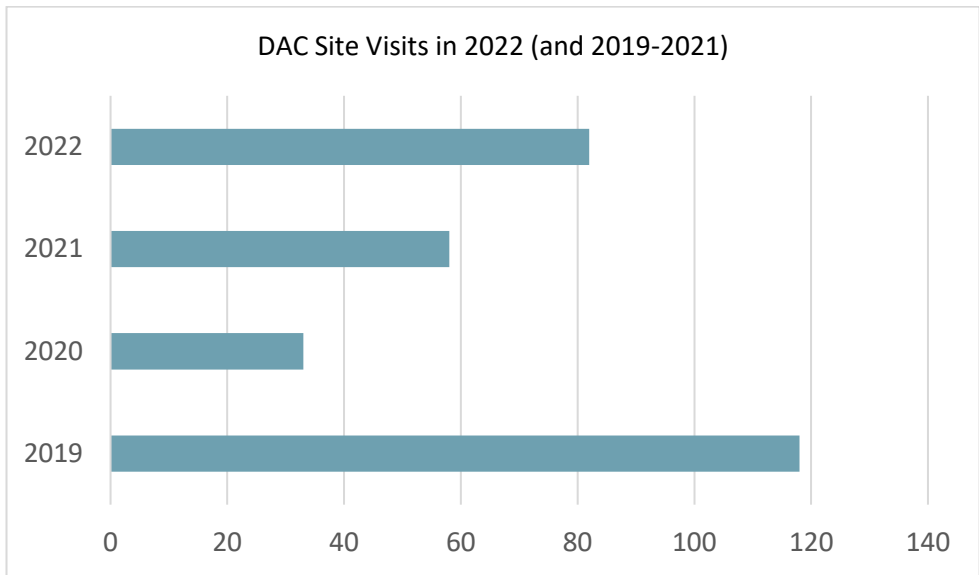
List B approvals

Many items of minor work that do not need Faculty authorisation may, after consultation with a DAC member or officer, be approved by the archdeacon under the List B process. In 2022 a total of **173** List B applications were approved. The average (median) time to process a List B application from submission to archdeacon’s approval in 2022 was **10** days with almost half of the applications received being processed and approved in less than one working week. As a response to the Church’s carbon net-zero target, List B was updated nationally on 1st July 2022. This resulted in some new items being added to List B and others, such as the like for like replacement of fossil fuel systems, now requiring a full Faculty. The revised list of items can be viewed on the Diocesan website (<https://exeter.anglican.org/resources/church-buildings/faculties/>).



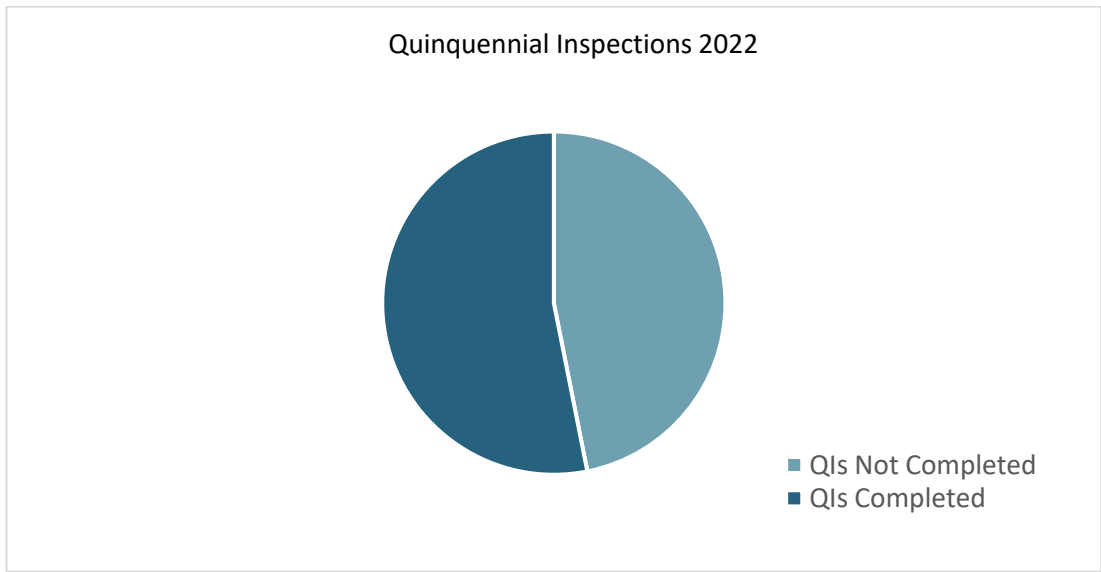
Site visits

A large part of the work of the Committee is making visits to parishes to offer informal advice on proposals and the DAC visited **83** churches in response to parish requests in 2022. Informal advice is free of charge and available on all matters relating to the alteration, repair and conservation of church buildings. 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. Parishes are encouraged to contact the Church Buildings Office at the Old Deanery at an early stage in their plans to make use of this service.



Quinquennial Inspections

Every 5 years each PCC is required by legislation to commission an inspector to visit their church and carry out an inspection of the whole building, its fixtures and fittings, the services to and from the building, plus the churchyard. Of the **96** Quinquennial Inspections that were due in 2022, 49 were received at the Church Buildings Office by the year’s end. Reports completed late in 2022 will, however, continue to be submitted into 2023. A total of **125** QIs are more than two years overdue.



Dr Nigel Pratt
Senior Church Buildings Adviser and DAC Secretary

dac@exeter.anglican.org
01392 294944 / 07399 937698

January 2023