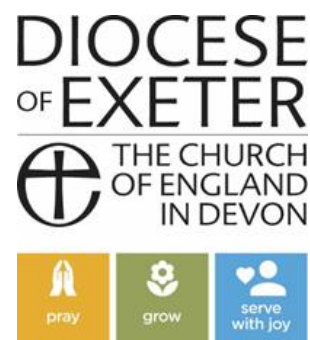
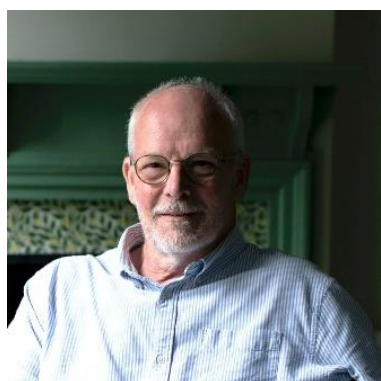


The Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches



Annual report for 2025

The Chair's Report



It has been another busy year for the DAC, with challenges and pleasures for all concerned. I appreciate the support I have received and continue to receive from the staff in the Church Buildings Office, the DAC members and the Archdeacons. Chairing the DAC is challenging at times and it would be impossible without a team that we can trust to deliver the process, manage matters sensitively with parishes and curate the referrals to DAC advisers for their special input. Our architect members do an extraordinary amount of work in examining application documents in detail on behalf of the committee and attending site meetings with the Church Buildings Officers.

I have said it every year in this role, but have no hesitation in saying again that the other DAC specialists who deserve extra-special mention are our Heating and Electrical advisers, Keith Dodd and Dave Farnham, who get through a prodigious workload, attending more site visits than anyone else and assisting parishes to address the complexities of heating and lighting that accords with our obligation to deliver on the Church of England's commitment to Net Zero Carbon by 2030 without being unaffordable either to install or to run. The nuance of both advice from the Church Buildings Council and our own interpretation of it deriving from experience is constantly developing and a lot of effort goes into maximising the support for parishes in getting the best from it.

I think it is worth stressing that we are abnormally blessed with a team of both staff and volunteer members (as all the members are) who devote a great deal of time and skill to facilitating the right outcomes, not just for the DAC but for the parishes as well. Staff and advisers really do go above and beyond to find solutions in tricky cases. This includes visiting churches to advise on repairs, helping parishes get the best value for money *and* best outcomes for their historic fabric, and dealing with other heritage stakeholders, where the Committee advocates for the parish in many instances. Not everyone realises how constructive our DAC is!

National and Regional Church Events

The National DAC conference in September concentrated substantially on the new Mission and Pastoral Measure that is being prepared, which among other things will change the provisions and processes for churches that are failing to sustain themselves and their buildings, with options for status changes and closure. That process is not dealt with by DAC, but the business of caring for the buildings which are in use links closely to the future the buildings have for mission and community. There was much interesting discussion, including a growing realisation of the difficulty, particularly in rural dioceses like ours, of recruiting the churchwardens on whom the whole faculty system is predicated. The conference gives a valuable opportunity to compare notes with other dioceses - who are largely all addressing the same issues. There is a tendency in the Church of England for the independence of parishes, dioceses and even different parts of the same organisational systems, to silo information and it is good to seize any chance to share experiences. As a result of contacts made at successive conferences, we have been specifically enhancing our dialogue with our neighbours in the Diocese of Truro. Their DAC chair and secretary attended one of our meetings in 2025, and I attended one of theirs. This has been very interesting and reassuring, in that we are grappling with the same issues in similar ways, and it is better for all concerned if we do not do so in isolation.

Training

Many of the DAC's interactions with parishes begin with an explanation of the system from first principles and the role of the various participants in it. Conversely many of the conflicts that arise are rooted in a lack of the same understanding, and the same explanations can go a long way in forging more constructive relationships with better outcomes. We have therefore concentrated some effort on training in 2025.

Better knowledge and management of the process for church fabric permissions is important for both clergy *and* churchwardens, and in the past we have only been able to reach the latter and it was a great pleasure to have our offer of a contribution to clergy training taken up. Accordingly, the DAC Secretary and I gave a joint presentation to the clergy training 'Into Incumbency' in May, which was well received. A repeat is scheduled for 2026 and we hope that our involvement in 'Into Incumbency' training will be repeated in future programmes. We also have churchwarden training events planned for the year ahead.

The DAC regularly engages in technical training for the architects and surveyors who serve parishes in the Diocese. Our Lime Mortar Day at the Old Deanery in March was attended by 40 architects and professionals. Expert David Odgers summarised recent research, guidance and best practice, and discussion focussed on ensuring that the information required for faculty and List B applications was clear and consistent. This specifically addressed a subject of current concern in processing applications and is facilitating better applications and consistent responses going forward.

Communications

The Church Buildings Office and Chair have combined with the Communications and Engagement team to produce a series of short videos about basic church maintenance, filmed at St Nectan's Ashcombe to illustrate the challenges at a typical Devon church. Aimed particularly at churchwardens and those who care for the fabric of our churches, these can be found at <https://vimeo.com/1126231699/6fc393c08c>.

A new newsletter regarding church buildings 'Living Stones' is also now being circulated to over 1000 recipients. Everyone involved in church buildings in the Diocese should seek it out and sign up.

My personal thanks go to all concerned, and to those churchwardens, clergy and PCC representatives who work constructively with the committee to best effect.

John Scott, Chair of the DAC

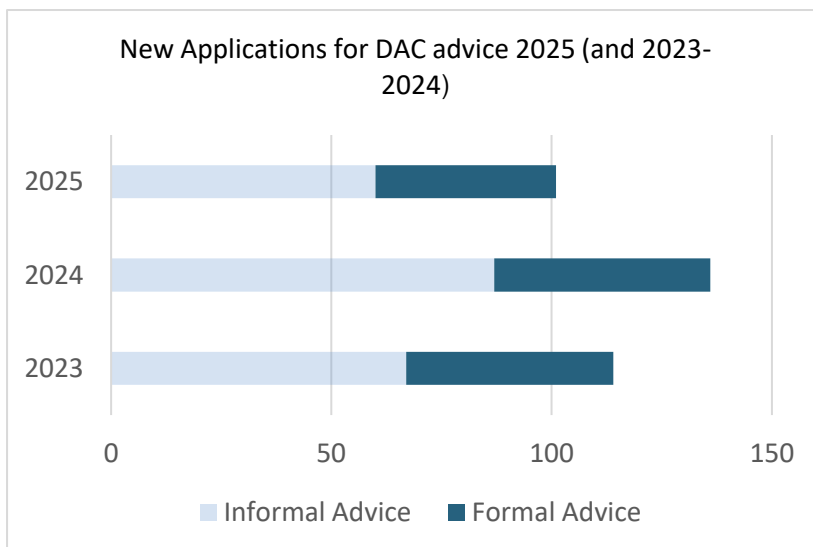
The Secretary's Report



DAC advice

The Diocesan Advisory Committee dealt with 191 items of casework at the six full committee meetings and weekly email subcommittees held in 2025. This included formal and informal advice, outline proposals, amendments to faculties, and the discharge of provisos attached to Faculties granted.

During 2025, the Committee considered 101 new requests for advice. Of these, 41 were for formal advice as part of a Faculty application. There were a further 60 requests for informal advice. The DAC strongly encourages PCCs to apply for early informal advice on all proposals involving changes to churches before they apply for a Faculty, so that they can be involved in the discussions at an initial stage, which can save time and money later down the line.



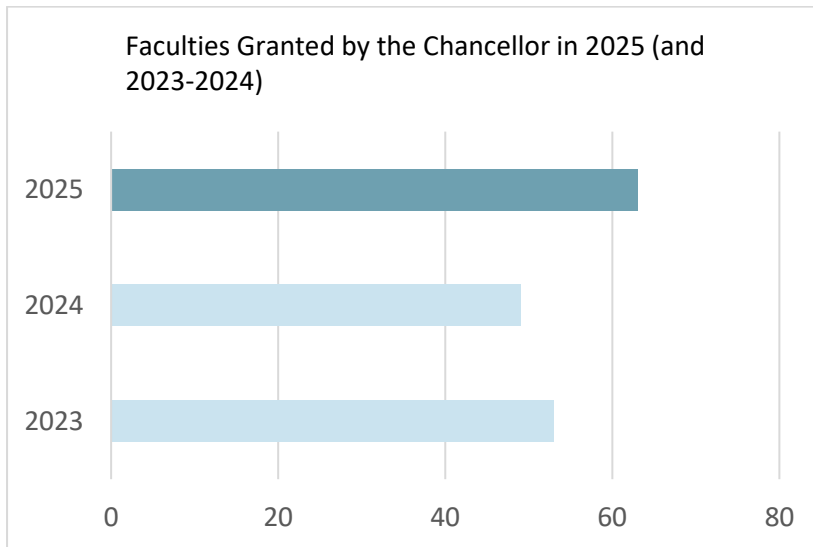
Faculties

The average (median) time taken for the DAC to issue its formal Notification of Advice from the validation of a Faculty application was 53 working days. It should be noted that for applications that require external consultation, this can include a statutory period of up to 42 days before the DAC Notification of Advice can be issued.

Once the Notification of Advice was issued, it took an average (median) of a further 119 days for the Chancellor to issue his decision. This period includes the statutory 28 days for the public notice and it should also be noted that the PCC can wait for up to 2 years before submitting their Petition to the Chancellor after the DAC has issued the Notification of Advice.

A total of 63 Faculties were issued by the Chancellor in 2025. The time taken between applying through the Online Faculty System and the Faculty decision being issued by the

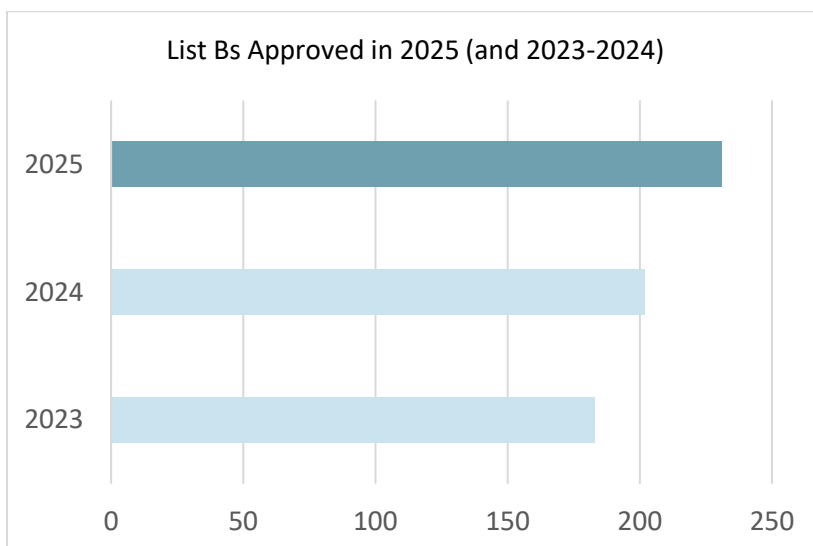
Chancellor varies according to the complexity of the case, but PCCs are advised to allow at least 4-6 months.



List B approvals

Many items of minor work that do not need Faculty authorisation may be approved by the archdeacon under the List B process. The list of works that qualify for List B is available on the Diocesan website at ([Minor works - Diocese of Exeter](#)).

In 2025, a total of 231 List B applications were approved. The average (median) time to process a List B application from submission to archdeacon's approval was 19 days.



Site visits

A significant part of the work of the Committee is making visits to parishes to offer advice on proposals and in 2025 the DAC visited 124 churches in response to parish requests. Informal advice is free of charge and available on all matters relating to the alteration, repair, and conservation of church buildings, their interiors and churchyards. As the Chair says in his

report, the DAC is 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 an early stage in their plans to make use of this service.

Quinquennial Inspections

For the 95% of churches in the Diocese that are subject to the Inspection of Churches Measure, the PCC is legally required to appoint a person to inspect the building and to make a report on the inspection every five years. In 2025, 74 QI reports were received by the Church Buildings Office. A total of 135 QIs were recorded as being overdue, although many of the 55 due in 2025 will have been completed and will arrive at the Diocesan office in early 2026. Church Inspectors and PCCs are reminded that the Measure obliges them to send copies of their QI reports to the archdeacon and the DAC Secretary.

Dr Nigel Pratt, Senior Church Buildings Adviser and DAC Secretary

Contact

Email: dac@exeter.anglican.org

Website [Your church building and churchyard - Diocese of Exeter](#)



Church Buildings Team (L-R): Louise Brown, Imogen Smith, John Scott (DAC Chair), Nigel Pratt, Alice Risdon and Toast.

February 2026