BUILDINGS FOR MISSION

MINOR REPAIRS & IMPROVEMENTS

GRANTS 2026-2029

APPLICATION GUIDE

DIOCESE OF EXETER

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN DEVON

INTRODUCTION

The Diocese of Exeter has once again been awarded a share of the Buildings for Mission: Minor Repairs & Improvements Fund. Buildings for Mission is a project funded by the Church Commissioners via the Archbishop's Council which supports grants for buildings and Church Buildings Support Officer (CBSO) posts across the country.

The intention of these grants is to assist with funding **'stitch in time'** repairs or small improvements which enable regular maintenance and reduce the cost of future repairs. The budget of the fund in this Diocese is £144,000 and this will be split over two 'tranches'.

There are two types of grants within the fund: Small and Large. Small grants have a minimal match-funding requirement with a maximum project cost of £5000. Large grants require more match-funding with a minimum of 25%. With the exception of total project cost, the eligibility criteria is the same for each type of grant.

In this Guide you will find information about eligible works and buildings, application processes and deadlines, panel decision processes, FAQs and everything else you will need in order to apply for a grant. Please read the whole guide carefully before applying.

If you have any questions about this guide or grant programme, contact the Diocese of Exeter CBSO:

Imogen Marshall-Smith

Church Buildings Support Officer

Church Buildings Team

Email: imogen.smith@exeter.anglican.org

Telephone: 07719980692

ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE BUILDINGS
Purpose-built church buildings, whether consecrated or licenced for worship, in the Church of England Diocese of Exeter in IMD bands C-K.*
Listed and non-Listed buildings.
Churchyard boundaries associated with Churches as above.
ELIGIBLE PROJECT COSTS
Minimum project cost: £500 including VAT.
Maximum project cost: £20,000 including VAT.
ELIGIBLE WORKS
Works recommended in the most recent QI report or equivalent professional report.
Fees: professional specification (must be included in and no more than 50% of the total project cost), scaffolding/essential access, VAT (where not zero-rated).
Professional fees for standalone investigative reports for repairs/project development for improvements where works investigated are themselves eligible
'Stitch in time' repairs to…
Internal and external building fabric (walls, roofs, floors, windows, etc.) and services.
Rainwater goods, above ground drainage and gulleys.
Churchyard boundaries, walls, railings, paths and gates.
Small improvements to…
Additions/alterations/adaptations to overcome building design defects or improve access for maintenance (e.g., up-size rainwater goods, add opening window hoppers).
Buildings services installations (e.g., improvements to heating, lighting, wiring…).
New installations or improvements to existing installations for digital connectivity
Bat mitigation measures (e.g., ecologists fees, deep cleaning…).

*churches in IMD Bands A and B will be considered in exceptional circumstances if they can strongly demonstrate need over a number of areas. For example: small PCC, low participant numbers, income/expenditure deficit and low reserves, small parish population.

***NOT* ELIGIBLE**
BUILDINGS
Buildings which are not part of the Church of England Diocese of Exeter
Church halls and other buildings owned by parishes in the Diocese which are not purpose-built churches
Buildings associated with parishes who withhold Common Fund payments, or who have outstanding unauthorised works may be ineligible and will be assessed individually
WORKS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THIS FUND
Please note this is not an exhaustive list, refer to the list of eligible works.
Repairs not recommended in the most recent QI report or equivalent professional report
Routine maintenance such as gutter clearance/unblocking, removal of minor plant growth
Routine inspection (QIs, electrical installation inspection, appliance testing, gas safety…)
Routine services of building services installations
Improvements which are not vital to sustaining mission in the building
Works, including conservation reports, professional fees and VAT to furnishings (bells/frames, books/manuscripts, church plate, clocks, monuments/brasses, organs, paintings/wall paintings, stained/painted glass, textiles, wooden objects…)
Removal of obsolete structures/equipment not part of the building fabric (e.g., oil tank)
Other churchyard structures in the immediate curtilage of the church building and those in the rest of the churchyard (e.g., monuments, churchyard crosses, other buildings)
Soft landscape repair/managements (e.g., works to trees)
Works which are part of a larger reordering, extension or other major project
New or like-for-like replacement of fossil fuel boilers
Any work covered by insurance

2 TYPES OF GRANTS

SMALL GRANTS

Maximum project cost including VAT	**£5000**
Minimum project cost including VAT	**£500**
Match-funding required Can be raised via any source (reserves, donations, fundraising events, digital/online giving, other grants, etc.).	**Minimum 10%** 100% grants can be awarded in exceptional circumstances
Particularly suited to repair works on List A or List B of Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2015 to churches with very limited finances and minimal fundraising opportunities.	

LARGE GRANTS

Maximum project cost including VAT	**£20,000**
Minimum project cost including VAT	**£5000**
Match-funding required Can be raised via any source (reserves, donations, fundraising events, digital/online giving, other grants, etc.).	**At least 25%** Does not need to have been raised when you submit an EoI.
Particularly suited to repair works on List B, or which may require Faculty permission but have already had Informal Advice from the DAC.	

HOW TO APPLY

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST LETTER

To start an application, send an 'Expression of Interest'(EoI) letter to the CBSO based on the guidance below. EoIs will be followed-up with in-person CBSO visits or other support as appropriate to help parishes compile grant application documents and/or consider alternative sources of funding.

EoI DEADLINES: TRANCHE 1 – 5 MARCH 2027; TRANCHE 2 – 10 MARCH 2028

Please note: we prefer to receive letters via email.	
You do *not* need to have permission for works in place before writing an EoI.	
In your Expression of interest letter, please:	
★ Refer to **BUILDINGS FOR MISSION: MINOR REPAIRS & IMPROVEMENTS FUND**	
★ Include:	• Your role and contact details. • The building place name and dedication. • Details of what works you want the grant for and why they are important • Whether the work has been recommended in your most recent QI • A short summary about how your building is used, how often and by whom. For example, we are interested in knowing about services, fellowship activities like coffee mornings, music performances, whether you hire space(s) to groups like exercise classes or a history club, for example. • How the works are vital for sustaining worship and mission use of the building. For example: Have you had to tape off or close a dangerous area? Is water ingress causing damp, damaging plaster, encouraging algae? Are your gutters overflowing and causing damage to stonework?
★ Attach:	• Photos of your building including the defects you are seeking to repair/improve and any associated damage/affected areas. • A copy of your most recent QI report • An up-to-date summary of your parish finances

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

1. FEEDBACK AND/OR SITE VISIT

Your Expression of Interest Letter will be received by the CBSO who will send you a receipt email. If clarification or more information is required, the CBSO will send you written feedback. The CBSO may offer to visit you at your church to discuss:

- Details of the works you have proposed and the overall condition of the building
- What type of grant would suit you best
- How you will raise the necessary match-funding
- What level of permission will be required and whether the works will require professional specification before seeking quotes
- Planning a timeline for the works
- Future planning, budgeting and fundraising for maintenance and your logbook

2. COMPILING APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

You will need to:

- Fill out an application form (the CBSO will send you a blank form)
- Provide 2 comparable quotes for the works (we cannot accept quotes for two different approaches to a problem, which is why it's often useful to have your church architect produce a specification in advance)
- Include a contingency in your budget
- Provide evidence that you have received relevant Informal Advice from the DAC (where applicable) or guidance from your permissions case officer from the Church Buildings Team.

3. SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

Send your documents to the CBSO within one of the following windows:

5th OCTOBER 2026 - 29th MARCH 2027

4th OCTOBER 2027 - MARCH 2028 (exact deadline to be confirmed, check https://exeter.anglican.org/resources/church-buildings/finance/ for updates)

PANEL PROCESS

SCORING CRITERIA

Grant applications will be assessed by a Panel within the Church Buildings Strategy Committee (a subcommittee of the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC).

Grants will be assessed during meetings by scoring based on the following criteria:

- Urgency of the works
- Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score of your parish
- Your finances
- Fundraising potential, participant numbers and population size in your parish
- Value-for-money
- Stitch-in-time impact

SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

AWARD LETTER AND AGREEMENT

- Sign and return agreement
- Post your certificate in 2 places in the church and share the good news!
- Finalise necessary permissions
- Schedule works

MONITORING

- The CBSO will ask for regular updates on how the works are progressing
- Please take photos, or ask your contractor to take photos of the works in progress
- Please inform the CBSO of any unavoidable delays or changes

CLAIMING YOUR GRANT

- Once all works are completed and you have paid your contractor you can claim the grant.
- If you do not have the funds to pay invoices in advance of receiving the grant, contact the CBSO. Payment in advance can be arranged in exceptional circumstances.

- To claim the grant, send the CBSO:
    - Photos of the completed work
    - Evidence that you have paid all relevant invoices (e.g., a receipt or screenshot from online banking)
    - Your PCC/JC bank account details
- If you do not receive an acknowledgement from the CBSO, check that you have provided all the necessary information.

UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

LETTER

If not successful, you will be issued with a letter by the CBSO as soon as possible after the Panel Meeting in which your application was discussed. The letter will include an explanation of why your application was not successful. You may be invited to re-submit your application to a future Panel Meeting.

FEEDBACK

You will be invited to provide the CBSO with feedback on the Expression of Interest, Application and Panel processes in writing.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What if costs increase unexpectedly during the course of the works? You should have included a contingency in your budget which will hopefully cover this. If the contingency is not sufficient, you will receive support from the CBSO and other Diocese teams to help plan to address the shortfall.

Can I submit an EoI for more than one building? No, only one building can be included in an EoI and only one grant can be applied for per building.

Why can't I submit an EoI for works which are not in my most recent QI report? Most of the criteria for eligibility, including this one, are set nationally and we must administer the grants according to them. Special cases can be considered and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, but applicants should be aware that there is no guarantee that the works will be determined as eligible, and this may require approval by the central Buildings for Mission team which may delay feedback, support and other processes beyond normal timescales.

Can I still submit an EoI if there has not been a QI for over 5 years? Yes, but it is likely that you will need to include the cost of a professional specification in your estimate or commission one in advance of submitting an EoI.

What if my church and church hall are attached and treated as one building? Where there is a clear delineation between a church and a church hall (e.g., a link corridor), works to the church hall part are not eligible. More complex situations will be assessed case-by-case by the CBSO in consultation with the Church Buildings Team, Diocesan Registrar and the Archdeacons.

If I am not successful in Tranche 1, can I apply again in Tranche 2? We discourage sending more than one Expression of Interest letter unless circumstances at your church have substantially changed. Every EoI will be read and assessed by the CBSO whether or not past letters have been sent and followed up. You should only send application documents for either Tranche if the CBSO has recommended that you do so.

Why can't I apply for a grant below £500, or to unblock a gutter or refix some roof slates? Regular maintenance tasks such as these should already be in your maintenance plan with an annual budget assigned to them. If you are struggling to raise enough funds to pay for maintenance, or if you have no volunteers willing/able to do these tasks, please tell us. The Church Buildings and Mission Resources Teams are here to help with exactly these sorts of challenges.

Why can't I apply for a large grant towards a major repair project? The intention of this grant fund is to enable and encourage stitch-in-time repairs and small improvements. The amount of funding available for these grants is too small to be able to contribute to major projects. We aim to support a larger number of small projects, rather than a small number of large projects. Grant funding is available for major repair projects from other organisations. If you want some guidance about alternative funding options, please contact the Church Buildings and Mission Resources Teams.

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