

**Diocese of Carlisle
Buildings Strategy**

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Contents

0	Introduction
1	Drivers for change
2	Context
3	Strategic aims
4	Tactical moves
A	Collect information
B	Set up toolkit
2	DAC
4	Churches Trust for Cumbria
6	Parish Plans
9	Archdeacons' visitations
10	Mission Action Planning
13	Support clergy
5	A typical pathway through the strategy
6	Relationship with the other strategic plans: the rest of the Vision

0 Introduction

This Strategy outlines what we ought to do about our buildings, and how we will attempt to do it. The thinking behind it is articulated in **Buildings Strategy, Discipleship and Growth**

1 Drivers for change

- Financial pressures – including hugely increased fuel costs
- Risk therefore not only to maintenance of buildings but also to Offers, which pay for ministry
- Aging and declining populations in some areas
- Declining congregations in some areas
- Some church buildings at risk
- Less than satisfactory location of some church buildings
- Heritage is important – and without communities to care for our churches, the heritage will be even more at risk
- Duplication of resources / plant (when ecumenical partners are considered)

2 Context:

There are over 300 Anglican church buildings in the Diocese/County; 112 of them are Gd I or II*
The insured value of these is in excess of £800 million

Perhaps as many as 50% of these are likely to have issues about sustainability over the next 20 years

There is a changing relationship between Diocese and Parishes: it is clear that the Parishes' money largely funds the ministry of the Diocese; and the language of partnership is much more to the fore as a result of the Parish Offer system. This understanding of ourselves as co-workers with different perspectives will be very helpful in developing and implementing this Strategy.

The Diocese is committed to working ecumenically and being generous, sensible and creative in our conversations with our sister denominations about buildings will lead to better outcomes. The Buildings Survey is fundamentally ecumenical. This strategy is Anglican in its focus, but ecumenical in its spirit.

3 Strategic aims

- Sustainable buildings
- Welcoming, well-used buildings
- Buildings open to their communities
- Growth in discipleship and in God's Kingdom

4 Tactical moves

Although it may be impossible to resolve finally some of the difficult questions raised in the thinking document, pragmatically we can and must take some actions.

A collect information

1. Complete the Buildings Survey (at the time of writing there are 5 deaneries done but reporting is not complete, and 6 deaneries to do) - this will give more complete and better evidence

B set up our toolkit

*NB the following list is somewhere between a wish-list and plan of action: it would be good to achieve all these but realistically that may not be possible, partly because of limited capacity: the * indicates more critical tools*

2. have discussions with the DAC to make it more effective:

- ask the DAC how we could work together to improve the quality of QQI reports; possibly work with the CTfC Church Architects Network
- revisit with the DAC their current policy of simply listing all architects who would like to do QQIs : NB advice from Central Buildings Council
- *look for more DAC advisers
- *get the advisers and the DAC generally to be more proactive in encouraging good applications
- *streamline our processes of dealing with applications
- revisit the de minimis rules to take unimportant decisions (eg benches in churchyards) out of DAC: test might be eg benches will be gone 20 years later
- lobby for changes to the Faculty system
- *DAC / Faculty applications : have an additional set of questions :
 - how do the changes you propose align with your Mission Action Plan ?
 - how do the changes you propose align with your Deanery's strategic thinking (deployment plan etc)?
 - are there ecumenical considerations?

3. Wider Church

- lobby for changes to the process of closing churches ; could we negotiate with the national Church for pilot status for a more radical approach?
- *talk to other Dioceses about how they are tackling these questions
- lobby for changes to the ways in which planners consider closed churches

4. *support Churches Trust for Cumbria – a key partnership

- possibly use Churches Trust for Cumbria staff to support DAC
- CTfC continue to develop experience and skill in helping churches to be more open and welcoming
- CTfC continue to develop experience and skill in helping churches consider diversification

5. *support churches exploring new ways of heating (and also of insulating!) buildings

- partners to include : Churches Together Environment Group; the Diocesan Environment Adviser (Ian James); Churches Trust for Cumbria; the national Church

6. *talk to Cumbria Association of Local Councils, MPs, District Councils and County Council to get high level interest in churches and other church buildings being part of Parish Plans

7. *create a permanent Fund to support those buildings, without viable congregations or any prospect of them, which we must keep; develop a set of criteria and a process for doing this;

8. *research possibilities for use of funds raised from sale of redundant churches: the Commissioners get one third, the Diocese gets two thirds; some of this should be used to improve retained churches – especially locally – perhaps at first with feasibility studies; some could be used to support eg Churches Trust for Cumbria; selling churches is not at first sight a good news story, but if we lose “only 30 churches” over the next ten years, that may be a very good news story; especially if we use the money generated constructively

9. *enhance the way the archdeacons do visitations : probably use a Self Evaluation Form (SEF) version of the basic visitation document to cover the lower priority elements; an evidence based (ie how they did last time) look at higher priority elements (eg PAT testing); the “normal” way of looking at essential elements (eg Safeguarding Policy); a more detailed set of questions on growing disciples to be discussed with clergy, wardens, and PCC (eg MAP, marks of discipleship, diversification of uses of church buildings)

10. *Mission Action Plans (MAPs) are central to this – both to be informed by the reality of the state of the buildings, and to inform churches’ thinking about how they might use their buildings;
11. encourage parishes to consider a History Audit : an OU project (**Engaging with the past to shape the future**) in London shows that a church’s past can both constrain and inspire the future; understanding it through a history audit will, alongside the information from the Buildings Survey, feed into the thinking of MAP.
12. try to set up a Joint Venture with an architect or developer – to redevelop church buildings; possibly offer a competition with preferred architect / contractor status as the prize; include Mitre Housing;
13. *support parish clergy, who will inevitably be at the sharp end of some of these discussions and decisions

5 a typical pathway

- i the church completes its Buildings Review questionnaire; the results are fed back to the church/congregation; (an alternative trigger might be an Archdeacon’s Visitation, QOI etc)
- ii the church is working on its MAP
- iii the Deanery has its thinking about its strategy / deployment etc
- iv the congregation/PCC, incumbent, RD, LC, Archdeacon, have conversations about the future of the church building
- v the Churches Trust for Cumbria joins this conversation, and is able to offer ideas
- vi local wider communities (including ecumenical partners) also join this conversation
- vii QOI’s are also part of the conversation; other factual information is also often part of the conversation: eg new ways of heating churches, history audits, etc
- viii churches make plans; some possible outcomes might be:
 - no change is needed or appropriate
 - a new heating system is installed
 - a post office or shop is run from church
 - some pews are removed at the front to make a space for concerts
 - some pews are removed at the back and a new community room created
 - all pews are removed
 - other adaptations to enable the church building to be used more fully
 - a neighbouring church (perhaps of a different denomination) is seen as the better building in the long term
 - the church building is used mainly during the summer, mothballed in winter
 - church is declared redundant and converted to affordable housing
 - the roof is taken off and the walls stabilised
 - church is declared redundant and demolished
 - etc
- ix applications go to the DAC / Church Commissioners
- x churches find partners, raise funds, make changes;

6 Relationship with other strategies / rest of vision

As each strategy (Buildings, Outreach, Ministry) is agreed and put in place, those already in place may need to be revisited to make sure all fit together.