



Salisbury Diocesan Board of Finance

Review of the Diocesan Advisory Committee & Church Buildings Team

Project: Salisbury DAC & CBT Review

Prepared for: Diocesan Board of Finance

Prepared by: Arani Mylvaganam & Bethan Lloyd

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Contents

Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction	5
Purpose of the Review	5
Review Parameters	6
Methodology	6
Pertinent points of legality and process	7
Parish experiences of national system	8
2. Governance, Responsibilities and Boundaries	10
Diocesan Advisory Committee	10
Church Buildings Team	11
3. Leadership, Capacity & Systems	14
Leadership	14
Capacity & resourcing	14
Systems, processes and tools	18
4. Support to Parishes and User Experience	22
Parish perceptions, understanding and expectations	23
Technical and capacity challenges	26
Guidance & support	27
5. Strategic Preparedness	29
6. Benchmarking findings	32
Analysis	33
7. Conclusions and Recommendations	34
Conclusions	34
Recommendations	35
Appendix 1 – DAC functions	41
Appendix 2 – Data collection	43



Executive Summary

The Diocese of Salisbury commissioned an external review of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) and Church Buildings Team (CBT) to assess their effectiveness, operational efficiency and alignment with diocesan strategy—particularly the emerging agenda to reimagine church buildings as assets for mission. The review drew on consultation interviews, a diocese-wide survey, parish workshops, national benchmarking with 15 other dioceses, an extensive document review and observation of DAC meetings. This review was not designed to assess individual cases or the quality of individual DAC decisions, and therefore focuses on patterns, perceptions, and system-level issues rather than case-specific judgement.

Parish experience

A consistent message from parishes is one of **significant frustration with the faculty and List B processes**, driven not by a single issue but by the cumulative effect of complexity, uncertainty and uneven experience. For many churchwardens, clergy and volunteers, the process places a **heavy emotional and practical burden**. Parish volunteers—often older and time-poor—described feeling overwhelmed by the volume of documentation, the need to coordinate multiple professionals, and the challenge of using digital platforms that were not designed with their capacities in mind. For some, this strain affects morale and confidence, with a small but significant number reporting that the experience has discouraged future engagement or led to volunteers stepping back from roles.

The **complexity of the nationally led digital platform and associated processes** is a major contributor to this experience. In particular, parishes struggle with understanding document requirements, navigating the Online Faculty System, knowing when applications have been formally submitted, and interpreting requests for further information. As a result, the CBT often provides basic digital and process support, diverting time from higher-value advisory and strategic work.

A further source of frustration lies in the **persistent gap between parish expectations and statutory requirements**. Many parishes approach the DAC and CBT expecting dialogue, proportionality and practical guidance. In contrast, the statutory system requires formal documentation, sequential compliance and adherence to nationally determined rules.

While some parishes describe supportive, timely and constructive engagement, others report prolonged delays, repeated requests for information and uncertainty about what is required of them. Where the rationale for requests for further information is not clearly explained, parishes can experience DAC advice as obstructive or disconnected from their local context, even where it is legally sound. These inconsistencies mean that parishes undertaking similar types of work can have very different experiences of the process.

Context

These challenges are not unique to Salisbury. National benchmarking confirms that negative parish perceptions of the Faculty system, digital barriers and confusion about roles are widespread across dioceses. Salisbury operates within a nationally prescribed legal and digital framework that significantly shapes parish experience and limits the extent of local discretion. However, while the underlying system is nationally determined, the **way it is communicated, navigated and supported locally makes a material difference** to parish confidence and trust. This review



therefore focuses on what is within diocesan control: clarity, consistency, communication, capacity and strategic positioning.

Overall Assessment

Within this demanding context, Salisbury compares well with other dioceses on a number of operational measures. The DAC fulfils its statutory responsibilities, makes effective use of delegated authorities and manages a relatively high volume of cases across a large and geographically dispersed diocese. DAC meetings are well chaired and efficiently run, and case progression rates are stable and in line with national norms.

The Church Buildings Team is widely recognised as **skilled, committed and professional**, and is highly valued by parishes where direct engagement occurs. Staff frequently go beyond minimum statutory requirements to support parishes through a complex process. However, capacity pressures, particularly the breadth of the DAC Secretary role and the reliance on a small number of individuals, constrain responsiveness, consistency and the ability to engage proactively with parishes and Diocesan strategy.

Risks

The issues identified in this review are not simply operational irritants. They have **strategic implications** for the Diocese at a time when demands on church buildings are increasing: rising technical complexity (including Net Zero requirements), an ageing volunteer base, growing financial pressures, and the Diocese's ambition to reimagine buildings as assets for mission.

Without action, there is a risk that:

- volunteer fatigue and disengagement will deepen,
- parish confidence in diocesan support will erode further,
- avoidable delays will increase costs and jeopardise funding opportunities, and

the DAC and CBT will remain largely reactive, limiting their contribution to wider diocesan priorities.

Opportunities for improvement

This review identifies a clear opportunity for the Diocese to build on strong foundations by:

- Strengthening internal capacity and reducing single-point dependency within the CBT and formalising DAC terms of reference
- Exploring opportunities to extend use of delegated authority
- Improving clarity, consistency and tone of communication with parishes
- Building on the proactive support already provided to parishes to addressing digital and process barriers
- Repositioning the DAC and CBT more visibly within diocesan strategic planning.

The recommendations presented are designed to balance **quick wins that build parish confidence**, with **longer-term structural changes** that address root causes. Taken together, they provide a practical route towards a more consistent, supportive and sustainable system—one that better reflects both the realities faced by parishes and the Diocese's strategic ambitions for its buildings.



1. Introduction

Purpose of the Review

Following the 'Shaping our Services Review' that took place in the summer of 2024 and the escalation of some challenging cases brought to the leadership team's attention, the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) commissioned Bean Research to undertake an external review of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) and Church Buildings Team (CBT) to assess their effectiveness, operational efficiency, and alignment with the Diocesan vision and strategic objectives.

This review aims to assess how well these bodies support Salisbury's churches in caring for and developing their buildings for mission whilst recognising the legal framework that these works sit within. The objective of this review is to enable the DBF leadership, DAC, and Church Buildings Team to identify areas of strength and challenge in process and performance in the two reviewed bodies and suggest recommendations for short and longer-term improvement.

The review seeks to:

- Assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency of the processes of the Church Buildings Team and DAC in their work in supporting parishes.
- Evaluate the impact of their engagement with parishes and other key stakeholders.
- Identify areas for improvement in processes, systems, governance and communication with a view to simplifying processes.
- Ensure alignment with diocesan strategy and its developing work around Flourishing Parishes.
- Ensure that learning from other dioceses and external bodies informs ongoing improvements.

The scope of the review covers:

- **Governance & Structure:** The role, function, and membership of the DAC as an advisory body, and the structure of the Church Buildings Team, its functions and capacity, recognising some of the functions sit within a statutory framework.
- **Processes, Systems & Advice Giving:** The handling of communications with parishes, effective processing of faculty and List B applications, casework efficiency, and advisory processes, including reviewing the current level of delegated authority.
- **Parish Engagement & Support:** The effectiveness of guidance, training and support provided to parishes and key stakeholders.
- **Resourcing & Capacity:** Staffing levels, leadership capacity and expertise.
- **Strategy Alignment:** Compatibility with diocesan vision and strategy especially in relation to Flourishing Parishes and the future development of Buildings for Mission.
- **Stakeholder Perception & Satisfaction:** Feedback from clergy, churchwardens, archdeacons and other relevant parties, focused on those things within the control of the diocese acknowledging the statutory role of the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules.



Review Parameters

The DAC, Church Buildings Team and the parishes they serve in Salisbury operate within a nationally determined system of Church legislation and processes. It was agreed at project inception that the focus of this review would be on how these systems function in practice within the Diocese, rather than on the underlying legal frameworks themselves. The review therefore does not examine how the Diocese of Salisbury has interpreted or applied these rules in individual cases.

The work concentrates on the experience of parishes, clergy and staff in navigating the faculty process, including the effectiveness of communication, support and internal systems. While detailed technical assessment of the Online Faculty System (OFS) has not been undertaken, user experiences and levels of digital confidence have been explored.

Through the course of this review, many parish stakeholders demonstrated varying levels of understanding of some nationally driven aspects of the Faculty process. This review aims to identify opportunities to strengthen local communication, guidance and support, without making recommendations for change at a national level, though some issues for potential escalation to national bodies are noted where relevant. Broader financial considerations (e.g. value for money) and any comparisons of the Faculty system with local authority planning processes were explicitly out of scope for this review.

Methodology

This review was undertaken by an independent research organisation, Bean Research, using a theory-based, mixed-methods approach, drawing on established evaluation practice. The review was front-ended by an extensive discovery phase, which enabled Bean Research to identify key audiences and topics for the review. A review plan and set of research questions was developed and agreed with the Church Buildings Committee prior to data collection commencing.

Based on this scoping phase, the methodology was designed to ensure that all key audience voices were heard and that multiple evidence sources were triangulated to build a robust, credible account of performance, culture and user experience. This approach combined:

- Document analysis to understand the operating context, statutory requirements, internal processes and patterns of practice. This included approximately 100 internal documents and wider research using publicly available sources.
- Qualitative consultations, including 29 in-depth consultations with 24 stakeholders across the Diocese to explore perceptions, experiences and causal mechanisms behind observed issues. This included Diocese staff, DAC members, the Church Buildings Team, Registry staff and DAC Secretaries.
- Quantitative analysis of a Diocese-wide parish survey to gauge views of parishes engaged with the DAC and Church Buildings team, which received 414 responses in the 3 week window.
- Process observation to understand real-time decision-making, communication and workflow, including a 'process walk through' meeting with Church Buildings Team staff and observations of two online DAC meetings.
- A comparative national DAC secretary survey to test whether emerging themes were typical or isolated and to situate Salisbury's arrangements within wider national practice. 15 DAC Secretaries responded.



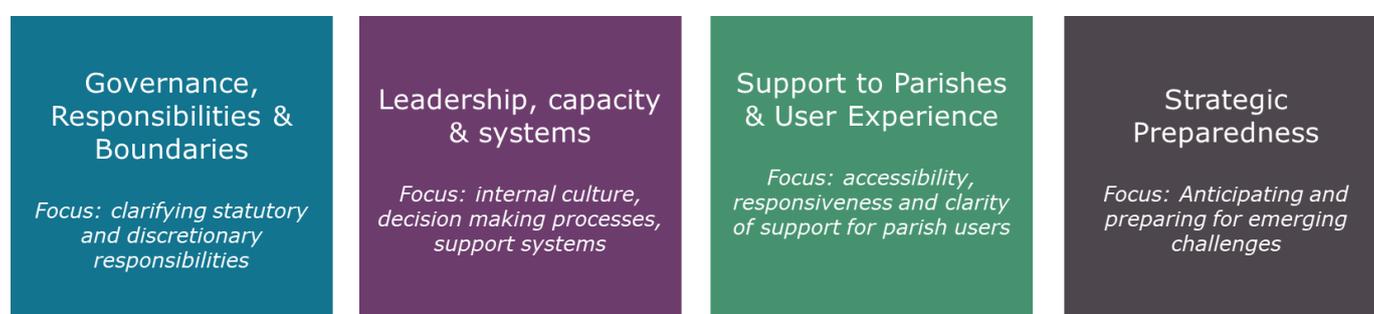
Bean Research has also attended the Church Buildings Committee meetings over the course of 2025 to keep the Committee apprised of progress. Further details relating to the consultation calls, surveys and workshops can be found in Appendix 2.

Representative anonymised quotes from the research conducted have been used throughout to illustrate key themes. These are presented *in italics* throughout the report.

Bean Research would like to thank everyone who has been so generous with their time and input over the course of this review.

Structure of this report

The key findings in this review are set out under the topic areas agreed with the Church Buildings Committee at the review planning stage:



There is additionally a section with the findings from the benchmarking analysis conducted with other dioceses. The report concludes with recommendations and a roadmap of suggested next steps.

Pertinent points of legality and process

While the review does not examine the national legislative framework in detail, it is helpful to set out the key provisions that shape the context in which the DAC and Church Buildings Team in Salisbury operate. This background ensures that any recommendations and future opportunities are grounded in what is feasible and realistic.

- The [Operation of the Ecclesiastical Exemption and related planning matters for places of worship in England Guidance \(2010\)](#) exempts certain denominations from secular Listed Buildings Consent. It covers the building and everything within its curtilage (i.e. churchyard walls, memorials, etc.). It does not exempt churches from planning permission, scheduled ancient monument consent, advertising consent, Building Regulations, etc.
- The [Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure \(2018\)](#) (EJCCM) legislation sets up the legal validity of Ecclesiastical courts. In relation to this topic area, this measure gives Chancellors the power to grant faculties and to hold courts and hear evidence in challenging cases. It also sets the requirement of dioceses to have an Advisory Committee (DAC), with the full duties set out in Section 37 of the document (see Appendix 1).
- The constitution of the DAC is set out in Schedule 2 of the EJCCM. It states that there must be a chair (appointed by the bishop after consultation with CBC, Chancellor, and Bishops' Council), archdeacon of each archdeaconry and at least 12 other members. Those other members are to consist of: 2 members of diocesan synod, 1 appointed in consultation with Historic England, 1 appointed in consultation with national amenity societies, the rest as required but should include someone with accessibility expertise. In making appointments



due regard must be had to their expertise with regards to church buildings, history etc. and their functioning. The last section of Schedule 2 makes the provision in law for the appointment of a Diocesan Secretary.

- A further key piece of national legislation that governs the current Faculty process is the [Faculty Jurisdiction \(Amendment\) Rules \(2022\)](#) which sets out the rules that the DAC, chancellors, archdeacons and parishes must follow when seeking or granting permission for works to Church of England buildings, their contents and churchyards. The Rules define which works require a Faculty and which may proceed under Lists A and B, establish procedures for consultation and advice, and set expectations for due regard to Church Buildings Council guidance, including on environmental sustainability and net-zero carbon. Together, they provide the legal framework for the management, conservation, and adaptation of church buildings and land. Whilst there is some scope for interpretation in their local application, the Rules themselves apply consistently across all dioceses.

The [Church of England \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Measure 2018](#) states '*The committee may delegate the exercise of any of its functions to an officer of the committee*'. This activity is referred to as 'delegated authority' throughout this report.

- All Faculty petitions, List B applications and List A notifications must be submitted by parishes via the [Online Faculty System](#) (OFS), which is used by all dioceses across England. A new system has been developed via Church Commissioners funding to provide a new central Building Management Portal. This new system will provide a greater resource for general building management and will connect systems used by dioceses and the national church, providing a single resource. The new system was planned for October 2025 but has now been rescheduled to early 2026 to allow for additional functionality following user testing.

Parish experiences of national system

Section 4 covers parish stakeholder perceptions, understanding and expectations of the Faculty process at Diocese level. However, it was clear throughout the review that a large degree of the negative feedback received from parishes related to the overall complexity and bureaucracy of the process in relation to the national system and statutory framework. The points raised fall outside of the scope of this Salisbury-focused review; however, we have briefly outlined the key points made in case it would be useful for the Diocese of Salisbury to raise these issues up to national level in due course.

Many of those engaged in the review had negative experiences and perceptions of the overall process, with descriptions such as "ghastly", "clunky", "unworldly" and "the most bureaucratic system I've ever met" being commonplace. One stakeholder said: "Believe me, the Faculty/List B process is viewed in such poor light that churches engage with it as an absolute last resort." It is clear from the feedback received that the process places a significant emotional and practical toll on many parish volunteers, who do not feel equipped to use the digital platforms or undertake the level of liaison between the CBT/DAC and various suppliers and experts required.

The online system is described variously as "confusing", "not intuitive" and "antiquated". Parish stakeholders expressed a hope that the forthcoming new system will resolve some of these user-experience issues. However, as the new system will also be a digital one, there remains a clear frustration that "volunteers from parishes are assumed to be IT-skilled which is far from the truth", and doesn't tackle the underlying issue expressed by parishes that "Our people struggled with it all being online, not being very computer literate". These barriers are expected to persist with the new Building Management Portal, unless paired with enhanced support.



There were several negative comparisons made between the Faculty process and local authority planning process, which many stakeholders perceive to be more straightforward, with several comments along the lines of *"It is very difficult to understand why the Church maintains a planning system that is more complicated and time-consuming (at least for fairly standard matters) than that required for obtaining local authority planning permission for listed buildings."* While it is challenging to know to what extent this viewpoint is based on experience rather than perception, there may be some lessons for the national process to explore and learn from, with respect to processes.

There were also comments on the proportionality of the Church's system. Whilst the List A process is generally welcomed, there is disagreement about the list of works that sit under List B and Faculty, with disproportionate requirements being pointed to and frustration that the same level of scrutiny is sometimes needed for minor works as major alterations. Several stakeholders requested that the Church of England consider a 'tiered approach' to dealing with applications depending on their urgency and scope.

There is a skills issue with the process at parish-level across England, as recognised by DAC Secretaries and a national Church level stakeholder engaged in this review. This refers to both digital skills and literacy with the overall Faculty process. This reflects the ageing national profile of churchwarden demographics and volunteers.

This is coupled with a sense that volunteers often feel unsupported and overwhelmed with the level of effort being asked of them, not just in relation to this topic area, with comments such as *"It will get harder to maintain this level of commitment. There is far too much reliance on volunteers."* This is contributing to a morale issue in some churches, with volunteers describing themselves and peers as *"worn down"*, *"losing faith in the process"*, or *"resigning afterwards"*.

These overarching negative views are not unique to Salisbury, with these themes being raised by the majority of DAC Secretaries engaged in this review, who identified that these commonly held frustrations with the national system and process left their parishes hostile to their DACs. Whilst the remainder of this review focuses on Salisbury specific issues as far as it has been possible to disentangle them from national level issues, the review team wish to emphasise that parish views and experiences of the nationally driven aspects of the Faculty process will largely remain unchanged irrespective of Diocese level modifications. To see any real reform in this area, changes relating to the national system and statutory frameworks will have to be driven at Church of England level.



2. Governance, Responsibilities and Boundaries

This section outlines the governance structures, statutory responsibilities and organisational boundaries within which the DAC and Church Buildings Team operate.

Findings show that governance is fundamentally sound: the DAC meets statutory requirements, makes relatively sophisticated use of delegated authorities, and benefits from a strong Chair–Secretary relationship. However, opportunities remain to formalise expectations, strengthen induction and prepare for the future recruitment cycles. The Church Building Team’s position within the Diocesan structure also warrants review to ensure clearer alignment, visibility and operational fit.

Diocesan Advisory Committee

The Salisbury Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) is the **statutory advisory body** for the care of church buildings and churchyards within the Diocese of Salisbury. It guides parishes on proposed work – from major repairs to the installation of features such as solar panels – and advises the Chancellor in relation to the faculty jurisdiction process. DAC members are volunteers.

The DAC brings together a wide range of specialists in architecture, archaeology, art, bells and textiles, who support decision-making on proposals that affect the historic fabric of places of worship. While it does not make final decisions on applications, its role is to help, advise and educate those involved in the care and maintenance of church buildings and churchyards.

Under its constitution, the DAC ensures membership covers expertise in church architecture and history, worship and mission, listing and planning policy. Through this governance structure, the DAC supports the wider mission of the diocese by enabling parishes to manage fabric matters responsibly and in support of worship and community use.

The DAC in Salisbury holds 10 meetings each year and conducts approximately 40 site visits.

The DAC has seen a fall in overall cases brought since 2020, though case progression rates have remained relatively stable across the period 2021-2024, in the range of 66-79%. In 2024, the most recent year for which there is full data, 113 cases were discussed by the DAC, with **73% progressed**.

Structure

The Committee fulfils the constitution set out in Schedule 2 of the EJCCM. The breadth of expertise is broadly consistent with national statutory requirements.

As of September 2025, the committee members were:

- A Chair
- Two Archdeacons
- Two architects
- Collections adviser
- Historic glass specialist



- Clergy and Liturgy adviser
- Local Planning Authority Conservation Officer
- Archaeology adviser

There were also 11 DAC advisors who attend committee meetings as required and are on hand to consult for advice in their specialist area (e.g. organs, heating systems, trees etc.).

At the time of writing, one member of the DAC provides the requisite accessibility expertise and interviews have recently been held to find additional support in this area; it is anticipated that the additional capacity will be fulfilled by the time of report dissemination.

All existing members and advisors are due for membership renewal in 2027.

Governance

This review has found that the DAC functions in accordance with Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure (2018) Section 37 and adheres to the necessary constitution outlined in Schedule 2 of the same measure. The Diocesan Registrar confirmed that there are a sufficient number of DAC meetings held each year and that minutes produced are comprehensive and clear.

Our review identified an opportunity to strengthen the induction process for new DAC members, who are not given a formal induction process (in line with nearly 75% of other dioceses asked). Whilst a degree of 'learning on the job' is to be expected in this role, there is opportunity to formalise the induction process and take a leading role in this area – only one of the 15 DAC Secretaries asked indicated there was a formal onboarding process with their DAC. This suggests Salisbury could take a national leadership role by formalising its induction approach.

As part of this formalisation process, it would be valuable for the DAC to develop a Code of Conduct or Terms of Reference for its members. Similar frameworks or standing orders are already in place in 46% of other Dioceses surveyed (7 out of 16), with a further 20% (3 out of 15) planning to introduce them. Such a document would set out clear expectations for DAC members, provide a practical reference point for induction and ongoing engagement, and, where necessary, give the Chair and DAC Secretary an agreed basis for addressing issues of underperformance or conduct.

Church Buildings Team

The Salisbury Church Buildings Team (CBT) forms part of the Diocese's support infrastructure, working alongside the DAC to facilitate parish care of buildings and churchyards. At a legal minimum, the CBT could simply act as a Secretariat (i.e. permanent administrative office) to the DAC, organising meetings, agendas, papers, minutes and passing communications between the DAC and applicants, managing the administering of the Faculty and List B applications process and overseeing five-yearly (quinquennial) building fabric inspections. Our review indicates that this was broadly the state of affairs until the current DAC Secretary took the role pre-Covid.

Now the CBT responsibilities extend to helping parishes balance mission, worship and wider community use with conservation, including support on sustainability and Net-Zero carbon objectives. In addition to its Secretariat responsibilities, the team proactively adds value to the Diocese through its delivery of consultative and technical planning activities including:

- acting as the first point of contact for enquiries from parishes.
- advising parishes on the application process and technical queries
- conducting site visits
- delivering relevant training and guidance.



Additionally, the DAC Secretary has strategic responsibilities within the Diocese, as well as leading on net zero policy implementation.

This move towards the broader remit of CBT in Salisbury is in alignment with the approach taken by several other CBTs in other dioceses that engaged with this review and is pertinent to note as this evolution has led to a wider range of skillsets and greater capacity requirements in recent years. This is explored further in Section 3.

The interface of the roles held between the DAC and CBT are clear to the staff and volunteers involved, and this review did not identify any areas of duplication or overlap between the two bodies. There does appear to be lack of understanding of the difference between the two bodies at parish level (see Section 4), which is partly driven by the complexity of the national system and process, but could be remedied with clearer communications at Diocese level.

Structure

The CBT sits within the Mission & Ministry Department of the DBF. The team is led by the Church Buildings Team Leader and DAC Secretary (1.0 full time equivalent, FTE), hereafter referred to as the DAC Secretary. This is the first time that both roles have been held by one individual in the Diocese. This individual has been in role since 2020 and holds several responsibilities including:

- Lead on Net Zero policy across the Diocese.
- Managing the efficient running of the DAC Committee (papers, agendas, minutes etc.).
- Recruitment and onboarding of DAC members.
- Oversight of the quinquennial inspection processes.
- Overseeing the allocation of incoming Faculty cases to CBT colleagues.
- Responsibility for own case load, including those that have been delegated and several other complex cases.
- Designing and delivering training and guidance to Parishes on the faculty process and related topics.
- Strategic leadership of Church Buildings related work across the Diocese, including trying to utilise greater delegated authority.
- Annual reporting to DBF
- Pastoral management of the CBT.

In a personal capacity, the role holder also volunteers in the Territorial Army, resulting in pre-planned absences from work for this commitment.

The remainder of the CBT comprises 2.6 FTE staff predominantly dealing directly with case work. This includes the Buildings Conservation and Sustainability Officer (1.0 FTE), Church Buildings Officer (0.6 FTE) and Church Buildings Assistant (1.0 FTE).

The team also comprises two externally funded roles who do not directly manage Faculty, List B or List A casework: Church Buildings Community Enabler (0.5 FTE) and a Net Zero Decarbonisation Officer (1.0 FTE).

Departmental placement

With regard to structure, the Church Buildings Team sits within the Mission & Ministry Department in the DBF, following an organisational restructure in 2022. The driver behind this move from the Parish Support Department was to reflect the important role of church buildings in delivering on Church mission. The team themselves, though understanding the rationale for being in this department, universally feel that this department is not the right cultural or operational fit for them,



with little alignment in content or context with the other teams within the department. Reference was made by several team members to feeling '*like spectators*' in the departmental meetings, as this is not a forum in which the team received or could add much value to colleagues from other teams.

A preference for working alongside other teams within the DBF with a focus on property and/or parish support was expressed, but there was an openness for discussion of this point. For reference, of the 15 dioceses that completed the DAC Secretary survey, 40% (6 out of 15) stated that their Church Buildings Team sat in a Property/Buildings Department within their DBF, and 20% (3 of 15) sat within a Parish Support/Pastoral Advisory Department. The remaining 40% sat in a range of other teams including Governance, Secretariat team, Vision Delivery and the Buildings Environment and Land Team.

Whilst there is no single right 'home' for a Church Buildings Team within a DBF, there is room to explore options for working alongside teams which share language and there is operational overlap to increase overall team satisfaction and sense of belonging within the DBF. However, any changes made to DBF structure should be considered in the broader context of the organisation's vision and strategy, and a wider management discussion will be critical on this point.



3. Leadership, Capacity & Systems

This section examines the internal culture, leadership dynamics, capacity, and operational systems that shape how the DAC and CBT function in practice. It considers team relationships, leadership visibility, workload pressures, communication patterns and the effectiveness of current tools and processes.

Overall, the DAC and CBT are committed, skilled and well regarded where engagement occurs, but both operate under capacity constraints that can affect responsiveness, communication and strategic contribution. Strengthening capacity, clarifying roles and improving internal systems would enable more consistent and timely support to parishes and allow the teams to engage more proactively in Diocesan priorities

Leadership

The CBT and some other internal stakeholders expressed that overall, colleagues across the DBF do not fully understand the roles and responsibilities of the DAC or Church Buildings Team (with 53% of DAC Secretaries in other dioceses also taking this view about their own DBFs). Opinions in the CBT and DAC were mixed about the extent to which the senior leadership team in the Diocese understand the role, responsibilities and challenges faced by the DAC and Church Buildings Team, though all those consulted agreed that there was room to work more closely with the Senior Leadership Team to increase the visibility of the work being conducted and develop stronger working relationships and understanding.

Whilst the relationship between the Director of Mission & Ministry and the Church Buildings Team Leader & DAC Secretary is a positive one, it is understood that issues tend to be escalated at later stages, often once they become more complex. There is room for more regular positive reporting, to ensure that the Director and senior colleagues are aware of the DAC's successes, in addition to problematic cases. This is currently done on an annual basis via the DAC Report.

Capacity & resourcing

DAC Secretary

The DAC Secretary is widely recognised as a committed, professional and extremely competent colleague, highly regarded across both the DAC and the CBT. His depth of expertise, diligence and commitment to professional development were frequently noted by internal and external stakeholders.

As referenced above, the DAC Secretary holds a dual role, balancing strategic responsibilities within the Diocese, secretarial tasks, their own case load and the pastoral leadership of the CBT. This has created a tension within the role that has ripple effects internally and possibly externally: it is possible, though challenging to confirm, that this dual role reinforces the ambiguity that parishes hold around the respective functions of the DAC and CBT (as explored in Section 4).

Benchmarking with other dioceses confirms that the Salisbury arrangement, where one individual serves both as DAC Secretary and Church Buildings Team Leader, is relatively unusual. Elsewhere,



these responsibilities are often divided, either through a Deputy DAC Secretary, a separate team manager (often held by a Senior Officer), or a more administrative interpretation of the DAC role. This does not indicate a failing with Salisbury but highlights the inequity of workload distribution compared with other dioceses. To ensure sustainability and strategic capacity, the Diocese should therefore consider a structural review to redistribute responsibilities and reduce the burden currently concentrated in this single post.

It is widely acknowledged within the CBT, and by the role holder themselves, that the DAC Secretary is working consistently beyond capacity, creating inevitable bottlenecks that affect the team's overall efficiency. This is due to the range of responsibilities held by the role holder in their dual position. A substantial personal caseload means that strategic areas such as Net Zero policy, training design and longer-term planning are often deprioritised. The role carries multiple responsibilities, with the team heavily reliant on the DAC Secretary for escalation, oversight and quality assurance. This dependency is reinforced by the existing flat team structure, in which all CBT members report directly to the same line manager. Whilst several team members say they feel well supported by the DAC Secretary, there is an appetite for more regular one-to-ones to support professional development.

High workload pressures also affect communication flows. Team members report occasional delays in responses and limited visibility of the DAC Secretary's planned absences, which at times complicates workload planning. Despite strong working relationships and mutual respect across the CBT, these factors have at times, led to understandable frustration.

Some DAC members likewise find it challenging to obtain timely responses, reflecting the cumulative impact of the current workload. The DAC Secretary is acutely aware of these pressures, describing the role as "*everything feels important,*" with competing priorities leaving little space for proactive or strategic work. He expressed a clear desire to focus more on forward planning and on enabling colleagues to take a greater lead in parish engagement, recognising that this would yield longer-term efficiency gains.

Overall, the current dependency on the DAC Secretary across the team and the DAC represents a structural vulnerability that carries an operational risk to the Diocese. A better distributed leadership model would mitigate this risk of single-point dependence and create a more resilient CBT.

Church Buildings Team

The Church Buildings Team presented as a warm, committed and professional group of colleagues throughout the course of this review. Working relationships within the CBT are positive and as a unit they possess strong analytical, organisational and inter-personal skills that match the roles they undertake. They acknowledge being very busy, and occasionally overwhelmed, with workloads, which means that they do not get the opportunity to do more face-to-face or on the phone engagement with parishes, which they acknowledge the value in, and enjoy, doing.

Parish stakeholders generally view the team positively where they can engage, with comments such as "*The Church Buildings Team are really helpful – when you can get hold of them*" made by several parish stakeholders. However, it is clear that workload pressures are recognised by stakeholders in the Diocese, with several survey respondents and workshop participants referencing the slow response times to hear back from the CBT, and many mentioning the email auto-reply stating that their query will be dealt with within 6 working days that some members of the team use, and stating that they have experienced much longer response times than this. This has at times created a perception of inconsistency, even where delays may have been due to external dependencies.



The team recognise that the process is a challenge for the ageing, time-constrained volunteer base, and understand that the overall national system has not been designed with their needs in mind. The CBT occasionally receives highly negative – sometimes abusive – communication from stakeholders, and even though they recognise that these are “*about the process not the people*”, this has had an impact on team morale.

All CBT members acknowledge the need for faster response teams to parishes. There appears to be an opportunity to better utilise the skills and experience of the Church Buildings Assistant in the team, who is currently in charge of several administrative processes and looks after List B applications and a small Faculty case load. This individual has an appetite to grow their responsibilities and take on more Faculty cases. Similarly, the Buildings Conservation and Sustainability Officer is keen to take on more responsibilities as they have grown into their role in the last couple of years. By giving current team members the opportunity to increase their remit, the end result will be a broader, more multi-disciplinary skillset across the CBT.

There is no structured CPD for members of the CBT at present. Any CPD that takes place is usually self-led and tends to take place outside of work hours. Some informal peer-support and mentoring is taking place within the team. All team members have a strong appetite for more structured training in their areas of expertise, as well as relevant customer service training to help them deal with challenging calls and emails received from parishes in relation to their applications. It is understood that the new People Director is exploring customer service training for all external-facing teams in the DBF.

Whilst the CBT has grown in size in recent years, caseloads have not increased dramatically and meetings are run more efficiently than pre-pandemic, it is clear that workloads have increased across the team. This review has attempted to unpick the drivers for this workload change, and some key areas have emerged:

- The complexity of cases has increased, particularly where heating is involved due to national net zero policy. This is due to the limited access to volunteer expertise in this field, and the more complex requirements on Faculty applicants. This is resulting in lower quality applications that are not suitable for passing up to the DAC without CBT intervention and support to parishes at the initial stages of application.
- The online system can be more time-consuming, particularly due to the way information must be extracted, reformatted and stored for internal use. This has increased the overall administrative burden on the CBT.

Against this backdrop of complexity and administrative burden, site visits and one-to-one support from the team are seen as potential solutions by both the CBT and parishes, indicating that personal engagement is a key component to helping parishes make better applications. However, current team capacity does not allow for as much bespoke case officer involvement as either party would deem beneficial.

DAC

It is understood that the DAC is currently struggling with capacity given that there are only two architects on the committee at present. At the time of writing, an active recruitment process is being led by the DAC Secretary with interviews taking place in late 2025, so no recommendations are made on this point in this review.

At the time of writing, one member of the DAC provides the requisite accessibility expertise and interviews have recently been held to find additional support in this area; it is anticipated that the additional capacity will be fulfilled by the time of report dissemination.



It is noted that the increasing complexity of hearing cases will likely lead to the need for additional advisor capacity in this area in due course. The DAC Secretary is aware of this issue and has been proactive in seeking additional volunteer capacity.

Both DAC members and the CBT identified that applications could sometimes be held up by a single member of the DAC being slow to respond on email. There is recognition that DAC members are volunteers and have not signed up to a service level agreement or fixed time commitment, so CBT members feel there is a balancing act between pushing for responses and giving volunteers time to respond. Having terms of reference for the DAC could assist with this, giving the CBT some guidelines around when it is appropriate to chase DAC members for a response.



Systems, processes and tools

Delegated authorities and other mechanisms

The DAC has formally granted the Church Buildings Team delegated authority to recommend certain Faculty cases proceed directly to the Chancellor without DAC involvement. Delegated cases are agreed within a precedent document and delegated policy, and additional specific cases for delegation are discussed and agreed at DAC meetings. These types of cases have been steadily increasing since 2022, and in 2024, 27 recommended Notification of Advice were issued via delegated authorities. It was noted that the precedents document was last updated in 2022, and warrants an update.

The Church Buildings Team also have delegated authority to recommend List B cases to proceed directly to the Archdeacons without DAC involvement. Furthermore, the Church Buildings Team have delegated authorities to advise the Archdeacons on particular List B cases directly¹, without reference to the DAC.

There are no formal criteria which determine whether a Faculty case is delegated to the CBT, however there is a broad outline of cases that can be considered, split by level of complexity, as well as criteria about who in the CBT can handle a delegated case (which relates to staff experience and expertise). This aligns with the approach taken at other dioceses whose DACs also delegate certain cases.

Stakeholders across the DAC and CBT agree that delegated authorities generally speed up case processing times and ensure that DAC meetings are focused on the more complex cases. There is appetite across the DAC and CBT to make greater use of delegated authority going forward. However, future expansion of delegated authority will require sufficient capacity, experience and training within the team – currently delegated cases are predominantly handled by the DAC Secretary and the Buildings Conservation and Sustainability Officer, as the most experienced experts in the CBT. The DAC Secretary recognises that more structured CPD and memberships of relevant bodies (e.g. Institute of Historic Building Conservation) would be required to upskill existing and new staff to ensure they would possess the relevant training and expertise to be able to handle these cases going forward. However, the DAC Secretary understands that there is no CPD policy or budget within the DBF at present².

The use of sub-committees, Additional Matter Orders (AMOs) and discharge conditions were also reviewed during the research:

- Sub-committees are used by some DACs to agree cases outside of meetings. The formal use of these is not frequently employed in Salisbury, due to capacity issues for both CBT and DAC. Email consultations are more common to progress cases outside of DAC meetings.
- AMOs are used extensively by several dioceses but were not widely used in Salisbury as the Chancellor needs to see an evidence-based requirement for them before they are granted.
- The DAC Secretary expressed a wish to use discharge conditions to speed some cases through the process; however, this would require more capacity to follow-up on whether parishes have fulfilled their obligations, so currently this mechanism is used sparingly.

¹ Peal boards, Noticeboards, Candle stands, Book of Remembrance, Benches, church plate repairs, timber treatment, asbestos removal, bicycle stands

² The reviewers note this may have changed since the new People Director was appointed in 2025.



DAC Meetings

Observations of the DAC meetings provided an interesting insight into the operations of the committee. Committee members arrive well prepared and the meetings are efficiently chaired, with plenty of space for questions and comments. It is understood that meetings have become more efficient in recent years, thanks to more effective papers being sent to the committee in a timely manner. In one observed instance, some personal views were expressed about a particular case, however, this did not directly seem to lend itself to the onward steps agreed.

Some parish stakeholders asked why applicants cannot present or observe cases at DAC meetings. Discussions with DAC and CBT colleagues confirmed that this approach supports open and impartial deliberation. The suggestion of introducing lay representatives was also raised, though this is not a constitutional requirement and is not common practice elsewhere.

Advice provision

The review found the DAC to be operating in accordance with the legislative requirements that define and guide its practice. However, there are some areas which have been identified for improvement in relation to communication, its advice and the rationale behind it. The evidence for this conclusion was drawn from both internal and external stakeholder feedback.

It is apparent that parishes do not always feel that the DAC understand their context, particularly when it comes to financial resources or ambitions around mission. Several stakeholders- both at parish level and internally – are left with the impression that the DAC is always looking for “*gold standard outcome*” rather than taking the realities that churches are operating in into account or “*seeing church buildings as mission*”.

“Our feeling is that the DAC are too skewed towards maintaining the status quo for aesthetic purposes rather than helping churches adapt for mission.”

Advice received from the DAC is not always contextualised for a church’s circumstances or well explained, and even members of the DAC recognise that the advice provided is not always constructive and that there is room for improvement about how advice is framed back to parishes. Parish stakeholders identified that advice is “*not proactive guidance for rejuvenating churches – it is missing this positive view*”.

“We need helpful advice, not obstructiveness – and the DAC needs to acknowledge that parishes have limited resources.”

Some members of the DAC feel that taking a more constructive approach to advice (including taking financial context into consideration where appropriate) could lend itself to a more positive relationship with applicants.

There were some internal references to ‘*nit picking*’ over some cases, and how this not only uses up time in DAC meetings but more importantly puts churches under additional pressure³. The high level of detail without any rationale to substantiate it was also reflected by several parish stakeholders when relaying their experiences of receiving feedback.

³ Some DAC members referenced cases where previously agreed decisions have been reversed with little clear explanation given. No details were provided, and the details of any such cases have not been verified by this review. This point is therefore not raised as a substantive point in the review but noted here for reference.



Further, communications from the DAC to parishes are often not well understood. For example, only **52% of those who have made applications agreed that their case worker helpfully explained why their application was turned back by the DAC** with a request for further information, with several people feeding back comments such as *"We were turned down initially and advised to amend the application. There seemed to be no dialogue about the decision."* DAC, CBT and parish stakeholders also raised the issue of 'misinterpretation', with evidence suggesting that parishes are not always being entirely clear on what the expected next steps are.

Linked to these points, some members of the CBT indicated that communications received by the DAC occasionally require substantial adaptation to be external facing before they can be shared directly with applicants. This process would be improved by ensuring the DAC consistently provides the CBT with professional, constructive external-facing feedback that can be shared directly with applicants, without the need for interpretation or 'translation'. These communications should be in plain, straightforward language that can be easily understood by non-experts in parishes.

It also became apparent during this review that personal relationships appeared key to the speed of success of some applications. In the workshops, it was noted by some participants that they were able to escalate their case by bringing it to the attention of specific DAC members and requesting an intervention: *"The only way of getting things done in the end is talk to the Archdeacon – she makes one call and something happens"*. Similarly, it was clear in talking to DAC members that they were able to advocate for cases where they already had knowledge of the church, its layout, and the parish's needs. To ensure fairness in the system, DAC or CBT members should have a more personal knowledge of the cases as far as practicable, and one route to this could be to embed more site visits ahead of application, particularly for complex cases. Where this is not possible, video alternatives could be considered.

Response times

CBT can be contacted by parishes seeking information via phone or email. Standard office hours apply to these services.

Where information was sought from the CBT via phone or email prior to application, 37% felt response times were quick, 32% felt they were slow and the remainder felt they were average. There is a small, positive shift in contact times once an application has been made: where direct contact was made with the team after application, 42% felt response times were quick and 23% felt they were slow.

Despite this, **40% of people said they had faced difficulties receiving timely feedback** or acknowledgement of submission once they had made their application, pointing to a need to improve response times from the 'front desk' of the CBT at all stages of the process.

Case worker communications

Following submission, 35% of applicants were contacted by a CBT case worker. Several workshop participants noted that they had been contacted by the Church Buildings Team via the generic email address following their submission, so they did not realise that they had a dedicated case worker.

47% found communications easy to understand, and 20% found the communications difficult to understand. Some survey respondents pointed to receiving different advice from different staff members, and several stakeholders referenced '*changing pathways*' through the process, with several requests for new information during the application process.



Where contacted, case workers were deemed helpful with answering questions about the application (68% agreed), providing guidance on supporting documents (67% agreed) and explaining the stages of the application process (62% agreed). While **59% felt that communications were personalised**, 18% disagreed with this and some people indicated that they had received generic emails that they perceived as careless. A small number of respondents indicated that the tone of emails as '*negative*' and '*obstructive*'. **56% of those contacted were signposted to relevant information for their application**, though 25% disagreed with this.

It should be noted that several members of the CBT were singled out for praise with the support provided to parishes in the feedback received, and no single team member is underperforming in any area.

Triaging and tracking tools

The Church Buildings Assistant is responsible for checking and updating the status of new and existing case work on a weekly basis. This involves manually pulling information from the OFS into a spreadsheet, and updating the team with changes and new cases. This is a manual and time-consuming process, and does not always happen on occasions when the role holder is out of the office. Once a case has been allocated to a CBT member, documentation is checked and cases are turned back to parishes for further information or progressed to the next stage in the process as relevant. In instances of team absence, cases are covered by colleagues.

Several information storage systems are used, including OFS, Teams and a centralised email system which not all team members (e.g. Net Zero Officer) have access to, so certain emails have to be manually forwarded for filing. Whilst the current team appear to be able to handle these systems effectively, it does create challenges for new starters and is an area of efficiency to be addressed in the longer term. It will be important to understand what reports and tools can be utilised in the new Building Management Portal, and explore what additional digital administrative capability could complement the new system.



4. Support to Parishes and User Experience

This section explores parish experiences of the Faculty and List B processes, including perceptions of the system, understanding of roles, clarity of guidance, digital barriers and the effectiveness of support from the DAC and CBT. Key themes raised by parish stakeholders are discussed, noting that this is a representative summary of the views presented from the wealth of data collected over the course of this review.

Evidence shows highly polarised experiences: many parishes value the professionalism and support of the CBT and DAC, yet many struggle with the complexity of the national system, digital requirements and uncertainty around timelines. Misunderstandings about roles, responsibilities and the value provided by Salisbury's DAC and CBT are widespread. While many applicants do ultimately receive the support they need, there are clear opportunities to improve communication, guidance, responsiveness and pre-application engagement to build parish confidence and reduce avoidable frustration.

Overview of the Faculty process

To provide some context for the material in this section, the Faculty/List B application process typically moves through the following stages within the Church of England system:

- **Early exploration and advice** – the parish identifies a need or proposal and seeks informal guidance, usually from the archdeacon and the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). This stage is not mandatory.
- **Proposal development** – the parish refines its plans, secures PCC approval, and commissions any required professional reports (for example statements of significance or needs).
- **Consultation** – statutory consultees and amenity societies are consulted where required, alongside local public notice where required.
- **Formal DAC consideration** – the DAC reviews the application and issues formal advice known as Notification of Advice.
- **Submission to the registry** – the parish submits the full faculty application to the diocesan Registry, including DAC advice and consultation responses. It is possible for parishes to make a submission without a Notification of Advice.
- **Legal determination** – the Chancellor, sitting in the Consistory Court, considers the application, may seek further clarification, and then grants or refuses the faculty (sometimes with conditions).
- **Implementation and compliance** – if granted, the parish undertakes the works in line with the faculty conditions and reports completion as required.



Parish perceptions, understanding and expectations

Perceptions and Experiences

Of those who have made Faculty and List B applications, 38% found it quite or extremely difficult, 27% found the process easy and 35% found it 'OK'. **46% found the support they received from CBT during their application extremely or very helpful**, with only 17% finding the support not helpful.

There were many very positive comments made by parish stakeholders about DAC and CBT through the course of the review which should not be lost sight of amongst the discussions of challenges and areas for improvement throughout the report.

"DAC specialists are usually very good and helpful."

"Faculty and List B applications are, overall, a well-managed and supported process. I am pressed to find any suggestions to improve it at this time."

"The experience I had with making a list B application was amazing. My previous application was 15 years ago and until this most recent application I was still tainted with the memory of it. Thank you."

"My most recent List B application (speed necessary because restricted by bat presence) was refreshingly quick and helpful - far quicker than any other application for Faculty or List B in past years."

"I recognise that the processes in place are there for good reason. It is a daunting process if approached alone. I found the Church Buildings Team helpful, considerate and generally very pleasant to work with."

"We have made a number of applications over recent years. Our most recent one was very straight forward and progressed easily."

"The team was helpful and friendly. But I think the system they have to work with, and the complexity of the requirements for small matters at any rate, is disproportionate."

Just over 100 people responded to the Diocese-wide survey who had never been involved in a Faculty or List B application. Of these, **77% said they perceived the process to be quite or extremely difficult based on what they had heard from others**. 27% of these stakeholders who had never engaged with the process held negative views of the DAC, and 17% held negative views of the CBT. Based on feedback from parishes, it is understood that some of these negative perceptions date back to before the current DAC and CBT were in place, whilst some comes from hearing about other PCCs' experiences.

While overall, the reality of most applicants' experiences in Salisbury do not match the perceived challenges, there do remain several key issues that need to be addressed to improve the experience for PCCs.

Awareness of roles and value

It was pleasing to see that many parish stakeholders do understand the core roles of the DAC and CBT with **80% of respondents understanding the advisory aspects of the DAC's role** and 53% understanding that the DAC is the equivalent of secular specialist buildings advice.



Awareness of the CBT's role was lower amongst parish stakeholders, with 70%

However, there is also a **significant lack of understanding** about some aspects of the DAC and CBT at amongst some individuals parish level. Of those asked in the Diocese-wide survey issued as part of this review:

- 64% are not aware that DAC members are volunteers.
- 36% think that Parishes directly cover the cost of faculty applications.
- 21% think that parishes cover the costs of Quinquennial inspections.
- 12% think parishes cover the costs for advice on Faculty applications.
- 65% are unaware that the CBT provides training to parishes on the Faculty system.
- 63% were not aware that the DAC supply guidance notes on a range of topics to assist parishes in the care of places of worship.
- 8% were not aware of the DAC or any of its roles; 19.5% were not aware of the Church Buildings Team or any of its roles.

understanding that they respond to general enquiries relating to church care; 62% understanding they provide case work support and 54% understanding their role in overseeing the Quinquennial Inspection process.

When discussed with DAC Secretaries in other parts of England, several of these knowledge gaps and misconceptions were echoed, reinforcing the point that many parish-level awareness and experience issues are not unique to Salisbury.

Regarding value, a small number of stakeholders suggested introducing a tiered charging system, with higher fees for more complex or higher-value applications, arguing that this could help prioritise cases and strengthen support. A few parish representatives also indicated that they would support appointing paid professionals if this improved the speed and clarity of advice. These points are noted for reflection, but no recommendations are made on them, as DACs operate nationally as volunteer bodies and the current model is not structured to support a chargeable system.

The anonymous nature of Salisbury's DAC was referenced by some parish stakeholders, with a desire for greater visibility of DAC members and their areas of expertise expressed by some. Some other DACs publish the names of DAC members on the diocese website.

Perceived gaps in trust

Where parish stakeholders had negative experiences or perceptions, a recurring theme of 'lack of trust in PCCs by the DAC' arose in feedback. This particularly related to some key areas:

- A point repeatedly raised by some stakeholders who had negative experiences of the process was a lack of **understanding of where the liability of the works lie**. This is perceived by some stakeholders as a '*culture of paternalism*' within the DAC. An example given was the request by the DAC to see evidence that churches had contacted their insurance and advised them of the works. The implication of this request was seen to be that liability will lie with the Diocese in the event of works not being undertaken correctly, when in fact liability lies with the PCC. Some stakeholders feel that "*The DAC assume authority without the matching level of authority*". This appears to have been clarified by the CBT prior to the commencement of this review with a shift away from requesting evidence that the insurer had been contacted, to applicants simply confirming that they had contacted their insurer. However, it would still add



value to parishes to have a clear understanding of why they were being asked for each document requested and simply provide a checklist of reminders for any documents/activities that the DAC is not mandated to review.

- Several parish stakeholders were highly dissatisfied that the DAC does not fully consider the **views of the parish architects or professionals** consulted during the course of the application. As well as reinforcing a sense of lack of trust by the DAC in PCCs, this has led to delays and frustrations across the process, with comments such as: "*Either (a) trust the parish church architect to ensure that minor applications (e.g. routing of broadband cables) are implemented appropriately, OR (b) only appoint parish church architects that you DO trust.*" "*Parishes have to prove themselves over and over again, as if our judgement can't be trusted.*" Clarity around the expected role of experts in this process for parishes would be extremely useful and help to manage expectations and costs.
- Several applicants referred to cases where **applications were turned back with requests for information that had already been provided**. Consequently stakeholders perceived that applications had not been fully reviewed before requests for further information were issued, or that the requests appear to bear no relevance to the application (e.g. asking for photos of the inside of the church when the application was for outdoor works). Whether this is the case or not, this reinforces to parishes the sense that the DAC/CBT will assume that they haven't provided what is required and that the DAC/CBT exist to block rather than aid them.

Expectations and experience of timeliness

Of those who responded to the survey, a range of outcomes for recent applications has been reached, with the majority of respondents (59%) indicating a successful outcome, a third (33%) indicating they are currently waiting on an outcome or have been asked for further information to support their application, 4% declined by the Archdeacon or Chancellor and 3% deciding not to proceed⁴. Timeframes to achieve these outcomes vary enormously, and there is no clear pattern between time taken and outcome type⁵.

35% of people indicated that the time to reach their case outcome was in line with their expectations, and 11% indicated that the time taken was faster than they expected. **38% people indicate that the time it took to arrive at this outcome was much slower than they expected** - this includes a handful of successful outcomes that were resolved in 2-4 months (3% of cases), as well as several cases that have taken over 12 months to reach the current outcome (13% of cases). This points to a wide range of expectations parishes currently hold about the timeframes involved in the process.

Parishes are highly frustrated about the slow delivery of case outcomes, pointing out that delays in processing application outcomes and case progress leads to rising project costs, lost grant opportunities and volunteer morale being damaged. "*We can't get quotes until we have a faculty, can't get a faculty until we have quotes - and by then the builder's gone and the cost's gone up.*" Cases were also cited of local donors being on the verge of pulling out of projects due to the time delays experienced with processing Faculty cases. Parish stakeholders also referenced that, for

⁴ This figure is based on self-reported data. It is understood that several of these reported declined cases would be List B cases that the Archdeacon would decline and then the case would be turned into a Faculty case.

⁵ This review did review available case completion data from DAC records, however it was deemed that the presentation of the average completion time figures would not be useful due to the wide range of contexts and variables that underpin each Faculty and List B case, resulting in a wide range of case completion times.



them, the time between DAC meetings feels too long, and they perceive this as an enabler of the long timescales involved in the process.

The review found examples of some protracted Faculty cases, both historical and current (e.g. *"When I have done a Faculty (not a list B) I have had to double up with civic planning which has delayed the process and seemed unnecessary"* and *"One Faculty ... is over 4 years and still going"*). While individual cases do vary widely for legitimate reasons (e.g. consultations, emerging information), clearer communication around expected timeframes would help manage parish expectations.

Experiences of other DACs

The issues raised above are not unique to Salisbury, with all the other DAC Secretaries who engaged with this review **echoing the findings around negative parish perceptions and lack of understanding**. Where capacity allows, these DACs are tackling this issue via constant messaging and increasing visibility with parishes. This includes regular training for a range of stakeholders, online and face to face drop-in sessions, working with dioceses' communications teams and ensuring there is DAC presence in external communications (for example staff profiles, blogs, good news stories and even TikTok videos!⁶).

Technical and capacity challenges

As identified earlier in the report, there is a national digital skills issue at parish level across England. In Salisbury 18% of people who have submitted applications in recent years state that their parish does not have people with the time, confidence and skills to complete Faculty/List A/List B applications without external help, with several stakeholders expressing views such as *"Very few parishes have the capacity (time/ knowledge / motivation) to complete such complex applications on their own"*. 29% said that their parish does have these people, whilst 49% said they had some of the right people, with the rest being unsure.

Many frustrations relate to the national OFS interface rather than local CBT processes. **39% of people said it was difficult to make their most recent application via the OFS, compared with 27% who found it easy and a further 35% who said it was 'OK'**.

Of those who did make an application, the biggest area of challenge with the process is around **understanding the document requirements**, with 55% of those making applications stating they had faced difficulties with this. 36% had difficulties completing the forms and uploading required documents. 34% struggle with the next steps once the information has been uploaded and 21% stated they had not realised that their application hadn't been submitted via the portal. The Church Buildings Team and DAC members corroborate this point from their perspective, referencing an ongoing frustration around poor or incomplete applications and pointing to several examples of where they have had to provide basic IT support to parishes.

44% of those experiencing difficulties with the system stated they received support from the Church Buildings Team, 30% stated they did not receive support and 26% were not sure about the support received.

⁶ E.g. <https://www.tiktok.com/@oxforddiocese>



Guidance & support

Support available

The Church Buildings area of the website hosts 16 guidance notes for applicants. This is in relation to an average of 23 from the DAC Secretary respondents. It was noted by internal stakeholders the pace of sign-off for new guidance by DAC has been slower than desired, partly due to limited meeting time and volunteer capacity. This is an area already identified by CBT as requiring development when capacity allows.

However, applicants cannot always easily locate the information, citing the website interface as challenging: "*antiquated and pretty useless*". When information is located it is not always deemed useful, as indicated by some parish workshop and survey participants. This illustrates a broader point about navigability rather than the content itself. CBT has also identified the improvement of the website as an area they want to tackle, and capacity is the current blocker to this⁷.

The Church Buildings Team run 7-12 training sessions for churchwardens, volunteers and clergy each year. This aligns with the average of 8 reported by DAC Secretary survey respondents. However, workshop attendees were generally unaware of the training opportunities available, and only **12% of those surveyed said they had attended any form of training** in the systems or application

Over 50% of people who have made an application have sought information from either the website or via email or phone. 18% of people have reached out to their archdeacon for advice, and 22% used other sources of information (Historic England, ChurchCare etc.). Around 17% had a DAC site visit before application. Across this range of sources, **54% found the information they received extremely or quite helpful**; 30% were neutral and 16% found it quite or extremely unhelpful. Only 7.5% of people making applications did not seek any form of advice or information *before* submission.

Additional support needs

Site visits were repeatedly identified as being valuable by those who had experienced them, helping the DAC and CBT understand the layout and requirements of the church and often lending itself to the development of better working relationships between the parish and the DAC. Several parish stakeholders referred to the fact that issues can be solved "*in 15 minutes on site*" rather than "*batting the application back and forth for two years.*"

Linked to this, **39% of those surveyed identified that pre-application face-to-face support from CBT would be welcomed**. The CBT has run roadshow events in 2025 to encourage this engagement, and the Deanery of Pewsey has engaged a Community Enabler to support parishes and a notable uplift in quality has been observed.

Expanding this support should be explored. For example, the Dioceses of Bristol and Winchester offers 'office drop in' sessions which allows parishes to book a meeting with staff in the central office, which helps to limit travel times, whilst the DAC Secretary in Gloucester offers up to nine Deanery drop-in sessions each year.

There were also several calls for the CBT to share strong examples of key documents such as **Statements of Significance and Need, which parishes often struggle to develop** if they have

⁷ At the time this review commenced, the Buildings Conservation and Sustainability Officer was undertaking a mini-project to review other DAC websites to support the redevelopment of the Salisbury DAC's website in due course.



not done one before. As one parish applicant said in some written feedback provided: *“Statements of Significance are the first hurdle for PCC volunteers to jump...it is daunting because it is easy for the PCC to misunderstand what is required...and first attempts are rejected”*.

The CBT points to this as a regular blocker in the process, as these Statements often do not meet the expected standard upon first submission. They are seen by the team as a key document for DAC, where churches have an opportunity to fully set out the context -including their financial situation. Regular applicants state that this document is straightforward to produce once it has been done once but agree that it is challenging for first time applicants to produce and the expectations on parishes for what these documents should cover are unclear. *“Our statement of significance was 5,500 words and 20 pages – for a pair of gates!”* There appears to be internal caution to sharing best practice examples of application documents, as the DAC does not want parishes to ‘copy-paste’ key information across.

Several survey respondents and workshop participants saw value in a peer-to-peer network, where they could learn from other parishes that have been through the application process and get recommendations for suppliers. This ‘community of practice’ or ‘parish champions’ idea catalysed a great deal of enthusiasm from parish stakeholders when discussed, and participants seemed open to both virtual or face-to-face delivery of such a network which would allow parishes to contact each other for information and ideas. Such a network would require some facilitation on the part of the CBT, but minimal engagement thereafter, and links to the wider diocesan priorities on building parish capacity in this area.

Other process related documents that were mentioned in the survey and parish workshops included: a clearer process flow chart and a comprehensive list of the document requirements at the application outset (which has been improved and reissued for List B applications during this review period).

“Produce a comprehensive ‘decision tree’ of every stage of every type of Faculty application, including sources of assistance; this will not be a trivial task, but it will reveal the full extent of the work required and will set parish expectations.”

Several parish stakeholders suggested various options for streamlining the consultations involved (Public Consultation Notices, amenity societies and statutory consultations) and streamlining of Faculty and local authority processes (e.g. *“When I have done a Faculty (not a list B) I have had to double up with civic planning which has delayed the process and seemed unnecessary”*). The viability of these suggestions sits outside the scope of this review, but timescales and external aspects involved at each stage of the process should be indicated on process flow charts and in any relevant documentation back to applicants.

In terms of other support sources, the following were requested by those surveyed: visits to parishes to support with the application process (39%), printed guides (39%), video tutorials (36%) and case studies/examples of good practice (31%). It was noted by one DAC Secretary interviewed in this review that given capacity issues in their team, they signposted parishes to resources from other DACs. For example, the Diocese of York has produced several YouTube videos talking applicants through aspects of the OFS process⁸. Until sufficient team capacity is created to develop in-house resources, sourcing available guidance from other DACs would be a useful exercise. This could be explored at a national level, to align with the launch of the new BMP.

⁸ E.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSr9CmAWfUA>



5. Strategic Preparedness

This section assesses the extent to which the DAC and CBT are positioned to contribute to emerging Diocesan strategic priorities, particularly around reimagining church buildings as assets for mission, building parish capacity and integrating sustainability. It reviews strategic documents and identifies where current DAC and CBT practice aligns with future needs, and where there are opportunities to strengthen engagement.

Findings indicate strong appetite within both teams to play a more strategic role, particularly around Buildings for Mission and Net Zero. However, current workload pressures and limited strategic capacity constrain their ability to engage proactively. Clearer links between casework, strategic planning and capacity-building would better align these functions with Diocesan ambitions and support a more developmental, mission-focused approach to church buildings.

An overarching Buildings Strategy would support future decisions around the resourcing of the CBT and capacity development of buildings-focused staff within the DBF.

Strategic priorities

DACs and Church Buildings Teams across England are operating against a backdrop of increasing levels of church closures due to a convergence of structural pressures, including declining weekly worship attendance, unsustainable financial models and funding constraints, ageing and shrinking volunteer base, conditions of the building stock, and demographic and place based change. Current figures for Salisbury anticipate around 130 churches will have closed by 2031, which will subsequently have financial implications for the Diocese.

Considering this context, it is notable that there is no overarching Buildings Strategy for the Diocese of Salisbury. Such a strategy would clearly set out the scale and ambition of the diocese's plans for church buildings during this time of flux and uncertainty. Such strategies or evidence of Church Building Strategy groups were found for other dioceses. This review would have been strengthened by the existence of a Buildings Strategy, as it would have allowed for a deeper understanding of how and where the DAC and CBT are and could play a role in connecting diocesan vision for buildings to strategic action.

The following key strategic documents for the Diocese of Salisbury were reviewed as part of this assessment, with the headline implications for church buildings drawn out.

Strategic focus	Implications for church buildings
2025 Diocesan Challenges Summary (February 2025).	The Diocese recognises that maintaining a large, ageing building stock across dispersed rural parishes is unsustainable without new models of use and stewardship.
Foundations for Mission 2025-31 (May 2025)	Buildings are framed as <i>missional assets</i> , not liabilities; they are central to diocesan growth if re-purposed with community participation and professional support.
Buildings for Mission Project overview (March 2025)	The Diocese needs a systematised, relational support model, enabling churches to navigate the intersection of heritage, mission and community development.



Taking these together against the backdrop, a consistent strategic narrative emerges in relation to church buildings at diocese level:

- **Reimagining church buildings as assets for mission:** integrating buildings, people, and place into a single missional ecosystem is at the heart of Diocesan strategy. Positioning churches as open, adaptable spaces serving and shaped by their communities is central to this. Within this, the Diocese wants to move from reactive management of decline towards confident, missional engagement in every community.
- **Building parish capacity and confidence:** equipping clergy, lay people, and volunteers with the confidence, skills and time to act is crucial to the delivery of the strategy.
- **Integrating sustainability:** it will be critical to address the financial, environmental and demographic pressures faced by parishes to secure their viable futures.

It is recommended that these priorities are reviewed and articulated in an overarching Buildings Strategy for the diocese. The National Church has provided guidance on the strategic planning for church buildings⁹.

Gap analysis

The following gap analysis is intended as a high-level diagnostic rather than a detailed assessment of strategic alignment.

Strategic priority	How DAC & CBT currently contribute	Where the gaps (may) lie
Reimagining church buildings as assets for mission.	The DAC and CBT provide casework advice and List B/Faculty administration; DAC members offer technical expertise. Increasing use of delegated authorities is speeding up lower-risk applications.	<p>The DAC’s advice appropriately emphasises best practice, reflecting the requirements of current church legislation. There may, however, be scope to explore how existing guidance is framed or communicated so that it can also support a more developmental approach to reimagining buildings for mission; while remaining fully within legal parameters and maintaining their independence, should the Diocese consider this appropriate. A detailed scoping exercise would be recommended before such a shift is implemented.</p> <p>Further, due to capacity issues, there is currently a limited strategic link between DAC casework and diocesan <i>Buildings for Mission</i> planning or community engagement support.</p>
Building parish capacity and confidence	The CBT delivers training sessions (7–12 a year). DAC site visits are valued. The presence of the Community Engagement Officer and Community Building Support Officers provide valuable in-parish support in some areas of the Diocese.	<p>Relevant training is inconsistently publicised and not linked to broader capacity-building (e.g. community development, fundraising).</p> <p>Parishes are seeking more in-person engagement, and opportunities for this are considered in Section 4 of this review.</p>

⁹ <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/diocesan-resources/strategic-planning-church-building>



Integrating sustainability	The DAC Secretary leads Net Zero policy. DAC members consider environmental impact in advice.	Further strategic leadership in this area is currently limited due to capacity.
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Strategic leadership will be essential to addressing the gaps identified. Both the DAC and CBT acknowledge the need to strengthen their contribution to the strategic development of a mission-centered response to the buildings issues faced the Diocese. As one team member noted, *"...the team needs to ... be given the vision and capacity to be a proactive force for the development of churches."* This reflects the team's aspiration to contribute more proactively to diocesan priorities.



6. Benchmarking findings

As part of this review, interviews with four DAC Secretaries and a short benchmarking survey was conducted, which 15 DAC Secretaries completed. The headline findings are below, with equivalent data from Salisbury indicated.

Metric	Average from other Dioceses	Range from other Dioceses	Diocese of Salisbury
No. churches in Diocese	355	142-808	582
Average geographical area (sq miles)¹⁰	1344	320 - 2574	2000
No. full DAC meetings held annually	8	6-11	10
No. DAC site visits conducted annually	40	8-100	38
No. live cases on DAC records at last full meeting	20	4 - 50	13
Total no. of Faculty cases discussed at DAC meetings in 2024	102	26-270	113
Average progression rate of cases to recommendation of NOA stage	70%	27-94%	73%
Formal granting of delegated authorities for Faculty cases to CBT?	Yes - 13% No - 87%	n/a	Yes
Formal granting of delegated authorities for List B cases to CBT?	Yes -40% No - 60%	n/a	Yes
Total FTE staff in Church Buildings Team (or equivalent)	3.1	1.0 - 6.0	5.1 (noting that 1.5 FTE staff are not dealing with case work)
Average no. churches in parish per case worker	132	53 - 298	219 ¹¹
Average square miles of Diocese per case worker (sq miles)	473.4	132-1713	769.2 ¹²

¹⁰ Based on desk research; Geographical data is based on 10 respondent Dioceses where publicly available data was found.

¹¹ Based on 2.6 FTE case workers. This figure reduces to 158 if the DAC Secretary is included as a full time case worker.

¹² Based on 2.6 FTE case workers. This figure reduces to 556sq miles if the DAC Secretary is included as a full time case worker.



Analysis

Based on the average data provided from 15 other dioceses, it is clear that **Salisbury is broadly on par in relation to number of DAC meetings, site visits, case load, case progression rates and Church Building team size when considering case workers.**

Benchmarking indicates two particularly notable areas for Salisbury. Firstly, it appears to be one of the few dioceses that is operating with at least partial **delegated authorities** for Faculty cases, with only two of the 15 DAC Secretaries who completed the survey indicating that these delegations were formally in place. It should be noted that we do not have a full national picture of where and how delegated authorities are being deployed, but it is notable that several dioceses that engaged with this review are not on this journey as yet, so Salisbury is relatively advanced in its approach.

Figures are higher also, in terms of **'churches per case officer' and the geographical coverage** (in terms of sq. miles), than the average diocese, based on data received. It should be noted that the mean average figures should be interpreted cautiously due to variation across dioceses. Nonetheless, they help to build a picture of the relative workload of the DAC and CBT in Salisbury.



7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings across this review point to several recurring themes that shape the recommendations which follow. Capacity constraints—particularly the breadth of the DAC Secretary role and the workload carried by the CBT—affect responsiveness, communication and the ability to engage proactively with parishes. Clarity of roles, processes and expectations also emerges as a consistent need, with parishes seeking more accessible guidance, clearer explanation of advice, and greater transparency around timeframes and documentation requirements. Communication challenges, both internally and with parishes, contribute to misunderstandings, inconsistent experiences and heightened frustration within a nationally complex system.

Alongside this, there is strong appetite within the DAC and CBT to contribute more strategically to diocesan priorities, but limited current scope to do so. Taken together, these cross-cutting themes highlight the importance of strengthening capacity, improving communication and enhancing clarity in order to support a more consistent, confident and mission-aligned experience for parishes.

Conclusions

Governance, responsibilities and boundaries

Salisbury DAC operates at a sophisticated level compared with several other DACs, making strong use of delegated authorities and managing a case load that is relatively large when considering the number of case workers and geographical size and spread of the Diocese.

Governance of the DAC is good, with some room for improvement around formalising expectations for engagement. Committee meetings are well organised and have increased efficiency over time. There is room for increasing the clarity and reasoning behind advice provided, which would provide parishes with greater assurance that their circumstances are considered in the process.

Leadership, capacity and systems

Engagement with the Church Buildings Team is consistently valued, though current capacity pressures limit responsiveness. Several manual processes are in place which, whilst manageable for the existing team, do create confusion amongst newer staff.

There are real opportunities for the CBT to be aligned with more relevant Diocesan activity that would support engagement and visibility internally and with senior leaders. There is also a case for restructuring the team to reduce the pressures on the DAC Secretary, allowing them to focus more time and energy on strategic priorities.

Support to parishes and user experience

As in other dioceses, parishes in Salisbury have widely polarised experiences of the Faculty process. There are mixed levels of understanding and knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the key bodies amongst those who have made Faculty applications, and high levels of negative perceptions across those in the parish who have never engaged with the process. These extremes in disparity reflect the complexity of the national system and varying levels of parish capacity and experience.



Amongst those with highly negative experiences, there is an overriding sense that the DAC is distrustful of parishes and does not trust them to undertake the works properly or use relevant experts. Significant frustrations also arise from parishes about the uncertainty of timescales involved, and whilst half achieved their outcome as, or quicker than, anticipated, the remainder were disappointed by the time taken and pointed to the knock-on costs and implications of the delays in receiving the DAC’s final advice. Parishes are facing challenging digital barriers to accessing the system, with less than 30% having the right skills in place to make their application or finding the process easy.

Most applicants are proactive about seeking information before making a submission, and over 50% found the information they received helpful. Whilst guidance to parishes is available, there are gaps in provision and user interfaces make information challenging to find. Engagement with available training is too low. Parishes would like more face-to-face support via parish visits or roadshow formats which CBT is already putting in place. There may be opportunities for more engagement, as well as facilitating peer-learning opportunities which were requested by several stakeholders. Improved templates and examples of best practice were also requested, which would improve the quality of some of the most regularly turned back application documents, including Statements of Need and Significance. Improved checklists are already under development, and there is further room for improvement here, particularly in adding further explanations around why particular supporting documents are being requested.

Strategic preparedness

DAC and CBT have a key role to play in the delivery of key strategic aims across the Diocese, particularly around reimagining buildings as assets for mission, building parish capacity and capability and integrating sustainability. Priorities for this area are not cohesive or strategic, and work is required to align the Diocese’s vision and mission with a broader plan for its church buildings.

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are structured to support practical decision-making and implementation. They are designed to help the Diocese:

- prioritise actions across the short, medium and longer term
- identify early actions that can build parish confidence
- distinguish between actions that address underlying structural issues and those that improve experience within the current system

A summary table sorted by timeframe is provided first to support prioritisation and sequencing. Detailed narrative recommendations then follow under each thematic area.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation	Thematic area	Implementation Timeframe	Root cause solution or symptomatic issue	Parish confidence building?	Lead responsibility
Ensure DAC advice and rationale provided in a clear and accessible way with end users in mind	Leadership, capacity & systems	Immediately	Symptomatic	Yes - quick win	DAC



Recommendation	Thematic area	Implementation Timeframe	Root cause solution or symptomatic issue	Parish confidence building?	Lead responsibility
Remove '6 day' auto-email response.	Leadership, capacity & systems	Immediately	Symptomatic	Yes - quick win	CBT
Add names and bios of DAC members to the website	Support to parishes & user experience	Immediately	Symptomatic	Yes - quick win	CBT
Audit of interest and capacity to assess viability of increasing number of DAC site visits.	Leadership, capacity & systems	0-3 months	Symptomatic	Yes - quick win	DAC Chair
Scope viability of video submissions as an alternative to site visits.	Leadership, capacity & systems	0-3 months	Symptomatic	Yes - quick win	DAC
Establish drop-in sessions for parish support and continue to trial new parish engagement opportunities.	Support to parishes & user experience	0-3 months	Root cause	Yes - quick win	CBT
Exploration of publicly available guidance available from other DACs	Support to parishes & user experience	0-3 months	Symptomatic	Yes - quick win	CBT
Review and refresh of existing guidance notes around documentation and checklists , including placement in an easy to find place on the website.	Support to parishes & user experience	0-3 months	Symptomatic	Yes - quick win	DAC Secretary
Develop a Terms of Reference/Code of Conduct for the DAC	Governance, responsibilities and boundaries	3-6 months	Root cause	No	DAC Secretary & DAC Chair
Delegated authorities scoping review	Leadership, capacity & systems	3-6 months	Root cause	Yes - in time	DAC
Introduction of Team Assistant role in CBT	Leadership, capacity & systems	3-6 months	Root cause	Partial	DBF Senior Leadership
Creation of a parish engagement communications plan	Support to parishes & user experience	3-6 months	Symptomatic	Yes - in time	DBF Communications Team



Recommendation	Thematic area	Implementation Timeframe	Root cause solution or symptomatic issue	Parish confidence building?	Lead responsibility
Develop and provide examples of good practice in key application documents to first time applicants	Support to parishes & user experience	3-6 months	Root cause	Yes - quick win	CBT
Development of further guidance notes and a simplified process flow chart	Support to parishes & user experience	3-6 months	Symptomatic	Yes - quick win	DAC Secretary
Explore facilitation of a peer support network for parishes	Support to parishes & user experience	3-6 months	Symptomatic	Yes - quick win	CBT
Redesign website with indexed, concise guidance, clear navigation and search functions	Support to parishes & user experience	3-6 months	Symptomatic	Yes - quick win	CBT
Review reporting channels between CBT and senior leadership	Leadership, capacity & systems	3-6 months	Symptomatic	No	DBF Senior Leadership
DBF Senior Leadership to explore an alternative departmental location for the CBT	Governance, responsibilities and boundaries	6-12 months	Root cause	No	DBF Senior Leadership
CBT restructure (Deputy DAC Secretary or Senior Officer)	Leadership, capacity & systems	6-12 months	Root cause	No	DBF Senior Leadership
Develop delegated authorities criteria and governance frameworks for any expanded scope	Leadership, capacity & systems	6-12 months	Root cause	Yes - in time	DAC Secretary
Implement annual CPD for all CBT staff	Leadership, capacity & systems	6-12 months	Root cause	No	DAC Secretary
Development of an overarching Diocese Buildings Strategy	Strategic Preparedness	6-12 months	Root cause	No	DBF Senior Leadership
DAC Secretary planning for DAC recruitment drive in 2027	Governance, responsibilities and boundaries	12 months +	Root cause	No	DAC Secretary
Explore AI/digital solutions for triaging cases, automating workflow and standard communications	Leadership, capacity & systems	12 months +	Root cause	No	DAC Secretary



Governance, responsibilities and boundaries

- The DAC Chair and Secretary should develop a Terms of Reference/Code of Conduct for the DAC and encourage current members to sign up to it. This will provide a useful reference point for induction and ongoing engagement, and—where necessary—give the Chair and DAC Secretary an agreed basis for addressing issues of underperformance or conduct. Other DACs already employing such Terms of Reference should be approached for guidance (e.g. Guildford, Oxford, Bristol, Durham).
- The DAC, in formulating its terms of reference/code of conduct, should consider the extent to which they should take any financial information provided by the church into account in their advice. It is understood that the DAC is under no obligation to take this into consideration in their advice; however, if they go down this route, it will help to ground their advice in the church's context and potentially speed up the process.
- DBF Senior Leadership should explore whether an alternative departmental location for the CBT may support better alignment and visibility. It is recommended that the CBT is directly and positively engaged with such a process.
- The DAC Secretary should be planning for a large DAC recruitment drive in 2027 and laying the foundations for this now. There may be opportunities to engage knowledgeable parish stakeholders and gauge their interest in potential roles. It is recommended that heating advice is considered a priority area for recruitment as part of the Church's continued drive towards Net Zero.

Leadership, capacity and systems

Church Buildings Team

- Capacity of the CBT is a critical issue that requires addressing to increase efficiency and morale of colleagues in the team. Subject to available resources: two changes are recommended:
 1. Introduction of a Team Assistant or similar junior role, to take on administrative tasks such as the triaging of new cases, case work allocation, enquiry handling, website management, training/event organisation and any other appropriate roles identified. This role could be initially offered as part-time on a fixed term basis to assess effectiveness. This would free up significant time for the existing staff, enabling them to take on a higher/more complex case load and undertake greater parish engagement activities and pre-application site visits, with the likely outcome of consequently increasing satisfaction at parish level.
 2. A restructure to create a 'Deputy DAC Secretary' or 'Senior Officer' role, who can take some line management and DAC administrative responsibilities away from the current DAC Secretary and mitigate the single-role dependency identified. It is proposed that one of the current team members could be promoted into this role internally without the need to increase headcount. Such a change would enable the DAC Secretary to drive forward some key tasks such as training and guidance development, as well as focus on Net Zero leadership and other strategic priorities.
- Should additional resource become available, or a vacancy arise, consideration should be given to appointing someone with the skills, experience and professional qualifications/memberships to take on delegated casework from the DAC.



- Once the changes above are implemented, or sooner, it is recommended that the '6 day response' auto-email reply is removed from CBT staff emails, as this leads to negative perceptions amongst parish stakeholders, particularly when this target is missed.
- When it comes online, the reporting functions in the BMP should be thoroughly explored to see if efficiencies can be found in the current case tracking system utilised by the CBT.
- Once the BMP functionality is understood, the DBF could consider exploring technological solutions to triaging cases and automating some aspects of workflow and communications in order to improve response times and consistency for parishes (e.g. AI assisted tools may be available to support). CBT digital competencies will need to be understood and relevant training provided once any new platform(s) are embedded.
- Structured CPD should be built into annual planning for all team members, with customer service and managing difficult communications prioritised as key training areas.
- It is recommended that formal and informal reporting channels between the Church Buildings Team and Departmental Heads are reviewed, to ensure that the team is given ample opportunity to report positive outcomes through the course of the year, rather than upward reporting being focused on the escalation of challenging cases.

DAC

- Delegated authorities are a powerful tool that Salisbury are already using to good effect to speed up the consistency and timeliness of case processing. It is recommended that the Diocese prioritise exploring the expansion of these powers.
 - The DAC and DAC Secretary should prioritise a scoping review to explore the options for extending delegated authorities in clearly defined categories.
 - Suitable CPD plans will have to be designed and enacted to ensure that CBT staff across the team continue to be appropriately skilled to handle these cases – it will be critical for organisational risk mitigation to ensure that the appropriate skills and knowledge do not rest with a single individual.
 - Appropriate criteria and governance frameworks (e.g. terms of reference, precedent reports and reporting mechanisms) must be put in place to ensure that parishes and CBT are safeguarded if Salisbury follows other progressive DACs into this space.
- The DAC should ensure that all advice is communicated in a professional and constructive tone, using clear, accessible language tailored to parish audiences. Rationale for advice and next steps should always be explained, and any requests kept targeted and proportionate to the application. This approach will support parishes more effectively and reduce avoidable follow-up for CBT colleagues.
- Whilst it is acknowledged that the DAC currently conducts a high number of site visits each year (c.40), across a wide geographical area, there would be value in exploring if more can be conducted, particularly at pre-application stage. An audit of interest and capacity could be undertaken to assess this amongst DAC members. Video submissions could also be considered as an alternative approach.

Support to parishes and user experience

- The review and refresh of existing guidance notes around documentation and checklists should be enacted urgently, and revised documents should be placed in an easy to find place on the website. It is critical that as part of this, the reasons behind each document being requested are made clear.



- Progress on developing, signing off and publishing accessible, user-friendly guidance notes is a priority for the DAC. Additionally, an improved, simplified process flow chart should be developed with details of potential timeframes outlined.
- A standalone project to explore publicly available guidance from other Dioceses (e.g. YouTube or video tutorials) could prove valuable, allowing CBT to signpost parishes to existing support. This could potentially be led at national level to align with the launch of the new BMP, with the findings shared across all DACs.
- Continued efforts to streamline and improve the website interface and user journey should be encouraged, with the end goal of a redesigned website with indexed, concise guidance, clear navigation and search functions. Include biographies of DAC members on the website to 'humanise' the committee. Digital capabilities should be considered as part of any new roles created.
- Increasing parish engagement is already a priority for CBT, with several options already available or trialed. Time and space should continue to be made for this engagement, alongside a suitable campaign to promote awareness of these opportunities. Drop-in office sessions could also be considered, having been proven successful in other dioceses.
- There is clearly an appetite for peer support in this area, either via a forum or through 'parish champions'. The CBT should explore how it can facilitate this, utilising the network of the Church Buildings Community Enabler and/or existing diocese networks and communication channels.
- Clarity around the expected role of experts such as architects and surveyors in this process for parishes would be extremely useful and help to manage expectations and costs. This information should be clarified in guidance and in any pre-application enquiry responses.
- Examples of good practice in key application documents such as Statements of Significance and Need would be of great value, particularly to first time applicants. Whilst there is a danger of some applicants taking a 'cut and paste' approach to such examples, it is hoped that appropriately caveated documents stating that all material produced must be original and unique to the building in question might mitigate this risk.
- It is recognised that the CBT at Salisbury would like to do more to increase positive profile with parishes, and engagement with the DBF Communications team is recommended to develop a plan for this in the medium term when capacity issues have been addressed.

Strategic preparedness

Development of a Buildings Strategy will be pivotal in helping to establish priorities for the DAC and CBT in the wider Diocese context.

There is currently no capacity for DAC or CBT strategic leadership in these areas. It is hoped that the implementation of some of the recommendations above will free up some capacity and expertise in this space and allow these bodies to take a higher profile standing in these important conversations.



Appendix 1 – DAC functions

Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018;

Section 37 - Advisory committees: Functions

(1). The advisory committee must act as an advisory body on matters affecting places of worship in the diocese and, in particular, must give advice when requested by a relevant person on matters relating to—

- a. the grant of faculties,
- b. the architecture, archaeology, art or history of a place of worship,
- c. the use, care, planning, design or closure of a place of worship,
- d. the use or care of the contents of a place of worship, or
- e. the use or care of a churchyard or burial ground.

(2) Each of the following is a “relevant person” for the purposes of subsection (1)—

- a. the bishop of the diocese,
- b. the chancellor of the diocese,
- c. the archdeacon of each archdeaconry in the diocese,
- d. the PCC for each parish in the diocese,
- e. a person intending to apply for a faculty in the diocese,
- f. the mission and pastoral committee of the diocese,
- g. a person engaged in the planning, design or building of a new place of worship in the diocese, not being a place within the jurisdiction of the consistory court, and
- h. such other persons as the committee considers appropriate.

(3) The committee must review and assess the degree of risk to materials, or of loss to archaeological or historic remains or records, arising from proposals relating to the conservation, repair or alteration of a place of worship, churchyard or burial ground or the contents of such a place.

(4) The committee must develop and maintain a repository of—

- a. records relating to the conservation, repair and alteration of places of worship, churchyards and burial grounds, and

other material (including inspection reports, inventories, technical information and photographs) relating to the work of the committee. (5) The committee must issue guidance for the preparation and storage of the records referred to in subsection (4).

(6) The committee must make recommendations as to the circumstances in which the preparation of a record of the kind referred to in subsection (4) should be made a condition of a faculty.



(7) The committee must—

- a. take action to encourage the care and appreciation of places of worship, churchyards and burial grounds and the contents of such places, and
- b. for that purpose, publicise methods of conservation, repair, construction, adaptation and redevelopment.

(7A) Where rules require a relevant person to carry out consultation, the relevant person may delegate the discharge of that function to the advisory committee.

(8) The advisory committee must carry out such other functions—

- a. as may be imposed on it by an enactment or by a Canon;
- b. as may be imposed on it by a resolution of the diocesan synod;
- c. as it may be requested to carry out by the bishop or chancellor.

(9) In carrying out its functions, the committee or any sub-committee it has must have due regard to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England.

(9A) The committee may delegate the exercise of any of its functions to an officer of the committee.

(10) Any expenses incurred for enabling the committee to carry out its functions properly and effectively, and which were approved by the diocesan board of finance before being incurred, are to be paid by the board.

(11) As soon as practicable after the end of each year, the committee must prepare a report of its work and proceedings during that year and must cause the report to be laid before the diocesan synod; and the secretary of the committee must send a copy of the report to the Church Buildings Council.



Appendix 2 – Data collection

Consultation calls

Bean Research conducted depth interviews with the following people over the course of this review:

Revd Canon Jonathan Triffitt	Director of Mission & Ministry and Deputy Diocesan Secretary
David Pain	Diocesan Secretary and CEO of the Diocesan Board of Finance
David Knight	Deputy Director for Church Buildings at The Church of England
Elizabeth Harvey	Director of Finance & Operations
Dan Crooke	Secretary to the DAC and Team Leader
Alex Weedon	Church Buildings Officer
Joe O'Connell	Buildings Conservation and Sustainability Officer
Lucy Scott	Church Buildings Assistant
Toni Bush	Church Buildings Community Enabler
Jarrold Hill	Net Zero Decarbonisation Officer
Richard Curtis	Chair of the DAC
The Rt Revd Dr Andrew Rumsey	Bishop of Ramsbury
The Ven Penny Sayer	Archdeacon of Sherborne
Sue de Candole	Diocesan Registrar and Bishop's Legal Secretary for the Bishop of Salisbury, Bishop of Winchester and the Bishop of Portsmouth. Partner at Batt Broadbent solicitors
Sarah Hart	Senior Registry Clerk
Dr Sue Lucas	Archdeacon of Southend
Paul Chivers	PA to the Archdeacons of Dorset and Sherborne
Beth Thomas	Member of the Church Buildings Committee, Church Warden in Westbury
Kevin Peto-Bostick	Member of the Bishop's Council & Blackmore Vale Deanery
Louise Ellis	Archdeacon of Wilts
Liz Kitch	DAC Secretary, Oxford
Dr Christopher Barnes	DAC Secretary, Bristol
Adam Klups	DAC Secretary, Gloucestershire
Sarah Anderson	DAC Secretary, Rochester

Parish survey

The survey was open over the period 8th September to 3rd October 2025. The questions were prepared by Bean Research in consultation with the Church Buildings Committee and DAC Secretary for Salisbury. The survey link was shared with stakeholders via the Grapevine and Working Together newsletters and on Diocese social media.



The survey was hosted on Bean Research's SurveyMonkey platform and raw findings were analysed and aggregated for the analysis.

Demographics of respondents

414 people completed the survey, all of whom either live in the Diocese of Salisbury and/or have links to a church in the diocese.

Over 55% of respondents are members of PCCs, and 17% are another form of church volunteer. 29% are church wardens, 12% are members of clergy¹³. 41% of respondents attend church regularly.

74% of respondents are above the age of 65, with a further 16% between the ages of 55-64, with the remaining 10% of respondents under this age.

Of those who responded 235 had made or been involved in a Faculty/List A/List B application. 86% of these respondents (202 people) had made their application since 2020, which aligns with the time that the current DAC Secretary and several members of the current Church Buildings Team have been in post. We can therefore be confident that the views of these respondents are reflective of the current environment.

The survey has been analysed, and findings have been fed into this report.

Parish workshops

Two workshops were held on 14th October 2025. The morning session in Colehill was attended by 18 people, and the afternoon session in Wimborne was attended by 7 people.

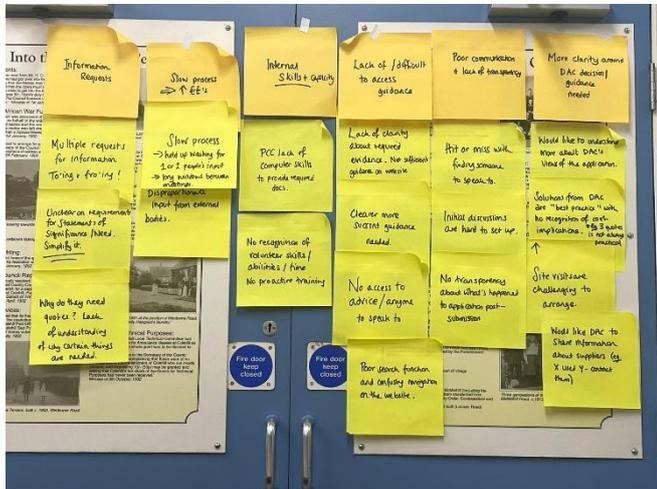
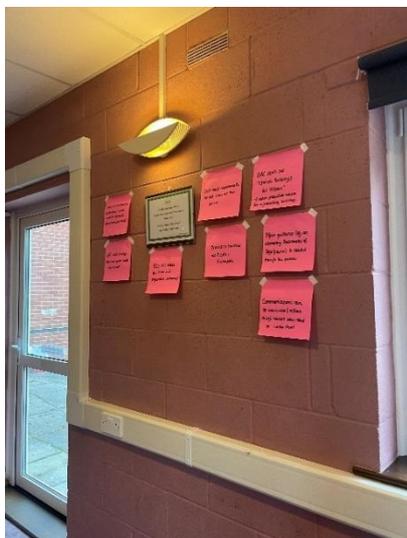
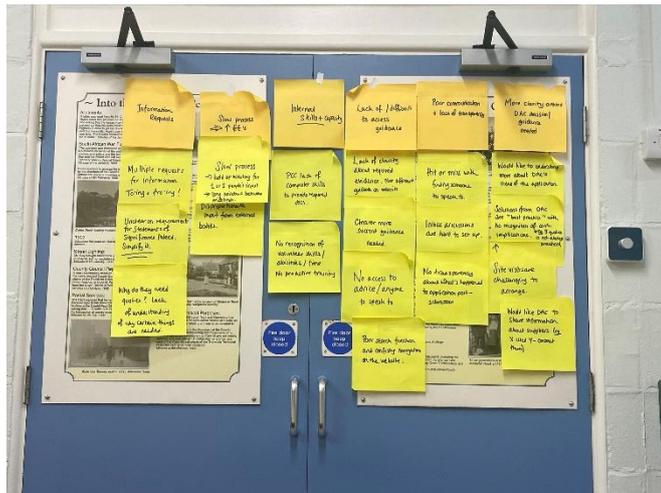
Bean Research designed and facilitated the two hour sessions, which followed this agenda:

- 0–15 mins: Welcome & framing
- 15–35 mins: Mapping the experience (small groups) In small groups, ask participants to map the "*typical journey*" of a Faculty application from their perspective
- 35–50 mins: Sharing back
- 50-60 mins: *Break*
- 60–75 mins: Clustering of issues
- 75mins – 115mins: Solutions identification & recommendation suggestions
- 115–120 mins: Closing

Findings from the session were written up and the analysis of these has fed into this report.

¹³ Respondents could indicate more than one role.





DAC Secretary survey

The survey was open over the period 7th October to 31st October 2025. The questions were prepared by Bean Research in consultation the Director for Mission and Ministry and the DAC Secretary for Salisbury. The survey link was shared with stakeholders via a national DAC Secretary email group, administered by the DAC Secretary of Gloucester.

The survey was hosted on Bean Research's SurveyMonkey platform and raw findings were analysed and aggregated for the analysis.

15 DAC Secretaries completed the survey from dioceses across England – there was no notable bias towards either northern or southern dioceses.

To incentivise participation, respondents were promised a short, anonymised summary of the findings. This was circulated to interested participants in January 2026.

