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**Corff Cynrychiolwyr Yr Eglwys yng Nghymru**  
**The Representative Body of The Church in Wales**

# GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF CHURCH HALLS

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# GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF CHURCH HALLS

This guidance note is designed to assist Parochial Church Councils (PCCs)<sup>1</sup> to better manage and maintain Church Hall buildings. For further guidance please contact your local Diocesan Office (and Churches Inspector if you have one), Archdeacon, or the Ecclesiastical Property Team at the Representative Body (RB) whose contact details are at the end of this note.

This guidance note sets out ten steps to managing your Church Hall effectively:

1. [Check Ownership and Boundaries.](#)
2. [Assess the Condition of your Building.](#)
3. [Review and manage building services \(heating, lighting, electrics, drainage etc\).](#)
4. [Manage Asbestos.](#)
5. [Keep People Safe – Manage Health and Safety.](#)
6. [Check your Insurance arrangements.](#)
7. [Check arrangements for the use of the building and its accessibility.](#)
8. [Plan ahead when making changes to your building.](#)
9. [Aim for carbon net zero.](#)
10. [Review your Strategy.](#)

## 1. Check Ownership and Boundaries

### What is owned and who holds the deeds?

Should you wish to make changes to the building, alter its operation/use, or raise grant funding towards upgrade and repair works, it is important that you know on what basis the property is held, and who the registered owner is.

Some properties are held in Trust for the 'Parish' by the RB, others by the local Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF). Some are held with specific restrictions and limitations on use or were gifted with particular covenants attached which might mean you are limited to what you can do with it – it is important to establish these details.

Please liaise with the RB Ecclesiastical Property Team, in the first instance, to confirm what, if any, records are held by the RB centrally, and what details are held by the Land Registry.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Parochial Church Council" is used within this document to describe the local church trustee body responsible for the management of the hall. These bodies may also be known as the Ministry Area Council, the Local Ministry Area Council, Rectorial Benefice Council, Mission Area Conference, or any other term designated by diocesan policies.

## **2. Assess the Condition of your Building**

### **What is the condition of the building, its grounds, access routes, car park and boundaries?**

It is important that you have a basic understanding of your hall's condition. This doesn't necessarily need to be in quite the same detail as a full quinquennial survey report as for your church, but that can provide a useful format of things to look for.

You should consider appointing a competent building surveyor or architect to survey the building but you should also make a careful inspection yourself. Look at each element and undertake an impartial assessment of how it is built, what it is made of, how old it is, when it was last repaired or renewed, and what works you might need to plan to do over the coming months and years.

Identify what does not look right and make a list even if you don't know the cause – you can then seek specialist advice on what you have seen.

There is very helpful and relevant guidance available from SPAB which, whilst aimed at places of worship, can equally be applied to church halls:

<https://www.spab.org.uk/campaigning/maintenance-matters>

<https://www.spab.org.uk/campaigning/maintenance-co-operatives-project/mcp-fim-resources>

The building might be a listed building or set within a Conservation Area. If it is within the grounds of a listed building (for example within the churchyard of a listed church) it might well be regarded as a building within the curtilage of a listed building and as such classified as a listed building also. This will mean your works to your building may require listed building consent or faculty permission. Please liaise with your Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) Secretary and/or Churches Inspector. Details of listed buildings can be found on the CADW website:

<https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/cof-cymru/search-cadw-records>

## **3. Review and Manage Building Services (Heating, Lighting, Electrics, Drainage etc)**

### **What building services has your building got and are they in good condition and well maintained?**

How is the building heated (or cooled if you have air conditioning)? What condition are your fixed wiring electrical circuits and portable appliances in? Do you have panic alarms in accessible toilet facilities, a lift or mechanical ramp? A smoke or fire alarm or sprinkler system?

All of these systems, and others, require regular maintenance and servicing, which are often a statutory requirement. You should always ensure that these are up to date and that records are held on site. Take advice from specialist engineers on your systems to understand your obligations.

Servicing and maintenance work should only be undertaken by specialist, qualified engineers able to certify their work – ask the Diocesan Office or Ecclesiastical Property Team at the RB for advice or guidance if necessary.

#### **4. Review and Manage Building Services (Heating, Lighting, Electrics, Drainage etc)**

**What building services has your building got and are they in good condition and well maintained?**

It is a legal requirement for you to manage asbestos in your buildings by:

- Obtaining an Asbestos Management Survey (including an asbestos register showing where asbestos is located).
- Obtaining a Refurbishment and Demolition survey where significant building work is envisaged.
- Undertaking regular monitoring by:
  - Checking the asbestos register, at least annually.
  - Updating the asbestos register whenever you have work done on asbestos materials.
  - Checking materials at least once a year to make sure they haven't deteriorated.
  - Review annually

The HSE provides clear guidance for building owners (which for asbestos purposes is the PCC) at:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/building-owner.htm>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/duty.htm>

You can easily obtain asbestos surveys and reports via Maintenance Booker:

<https://www.maintenancebooker.org.uk/services/asbestos>

#### **5. Keep People Safe – Manage Health and Safety Assess hazards and develop Risk Assessments**

You will want to make sure people using your hall are kept safe. Your PCC should have a written Health and Safety Policy setting out its approach to the management of hazards in its premises and activities. Hazards are managed through risk assessment – a process of considering the likelihood that hazards will cause harm and developing measures to reduce the risks.

As well as the risk associated with asbestos containing materials, it is important that there is a risk assessment available for the building and the activities undertaken there. Through preparing the risk assessment, you should bear in mind the types of activities that will take place within the building – there will be specific things to bear in mind if

you accommodate activities for young children, for those with dementia, for those with mobility limitations, etc. Further guidance is available on the Ecclesiastical Insurance website:

<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/risk-assessment-guidance.pdf>

<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/example-risk-assessment.pdf>

## **6. Check your Insurance Arrangements**

The PCC is responsible for arranging insurance of the hall and associated public liability cover. Whilst you are free to insure with whichever company you prefer, we recommend that you insure through Ecclesiastical Insurance so that your policy for the church and hall are coordinated. Details of the Ecclesiastical Insurance policy terms and conditions, and other useful guidance and information is available here:

<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/church/church-hall-insurance/>

## **7. Check arrangements for the use of the building and its accessibility Users, leases and licences**

The Church in Wales has developed a template Hiring Agreement for the use of Church Halls by external groups on a session-by-session basis which can be found here:

[https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Hiring\\_Agreement\\_January\\_2022.pdf](https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Hiring_Agreement_January_2022.pdf)

This is NOT suitable for long term use of the building or parts of the building by external groups where those groups may exclusively control an area of the building, its grounds, or the whole building itself – for example, where a children’s nursery has the exclusive use of a couple of rooms in the building and no one else is able to use the space at other times. In such cases, please contact the Ecclesiastical Property Team at the RB for further guidance. It may be that a more formal lease is required in such circumstances; the wrong agreement can mean the unintended grant of rights to occupiers.

### **Accessibility**

The Church in Wales and all its constituent parts has obligations – both legal and moral – to ensure that our premises and activities are reasonably accessible to all. This can include for those with limited mobility (with items such as ramped access and egress, accessible toilet facilities, etc), but also for those with other impairments e.g. visual and hearing impairments.

This should be considered as part of your review of the premises, and especially when any alteration works are being proposed – Building Regulations require that works

take this into account. Your professional advisors will be able to assist in such circumstances.

There is some helpful guidance on the Church of England Church Care website which can be accessed here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/accessibility>

This is embedded in the Church in Wales Equal Opportunities Policy which is accessed here: <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/clergy-handbook/equal-opportunities-policy/> and in the UK Government Equality Act 2010 legislation which is available to view here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

## **8. Plan ahead when making changes to your building**

Professional advice should always be sought prior to embarking on a building project – ideally from a suitably qualified and experienced building surveyor or architect. Your local Diocesan Property Team should be able to help you find a suitable advisor. Your advisor should help develop a suitable specification, design, secure necessary consents and approvals (faculty if required, listed building consent, planning permission, and building regulations approvals, for example), obtain quotes for the works, and oversee the works themselves.

Prior to embarking on any scheme, as well as statutory consents, you will need to secure the agreement of the Church Committee/PCC (incl MA/LMA). Most of the guidance relating to church projects also applies to church halls in terms of good/best practice:

[https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Property\\_Dept\\_-\\_Church\\_Building\\_Projects\\_and\\_Safety.pdf](https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Property_Dept_-_Church_Building_Projects_and_Safety.pdf)

[https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Property\\_Dept\\_-\\_Managing\\_Small\\_Church\\_Building\\_Projects.pdf](https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Property_Dept_-_Managing_Small_Church_Building_Projects.pdf)

[https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Property\\_Dept\\_-\\_Managing\\_Large\\_Church\\_Building\\_Projects.pdf](https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Property_Dept_-_Managing_Large_Church_Building_Projects.pdf)

You are likely to seek grant aid for your project. Some grant funders are happy to offer support for particular projects to upgrade community facilities, such as Church Halls, especially where it will increase and enhance access to services for those who otherwise could not access them. You should always consult your Church Committee and LMA/MA prior to committing to a funding package as these often bring obligations that the Trustees of the LMA/MA Charity will need to be aware of.

Funders may also want a consent letter from the legal title holder of the building (RB or DBF), so make sure you appraise them of the project and grant application in good time.

## **9. Aim for carbon net zero**

### **Energy efficiency**

The Church in Wales has committed to achieving Net Zero Carbon by 2030. This includes church halls, churches, parsonages, and our various activities that are based in our buildings.

There are helpful and easy-to-use tools and guides on the Church in Wales Climate Change web-page which can be accessed here: <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/about-us/our-campaigns/environment/>

By far the largest source of carbon emissions from our church hall buildings is the use of fossil fuel heating systems. If you anticipate needing to replace your heating equipment in the near future, start thinking about what you might replace it with before it breaks down! Speak to your Diocesan Churches Inspector, your DAC Secretary, the RB Climate Change Champion and the RB Ecclesiastical Property Team for advice, and consider engaging a suitable expert to review your energy use and the options that might be available to you.

A commercial Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) can be a useful and relatively inexpensive way to have an overview of the building and how it can be made more efficient. You should aim to have an EPC rating of C or above.

In a relatively modern, potentially un-listed building, options for insulation and draughtproofing are wider and more varied than for a listed church hall – a well maintained, dry and draught-proof building is already going to be more carbon efficient than one in poor condition that is damp and draughty! It is important that appropriate advice is taken to make sure that as well as being energy efficient, any new system is affordable to run and effective.

For those sites with relatively low energy use, and/or with existing plant in good working order, continue to maintain your equipment and speak to the Diocesan Office and RB colleagues about recommended Carbon Offset schemes.

Your starting point should be the Net Zero Carbon Framework which is accessed here:

[https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/2205 -  
\\_THE NET ZERO CARBON FRAMEWORK OF THE CHURCH IN WALES -  
\\_FINAL - 2022.pdf](https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/2205_-_THE_NET_ZERO_CARBON_FRAMEWORK_OF_THE_CHURCH_IN_WALES_-_FINAL_-_2022.pdf)

and The Energy Toolkit which can be accessed via this link: <https://eft-wales.parishreturns.info/>

## **10. Review your Strategy**

### **Is your church hall an asset for mission or a liability?**

You hold property either directly to enable the delivery of mission and outreach, or to help raise money to fund mission and outreach.

If your hall enables you to reach out to your community to deliver a range of activities to people you otherwise would not come into contact with, and/or helps to raise enough money to cover its costs and contribute towards the running costs of the church, then great! In some cases, however, we are aware that running the hall can become a burden, and income barely covers the running costs. It is important that you regularly assess whether the hall is enhancing the lives of your church community and mission and outreach, or whether it is draining your time and resources.

Where a hall has become a liability or where its activities can take place in your church, it is time to consider selling it, or leasing it to another community group to run. Please contact your MA/LMA Trustee body, your Archdeacon, the Diocesan Office and the Ecclesiastical Property Team at the RB if you are considering such a change. Closure or letting will, in most cases, require a resolution from the Church Committee and MA/LMA Committee, support from your Archdeacon, and agreement from your Diocesan Property Board. If the deeds are held by the RB then Provincial Property Committee will also need to agree to the proposed change.

There is a further guidance note here:

[https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Church\\_Hall\\_Closure\\_and\\_Disposal\\_Guidance\\_Note\\_Version\\_1.1\\_March\\_2022\\_ENGLISH1.pdf](https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Church_Hall_Closure_and_Disposal_Guidance_Note_Version_1.1_March_2022_ENGLISH1.pdf)

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