

APPRAISING FUTURE CHURCH BUILDING NEEDS

Introduction

The future of the buildings in a parish cannot be looked at in isolation. The form of ministry and outreach can influence the building needs of a parish. Parishes need to consider the community served by each church, identifying population centres, special target areas and areas of special need. This leads to questions such as:

- Are churches in the right place?
- Do the traditional parish boundaries still apply and should they be adjusted?
- Should there be a more flexible approach taken by neighbouring parishes working together on outreach?
- Churches or buildings in another parish or possibly, deanery, may have better resources or potential to serve mission in part of the parish more effectively. Do neighbouring churches have more scope for growth e.g. better facilities, greater resources?

Other issues will include the number of clergy anticipated to serve the area in the future and how each parish is equipped for developing the ministry of laity. The issues for assessing isolated rural parishes will be different from those in urban areas. Rural churches are often important to village life but are commonly located in areas of small population and consequently a smaller nucleus for fund raising.

While it may be beneficial for some churches to be used for purposes other than worship, it is sometimes found that a hall is more effective for worship because of its location or the form of worship. In some cases, it may be considered better not to retain the church building and to meet in a village hall or a local school. In other circumstances, a parish may decide to sell all of its existing buildings and to use the proceeds to fund a new worship centre, incorporating facilities for other activities and uses.

The following approach seeks to help Parishes and Area Deaneries in their appraisal of the future of church buildings.

Part I - Parish Level

1. What Church in Wales property is in the parish? Identify all churches, church halls, schools and land. The Representative Body and the Diocese can help with this.
2. Does the parish have difficulty managing the properties and funding maintenance and insurance? Are any a drain upon the parish's resources?

Yes *Can this be overcome by improving the facilities?
Could improved management and greater use provide sufficient income to make such properties viable?
Does the parish have the resources to do this?*

Should the property be sold or, if there is proposed housing or other development in the immediate surrounds, should a short-term lease be considered?

*Consult the local authority and local plan to assess planning potential
If there is a possibility of sale, consult with RB so that the title can be checked and authority for sale sought.*

3. The Parish needs to consider a number of key questions:
- How is future outreach within the parish seen within the mission plan? Which of the current buildings does the parish see as having key roles in this respect? Are any suitable for fulfilling this role?
 - How does this relate to proposals in neighbouring parishes? What discussions have taken place to ensure the best use of resources between neighbouring parishes?
 - What is the Churches and Pastoral Committee's view? Buildings should not be looked at in isolation e.g. if there are a number of churches in the area, an assessment of whether one or two churches should form the central focus or base with ministry in other locations being held in a hall or school. Consequently, resources would then be targeted accordingly.

Disposal of property which does not form part of the mission plan should be considered. There is a detailed closure procedure for churches (see RB Guidance) and where other property is to be sold a PCC resolution proposing a sale needs to be sent to the RB.

4. Are the buildings located in good strategic positions to serve the parish i.e. within or near the population centres?

*It Not Consider a sale and, possibly, funding a new building in a different location.
Consider other local buildings that could be shared such as schools or meeting halls.*

5. Are the buildings suitable for the form of worship and outreach envisaged above?

Yes *Retain the existing buildings*

No *Is it feasible to make them suitable? What obstacles are there to making them suitable? If financial, is there property in the parish that could be sold to assist funding? Is grant assistance needed? What grant funding is available? (See guidance note on grants)*

Part 2 - The Area Deanery and Diocese

Once a parish has made its initial appraisal, this should be made available for discussion with the area deanery and the Churches and Pastoral Committee. The lead for decisions affecting particular churches or parishes must come from the PCC but there may be aspects that will require advice and guidance from the diocese.

In some cases, the diocese will need to step in to assess the merits and de-merits of possibly conflicting views or proposals within deaneries to ensure a strategic overview and framework.