

## Church Improvement Fund – Application Guide

### Funding Priorities

The Church Improvement Fund (CIF) was established by Bishop's Council in October 2018, to provide financial support to PCCs wishing to improve the facilities of their church buildings. The aim is to future-proof mission by making church buildings fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century mission and ministry. The fund has recently been expanded to include funding for net zero projects – these are works which will allow a church to enable and enhance mission and ministry, whilst implementing a demonstrable reduction in their carbon footprint,

There are two strands of the fund – Net Zero projects and Church Improvement projects. The application criteria and process are slightly different for the two strands.

#### **Church Improvement projects:**

- Up to 75% of the costs of improvements can be covered by the grant. Evidence is required of other funds being raised or monies being used from PCC reserves.
- Parishes may apply for a grant of up to £5000.

#### **Net Zero projects:**

- Up to 50% of the cost of the project can be covered by the grant. Evidence is required of other funds being raised or monies being used from PCC reserves.
- Parishes may apply for a grant of up to £25,000.
- Applicants will need to have submitted recent energy use data on the C of E's Energy Footprint Tool: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/policy-and-thinking/our-views/environment-and-climate-change/about-our-environment/energy-footprint-tool>).
- Applicants will need information about their current energy consumption and emission levels (from an energy audit or similar).
- Applicants will need to demonstrate communication and engagement with church members and their wider community about the project and about climate action, carbon reduction or renewable energy issues.
- Priority will be given to churches planning works within Section A of the [Practical Path to Net Zero Carbon guidelines](#). This is to enable the maximum number of churches to take the required steps towards achieving net zero carbon by 2030. See the flowchart at the end of this Application Guide for further details.

#### **The following principles apply to both Net Zero and Church Improvement applications:**

- Applications must demonstrate how any improvement of facilities will develop and grow ministry and mission.
- Applications must have the approval of the Area Dean, and must take into account the relevant Deanery Plan
- Grants will only be made where parish share has been paid in full for the previous two years, and are subject to an understanding that future parish shares will be paid in full.
- Grants are subject to faculty approval being in place, where this is required for the proposed works.
- Priority will be given to churches who have not received a CIF grant in the previous three years.
- Applications for projects that have already started will not be accepted, retrospective funding is not permitted.

## How to apply

### *Church Improvement Projects*

The application form is available from the diocesan website. Completed application forms should be sent to Jo Hands, Governance and Grants Officer at [jo.hands@coventry.anglican.org](mailto:jo.hands@coventry.anglican.org) who will confirm receipt.

### *Net Zero Projects*

Because of the technical complexities and the importance of selecting technologies that are best suited to the individual circumstances of each building, a two-stage application process is in place. Stage 1 is an expression of interest, Stage 2 is the full application. We will work with you to research and appraise projects, especially those involving renewable energy technology. We will aim to contact you within three weeks of confirmation of receipt to discuss your proposals in more detail and advise you whether to make a full stage 2 application.

Applications will be reviewed by a technical panel and recommendations made to the Diocesan Mission Fund Committee. The technical panel are advisory and decision-making remains with the DMFC and/or Bishop's Council (depending on the amount of grant applied for).

The DMFC consider CIF applications in April and September each year. Applications for Church Improvement projects should be submitted no later than 31 March and 31 August. Stage 2 applications for Net Zero projects should be submitted no later than 28 Feb and 31 July. Stage 1 expressions of interest for Net Zero projects may be submitted at any time.

## Help & advice

Peter Bemrose, the DAC heating adviser, can be consulted for advice on Net Zero projects: [peter@pbemrose.co.uk](mailto:peter@pbemrose.co.uk) Diocesan Mission Fund Committee members are available to help develop other proposals. If you are not sure whether your idea would qualify, please get in touch for advice. Please contact Jo Hands, Governance and Grants Officer, in the first instance.

## Applicants

Applications will only be accepted from parishes, benefices and deaneries. Where a parish is part of a multi-parish benefice, the application must come from the benefice as a whole, rather than the parish alone. Payment will only be made to a PCC bank account.

## Approval

Grants will be given at the discretion of the Diocesan Mission Fund Committee and/or Bishop's Council. The minimum grant which can be applied for is £100.

The process for considering applications will vary depending on the size of the application:

- **Grants up to £9,999.** Applications will be considered at the April and September meetings of the DMFC (at which the Archdeacon Pastor is present). Please refer to the grant funding page of the Diocesan website for the application deadline dates. On submitting your application you will be contacted by the Governance and Grants Officer who will confirm receipt.
- **Grants larger than £10,000 (up to £30,000 limit)** will be considered by the DMFC, as per the process above. The committee will make a recommendation to the Bishop's Council to approve or decline the application. If recommended the application will need approval from the Bishop's Council, who meet 4 times a year.

Please consider the timing of the approval process and factor that into your project schedule. Further details of Committee and Council meeting dates can be discussed with the Governance and Grants Officer.

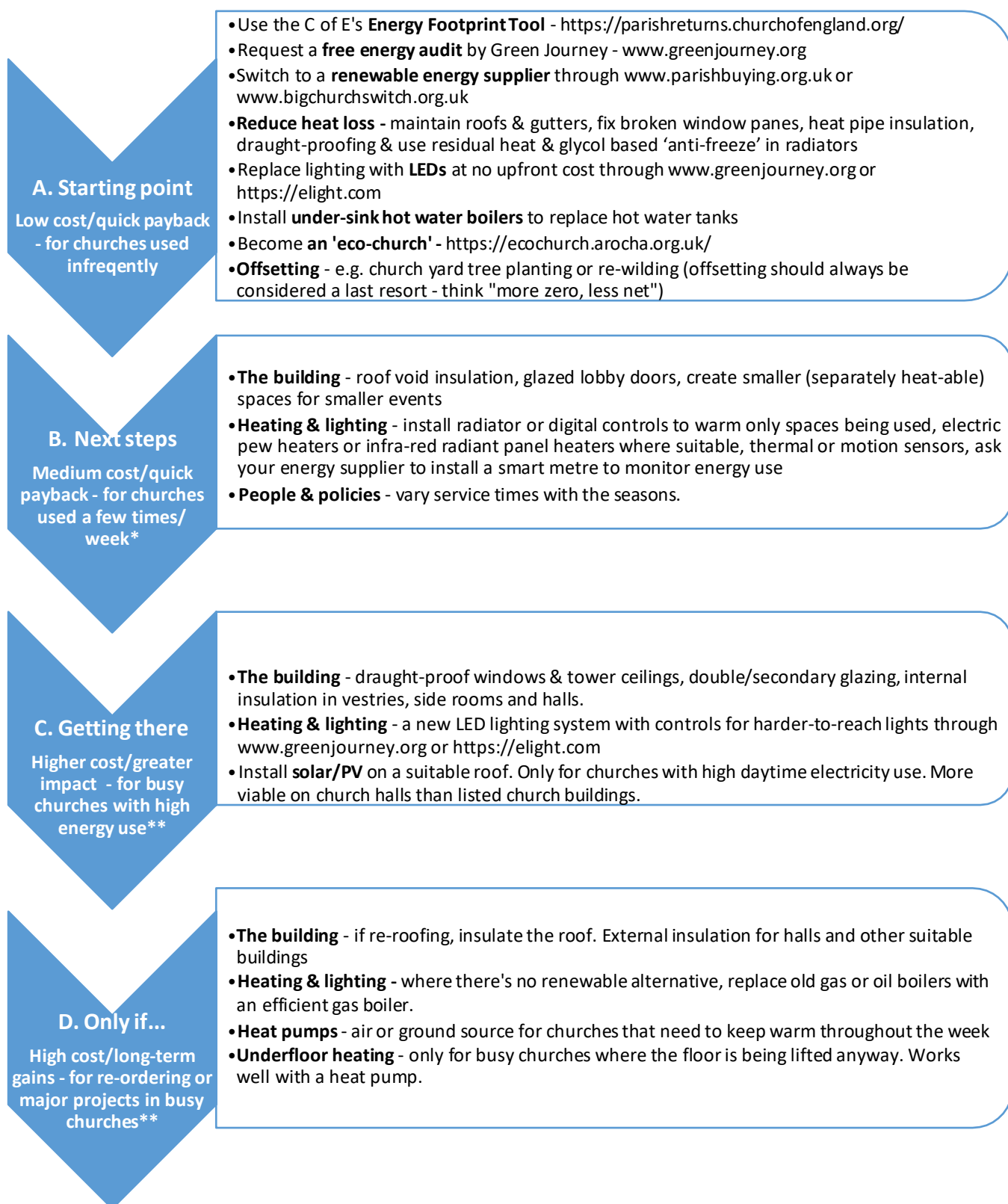
**Reporting back**

A condition of any grant will be that each initiative is expected to identify clear outcomes and to monitor, assess and report to the DMFC how these have been met. These reports will assist the committee in future deliberations and can help other churches as they pray and plan. The risk with new initiatives means that some are bound to fail - which is completely acceptable, as long as we learn from them. Once funds are drawn, if there is no report then the committee will contact you. If no report can be provided the committee may ask for the grant to be returned. For larger grants, tapered over time, various reports will be requested as an update on the process and continuation of the project for which the grant has been paid.

**Payment**

- Grants will only be paid into PCC bank accounts. No grants will be made to an individual, supplier or para-church organisation.
- No monies are paid until needed and surplus funds are to be paid back.
- If funds have not been drawn within a year after approval funds will be withdrawn and an application will have to be resubmitted.
- In the case of 'matching funding' applications, where this grant is a part of the finance needed, grants allocated will not be released until other funds have been committed.

## Net Zero Flowchart



\* Professional advice and DAC input may be required

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Adapted from CoE Practical Path to Net Zero: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/net-zero-carbon-church/practical-path-net-zero-carbon-churches>