

Organisation: DAC

Interviewee: MM Matthew McDade

Date: Tuesday, 20 October 2015

1. NW: This is an interview between Nigel Walter and Matthew McDade at the offices of Norwich Diocese on 20th October 2015. Thank you very much Matthew for agreeing to take part in this; this is part of the All is not Loss PhD project at the University of York. We've got this interview structure which will guide our discussion, but could you tell me briefly how you come to be doing what you're doing, and your interest in historic church buildings?
2. MM: How I come to be doing what I'm doing? It's not a planned career structure at all. I fell into it by accident. Whether that was providential or just bad luck on my part, I don't know. I'm a failed teacher – I didn't like teaching. When I came out of teaching I ended up working with the ministry training department of Lincoln Diocese, and for whatever reason was deemed to be an appropriate placement when the then DAC Secretary in Lincoln retired and I took over from that, did that for five years, and then moved to Evesham and Ipswich, and then Ely, and now Norwich. My interest in church buildings – I've always been a church crawler, as it were. Also, being a Christian, I take the role of both the church locally, universal, people, built fabric, as being very important and I have a love of the buildings but also not just the architecture and history of buildings, but the people who make up the church, who use these buildings for what they should be, as local centres of mission and ministry, which is foremost.
3. NW: Thank you. And in your role as DAC Secretary, how do you see that role, and what do you hope to achieve in it? You're a year into it, aren't you?
4. MM: Yes. A year into, yeah. Apart from being a statutory role, as you know every diocese needs somebody to act as DAC Secretary, I have a distinctive view which isn't necessarily shared by all of my counterparts throughout the Church of England, in that it's not purely an administrative role, as somebody who oils the wheels of the faculty process. It's actually far more hands on, which was one of the reasons that I got this job in Norwich, that they were looking for somebody who would be out there with parishes, actually go and visit them, offer them advice about what they can and can't do with their buildings, the art of the possible, as it were. So I see it very much as, to a lesser extent helping the legal process of obtaining permission go through, but to a greater extent being a friend, a critical friend sometimes, but a friend to parishes in enabling them to try and think more creatively and holistically about what they want their church to be.
5. NW: And perhaps how the people aspects and the building aspects interrelate; is that right?
6. MM: Absolutely, yes. There is always, as you know, the dichotomy... the balancing act, of what is the church building for. And it has a function. Now the form that the

church building takes necessarily could be quite important as well, but without the function the form is almost worthless. Otherwise we just have museums.

7. NW: So what do you hope to achieve in your role here in Norwich Diocese?
8. MM: I hope to help enable parishes to get the best out of their church buildings that is possible within the local context. To get it working as best for them as is possible within their financial remit, but also what is possible within the confines of the legislation.
9. NW: We'll come back to the place of the DAC within the process later on, but just to unpack a few of the themes that have come out of the interviews. Just to kick around the ideas, and see whether it matches your experience and whether you've got any suggestions really. So firstly, about process, there was a very strong feeling that it shouldn't be this difficult. Some churches have been able to embrace the process and get on with it. So for example Sue Shillam, who describes herself as a process person at Blofield, so she wasn't fazed by that. But she's more the exception than the rule. A lot of people commented about the time it takes, and a few comments ... some of the incumbents were aware that the faculty simplification was coming – but it didn't seem to make it any simpler. I don't know what your views are about the process for which you are one of the key players, in making that process work.
10. MM: I understand that some parishes can have frustrations certainly about the perception that process can take longer than it should do and can be rather onerous. Sometimes that is unjustified, sometimes as with every committee and every process, nothing is perfect, so the DAC doesn't every time get it right, is made up of people, can overlook things, sometimes can take longer than it should do for whatever reason. But I think the interesting thing is that most people who work with church buildings don't live in listed buildings, necessarily grade 1 or 2*. I should be surprised if any of the churchwardens in this diocese perhaps with the exception of the Earls of Holkham, or whoever lives in Holkham Hall, lives in a grade 1 listed building. So they have nothing actually to balance it against. And I think if they were looking to undertake major reorderings, partial demolition, extension of a grade 1 stately home, I think they would possibly have a different view about the perception that process under faculty is extremely difficult – because they have nothing to balance it against.
11. NW: So perhaps we could say that in a church taking on a building project, often there's an education process where they come to realise what it is that they're dealing with. Something that is very familiar to them, in a sense they need to look at with different eyes.
12. MM: Yes. I think often the case is that people are so familiar with their church it doesn't necessarily register that it's a grade 1 listed building, so it's nationally or internationally important. It's their church, and they're looking after it as best they can. Why would people want to stop them with their mission and ministry, what they perceive as being very exciting plans? Not necessarily understanding that any changes to a highly listed building, you've got to be very careful and sure of i)

what you need, and ii) how you're going to achieve that need [in a way that] has the least detrimental effect on the building itself. And as you know the DACs try and juggle this all the time, balancing mission and ministry with the historic fabric. And the perception or the DAC or the faculty process is putting obstacles in their way often is stronger than the realisation that the DAC and faculty process is there to try and protect as best they can the important historicity of our buildings, whilst allowing them to still be living buildings.

13. NW: Interestingly I can think of probably in the course of interviews with all of the churches, comments to the effect that we do need these checks and balances; if we were left to ourselves we might do some real damage, was one of the comments. So I think that at least with those churches all of which have, with whatever result, been quite a way down the process if not all the way through it, those five at least all understood the need for the process. They might have had criticisms of it, but nobody was proposing just that the church should be able to do what it likes.
14. MM: No. And it's good to hear that. Architect colleagues of mine have sometimes used the phrase – I won't use it because I think it's patronising, but I'll repeat it – people sometimes need to be saved from themselves. In the best way possible. One example, I know of a grade 1 church in Lincolnshire – I won't say which one – but in the 1970s a churchwarden, who was a well-meaning farmer, didn't have any idea about church buildings or fabric, took out the limestone floor, and filled the entire church with cement. Of course, 30 years later, it has enormous problems with damp wicking up the walls, and to take out the cement floor and repair the damage is going to cost hundreds of thousands of pounds. He did it with the best of intentions, but you know what they say about the road to hell... And this is one of the cases I use as to why we do need these checks and balances.
15. NW: In terms of people. People came across strongly as a category of discussion. Two things to that. One was people needed to make a project work, so the skills capacity within the church, and as I was saying before, some of the churches – in fact each of the churches that have successfully completed something, so Blofield, Wymondham and Holt – all had at the centre of the project somebody with enormous skills brought to them from the career from which they had retired. So active and highly skilled recently retired people who did a lot of the running of the project, in each case alongside the incumbent, so there's a people [and] skills capacity thing. And there's also people as the criterion by which the success of a project or the hope [CHECK] for a project would be judged by, because it would bring more people into the building, bring more people into contact with the church and into the kingdom of God; there were different ways in which it was expressed. One of the questions that I have about conservation as a whole outside the church, everywhere, is that there are different approaches to conservation. My question is always 'where do the people fit in?' Because a lot of conservation is treated as a technical task that doesn't actually need the people there at all. You rather suspect that for some people the people are rather an annoyance. Whereas for me, if a church is anything it's people, which doesn't

mean that the physical stuff isn't important, but the people are an essential ingredient in what makes it significant.

16. MM: Absolutely, yeah. And going back to my earlier point about function and form, church buildings in my view – and I'm pretty sure you would share this view – have a particular purpose. They exist to enable the people of God to meet out of the weather in what often are beautiful surroundings. So it's got a very strong functional element about it. I do know that other people think that churches should be almost preserved in aspic, and I have never been a believer in the theory that conservation is preservation. Conservation is not. Conservation includes adaptability and evolution, and the history of church buildings, as you well know, is a constant changeability. So the primary purpose of being, almost the *a priori* reason why church buildings exist is to provide the people of God with a meeting space. Arguably it could be discussed that architectural beauty isn't required. I think there is a whole debate about the aesthetics of architecture which on one level I think is a bit of red herring, because we have these buildings. Whether we would design them this way today or not is a moot point, but we have them, we have to work with them, as best we can, to enable the people of God to be the people of God in that location.
17. NW: Going back to the people in terms of skills capacity aspect of it, Sue Shillam was referring to – I can't remember the name of the group, was it Church Ambassadors?...
18. MM: Yes.
19. NW: ...as I understand it as a mechanism to try and share some of that skill around. Can you just outline how that works?
20. MM: I chair that group, and it is a group of roughly ten people...
21. NW: So that's 65 churches each!
22. MM: [Laughs] – Let's not go there – who provide to varying degrees of success the ability to work with parishes who are struggling with their church buildings on particular projects. Some are very active, some are less active.
23. NW: Some of the individuals?
24. MM: Yes, some of the individual ambassadors are very proactive and some are less active. With every volunteer, their time is limited, of course, and they're torn in different directions.
25. NW: And you said church projects; is it that in order to have involvement a church needs to have a specific project?
26. MM: There are no formal criteria for being involved with an ambassador. It's up to each individual church, if they would like to call an ambassador to help them, they get in touch with that person and say 'We're thinking about taking the pews out, or we're thinking about having an application made to the HLF – do you have time to come and help us?' It's on an ad hoc and as required basis.
27. NW: Sue was suggesting that it might be moving to a geographic base...

28. MM: We are actively considering how best to reconfigure both the membership and remit of the group. The current ambassadors tend to be in isolated geographic pockets, and we're looking at is there a way that won't put off volunteers of trying to spread the load and get more people from different localities to have a more even spread. It's a work in progress.
29. NW: Well it's good that there's a work at all. Another aspect that occurs to me in terms of the structures of the Church of England, deanery level, I wonder what can be achieved at deanery level. That might be a forum for sharing skills and knowledge of who to go to for some repointing or that sort of thing. I don't know if... Sue mentioned again that she had some sort of a spreadsheet that she had circulated within her deanery; I don't know whether you're aware of that?
30. MM: I have seen it, I can't remember what's in it, to be honest. Obviously you'll appreciate that some deaneries have larger populations than others, some have more priests than others, some have a higher socio-economic demographic than others. And it really depends, as always, on the ability and time of the people within each deanery. So some deaneries are more clued up than others.
31. NW: How many deaneries are there within the diocese?
32. MM: Good gracious me! 23 possibly – I've just made that up – I've got no idea. I've only been here a year so... [laughs]
33. NW: It'll be something 25–30 or something I imagine.
34. MM: It's quite big.
35. NW: The numbers of churches that you've got it will be about that.
36. MM: Yeah. It is one of the larger dioceses, both geographically, and it's second only to Oxford in terms of church buildings.
37. NW: Another theme that came out of it was time, both why does it always take so long – that aspect of time – but also I was struck by how... I think of it in terms of a broad view of history or a narrow view of history. By a narrow view of history I'm thinking of for example some of the amenity societies are focused on a specific period, so to take an example the Georgian Society is interested in a period that starts at date X, and inevitably as a result of that remit there's a focus more on the history as detached from the present, whereas the way in which folk were talking in the interviews with churches was very much in terms of seeing the history as continuous with the present, and indeed into the future. Jeremy Bell has a nice thing; he suggested the creation of a non-existent organisation called 'The Council for the Future of the Church' which would be able to provide a balance to all the forces within the process which are focusing on the past. And I think by implication he would say focusing on the past as detached from the present.
38. MM: That has good theological implications; let's not go there, either.
39. NW: Well, why not? [Laughs] And I think that one of the strengths of church communities, and that sets them apart from some of the folk who are having an input into... the gatekeeping role as to whether or not something is permissible, is that actually churches have a more nuanced view of history and time, a richer

view, and actually that's potentially a real gift to conservation and heritage as a whole, if that view could be given some credence.

40. MM: Sure. Going back to your point about – say for the Georgian Group hypothetically – is it 1720–1813?
41. NW: I think they probably stop at 1837, which is when the Victorian Society start...
42. MM: Is it, thank you. My monarchical history... Obviously they have a particular remit, and as I understand it, you'll know it better than I do, a lot of these groups were formed, certainly interwar and after the Second World War, with the rampant vandalism and demolition of many, many structures. Whether their remit has been coloured inadvertently by a lot of the past – you know the knocking down of the Euston Arch etc, the proposed demolition of the St Pancras Hotel – whether they've been burned by that and are just over-sensitive sometimes to changes to what they view as their period, I think is a debatable point actually.
43. NW: Do you think they are more balanced, or do you think that they are...
44. MM: They try to be as fair as they can, given the brief that they have, if that makes sense. The DAC and other groups don't always necessarily agree with their recommendations, but we fully understand why they are making their recommendations and where they are coming from. And of course they don't have the same remit as the DAC and the Faculty Jurisdiction, so they're looking at things much more from the preservation of the built fabric, of the historical importance of particular buildings or features. And they don't need necessarily to take into account the living role of the church as a centre of mission and ministry. That's not what they're about, so I don't think they can be blamed – not that you are – but I don't think they can be blamed for taking their remit and running with it.
45. NW: Though again as Jeremy Bell pointed out, section 1 of the 1991 Measure explicitly frames the whole enterprise within the context the local church as the local centre of...
46. MM: They 'should have due regard'...
47. NW: Yes.
48. MM: Absolutely, first paragraph, yes.
49. NW: Moving on from that, there was also a question which we have already wandered into of language, which is not surprising but it was quite a prominent finding, if you like, which was that the way in which people in the church talk about their building is often in theological terms. They will go very, very easily from questions of the layout of the church, pews or whatever, to something about... possibly straight into Scripture, or into theology in some sort of expression. So there's a multi-layered thing going on for folk within the church, and indeed some comments from the interviews, people were saying that they felt that representatives who were being consulted of various organisations were only interested in the physical stuff and they didn't understand what the church was about; they wouldn't enter into that discussion, in terms of worship and mission. I wonder, the DAC's presumably more comfortable talking in those terms, because it's part of your

remit, do you think it's justified to expect, for example the Victorian Society, to be able to engage on those terms, or not?

50. MM: I don't expect the Victorian Society to be comprised of theologians but, and I've had this argument previously with an architect on a DAC – I won't say which one – I think that unless one has an understanding of theology then one really shouldn't be working with church buildings, because you're not understanding what you're working with. It's fine being able to say 'That transom is particularly fine' or 'the pinnacles are wonderful' and come up with lots of wonderful architectural speak without having any realisation of what the building *is*, and *is for*. I think that's crucial. So I would expect there to be at worst a basic understanding of the theology of what's going on with a church building, and I hope that it would be wider than that.
51. NW: Another of the comments that came out of the interviews – and this I think was Henry Freeland, I think it came up a couple of times – a sort of fear really for some of the amenity societies, that there was perceived to be a difference between Historic England and some of the amenity societies which had moved on and had a more nuanced approach to heritage let's say, and others that were in danger of being left behind. And therefore he was lamenting the fact that they might paint themselves into a corner of irrelevance.
52. MM: Almost being a one trick pony, as it were.
53. NW: Yes, yes, and indeed another comment out of the interviews was the amenity societies tend to be a one-dimensional argument. Another comment was around [the view that] only the church steering group for the project was able to hold together the whole vision, and everybody else was looking at little bits of it. I don't know whether that rings true for you?
54. MM: That's interesting. I have diverse experience of working with what was then English Heritage – now Historic England – and the various national amenity societies. I think so much of it is down to the person you are actually dealing with. I was with the director of Vic Soc and SPAB on Thursday of last week; it was very interesting, it was the annual AABC conference, which I managed to gatecrash, and I think if you asked the various national amenity societies themselves what they saw their remit as, they would include actually a holistic approach to the building. I'm pretty sure they wouldn't necessarily see that they sometimes can be perceived as having tunnel vision: 'This is Victorian and can't be changed; this is Georgian and you can't mess with that.' So I think, rightly or wrongly, their perception of how they operate with parishes isn't always shared by the parish's perception of how they interact.
55. NW: Is that a difference between the organisation's leadership and those on the ground who are implementing it, with whom the parishes...
56. MM: Yeah. Certainly my ... Are we including English Heritage / Historic England in this, or more of the national amenity societies?
57. NW: Potentially it applies across the board, but certainly from the interviews... so perhaps across the board.

58. MM: I have had much more dealings with various people from English Heritage in different regions; I think I've dealt with probably about six or seven different case officers over the years, and some of them actually are more flexible than others. So I do think it does come down to personality. Whether they're necessarily trying to reflect a top down ethos or not, I don't know, actually. I think it's probably more [that] it depends on **where their knowledge and interests lie** as to what they view as more or less important. And with the national amenity societies, I don't know the hierarchy who set their agenda well enough to be able to comment on that one, but again I think it does come down to personality. And certainly I won't mention which society, but there has been one in the past which has come in for particular criticism from parishes, and the old joke is, you approach them and they say 'The answer's "No", now what is the question?' And that sometimes that does come down to the case officer being told actually that either his or her remit is this, and this is what they need to do. So in one sense that could be a criticism.
59. NW: Moving on to wider reflections on the process, if we may, from your experience of working with churches in previous dioceses as well as this one, what essential skills would you identify for a church to have in order to successfully see through a project for change?
60. MM: Hypothetically these are the people within the church, whether it's the wider community or whether they delegated it... That's a very interesting question, and I think there are a number of different answers to that, and I think they all play a part. I think empathy for each other and their needs, and the needs of the church building itself is important. I think clarity of thought is important. So often I visit parishes and they say 'This is what we'd like', and sometimes they come up with things and you think where on earth does that come from; do you really want that? And it's what they want, it's not what they need. And they don't always see the difference between wish list and a needs list. It does help that if you've got at least one person with vision and drive and wanting to achieve something driving a project from a parish; it's often not the parish priest, because they are just absolutely overworked, and some of them to be honest don't actually have an interest in buildings anyway, so are quite prepared to delegate it to somebody in the congregation. I think where churches fail either with any kind of thinking about where they are or where they want to be, or with projects that get so far and then get stopped, is a lack of leadership. Not necessarily by the priest; there's not somebody on the ground who can really run with this. So I'm you will have experienced this as well: a lot of the really big projects that are either going through or get through are in places where to be frank it's middle class, or you have retired professionals. Because that's where the skills are.
61. NW: The skills that can be brought into a project.
62. MM: Yeah. That can juggle the various different aspects of appointing an architect or surveyor, getting the brief right, knowing how to negotiate the process, getting the money; all of this is intertwined, and it takes a certain kind of character to juggle all of those things.

63. NW: Or indeed something as simple as having a reasonably equal relationship with your architect or whoever, that comes, I think, from having a professional background yourself. Do you think that those skills... It's the nature and nurture thing. Do you think those skills can be developed in churches...?
64. MM: Absolutely. I wasn't born a DAC Secretary, I learned it as I did it.
65. NW: Do you see that as part of your remit, to try and develop that capacity, or is that...
66. MM: Absolutely, part of my remit, and actually part of the remit in the 1991 FJM, is that DAC Secretaries should be a point of education for parishes in dealing with their church buildings. I take that very seriously. I have been doing this for so long, it has become second nature really. But I'm aware that it is a very specialised area. And whether you're a Christian, and whether you've been going to church for 20 years or not, before I started working for the Diocese of Lincoln I had never heard of a DAC, and I'd been going to church forever, basically. So I see it very much that the role of those who are paid for by the parishes to help them with their church buildings should help them with their church buildings..
67. NW: Thinking about the process as a whole, do you think it's a process that can be relied upon to... [INTERRUPTION] ... to produce good results, or do the good results come out in spite of the process, or is it somewhere in between.
68. MM: Define 'good results'.
69. NW: Well, a successfully completed project that changes a historic building, and perhaps I would add the criterion that it has brought the community along with it.
70. MM: I think a process, and I would include the legal process which is necessary, you will never have the perfect process. I think what we have is arguably the best that we will get. I think it is a tango between the parish and the DAC/Chancellors/architects, that there's got to be an understanding on both sides in order to get the dance steps right. And some DACs are better than others. I'm absolutely certain that every DAC tries its best to be as helpful as possible, usually, but the DAC is only as good as the people who are on it, and nobody's perfect. And DACs do sometimes make mistakes, and parishes are sometimes frustrated. And parishes sometimes make mistakes, and [that] frustrates the DAC. So I think ideally DAC/parish should be symbiotic.
71. NW: We obviously have the DAC quite central to this process, and we have some external inputs if you like from, for example the amenity societies, Historic England, Church Buildings Council etc; what is the best way of managing those? I'm thinking for example at Wymondham Mike Halls talking about Henry Freeland getting a big meeting together at the outset of the project, and in Mike Halls' view that was key to it subsequently succeeding, because everybody had been included from the outset. Is that the best model do you think?
72. MM: I think with such a large project like Wymondham I think that's a very good way forward, and in fact I've got a similar situation with a very large proposed internal reordering or possible extension on St Margaret's Kings Lynn Minster, grade 1, 15th largest church in the country. And I've got a site visit there where the entire DAC, plus CBC, plus Historic England, plus SPAB are all going to turn up at once,

because it's such a large and possibly controversial scheme, if you don't get that initial discussion at the beginning, then it can just go on and on and on forever. And I think Wymondham had been going on for about 11 years.

73. NW: Yes, and prior to that.
74. MM: Yes.
75. NW: So for smaller scale, for more typical parish church ...
76. MM: Yes, who want a lavatory in the tower and a servery in the west end of the north aisle...
77. NW: ... how would you suggest, if a parish rings up and asks you, how would you suggest they deal with the amenity societies etc?
78. MM: Not taking into account any particular cases, but say Great Moaning in the Marsh, grade 1 listed building, they want to put a lavatory in the tower, servery at the north aisle, take out a couple of pews at the back. Because it's grade 1 they will have to involve Historic England at some point, and let's say for point of argument that the interior is medieval. So I would strongly encourage them to talk to Historic England and SPAB. If it was a grade 2, I would look at the proposals, because I know that Historic England and the other national amenity societies are much less concerned about works to grade 2 than they are to grade 1 and grade 2*. I think if we can initiate a conversation early between the various interested parties, that lessens the likelihood of the parties misunderstanding what the others are saying and providing conflicting feedback to parishes which can just kill a project, because the parish thinks 'Historic England say one thing...'. I've actually had a case in Ely Diocese where the DAC said one thing, SPAB said another, CBC said something else, and Historic England said something completely different. And none of them can agree, and that's just killed the project. Sorry, a long answer.
79. NW: No, that's helpful. So within the process, we have, it seems to me, the DAC in the centre, and these external inputs. Is the balance right, do you think, between the weight that the DAC has within the process and those outside?
80. MM: I think it would depend partly on the view of the chancellor. As we are all individuals, as are chancellors, who will have different views of weighting. If you view the DAC as being the equivalent to the planning officer, advising the planning committee, which is the chancellor – I think that's quite a useful way of viewing it – somebody has to be the statutory committee in the middle being fed into by the other two statutory committees, certainly for grade 1 and grade 2*, CBC and Historic England, whether the chancellor weights the views of DAC equally with the other two statutory bodies and then the national amenity societies is not something I can comment on. But certainly the DAC has a strong voice, but should best practice take into consideration any comments from the other societies before coming up with a recommendation itself.
81. NW: Do think that the DAC – as a generality, not thinking of this one, which I don't know anyway – but as a general thing do you think the DACs have sufficient capacity, in terms of skills capacity to draw on to fulfil the role they need to?

82. MM: In my experience of the four dioceses I've worked with DACs in, yes. There will I'm sure be other DACs in other parts of the country that, if you asked the secretary, might say, actually 'No'. I've been very lucky in working with DACs who have been served by large [number of] dedicated, professional, knowledgeable people, with a very wide variety of experience. There will always be gaps, so in some DACs they have nobody who is an expert in organs, or clocks, or heating, or lighting – lighting is a particularly big and difficult one – and often the architects and other members of DACs don't feel sufficiently expert to comment on particular parts of a scheme, such as a new lighting scheme, or a new heating scheme. And that varies from diocese to diocese. There are gaps in some of the areas covered by this DAC, that are not gaps in other DACs. And vice versa: they have gaps that we don't have.
83. NW: Is there any sharing; I mean there's the [annual] DAC Conference.
84. MM: Yeah, there is some sharing. But the two issues with sharing are that firstly the geographical location of advisors, if you've got say hypothetically we've got a heating advisor in Kings Lynn, that's an awfully long way from Cambridgeshire. Are they going to go and advise Ely Diocese, or the deep south of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich? So you've got the geographical limitations. And also, a lot of these people are not necessarily retired, so they are still working, and their capacity to offer advice to one DAC, let alone more than one, can be compromised anyway.
85. NW: So by the sound of it the gaps, if there are any, are around the periphery rather than around the central stuff. So one could expect a DAC to have the church bits covered and the architect bits covered...
86. MM: Yeah, the theology will be covered, because every DAC should have clergy members, it will certainly have the archdeacons on, and if they don't know theology then they shouldn't be archdeacons anyway. And in my experience the architectural side is also quite healthily covered in the four that I've worked with.
87. NW: But perhaps not for example the heating and lighting, the services, always.
88. MM: Yeah.
89. NW: We've talked about the language which is used, and churches talking in terms of theological categories, and others not doing so at all. The Historic England conservation guidance, principles etc has the fourfold values structure, within which there are sub-values, the implication of which is that the communal stuff is on an equal level, top rate billing [along with] the architectural, the historical, the evidential. I was struck in terms of the project correspondence on these five projects that I don't think anybody in that correspondence mentions the word 'value' at all. Which is interesting. So there's a question about how much Historic England themselves, and the process as a whole, has taken any notice actually of the guidance. But I wonder, leaving that aside, whether the – we'll call it the theological/communal/spiritual bit – actually gets much of a look in in the process, in the process of determining whether or not proposal X is acceptable.
90. MM: It should do, if DACs certainly adhering to FJM '91 then that must be of as high an importance as maintaining the historical value of our church buildings. As we said

before, those involved with church buildings must have due regard for it as a local centre of mission and ministry; the first thing it says in the '91 Measure. So DACs should. Historic England and other societies, I think they try, they try and understand with, depending on the individual involved, varying degrees of success. Obviously the Church Building Council should also take that as one of the two major considerations.

91. NW: Certainly that's the way they pitch themselves, or introduce themselves, in my experience of meetings. And then looking across the piece as it were, if you could change anything about the process, blue sky thinking, unconstrained. For example, would it be better if the DAC had a greater weight put on [its advice], so that the DAC becomes the forum at which everything is decided; not quite that far, perhaps, but...
92. MM: At the top of my wish list – actually perhaps I should rephrase that – at the top of my needs list would be that every member of a DAC has a good theological grasp of the nature of the architecture which they're dealing with. So it's not just beautiful buildings, it's about the community of God. And from experience I know that some members of DACs struggle with theology, and have a more preservation agenda than the proper understanding of what conservation is.
93. NW: Which of course English Heritage defines as the management of change.
94. MM: Yeah, yeah.
95. NW: ...a healthy and helpful definition.
96. MM: Yeah. And as you know, in the history of architecture the only constant is change.
97. NW: Hmm. And particularly with these wonderful old buildings that we've got.
98. MM: Absolutely.