Minor Repairs and Improvements (MR&I) Application Guide

The Diocese of Winchester has secured a small pot of grant funding from the Church of England's Minor Repairs and Improvements (MR&I) Grant Fund.

Applications can be submitted by parishes for projects totalling up to £25,000 that focus on urgent repairs and small-scale improvements which are essential to sustaining worship and mission. Amounts awarded will be based on deprivation and other factors.

This project aims to give priority to areas which lack access to support for Church of England church buildings. It also aims to address need and therefore, churches in areas of demonstrable need will be prioritised.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible buildings

Church of England consecrated church buildings and licensed places of worship. The 'building' extends to its below-ground drainage system, foundations and immediate curtilage. For the purpose of certain works (detailed below), the 'building' may also extend to the boundary walls, railings and fences of the churchyard or curtilage; to the gates providing access to the churchyard or curtilage; and to the paths providing access through the churchyard or curtilage to the church.

Ineligible buildings

Cathedrals; churches and chapels which are the responsibility of private owners or institutions; non-Anglican places of worship; closed and closing churches. Church or parish halls and other buildings or structures in the churchyard or curtilage except those defined under Eligible buildings above.

Eligible work: Minor Repairs

- Repair of the building fabric and its permanent building services installations, defined as follows:
- Roof structure and coverings - slates, tiles, shingles, lead flats etc and the wooden or metal structure supporting them;
- Rainwater goods including below-ground drainage - ie the whole system for disposing of surface water, including gutters, spouts, hoppers, drainpipes, gullies, surface channels, drains and soakaways;
- Masonry and foundations – walls, parapets, buttresses, towers and stone or brick spires;
- Architectural features and decoration – pinnacles, bellcotes, fleches and spires (where constructed of timber and/or metal) and other architectural features; external decoration eg limewashing and paintwork;
- Doors and windows (surrounds, tracery, plain window glass) - external doors including the masonry, wood or metal fabric of the opening/surround/frame as well as the door itself; windows, including the masonry, wood or metal fabric of the opening/surround/frame, tracery and ferramenta and plain window glass (clear or

coloured plate glass and leaded lights but not stained or painted glass);

- Boundary walls, railings and fences; gates and paths - boundary walls, railings, fences and other non-vegetation boundary markers of the churchyard or curtilage; gates providing access to the churchyard or curtilage or within it; paths providing access through the churchyard or curtilage to the church
- Internal building fabric - ceilings, floors, internal doors, walls and wall linings (plaster/panelling but not wall paintings, mosaics etc)
- Building services installations - electrical wiring; gas, oil and water pipework; audio-visual system cabling and permanent fixtures, and the lightning conductor

To be eligible, any such work must be recommended in the most recent QI report (or subsequent professional report or condition survey etc). Work classified as urgent (either category 1 – urgent, requiring immediate attention, 2 – requires attention within 12 months, or 3 – requires attention within the next 12-24 months) should take priority, but any work required within the quinquennium is eligible. Works of differing urgency within that definition may be undertaken together for the sake of efficiency and economy, especially where 'stitch in time' repairs can save money in the long term.

Eligible work: Improvements

Improvements to the building fabric and its permanent building services installations, where essential to sustain worship and mission use, defined as follows:

- Additions, alterations or adaptations to overcome building design defects or to improve access for maintenance – eg replacement of undersized hoppers or drainpipes or installation of fixed ladders at high level for maintenance/inspection access
- Additions, alterations or adaptations to improve physical access for users and visitors – eg handrails, ramps etc; the objective of such work should be to achieve equal access rather than an arbitrary improvement; for guidance see Equal Access to Church Buildings, available at: https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/accessibility
- Improvements to building services installations - such as improvements to heating, lighting, wiring, kitchens, WCs, audiovisual systems. Where necessary, this might include the installation or upgrading of supply infrastructure, including pipework or cabling from the nearest suitable connection, eg to provide a three-phase electricity supply

New installations or improvements to existing installations for digital connectivity - whether through a wired connection or 4G/5G mobile Wi-Fi; Bat mitigation measures - including relevant ecologists' fees and production of a bat management plan where necessary, where the impact of bats is a barrier to worship and mission use. A one-off deep clean may be an eligible cost as part of a mitigation plan.

Other eligible costs

Necessary costs incurred with an associated eligible repair or improvement:

- Contractors' preliminaries
- Scaffolding and other essential access costs
- Professional fees to design, specify, inspect and certify the repair or improvement work
- VAT – unless a zero rate is available. For guidance, see Understanding VAT Zero-Rating for Church Works, available at:

  https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/understanding-vat-zero-rating-church-works

  Where a reduced rate is applicable, the amount of VAT payable (and not recoverable) would be eligible for grant.

Professional fees for standalone investigative reports for repairs – eg fees for investigation, survey, design or specification aimed at repair work. To be eligible, the repair work envisaged must itself be eligible for the MR&I Grants Fund, even if the likely cost of that future work may potentially be above the project cost threshold. NB in cases where the cost of such preparatory work could be included in the development phase of a major project eligible for grant from a large-scale funder such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund, such requests should take that route for funding rather than MR&I;

Professional fees for standalone project development for improvements – as above, the improvement envisaged must itself be eligible for the MR&I Grants Fund; Ecologist's fees to prepare a bat management plan.

Ineligible work

- Routine maintenance, as set out in the Calendar of Care, available at: https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/building-maintenance-and-repair
- Routine cleaning. If the increased cleaning burden is due to bats, this may be eligible for a Living Alongside Bats in Churches grant, see: https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/bats-and-churches/living-alongside-bats-in-churches-grant
- Routine inspection (Quinquennial Inspections, periodic inspection and testing of electrical installations, appliance testing, gas safety checks, etc)
- Routine servicing of building services installations
- New or replacement fossil fuel appliances
- Works, including conservation reports, professional fees and VAT, for furnishings, such as bells and bell frames, books and manuscripts, church plate, clocks, monumental brasses and decorative metalwork, monuments, organs, paintings and wall paintings, stained or painted glass, textiles and wooden objects. These may qualify for the grants administered by the Archbishops' Council for historic church interiors and churchyard structures: see https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/our-conservation-grants/grants-historic-church-interiors-and-churchyard-structures#na

- Works, including conservation reports, professional fees and VAT, for structures such as tombs, monuments, grave markers, churchyard crosses and other buildings in the immediate vicinity of the church or in the wider churchyard or curtilage. These may qualify for the grants administered by the Archbishops' Council for historic church interiors and churchyard structures: see https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/our-conservation-grants/grants-historic-church-interiors-and-churchyard-structures#na
- Soft landscape repair, maintenance, tree surgery and pruning, grass-cutting and other gardening work
- Any work covered by insurance

How to Apply

Parishes can apply using the form on our website, found here: https://winchesterdiocese.org/parish-resources/dac-and-church-buildings/minor-repairs-and-improvements-grant/

It is essential to have had a conversation with the Church Buildings Team to apply for this grant:

Libby Davis – libby.davis@winchesterdiocese.org

Richard Streatfield – Richard.streatfield@winchesterdiocese.org

Grants will be awarded upon completion of the works, by the Diocese from monies provided by the national church. Projects must be completed within 12 months.