



Provincial financial support for works to church buildings (other than rectories and housing)

Building Grants Fund and Building Loans Fund Guidance Notes

The Building Grants Group administers a number of provincial grant and loan funds. It aims to support charges in their care and maintenance of church buildings. It has a responsibility to ensure that provincial financial resources are directed towards assisting in the maintenance and development of buildings that will continue to be used by the Scottish Episcopal Church. Dioceses are therefore specifically required to consider and comment on the ongoing requirement for a building as part of their review of the application.

To assist the Group in fulfilling its aim charges and dioceses must ensure that application forms are properly completed and authorised and that all supporting documentation is submitted with the application. If you think that a document or photograph will assist the Group in its understanding of the proposed works and your need for financial support, please include it with the application.

Please read the guidance below before completing an application form.

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Please consult with your Diocese before undertaking any works that are likely to require Provincial financial assistance.

All applications must be reviewed by a member of the Provincial Net Zero Team.

Notes on completion of application

- 1 Grants and loans may be made from Provincial Funds for building costs relating to churches and church halls. The works concerned may be new building (including purchase of land or property), renovation or repairs of a major or emergency nature. Routine maintenance is the responsibility of the diocese or congregation concerned.

Quinquennial Inspections are an essential routine requirement for all buildings and adequate provision should be made to meet the costs of such Inspections. Grants will therefore not normally be given towards the cost of Quinquennial Inspections. Attention is drawn to the requirements in the Digest of Resolutions for Quinquennial Inspections.

Grants will not be given towards works costing less than £1,500. Consideration will however be given to providing grants for professional advice costing less than £1,500 incurred in the planning or scoping of works. Grants will only be awarded

towards decoration where such works are required as a consequence of other grant assisted repairs.

2 The Building Grants Group administers the Building Grants Fund and the Building Loans Fund on behalf of the Administration Board:

Building Grants Fund

There is no fixed limit to grants but they will be subject to the availability of cash and will not normally exceed 50% of the total cost. The Building Grants Group will consider applications at each of its meetings and will seek to allocate funds to both small and large projects – with a preference to providing a larger number small grants rather than a smaller number of large grants. The total available to distribute each year for general works is in the region of £280,000. (Assistance can normally be given only on property that is wholly church owned.)

'Net Zero' grants

Additional funding is also being made available through the Building Grants Fund to specifically support charges undertaking works to church buildings to improve their energy efficiency and reduce their carbon footprint. The costs of such 'Net Zero' works need to be separately detailed on the application form.

Any works that are designed to improve energy efficiency or reduce a property's carbon footprint should be considered to be 'net zero' works.

Examples of such works include:

- Insulation
- Replacement windows and doors
- Secondary glazing
- Energy efficient heating systems (including air source / ground source heat pumps)
- Solar panels
- Radiant heating

Building Loans Fund

Applications for loans can be submitted to any meeting but those which require urgent action can be considered between meetings if required. Loans are made for a maximum period of 5 years, except in very exceptional circumstances. Interest is payable half-yearly. Repayment of principal is expected in equal annual instalments. Alternatively, repayment of the loan in fixed monthly instalments over the duration of the loan is possible. Consideration will also be given to shorter term loans to assist in funding project costs prior to receipt of agreed grants from other grant making bodies. The interest rate is regularly reviewed by the Administration Board. It is currently (March 2025) 3%. Detail of rates are available from the Chief Financial Officer at the General Synod Office.

Dioceses are required to consider and support all loan applications, and to be accountable for monitoring and guaranteeing repayments. (Loans will normally only be given on property that is wholly church owned.)

3 Procedures

- a) Any congregation considering works that are likely to require Provincial financial assistance **must contact the Diocese as early as possible** in the process to seek its guidance and to agree the extent to which diocesan involvement in the process will be required and the relevant diocesan timetable for consideration of applications prior to their submission to the Building Grants Group. If relevant the Diocese will ensure that a member of the Provincial Net Zero Team is allocated to assist in scoping the works and completion of appropriate funding applications to other agencies.
- b) Dioceses or congregations seeking grants and/or loans should complete the application form and submit it, with supporting papers, to the appropriate diocesan committee. Applicants are reminded of the need to consider other sources of funding in addition to provincial grants and loans. (A list of possible funding sources is available on the SEC website: www.scotland.anglican.org/vestry-resources/buildings/sources-of-funding-for-repairs-and-improvements-to-church-buildings). Details of any unsuccessful applications should be provided with the application.
- c) Photographs of the building must be submitted to assist the Building Grants Group in its consideration of the application. It would be helpful to have recent general exterior and interior views of the building together with more specific photographs identifying the need for repair or the issue / area that proposed works will impact.
- d) **Dioceses are required to subject all applications to a detailed review.** A member of the Provincial Net Zero Team should be included in the review process. Any applications gaining diocesan approval should be submitted to the General Synod Office with a covering **Letter of Support** explaining the nature of the review undertaken and detailing the diocese's endorsement. (In the case of a loan application the Diocese should also confirm it is willing to underwrite the loan.) The Letter of Support should detail any issues or concerns raised by the Diocese in relation to the proposed works during its review and how they were resolved. Issues that the dioceses should consider in their review include:
 - Is the charge viable?
 - Is there an ongoing need for the building?
 - Is ongoing support of the charge and building envisaged in the Diocesan mission plan / strategy?
 - A comment on the funds raised from external sources for the works and confirmation that all appropriate funders have been approached.
 - Review of Quinquennial Inspection and confirmation that required works are being attended to.
 - Review of quotations submitted with application and comment on suitability of preferred contractors for the work. If fewer than three quotations provided comment on explanation provided by congregation.
 - Review of accounts and comment on financial position of the congregation to fund the proposed works and, in the case of a loan application, ability to fund interest and capital repayments. If the

congregation's investments are large in comparison with its income (investments greater than twice annual income) an explanation as to why a provincial grant is thought to be appropriate.

- A comment on the congregation's ability to manage and fund future building repairs.
- Consideration of any impact funding the works might have on the congregation's ability to continue to pay stipend and related costs.
- If a grant application is for more than 50% of the costs of the proposed works, what are the circumstances that merit the application being submitted to the Building Grants Group.

Supporting documentation must be submitted with the application to the General Synod Office. (Documentation should be submitted electronically.)

- e) Applications **must** be received by the General Synod Office at least **3 weeks** before the next meeting at which they are to be discussed. The Building Grants Group will generally meet four times a year:
- February / March
 - May / June
 - September
 - December

Dioceses will be advised of actual meeting dates in the Autumn of the preceding year. Potential applicants are advised to contact their Diocesan Office to ascertain the deadlines for submission of applications to the Diocese for its consideration.

- f) The Chief Financial Officer will inform applicants of the Group's decisions as soon as possible after the Group's meeting. Diocesan offices will also be advised of the Group's decision.
- g) Grants and loans will be earmarked for a maximum period of three years, subject to annual review.

Amended April 2025