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A conservation management plan is a useful tool for recognising and reconciling tensions that may come up between the necessary life of the worshipping community and the significance of the place.

It helps the church and its community to rise above these tensions in order to develop and grow.

Conservation management plans are likely to be especially useful to major churches and cathedrals.

Download our guidance



Why do you need a CMP and who is it for?

Some churches are so complex and significant that a statement of significance and needs is not adequate.

Some projects will have a very large impact on the building or are quite controversial.

If this is the case, you should consider putting together a CMP for:

- Applications for permissions (e.g. faculty, planning permission, listed building consent, scheduled monument consent, etc.)
- Applications for grants to assist with the care, conservation and development of your church and churchyard
- The management of your church: to make sure its values and significance are maintained and enhanced; to avoid damage and potentially expensive mistakes

What does a CMP do?

A conservation management plan helps you:

- Understand the church building and site and its use by the community
- Assess its significance
- Identify potential and constraints
- Develop management policies

What to include in your CMP?

A conservation management plan is a straightforward document. It should be done within a reasonable budget and time span.

It is not a major piece of original scholarly research. It is an attempt to synthesise the available information in the context of current knowledge and best practice.

A CMP is between 10,000-30,000 words (copiously illustrated) and is made up of the following parts:

Preliminaries and introduction

This section includes:

- A list of contents and illustrations
- A message that you have formally adopted the CMP and are committed to using it
- A short summary of key points
- An introduction that explains who has written the CMP, when, why and for what purpose

Understanding the place and community

This section includes:

- The location and setting of the church (i.e. spatial, environmental, social, archaeological and historical context)
- The primary mission and role of the church
- The various activities that take place inside
- How people interact with the church (now and in the past)
- The history and archaeology of the building and site
- The church and site as it is today

Include maps, plans, and photographs.

Assessment of significance

You need to articulate the various levels of significance of your church and churchyard.

Significance is a hierarchical concept, using ascending levels of value. They are:

- Exceptional – important at national to international levels
- Considerable – important at regional level or sometimes higher
- Some - of regional significance for group or other value (e.g. a vernacular architectural feature)
- Local - of local value
- Negative or intrusive feature (i.e. those which actually detract from the value of a site)

Remember that a lower significance does not imply that a feature is expendable. And significance can change the moment new information becomes available.

Organise your assessment by giving:

- A summary of the formal designations (e.g. listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, conservation areas, sites of special scientific interests, tree preservation orders, etc.)
- A detailed breakdown of what is of significance (e.g. fabric, contents, landscape, archaeology, etc.)

Remember that understanding the significance of the building and the site is the whole basis of the process and should influence everything else. This means that practical decisions take the values of the place as their starting point.

There are likely to be real conflicts between different values or types of significance; part of the skill of managing a major church lies in reconciling such conflicts.

The more explicitly values are articulated, the easier it is to recognise – and reconcile – potential conflicts.

Defining potential and constraints

This section describes all the issues that impact the significance of your church and churchyard in a positive or negative way (e.g. radical reordering proposal, new regulations on access for people with disabilities, or on energy conservation).

It includes:

- Issues affecting the church, its context and contents (e.g. structural problems, lack of resources, patterns of worship, new legal requirements, etc.)
- Potential for enhancing the church and its significance
- An exploration of the potential areas of conflict
- An impact assessment

Conservation and management policies

This section sets out the policies that you have identified as necessary for keeping and enhancing the significance of your church taking the constraints into account.

They should be general to the place as a whole. And specific to particular areas.

They could include general (not day-to-day) policies on:

- Use, maintenance and repair
- Access
- New services and new work
- Health and safety
- Community consultation and planning
- Archaeology and ecology
- Visitor management

They could also include specific guidelines about how the values should be kept or enhanced:

- Disaster management plan
- Disability audit
- Sustainable management policies
- CMP review procedure (e.g. at the same time as your quinquennial inspection)

Contact your diocese for advice

Sources

This section will provide details of the main texts, collections and institutions where people can find the relevant information and material referred to or supporting the CMP.

Appendices

To keep your conservation management plan a reasonable length, include in appendices or make references to materials such as:

- The Arts Society reports on furnishings and fittings
- Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England reports (or other)
- Detailed fabric records
- Architect’s plans from the Incorporated Church Building Society collection
- Archival materials
- Scholarly discussions
- Suggested areas of future research

In these ways, it should be possible to avoid the CMP expanding and becoming unmanageable, expensive and potentially unusable.

Make it happen

Follow our step-by-step guide on how to make a conservation management plan happen.

Identify possible partners

From the beginning, and with the help of your diocese and the Church Buildings Council, think about possible partnerships in compiling a conservation management plan.

Consult:

- Your architect
- Local planning authority staff (e.g. conservation officer)
- Neighbouring landowners or stakeholders
- Statutory bodies (e.g. Historic England, Natural England, etc)
- National amenity societies
- Community groups
- Conservation area advisory committees
- Local societies
- And specialist groups or individuals

Appoint the right people

Once you've taken the decision to proceed with a conservation management plan, you should appoint:

- A project manager (preferably from within the PCC)
- A steering group (include PCC members and partner representatives)
- A facilitator (a single person or practice)

Your facilitator should have:

- An understanding of the legislative and planning framework
- A background in one of the conservation professions
- An ability to read and understand historic fabric and the archaeological significance of the church and site, the furnishings and fittings and their liturgical use
- An ability to write and present complex information clearly and concisely

Write the CMP

A conservation management plan should not be a purely academic exercise, undertaken by an individual or group in isolation. The PCC should actively contribute to it.

The process requires participation and consultation of a wide range of bodies and individuals, and the PCC should keep close control of the process and content.

The CMP is likely to go through several drafts before it is ready.

Once completed, the CMP should be regularly reviewed, updated and edited.

Distribute and archive it

In the first instance, print multiple paper copies for all key partners. Reproduce them after every significant change.

Remember that the finished conservation management plan should be accessible to the public.

You should consider issues such as:

- The location and status of the archive. You may have particular issues with storage of digital data
- Security: any strictly confidential material should be in a separate appendix
- Copyright: make sure you obtain permission to use any material which vests in third parties (e.g. research, drawings, photographs, etc.)

Also of interest



Statement of significance and needs



Contact us

[Contact us to see how we can help](#)

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/conservation-management-plans>