

**Historic Church Building Support Officer (HCBSO)**

**(Fixed Term, 3 years)**

**Job Description**

**DIOCESAN VISION & MISSION**

The Diocese’s four mission priorities are to grow in depth and to grow in influence, thereby enabling it to increase in number and to become younger. It seeks to achieve the vision of ‘Growing in God’ by being ‘Flourishing congregations, making a difference’.

**PURPOSE**

Suffolk boasts an internationally significant legacy of historic church buildings. Along with that of Norfolk, they reputedly constitute the greatest concentration of medieval churches anywhere in northern Europe. Out of a total of 476 functioning churches, 50.8% are listed at Grade I and 37.2% are listed at Grade II\*. Seven are classed as Major Parish Churches by the Church Buildings Council.

The purpose of the Support Officer role is to help parishes and communities to care for and maintain their historic churches, in particular those on Historic England’s Heritage at Risk Register. These buildings are not museums, they are living places of worship at the service of their communities, and responsibility for their upkeep rests primarily on the shoulders of volunteers. When major, expensive fabric repairs become necessary, this can be daunting for a parish without the funds or experience to tackle something so demanding. The aim of this post is not to provide a substitute for PCC officers, but to guide and inform, to build capacity and morale. The successful candidate will enable churchwardens to overcome the most pressing problems, leaving them equipped with the knowledge, experience and confidence to tackle them again should they arise in the future, as well as with a better understanding of how to avert fabric decay through routine maintenance.

Candidates for assistance will be identified primarily through the Heritage at Risk (H@R) Register published annually by Historic England (HE). This will also be one of the measures for performance, and thus the postholder’s responsibilities will include ensuring that information in that source is kept accurate and up to date to reflect the progress achieved. This post is part-funded by HE and the successful candidate will report on a regular, six monthly, basis –- to a designated representative at that organisation to review progress.

At some churches, fabric repairs are closely related to projects are aimed at making the building a versatile asset for the local community, thereby generating income streams which can boost its sustainability. In such cases, it is envisaged that the postholder will work in conjunction with the Church Buildings Support Officer, whose remit focuses on development projects and community involvement, both integral to the sustainability of historic church buildings.

Since the Historic Church Building Support Officer post will be partly funded by a fixed-term grant from HE, it has a three-year duration. It is hoped that it may be possible to continue it beyond 2027, but the Diocese is not currently able to make any commitment to do so.

**DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTION**

The DAC office is the department of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) that has oversight of the Diocese’s functioning church buildings and churchyards. It is the first point of contact for clergy, architects and laypeople in parishes who need guidance on the care, maintenance and development of their churches and churchyards. The office operates the faculty jurisdiction, the legal system for granting permission for repairs and alterations to them. It also oversees the system for undertaking condition reports on churches at five-yearly intervals (Quinquennial Inspection Reports, usually known as QIRs) and maintains records of church buildings. The office is the point of liaison between parishes and the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC), which meets six times annually and provides specialist advice on the care of and works to church buildings and churchyards. Approaching that body, which discharges listed building consent under the terms of the Ecclesiastical Exemption, is the preliminary to obtaining a faculty.

**REPORTING TO**

* The DAC Secretary
* HE Team Leader for Development Advice, East of England

**KEY CONNECTIONS**

* HE
* Archdeacons
* Incumbents and other clergy
* Churchwardens
* Architects and contractors
* Grant-giving organisations (Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, National Lottery Heritage Fund, etc)
* The Diocese’s Giving Adviser
* Church Building Support Officer

**KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

**General**

1. Assist churches on the H@R register, working with parishes, inspecting architects and other key stakeholders to carry out fabric repairs in order downgrade buildings and ultimately to remove them altogether.
2. Review incoming QIRs, identifying churches with major and/or chronic fabric defects using agreed criteria, and draw up strategies for assisting them.
3. Make contact with the parishes concerned and establish the scope for support, in the first instance by compiling an action plan.
4. Assist the DAC Secretary and HE in ensuring that H@R entries are kept up to date, notifying them of cases where the rating can be downgraded or the building removed altogether.
5. Liaise with the DAC Secretary on any proposals brought about through work with parishes which require formal permissions, and assist parishes and architects with compiling Statements of Significance and Needs for faculty applications arising from repair projects where necessary.
6. Assist parishes with gauging the proportion of external funding that may be needed to tackle repairs, identify funding sources and advise on eligibility, help with compiling grant applications and coordinate simultaneous bids when necessary.
7. Promote understanding at parish level of the importance of regular maintenance in warding off fabric decay, what is involved in fabric repairs, and sources of grant aid, to include speaking at training events and webinars, as well as sharing examples of best practice.
8. Keep abreast of relevant opportunities, changes and developments with grant-funding for heritage projects, as well as related legislation, forwarding authoritative guidance and information as required.
9. Maintain regular contact with counterparts at neighbouring dioceses to share experience and advice, attend regional and national meetings for other HCBSOs.
10. Liaise with the Church Buildings Support Officer on any projects where fabric repairs are interlinked with promoting community engagement.
11. Maintain records of the number of churches with which contact is made, record where this leads to successful engagement, as well as flagging up problem cases where this is difficult or impossible.
12. Maintain records of grant applications, including the amount secured and as a percentage of the total cost of the cycle of works, as well as recording feedback on unsuccessful applications.
13. In cooperation with the Church Buildings Support Officer, set up and promote a network of church ambassadors, who have successfully fundraised for and carried out fabric repair or development projects at their own buildings, and who are willing to give advice to other parishes facing similar challenges.
14. Support the establishment and development of relevant voluntary organisations such as Friends’ groups.

The role will involve desk-based work in the Diocesan offices and regular catch-ups will be held there with the DAC Secretary to provide guidance and discuss progress, although home working will be possible in due course. It is envisaged that the role will involve a high degree of independent working, including frequent travel around the diocese and, on occasions, outside it. In time, the successful candidate will be expected to be master of his/her own diary, taking the initiative in organising meetings with PCC officers, architects, stakeholder organisations and so on. By nature, the role will be varied and so the schedule will change from week to week.

Please note that this list of responsibilities is not exhaustive and may be subject to change. From time to time, the postholder may be required to take on other duties of a similar nature. It is the practice of the DBF via the line manager to review and amend job descriptions annually, in consultation with the post-holder. HE strongly encourages post holders to develop a programme of appropriate Continuing Professional Development in agreement with their employers.

**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

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| **ESSENTIAL** | **DESIRABLE** |
| **Education and professional qualifications** | |
| * Undergraduate degree in history / history of art and architecture/archaeology or other relevant subject | * Master’s degree in conservation or related discipline (e.g. heritage management) * Membership of relevant professional body (e.g. IHBC) |
| **Knowledge and Experience** | |
| * Knowledge of church architecture and buildings * Successful track record of repair and conservation projects involving listed buildings. * Knowledge of heritage and community grant-funding resources, understanding of their priorities and experience of writing applications. * Able to read and interpret technical drawings, specifications and schedules of work. * Experience of managing volunteer-led projects, including providing in-person training and written advice. | * An understanding of the Church of England’s legal and governance processes, including the faculty system * Familiarity with Suffolk |
| **Skills and Abilities /Aptitudes** | |
| * Excellent written and spoken English * Ability to design, present and deliver training events. * Good IT skills * Full driving licence | * Competent photographer |
| **Work-Related Personal Qualities** | |
| * A self-starter, content to work independently. * Able to identify priorities and manage flexibly a high workload with range of tasks being handled simultaneously. * Able to understand importance of role in a larger structure and its interdependence with other departments and related organisations. * Able quickly to form effective working relationships with people from a wide range of different backgrounds. * Good problem-solver and diplomat * Positive and enthusiastic manner * Sympathy for the values of the Church of England and commitment to the aims of the Diocese |  |

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**About Us**

The Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich has 445 parishes in 112 benefices and serves approximately 660,000 people living in a geographical area of more than 1,400 square miles.

The Diocesan Board of Finance serves and supports our parishes and schools offering the people of Suffolk the opportunity to encounter God and grow in Christian faith. We strive to do this in providing service and support in line with our values of Respect, Transparency, Quality and Well-being. The DBF is an equal opportunities employer.

**Terms and conditions – general information**

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| Salary | The salary for this post starts at around £33,000 per annum dependent upon experience. |
| Pension provision | Membership of the Church of England Pensions Board Pension Builder 2014 Scheme following completion of probation period. |
| Hours of work | Full time (35 hours) per week Monday to Friday with some flexibility required and offered. TOIL (time off in lieu) is applicable for evening and weekend working to be agreed with line manager. |
| Holidays | 25 days pro-rata paid leave in addition to the usual public holidays plus Discretionary days (at Easter and Christmas) |
| Probation Period | Six months during which time progress is regularly reviewed and the period may be extended |
| Notice period | During probation 2 weeks and thereafter 1 month |
| Place of work | Diocesan Office, St Nicholas Centre, 4 Cutler Street, Ipswich IP1 1UQ  However, these offices are currently up for sale, and we are planning a potential move away from this location to new offices within a reasonable distance (either within Ipswich or on the outskirts of Ipswich) which will become the main place of work. |
| DBS requirement | *The appointment is subject to an unblemished enhanced DBS check in relation to the requirements of this role.* |
| Transport | *The postholder will require use of own personal transport and provide evidence of insurance cover for business use. Expenses for mileage will be met.* |

**Application packs available from:** Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich Website [Vacancies - Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich (cofesuffolk.org)](https://www.cofesuffolk.org/about-us/vacancies)

**Please note:** Applications will only be accepted on our DBF application forms. Please do not apply online or send CVs

**Applications marked ‘Confidential Application’ to be sent to:** [HR@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:HR@cofesuffolk.org) or by post to Diocesan Office, St Nicholas Centre, 4 Cutler Street, Ipswich IP1 1UQ.

**Closing Date for Applications:** Wednesday, 24th July 2024

**Interview Date:** w/c 12th August 2024