

THE USE OF INTERPRETIVE MATERIALS IN CHURCHES

The purpose of this document is to provide PCCs¹, clergy and DAC members, with information on the use of interpretive materials in churches and churchyards, and other associated structures of architectural, archaeological, historical or ecological interest such as lychgates, monuments, tombs, preaching crosses and veteran yew trees.

Introduction

The interpretation of a historic building or site is the telling of its story to visitors. This should be done in an engaging and factual way that will enhance their visit and ideally make them want to return to learn more. There can be lots of stories to tell, so the key to good interpretation is deciding what to include and what interpretive materials to use. Projects do not have to be elaborate or large. A simple well-presented information sheet or guidebook can be just as effective as an interactive touchscreen or multimedia display and considerably less costly. It all depends on what you feel will work for your church and the story you wish to tell.

Your church will have lots of stories, so how do you decide which ones to choose? Should you concentrate solely on the history of the building itself for example? Or should you also include the local community, as the two are often linked through their shared development. Alternately, you may want to tell the story of your church's saint, architecture, monuments, artworks, etc, or include all of these things. If so, what level of detail is appropriate? Too much, and visitors may find it difficult to digest, not enough and you risk the story being too superficial.

Once you have decided on the stories, you need to think about how to deliver them to your audience. The range of interpretative materials has increased considerably in the last decade or so and now includes options like audio tours (on hand held devices or mobile phones), touchscreen panels, QR codes, augmented and virtual reality, as well as the more "traditional" booklets, guidebooks, banners and static information panels. Every church is unique, so the type of materials you use will depend on your individual circumstances and budget.

Whether you are thinking of introducing or renewing interpretive materials at your church, do your homework first! Visit other churches and see what they have done. Do you feel it works for them? If not, why not? Remember, each church is different, so what may work at one church

¹ The term "PCC" is used within this document to describe the local trustee body responsible for the management of the church and churchyard. These bodies may also be known as the Ministry Area Council, the Local Ministry Area Council, Rectorial Benefice Council, Mission Area Conference, or any other term designated by diocesan policies.

may not work at yours. Once you have decided what you would like, consider how you are going to achieve it. If it is something simple like updating a guidebook, then you may be able to do it yourself. If you have more ambitious plans, then you may need to engage a professional. Always make sure you speak to your DAC Secretary as early as possible in the process, as he or she will be able to advise what permissions you will need eg. faculty consent.

The provision of information about your church may also be a requirement of a grant. If so, the organisation supplying the money will be able to advise what their requirements are. This will almost invariably mean ensuring the content is factually correct, bilingual, and any interpretive materials are accessible and sympathetic to the setting and interior of your church building. For example, information panels should be easily readable by those with impaired vision, and exterior signage should not dominate the site, especially if it is in a conservation area, designated historic landscape or World Heritage Site.

This guidance looks at the key stages involved when considering the installation of interpretative materials: deciding on the stories you want to tell, the materials available to help you do this and how to assess whether it is right for your church. Useful links have been included throughout to a variety of interpretive projects at places of worship, along with several appendices containing further information.

The Story

Deciding on the story of your church can be difficult. You may want to include information on its architectural history, the life of its founding saint, its social history, its works of art, its furnishings and fittings, associations with local and national events, or individuals who have shaped the local community or nation. Should you include everything or be selective? A good starting point is to research the history of your church. Even if it is relatively well documented, there is always scope to discover more, or to update what is already known.

Always check your facts! Just because the old church guidebook has been in print for the last fifty years does not automatically mean the contents are entirely accurate or well presented. Where did the information come from? If there are references in the guidebook, check them out. If it does not contain any, you will have to verify the information came from a reliable source if you want to use it in your interpretive materials. Also ask your DAC about more recent research and publications (its members include historians, archaeologists and architectural historians). Even if you are paying a professional to design and create your interpretive material, they are not infallible. You will still need to proof read what they produce and agree to it, as will the DAC (if you are applying for faculty consent), so it is important that you still conduct your own research as well.

Other excellent sources of reliable and factual information include Listed Building descriptions, Historic Environment Records (HERs), the Buildings of Wales guides (also known as Pevsner guides) and the Welsh Archaeological Trusts' database, Archwilio. See Appendix II for details on how to access these.

Once you have a good understanding of the history and important features of your church, you need to decide what to include in your interpretive materials. If your church is relatively modest, you may be able to include virtually everything. If you have a large nationally important church, you may need to be selective or concentrate on one aspect of its story, such as its architectural history. However, this approach risks missing out other equally as important stories. A good solution may be to present different pieces of the overall story in different parts of the building.

The basic history of the church could be presented at the start of the visitor experience (at the entrance), then added to at various points throughout the building as new features are encountered eg. a finely carved rood screen. This is also a good way to introduce non-architectural aspects, such as the church's use as a Christian place of worship, and the role that the rood screen traditionally played in a service. This staged approach gives the visitor time to digest the information before they move on to the next interesting feature.

How much information you include in your story will also depend on the type of interpretive materials you are using. If you have the budget for a guidebook, then you may be able to include everything. If you are just using interpretive panels, then you will need to be more selective. A combination of materials like a booklet and panels may provide the best solution - panels to give visitors immediate pertinent information and a guidebook to read at their leisure. You may even want to dispense with this approach altogether and have everything presented digitally via a mobile phone app. Again, it all depends on the story you want to tell, your budget, which materials would work best in your church, and of course your own preferences.

It is also worth checking if there are any community interpretation projects planned for your area. If so, then you may be able to include the church in this as part of an overall integrated interpretation project. This type of project is usually aimed at enhancing the experience of visitors to the area, possibly in the form of a "historic walk" around the community, highlighting its most interesting and important buildings and sites. It could lead to more visitors to your church, which in turn may bring in more revenue, especially if you have a shop or café.

One advantage of a community project is that any external interpretive materials (such as signage and information panels) may be provided to preserve a "standard style" which visitors will look out for when exploring. The church may have to pay a fee for this, but it could be cheaper than "going it alone". The provision of materials for the interior of the church may not be included in the overall project, although you may be able to commission the same supplier to produce them, possibly at a discounted rate.

Ensure that you earmark some of your budget for researching your stories, and do not allocate it all for the design and production of your interpretative material; the latter is only the packaging and it is the content that is important.

Interpretive Materials

The traditional approach to presenting information to church visitors is by leaflet, guidebook and greeter or tour guide. Printed materials have the advantage of being relatively easy and inexpensive to produce and do not require someone to be at the church when visitors are present. Larger churches and cathedrals usually have more volunteer resources and often provide guided tours. This is an excellent way to engage visitors. Who hasn't been inspired by a knowledgeable tour guide who is happy to take questions? It makes the church more welcoming to those not familiar with places of worship and can encourage them to stay longer, especially if there is a shop or café on site.

New technology has opened up ways in which visitors can access information about churches and even the way they interact with them. Digital guidebooks can be downloaded to mobile devices prior to a visit or at the church itself. These can include a tour route, perhaps supplemented by audio, which visitors can follow as they walk around. Interactive panels positioned at various points throughout the church allow visitors to access information about special features as they encounter them, or explore a "trip back in time" to experience how the church has developed architecturally. Information can even be sent to mobile devices via Bluetooth transmitters as visitors walk past them.

An important thing to remember is that new materials do not have to replace old. A mix of interpretive materials might in fact create the best visitor experience. The most common interpretive materials suitable for use in a church setting are listed below. The list is not exhaustive and does not discuss each in any great depth. Its aim is to introduce PCCs to what is available. Further information can be found in the appendices and by clicking on the links throughout this document.

Printed materials

This includes things like guidebooks, pamphlets and information sheets and is probably the easiest way for churches to tell their story. The contents can be as selective or as all encompassing as resources allow, and can be easily compiled by knowledgeable people in the congregation or wider community. Leaflets and information sheets can be printed in the parish office or at home, and a professionally presented guidebook can often be produced by a good local publisher/printer at a reasonable cost.

Visitors can purchase these items in the church, perhaps using an honesty box if the church is unmanned. It is important to set a reasonable price for them, perhaps just enough to cover the costs of production, with a little extra added to help with church maintenance or the running costs of keeping it open. Informing visitors of this policy will help them to understand why they are being charged and that it is all in a good cause.

Tour guide

Never underestimate the traditional methods of story telling! The best of which is an enthusiastic and knowledgeable tour guide who brings their subject to life. Visitors have direct access to them, so can ask questions about the information they are being presented with. They are excellent

ambassadors for their churches and present a friendly face in what can sometimes seem an intimidating building to enter. They can point the way to further information if visitors want to learn more, or highlight interesting places for them to visit outside the church, especially if it is part of an overall story within the wider community. Charging a small fee for this service can also help towards the maintenance of the building.

Also remember that some people prefer to explore in their own way and may actually be put off by the attentions of a greeter or guide! It is therefore important that you provide other methods of information wherever possible to enable them to enjoy their visit at their own pace.

Church website

Many parishes have their own website, and as with printed materials, the quality and contents can vary! Most list the churches in their benefice/ministry area with dates and times of services and who to contact for more information. Some also have parish news bulletins, a donation point, visitor opening hours and facilities and further information about the church, such as its history and a gallery of photographs.

The amount of information that can be included on a parish website is virtually limitless. It is a convenient way to reach many more people than printed materials alone can do. However, unless you have an IT specialist in your congregation or community willing to maintain it for free, you will have to pay a professional to do this. Information can quickly become out of date in a poorly maintained website and there is nothing worse than visiting one where the news bulletins, event information and links to other websites are years out of date.

The creation of a good church website is worth investing in. If you have the funds, you can commission an IT professional to create the website, which can then be maintained by the parish from that point onwards. If someone in the parish is responsible for inputting new content and removing old, you can also reduce any ongoing support costs.

Click on the following links for ideas for a parish website:

[St Edmund's Church, Crickhowell](#)

[Crowland Abbey, Lincolnshire](#)

Temporary display boards and banners

These are often seen at exhibitions, popular examples being tall banners on stands or head height concertina type display boards that fold away when not in use. They are particularly useful if it would be difficult to have permanent interpretive materials displayed within the church, perhaps because the space is needed for worship, or the building is particularly significant, where any permanent fittings would cause irreparable loss of historic fabric or compromise the setting of the interior space. Most boards are designed to allow the display materials (posters, photographs, text, etc) to be stuck or pinned on, which means out of date material can be easily replaced. Some boards, like the banners, can have information permanently printed onto them, although this will require them to be replaced in their entirety when the information needs changing or updating. Banners or "A boards" can be useful displayed outside a church, indicating when it is

open or what facilities are inside (eg. shop, café, toilets, etc), although their use in historically sensitive areas may require planning permission if they are over a certain size.

Static interpretive display panels

Static panels can be sited externally or internally and can be permanent or moveable structures. External panels appear in a wide variety of settings, such as outside historic buildings and sites, alongside wildlife trails and coastal paths, in historic towns and cities, parks and gardens, etc. Most have information printed directly onto the panel and are permanent fixtures. The panel may need replacing every few years due to weathering, damage or outdated information. Some static displays can have information etched onto a metallic panel or plate, like those in remote sites, where the information they contain is unlikely to change.

External panels are normally designed to be a permanent fixture and as such need to be robust and well anchored. This means care should be taken when choosing a site for them within a church or cathedral setting and their introduction will almost certainly require a faculty. There is always the possibility of disturbing hidden burials or below-ground archaeology when erecting the panel supports, especially if the site is medieval. Later churches may have a burial plan which will limit the chance of disturbing any burials, although there could still be the chance of encountering the remains of any previous buildings on the site or “hidden burials” that have no grave marker. Archaeological advice should always be sought - a preliminary discussion with the DAC archaeologist can inform what investigative work (if any) will need to be done.

External display panels should be visible and informative, but also complementary to their historic setting. They should not “overwhelm” the site by being unnecessarily large or be made of unsuitable construction materials. Their scale and form should be sensitive and appropriate to the site, building or object being interpreted. The *ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage*, states that “All visible interpretive infrastructures (such as ... information panels) must be sensitive to the character, setting and the cultural and natural significance of the site ...” (see Appendix I for more information about ICOMOS and this charter).

Care should also be taken with the choice of colours used on the panels themselves, especially any text sections. Some combinations of text and background colours can be very difficult to read for people with visual impairments. Some external display panels may also need planning permission from the local authority. This will depend on their size and construction, whether the building is listed, lies in a conservation area or historic landscape, or whether there are any other adjacent listed structures or scheduled monuments. **You will also need faculty permission**, so make sure you speak to your DAC Secretary **before** commissioning or erecting any panels.

Internal display panels are one of the most common ways of presenting information within historic buildings and come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Some of the smaller lightweight ones are designed to be easily moved, whereas others should be considered as permanent fittings, either because of their size and weight, or because they need fixing in place. Many of the same design considerations for external panels apply to internal ones. Also, if the panel will be fixed to

the historic fabric of the building (eg. floor, wall, etc) or cannot be easily moved, faculty permission will be required.

Interactive interpretive panels

Interactive panels need a power supply and therefore are almost exclusively found within a building. They can come in a variety of shapes and sizes and can be permanent or moveable structures. The information they display is controlled by the user on a touch sensitive screen. Some only display images and text, whilst others also offer sound.

One of their most popular uses in a historic building is to display its architectural development through time. Users can view a 3D representation of how it would have looked at different stages of its development and “walk through” the structure itself. Some displays even offer a narrative from historical characters who would have worked or lived in the building throughout its life.

These sophisticated types of displays are supplied by specialist manufacturers. Some may supply the equipment and the content, while others will work with interpretation professionals or their clients to deliver the content. You will need faculty permission for these types of displays if they are to become a permanent fixture within the church.

An interesting project between York University Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture and the Church of Holy Trinity Micklegate in York, illustrates this type of application. It delivered an interactive touchscreen to complement the existing 'Monks of Micklegate' exhibition as part of the church's visitor interpretation. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Virtual tour

These offer a “3D” tour of your building and its wider site which can be accessed via a mobile phone, tablet and laptop/PC. They can be uploaded to a variety of social media sites such as YouTube or Facebook or a parish website. They don't have to be expensive to produce – anyone with a mobile phone or digital video camera can create one. Alternately, they can be supplied by a company specialising in this kind of thing.

Tours can be as long or short as you wish. You could create one for the whole site, including the churchyard and any ancillary structures like a shop or tearoom, or have several short tours of different parts of the building. You can even add commentary. They could serve as a taster to potential visitors to encourage them to visit in person or to view as they move around the site itself.

The important thing to remember if creating a tour yourself is that it needs to be well presented – no blurry images, camera shake or muffled commentary. Decide beforehand what you will be recording and any commentary you will be adding. If you are recording people in the tour, make sure you have their consent. Always review your handiwork with the PCC before publishing/posting it and be prepared to edit or re-record following any feedback. This is an opportunity to present your church to a wide audience – so show it in its best light!

Click on the links below to see some excellent examples of virtual tours of historic churches:

[Holy Trinity Church, Guildford](#)

[St Mary's Church, Beverley](#)

[Brecon Cathedral](#)

Audio tour

Many historic buildings, such as cathedrals, castles and county houses offer visitors audio tours to listen to as they walk around the site. They are also popular in museums and art galleries, allowing visitors to access information about an exhibit as they view it. They can be delivered via a handheld device specifically designed for the purpose or an app that can be installed on a mobile phone. The content delivery can be automatically triggered when the visitor reaches an information point within the building.

Most manufactured handheld devices allow the content to be created and edited by the organisation purchasing them, usually via software specifically created for the purpose or accessed via the company's website.

Augmented reality

Augmented reality can probably best be described as the presentation of an enhanced view of a real-world environment. For example, a visitor could view a historic church in real-time through the camera on their mobile phone or tablet (or a device specifically designed to deliver this kind of experience), and then have the option to see the same scene as it was in the past by superimposing an older image or reconstruction over it. This could be further enhanced by introducing sound or interactive elements, where users can access different parts of the screen or objects within it, to receive further information.

QR codes

A QR (quick response) code can be scanned from a mobile phone or tablet by a visitor to provide them with further information about the object to which the code is attached. Typically, the scanned QR code would be linked to a URL, which would open a webpage on the user's device. They are widely used within the historic environment as they are unobtrusive and cost virtually nothing to set up. This has obvious advantages for a parish which already has a website – all they need to do is create the codes (widely available for free online), print them out and attach to a relevant object eg. a church notice board. All visitors need to do is ensure they have downloaded a QR code reader prior to their site visit (although many mobile phones now have them already installed as part of a standard suite of apps).

Care should be exercised in the placement of QR codes on historic objects as the method of fixing could cause damage if not done sensitively. Thought should also be given to the location of the codes. A proliferation of them inside the church will detract from the objects they are trying to highlight or the overall setting of the interior.

Click [here](#) to see an example of a church website using QR codes.

[Bluetooth beacons](#)

The use of discretely positioned Bluetooth “beacons” is gaining popularity within historic buildings, museums and heritage sites. Here, a small Bluetooth transmitter is located at various points throughout the building or wider site, which delivers multi-media content to a visitor’s mobile device. The visitor does not need to scan anything (like a QR code) or enter a code for the information to be sent to their device, all they need to do is pre-load the app and enable Bluetooth on their device.

Although the technology itself will need to be purchased from a specialist supplier, the software behind the beacon delivery system can be easily set up and managed by anyone familiar with website design or online publishing. Many companies offering interpretation services can also be commissioned for this type of work. The following videos show two Welsh projects that use beacon technology to deliver content to visitors to enhance their experience:

[Nefyn Heritage Trail](#)

[Beaumaris Town](#)

The Bluetooth transmitters themselves are very small (usually no bigger than a matchbox) which means that can be positioned easily within a church or cathedral without the need for a permanent fixing. This in turn means that full faculty permission will not be required!

[Virtual reality](#)

The use of virtual reality within a historic setting can offer an immersive, interactive and alternate view of the real world for a visitor. Although its scope to recreate a historic landscape or building can be truly mind boggling, it is probably the most expensive and specialised type of interpretive materials available. This places it financially out of reach for most churches and cathedrals. However, there may be a place for it within a larger well-funded project, where its implementation could form part of an overall heritage education strategy.

[Planning your Project](#)

Just like any other project, the installation or updating of interpretive materials in your church needs careful planning and management. There is no “one size fits all” solution, but as a general rule of thumb, the larger and more complex the project, the more planning is needed. This guidance cannot hope to cover every last thing that should be considered, but it can get you started by highlighting the main points. Further information on planning an interpretive project can be found in *Bored of Boards! Ideas for Interpreting Heritage Sites* and *A Sense of Place: an Interpretive Planning Handbook* in Appendix I.

[Project management](#)

Decide who will manage your interpretive materials project. Will it be the entire PCC or perhaps a smaller committee within it or just a single person? This will largely depend on the scope and

complexity of the project, although the choice of content and the types of materials used would probably be best decided collectively rather than individually. If your project is part of a larger one (eg. reordering), could it be included with that?

Assess what you already have

Do you already have any interpretive materials? If so, find out when they were last reviewed, fact checked or updated. If it has been more than a few years, have there been any new discoveries in the church or churchyard? Has more detailed information become available on the history of the church, its architecture or fixtures and fittings? If new information is available, consider updating your current materials.

Remember to be honest about your existing materials and ask yourself if they are still delivering a good interpretive experience to visitors. Get a second opinion. Ask other people (perhaps the local community) what they think and what they would like to see (within reason). Their responses may influence whether you update your current materials, supplement them, or start from scratch.

Conduct an accessibility audit

Consider how accessible your interpretive materials are. Do the colour contrasts of text and background make them difficult to read for people with a visual impairment? Can display panels be viewed from a seated position, as would be the case for people in wheelchairs? Could you provide guidance leaflets in large print or an audio tour device that is compatible with a hearing aid? Can people with limited mobility even get into the church to view the materials?

The Equalities Act 2010 places a duty on employers and service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that people with disabilities are not disadvantaged when visiting a property. This includes historic buildings and churches. The Welsh Government has not published any updated guidance on this yet (it is currently out for consultation), although Historic England have issued a guide, *Improving Access to Historic Buildings and Landscapes*, which contains lots of useful advice. In addition, a shorter article, *Reasonable Adjustments and Historic Buildings: Requirements and Best Practice*, written by a firm of lawyers, highlights best practice specifically for religious buildings. The National Disability Authority in Ireland have also published a guide, *Access: Improving the accessibility of historic buildings and places*. Links to these documents can be found in Appendix III.

Visit other churches and historic buildings

Have a look at what's out there! Many historic buildings and sites have some form of interpretive materials these days. If possible, talk to the people who carried out the project. They may be able to give you some insight into how easy/difficult it was or recommend a supplier/contractor. Talk to your DAC Secretary, they may know of some nearby church projects that you could visit. Follow the links to projects in this document and do your own online research. It may help you decide what would (and would not) work in your church.

Consider your target audience

Regardless of whether you are updating your current interpretive materials or starting from scratch, consider who your target audience will be, as this may influence the type of materials you provide. For example, children are very IT savvy and would enjoy interactive materials, whereas older people may prefer a guidebook. In the ideal world the provision of a range of materials would be good, but this will be dictated by budget in most cases. If your budget is tight, then consider which types of materials would suit the widest range of visitors, such as different types of guidance notes – one for the youngsters (eg. limited content and lots of eye-catching headlines and colours) and one for the adults (well informed content with decent photos and a good narrative).

Your church may have close ties with the local community and welcome school parties as part of a wider education & learning programme. Although this would mean catering for a specific group (children), there will be a range of different ages and abilities. In cases like this, seek the advice of the teaching staff over your choice of materials and its content. You may well be eligible for a grant specifically targeting projects that involve education and learning, working with children and young people or the local community.

If you get a lot of overseas visitors, you may want to think about providing materials in different languages, although this could be expensive - but still worthy of consideration if you have a large budget! At the very least, your materials should be bi-lingual (Welsh and English).

Materials content

Once you have assessed your current interpretive materials, researched what is already out there and decided on a target audience, you will need to make a decision about the materials you will be using and their content (see earlier sections [The Story](#) and [Interpretive Materials](#)). You must be clear about this before applying for any grants or permissions as you will be expected to supply full details of your project.

Funding

How will you fund your project? If it is a modest one, like updating or creating new printed materials, then you can probably do this from parish funds. Anything more substantial may require local fundraising or a grant application. If you are working with a partner organisation, such as a school or local community group, make sure you are all clear about whose responsibility it is to approve the materials and pay for them.

If the provision of interpretative materials is part of a wider grant aided project, then you need to make sure you included this element in the original application. If you don't do this and then subsequently decide to introduce interpretive materials, the funder may not approve it, and you may not be eligible for funding for this part of the project. Always speak to your funder if in doubt.

Significance

Make sure you assess the significance of your church, its fixtures and fittings and the churchyard, as this may well dictate the most appropriate interpretive materials to use. Is your church listed or are there any other listed structures or scheduled monuments in the churchyard (such as a lychgate or preaching cross)? Is the church and churchyard in a conservation area, national park or within a designated historic park and garden? If so, you need to carefully consider the impact of the materials on the church and its setting. Will the setting be adversely affected by their introduction or can the impact be mitigated by choosing something discrete that will blend in or compliment it?

Assessing the significance of your church does not have to be an onerous task! A good starting point is to check if it is listed with the *Historic Wales* portal. From here you can also access information on Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Historic Environment Records (HERs) and the Royal Commission's heritage records. You should also be able to find out if your church is in a conservation area or other "sensitive" area via the planning and conservation section on your local authority website or the Welsh Archaeological Trusts' Archwilio database. In addition, the Pevsner Buildings of Wales books may have an entry for your church. See Appendix II for further information.

The selection of the most appropriate materials to use will always be a balance between the need to provide interesting and engaging information that is accessible, but also sensitive to the church's significance. Speak to your DAC Secretary for further information on this issue.

Permissions

All Church in Wales' churches require faculty permission for the vast majority of works, apart from routine maintenance or very minor works. The type of permission required (List A, List B or full) depends on the nature and extent of the works, as does the supporting documentation required.

If your church is listed and the installation or updating of interpretive materials (other than printed materials) will affect its character or its setting, then planning permission may also be required from the local planning authority **in addition** to faculty permission. It is therefore extremely important to seek advice from your DAC Secretary **before** submitting an application.

Always include photographs of the areas where your materials will be located in your supporting documentation (preferably annotated). Put these into context by including shots of the wider interior or exterior of the church and churchyard. State which type of materials will be used in each location and describe their size, colour, weight, etc. Include manufacturer/supplier information if possible and the method of fixing. Include an annotated plan of the church or churchyard if your materials will be permanently fixed to the floor, furniture and fittings (such as pews) and any historic fabric (such as a wall). Also supply details of the content.

When reviewing an application to update or install interpretive materials, the DAC and Chancellor will consider things such as their content, the significance of the church and

churchyard, its overall setting, whether the materials are fixed or moveable and if they will cause any damage to historic building fabric, fixtures and fittings or archaeology.

Summary

This guidance should have given you a good overview of the key stages involved when considering the installation of interpretative materials: deciding on the story you want to tell, the materials available to help you do this and how to assess whether it is right for your church. Make sure you use the links within the document to view examples of interpretive projects in churches and historic buildings, and access the resources in the appendices. To sum up the main points:

- Make your story engaging and factual
- Assess your current interpretative materials and conduct an accessibility audit
- Research the significance of your church and site
- Research the range of interpretative materials available
- Check what permissions you will need
- Consider what materials are appropriate for your church
- Decide who will manage your project
- Talk to the DAC!

Appendix I – Resources for Heritage Interpretation

The Centre for the Study of Christianity & Culture, University of York

In recent years, the centre has worked with many partners to deliver a range of interpretive materials for church and cathedrals across the UK. Most of these projects use a combination of materials, ranging from virtual recreations of churches and cathedrals to interactive panels and mobile apps. It is well worth looking at the projects to get an idea of what is possible within places of worship.

[Interpretive Projects for Churches](#)

Ideas for Interpreting Heritage Sites

This publication from the *Irish Walled Towns Network* shows the different types of interpretive materials suitable for use in a historic setting. It contains a short section on planning your interpretation plus a wide variety of excellent examples of “real life” projects.

[Bored of Boards!](#)

A Sense of Place: An Interpretive Planning Handbook

Although this handbook was produced in Scotland, its content is relevant to any country. It leads readers through the planning, implementation and assessment of their interpretive materials project.

[A Sense of Place](#)

The guide’s author, James Carter, has also written other articles about interpretation which can be found here:

[Heritage Interpretation Resources by James Turner](#)

The Heritage Inspired Initiative

The two guides below were published in response to *South Yorkshire’s Faith Tourism Initiative* and discuss how to interpret your site.

[Interpreting Your Site – Part 1](#)

[Interpreting Your Site – Part 2](#)

The Association for Heritage Interpretation

The aim of the AHI is to promote good practice amongst heritage interpretation professionals. It has a useful suppliers search facility on its website and a small resources section for the *Interpret Wales* magazine, which contains some good examples of interpretation projects in Wales.

[Heritage Interpretation Suppliers](#)

[Interpret Wales Magazine 1](#)

[Interpret Wales Magazine 2](#)

[Interpret Wales Magazine 3](#)

[Interpret Wales Magazine 4](#)

[Interpret Wales Magazine 5](#)

[Interpret Wales Magazine 6](#)

[Interpret Wales Magazine 7](#)

[Interpret Wales Magazine 8](#)

[Interpret Wales Magazine 9](#)

The ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites

ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) is a non-governmental international organisation dedicated to the conservation of the world's monuments and sites. It has produced a wealth of material over the years dedicated to the care and conservation of historic sites, and is the organisation that awards World Heritage Site status. Many of its guidelines are enshrined in charters. Any heritage interpreters and suppliers worth their salt should know about the above charter and follow its guidelines. It is worth a read if you are interested in the principles of heritage interpretation and presentation.

[ICOMOS Charter](#)

Appendix II - Researching your Church's Significance

When researching the significance of your church, it is vitally to consult reliable and factual sources of information. One of the best online resources is the **Historic Wales** website where you can access Listed Building Records, Historic Environment Records, National Monuments Records, Scheduled Ancient Monuments Records and the National Museum Archaeology collection. Here, you can search by place name (village, town, city, etc), Ordnance Survey grid reference or postcode. The website can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

The following briefly describes the Historic Wales website resources and what they are useful for when creating a SOS. A further list of resources is also available in at the end of this section.

Listed Building Reports (LBRs)

LBRs come in a standard format and usually contain a brief history of the building, a description of its exterior, interior and a reason for listing (designation). The “reason for listing” section is extremely useful for highlighting what is special or significant about a building and you should pay attention to this in your SOS, especially if the proposed works will affect it.

A wide variety of structures are listed, not just churches and other buildings. War memorials, lychgates, churchyard walls, etc, can all be listed in their own right. This is useful to know when planning any external works to your church, as you will be expected to describe how the setting of any listed structures within its curtilage will be affected, in addition to the building itself.

Historic Environment Records (HERs)

The regional HERs contain information about historic landscapes (urban and rural), buildings and archaeological sites, and are maintained by the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts. They can also contain reports of surveys (such as the Welsh Historic Churches Survey), archaeological excavations and investigations, and historical studies, or at least reference or link to these so you can conduct further research yourself.

Don't be put off searching HERs if your church is not listed, as both listed and unlisted churches can have an HER. They are particularly useful for archaeological information and may be able to tell you if you have any important “hidden archaeology” in the church or churchyard.

National Monuments Records (NMRs)

These records are maintained by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW). However, it is not just monuments that the RCAHMW include. The NMR also has records of churches and other buildings and structures, so it is always worth searching the Commission's records. Many of their records often have photographs and links to associated sites and monuments, such as lychgates and churchyards crosses.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs)

Churches, because they are buildings in use, cannot be designated as SAMs, although a churchyard feature such as a preaching cross or early Christian stone could be. Unlike listed churches and structures within their curtilages, SAMs do not fall within ecclesiastical exemption. They are given greater protection than listed buildings and any works to them will need Scheduled Monument Consent from Cadw. You need to be mindful of any external works to your church, churchyard

and any structures within its curtilage, which may affect the setting of a SAM. If this is the case, make sure this is recorded in your SOS.

National Museum Archaeology collection

These are records of archaeological finds. No information is available via the Historic Wales website directly, although a location and a find number are recorded. They are of limited use in describing significance, but may give an indication of the presence of a historical site, which in turn means that you may have to take this into account if your proposed works could disturb any hidden archaeology. However, if the site itself is important, it will have been recorded in the HER, so always check this too.

Other sources of information

The Pevsner Buildings of Wales' guides are particularly useful for both listed and unlisted buildings as they will contain authoritative information about the architecture, history, building materials and contents of a church. In addition, they will often include some background information about your village/town/city, which can sometimes be useful to include in a SOS. They are widely available in bookshops and libraries or can be ordered through an online book seller such as Amazon.

County Record Offices are present in all local authorities and hold local archive materials such as historic documents, maps, photographs, etc. Most of the archivists will be happy to help you search for information about your church and can often direct you to other useful repositories or resources. Most have an online presence where you can search their catalogue of materials and request material to view when you visit. The [Archives Wales](#) website contains contact and location information, opening hours and the types of records held, for all local authority records offices across Wales. Additional further information may be held in the [National Library of Wales](#).

Your church should have an inventory of its contents. These were compiled some years ago (along with the logbook and terrier) and are kept in each parish. They often contain an architectural history of the building as well as a detailed inventory of its contents and may prove useful for highlighting the most important features of a church.

Quinquennial Inspection reports often contain a description of the architectural history of a church (usually derived from other sources) and its building materials and construction (in addition to highlighting areas that need attention). They should also contain a note of any designations that apply (eg. listed building, conservation area, etc).

Church Heritage Cymru is a church record database for all Church in Wales' churches. There is an ongoing project to populate it with useful information to assist parishes when preparing a faculty application. Although the content of each record will vary, it is always worth checking to see what data it contains about your church.

Appendix III – Accessibility and Historic Buildings

Easy access to historic buildings

The aim of this guide from Historic England is to improve access to historic buildings and landscapes for people with disabilities. It explains how to make a range of positive changes to historic places, while at the same time working within the wider principles of conservation. It is aimed at those who own, manage or get involved in adapting historic places and includes examples of successful approaches, ranging from minor improvements to high-quality modern design solutions.

If you are thinking of implementing any of the suggestions, you should check whether there is any specific Welsh legislation that would apply.

[Improving Access to Historic Buildings and Landscapes](#)

Reasonable adjustments and historic buildings

This issued by Bates Wells lawyers and discusses adjustments that can be made to historic buildings to make them more accessible. It also discusses best practice. If you are thinking of implementing any of the suggestions, you should check whether there is any specific Welsh legislation that would apply.

[Reasonable Adjustments and Historic Buildings: Requirements and Best Practice](#)

Improving the accessibility of historic buildings and places

The National Disability Authority in Ireland believe that one of the key requirements for an inclusive and sustainable society is that everyone should be able to participate in and enjoy the social, economic and cultural assets of that society. This includes historic buildings and their guidance includes lots of useful information on how to achieve this.

Please note that any reference to Irish legislation in the guidance will not apply in Wales.

[Access: Improving the accessibility of historic buildings and places.](#)