

# DAC GUIDANCE NOTE

## Paths in churchyards

### **DAC Policy**

Paths should normally be repaired on a like-for-like basis unless there is good reason for changing the materials or design. This is because paths are an important part of the external setting of a church and changing them can have a dramatic impact on the appearance of the building and the wider setting. In general, old stone paviers should be treated as any other part of the fabric of an historic building, i.e. retain original material and repair in situ wherever possible. Individual flags can be re-bedded and fractures dowelled; flags or setts beyond repair should be renewed in matching stones, these are often obtainable through local reclamation companies. Where appropriate, the greater part of an original stone might be retained by the inclusion of a small area of in situ material, such as fine granolithic concrete, to replace say a decayed corner. Unevenness in paviers or setts should also be addressed on a stone by stone basis and lime based mortar should be employed for re-bedding and jointing. The collection of sound, retained paving stones into one area is not good practice as the historic pattern will be lost. Stone steps are important features and should be repaired in situ; replacement of steps is seldom justified. Essential path widening should be achieved with a complementary material, leaving the original path apparent. Where excavations are involved, an archaeological overview will be required.

The DAC is mindful of the need to make churchyards as accessible as possible and realises that gravel paths are not always easy for people using wheelchairs or pushchairs to negotiate. In some situations existing gravel paths can be replaced using tarmac with gravel rolled in as a top-dressing so that there is a hard surface but the traditional appearance is retained. In other places crushed stone or hoggin paths have been found to be suitable. In rural churchyards the use of paving slabs, concrete or hard edgings is undesirable since such materials often look too “urban” and unsympathetic.

If new paths are being planned, perhaps to provide access to additional burial areas, it is important that the Parish takes a holistic view of the future of the churchyard. Rather than simply providing a new stretch of path to the most recent interments, the PCC is encouraged to draw up a scheme for paths to the whole churchyard in the years to come. This should include any planting, sites for benches and practical features such as water supplies and compost bins. This allows the immediate need to be addressed as the first phase of a coherent vision for the future use of the churchyard. Please be aware that in addition to a Faculty new paths may also require planning consent and informal consultation with the Local Authority is advised at the outset, which may incur a charge from the Local Authority.

### **Archaeological Advice**

It is likely that a new path within an historic churchyard will have archaeological implications which will require the services of a professional archaeologist, and the advice contained within the relevant guidance notes should also be followed.

### **Points to Consider**

#### **Path design**

Clearly, in some situations compromises have to be made because of the lie of the land and the fact that excavation is not possible due to burials.

The Sensory Trust [www.sensorytrust.org.uk](http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk) offers the following basic information but the current Building Regulations should also be consulted:

#### *Width*

1.8m = two wheelchairs, or two people, side by side

1.2m = a wheelchair with a pedestrian alongside

0.9m = a wheelchair with no room alongside

NB for churchyard paths it is important to consider other uses especially access for funerals and weddings

#### *Gradient*

1:20 = the preferred maximum gradient

1:15 = the recommended maximum gradient

1:12 = the maximum gradient given in the British Standards but many find it too steep

#### *Length of slope*

Sometimes a slightly steeper gradient over a shorter distance may be preferable to a longer slope with a gentler gradient. A path with a gradient of more than 1:20 must have a level resting platform at least every 30m

#### *Camber*

Camber can present difficulties for wheelchair users and people with visual impairments. 1:100 is the preferred maximum although 1:50 is the British Standard.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requires reasonable efforts to be made to remove physical barriers to equal access but legislation protecting historic buildings still applies. Equally, there are existing trees and tombs in churchyards that have to be respected.

#### **Surfaces**

There are a number of options but each churchyard will require different treatment:

##### *Epoxy-bonded resin aggregate*

- High cost but attractive range of colours and finishes so can be carefully matched
- Provides a good quality surface

##### *Hoggin (rammed, compacted stone)*

- Low cost, depending on local source.
- Rural "country park" type finish with good grip and level firm surface if well prepared and constructed.
- Can rut, especially in wet areas, and can get muddy

##### *Asphalt and tarmac*

- Medium cost and low maintenance.
- Durable providing preliminary consolidation and weed elimination are carried out.
- Unsuitable in rural churchyards unless surfaced with other materials to give softened finish.
- Can be laid between timber boards (not hard edges) and the timber allowed to remain in place until it rots away and nature allows the churchyard grass to creep over and soften the edges.

### *Concrete*

- Low cost.
- Unsuitable in its raw state but in some situations might be appropriate if surface is rolled with textured surface to improve appearance and grip.

### *Gravel*

- Generally considered unsuitable as a loose material that can be dangerous for wheel-chair users and difficult for those with pushchairs.

## **Design Considerations**

Paths (repair of existing):

1. Is the path to be patched or completely resurfaced?
2. Will the repairs be like-for-like or are different materials to be used? If so, why?
3. Is the width, route and approach to the path to be as existing? If not, why?
4. Will the work require excavation that will disturb soil below the level of the existing path?

Paths (new):

1. What is the purpose of the path, who is it for, what will it achieve?
2. What materials will be used and how do these relate to the fabric of the building, walls, and headstones?
3. What is the width, route and approach to the new path?
4. What depth of soil will need to be disturbed to create the path?

## **Applying for a faculty**

Please note that most projects will require a faculty application, accompanied by the following information:

1. Answers to the relevant questions above
2. A plan of the churchyard preferably to scale, showing the extent and location of the proposed work in the context of the church building, existing paths, tombs and trees.
3. A smaller-scale plan, showing the churchyard within the wider neighborhood.
4. Photographs illustrating the situation (snapshots are enormously helpful)
5. Details of the methods to be used and drawings to show design and construction, including a cross-section showing the amount of sub-soil or soil to be removed to allow the path to be constructed
6. Details of whether the church architect has been involved in the project
7. Specification and/or estimate for the work

## **Professional Involvement**

If the specification has not been drawn up by the church architect the DAC is likely to suggest that s/he should be consulted about the proposals and technical aspects of the project as well as those which might have a visual impact on the church. The PCC may find it helpful to do this at the outset rather than after the DAC has discussed the proposals.

## **Further information**

Health & Safety – A policy and audit form available from EIG 01452 528 533 or help@eig-mail.com.