



Historic England

Ms Jacqui Carreira-White
The Diocese of Bath and Wells
Flourish House
Cathedral Park
Wells
Somerset
BA5 1FD

Our ref: PA01203800
Your ref: 2023-082995

5 August 2025

Dear Ms Carreira-White

Pre-application Advice

CHURCH OF ST MARY MAGDALENE, STOCKLAND BRISTOL, BRIDGWATER, TA5 2PZ

Thank you for consulting us on these proposals at pre-application stage. We offer the following advice to help inform the proposals.

Advice

The significance of the Church of St Mary Magdalene

In 1865 the present Church of St Mary Magdalene replaced an older parish church which had been dedicated to All Saints in 1316. Construction of the replacement building was funded by Thomas Daniel Jnr (1799-1872), then lay rector and patron.

The Daniel family were bankers and merchants from Bristol, who made their money through the slavery economy. They owned enslaved people, plantations, ships trading between England and the West Indies and were sugar merchants, as well as providing mortgages to plantation owners and investing in other concerns related to, or dependent on, enslavement. When slavery was abolished, the family received one of the largest compensation payments from the British government.

Some members of the family are commemorated by a small brass plaque on the rear nave wall. The text highlights the contribution that Thomas Daniel Jnr and his wife made to the construction of the building. The plaque also outlines that the west windows are dedicated to Daniel Jnr's son, Revd Henry Arthur Daniel (1829 - 1912), who was installed as rector by his father.



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The plaque possesses historic interest as a record of the evolution of the building documenting its benefactor and his family. It also holds artistic interest, through its elaborately enamelled text in a Gothic style typeface. The plaque does not mention the source of the money that the Daniel family amassed, nor the suffering which the transatlantic slave trade caused to the African people who were subjected to it.

The church of St Mary Magdalene is included on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. It is listed at grade II, recognising its special interest.

The impact of the proposals on the church of St Mary Magdalene

The proposals constitute a wide-ranging scheme of work to the interior and the exterior of the building. We do not wish to offer any comments regarding the vast majority of these works and defer to the advice of the DAC on these matters.

As part of the proposals the Daniel plaque would be re-enamelled, to increase its legibility, and supplemented with an additional plaque in memory of the many enslaved people who passed through the ownership of the Daniel family, especially the 4,424 who were in their 'possession' at the time of the compensation payout. The design, precise location, materiality and wording of the proposed supplementary plaque has not been included within the submission.

The addition of a supplementary interpretation plaque to demonstrate the source of the Daniel family wealth would not, in principle, harm the significance of the extant plaque or the wider church. It could be beneficial for the plaque's historic significance by presenting more information on the historical and social context that led to the erection of the church. By restoring it to a legible condition and improving its appearance, the re-enamelling of the plaque would be positive for its historic and artistic values. Further details regarding the new plaque will be required as the proposals develop. Historic England leave this detail to the DAC to scrutinise.

Policy context

The Church of England's publication, *Contested Heritage in Churches and Cathedrals*, provides statutory guidance relevant to contested heritage within the jurisdiction of the faculty system and the Care of Cathedrals Measure (2011). The guidance states that interpretation can be used to add different narratives to the object and explain different



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perspectives.

Paragraph 211 of the National Planning Policy Framework stipulates the importance of the retention of plaques in situ, and of articulating their historic and social context.

Historic England's position

Historic England's position regarding monuments that are contested is that they should remain in situ but be interpreted, allowing us to develop a deeper understanding of our often difficult past. This reflects the Church of England's guidance and Government policy, as cited above.

Having assessed this application, we consider that the proposed works to the plaque, including the addition of an interpretative plaque providing additional historical and social context, is consistent with both the Church's guidance and national policy (NPPF 211).

We recommend that you seek the advice of the DAC in relation to the remainder of the works.

Next Steps

Thank you for involving us at the pre-application stage. We recommend that you seek the advice of the DAC regarding the other works that are included within the proposals.

Yours sincerely

Historic England - South West

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Pre-application Advice

List of information on which the above advice is based

All documents were accessed via the online faculty system.



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