

From: Rachel Broomfield <rachel.broomfield@spab.org.uk>

Sent: 25 July 2025 12:59

To: aparsons@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Cc: Jacqui Carreira-White <Jacqui.Carreira-White@bathwells.anglican.org>; Mark Lidster <Mark.Lidster@bathwells.anglican.org>; Merlin Lewis <merlin.lewis@spab.org.uk>

Subject: Re: St Dubricius' Church, High Street, Porlock, Somerset, TA24 8QJ, (app: 6/27/25/005), our ref: 207505

Importance: High

Re: Proposed new PV system and glass door

Dear Andrew

Thank you for consulting the SPAB regarding the proposed works to the Grade I listed church of St Dubricius, Porlock. We have copied in Jacqui and Mark from Bath & Wells DAC so they are aware of our comments.

Proposals

- Installing PV panels to the south pitch of the nave roof within the concealed central valley.
- Installing a new glazed door in the porch.

Discussion

Although this is an application for Planning Permission as the church is covered by Ecclesiastical Exemption, it is a Grade I listed building within a Conservation Area and therefore we would expect to see a Heritage Impact Statement and an assessment of the visual impact of the proposed panels being provided. The porch where the new glazed door is being proposed is 15th century and yet there is very little detail about it and no assessment of its significance or the impact the works would have.

We would like to raise the following questions and would suggest that the additional information is requested prior to this application being determined.

- **PV panels**

We understand that the roof covering on the south pitch of the nave roof is to be replaced which is why the opportunity to install PV panels has arisen. Has the roof structure been assessed to ensure that it can take the additional weight or are strengthening works required? If so, details of these works need to be provided.

The proposals are for 18 panels, but no information has been given regarding how much electricity the church uses and therefore how many panels are needed to supply this? Additional panels specifically for the purpose of generating energy to sell back to the grid are not encouraged to minimise the level of harm.

How will the roof be accessed for maintenance and cleaning the panels? There are no obvious hatches shown on the roof plans.

On proposed GF floor plan it says: *'New Battery and inverter in store or alternative locations: could be within reconstructed shed outside s2 or in boiler plant room'*. This detail needs to be confirmed.

The eastmost panels are visible from the south (see Proposed South Elevation drawing) and might be visible from the footpath which connects the corner of the high street to Coach Road / The Drang via

the north side of the CoE First School. There is also an area of raised ground to the south of Porlock which maybe a popular spot - is the church visible from here and is this an important view? PV panels are reflective and so can be seen from a significant distance, especially on a sunny day. We therefore advise that a proper view point assessment / photos are needed as a minimum to establish the true visual impact of the proposed panels.

- **Glazed porch door**

The porch is currently open and dates from the 15th century. We therefore need more information regarding it to understand the impact the glazed door would have, both physically (in terms of fixings and changing the internal conditions within the porch) and its visual impact.

What material is proposed for the frame and how will the doors be fixed in position? No details are given but fixing into the mortar joints would be preferable to the stonework.

What other draught proofing measures are being installed throughout the church?

We would suggest using low reflectivity glass otherwise it will be hard to see into the church. The manifestations should be kept to a minimum.

Will the new door have an automated opening mechanism to improve accessibility otherwise it will become another obstacle for anyone with mobility issues? If so, where will the buttons be located (outside and inside)?

Summary

At this stage there is not enough information to be able to fully assess the impact that the proposed panels and new glazed porch doors would have on this Grade I listed church. We would therefore recommend that the application is withdrawn and amended to include the additional information requested. We would be very pleased to look at this again once these details are available.

Best wishes,

Rachel

Rachel Broomfield

Senior Casework Manager (Acting)

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)

Phone number: 01752 270409