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Floodlighting

Many rural and urban churches are floodlit successfully by night to dramatic effect and it can be an important tool in ensuring the visibility and longer term sustainability of the church building in the community.

However there are obvious environmental impacts. In an urban setting floodlighting is now entirely normal and the combined effect of street lights and flood lighting giving an unnatural glow to the sky is known as light pollution.

The ability to see the stars clearly in the night sky is still treasured in more

rural areas and installing flood lighting in these areas is likely to be controversial.

In addition to light pollution there are high energy costs associated with floodlighting your church building.

These can be mitigated to some extent by low energy light bulbs and time switches.

However, It is important that given the Church of England's target of 80% reduction in carbon footprint by 2050 parishes should think carefully what they want to achieve and how else it could be done before embarking on a floodlighting programme.

Things to consider before pursuing a scheme

Don't confuse floodlighting with security lighting which will need a specific scheme and separate advice.

Consider the cost - both set up and ongoing running costs which will include electricity charges, maintenance and replacement of fittings and bulbs.

Consider local opinions to a new scheme – particularly in rural areas where the introduction of floodlighting may impact on neighbours and the skyline.

Draw up a brief with your requirements and ideas for how you want the building to be lit as a starting point for discussion with the DAC and your architect who will be able to offer advice on selecting a consultant.

Choose a specialist lighting consultant with proven experience of church buildings.

Designing Church Floodlighting

You don't necessarily need to light the whole church. Special features such as a prominent cross or a gilded weathervane will be obvious targets for spotlighting but in some cases it may be that only a part of the building would be lit, a tower or spire would be the most likely choice.

A good scheme should seek to:

- avoid too dramatic an emphasis on upward shadowing;
- take care that there is minimum light pollution or overspill towards neighbours;
- choose the colour of the light source carefully; rendering as closely as possible the natural colouration of the church and ensuring differentiation

is maintained when different materials abut;

- take account of the environmental impacts of energy use;
- take account of trees and vegetation and how growth and seasons will impact the scheme.
- consider opportunities such as lighting part of the building from the roofs. Be imaginative with fittings; in some urban situations it is possible to floodlight off street lighting columns or from fittings mounted on nearby buildings. However it is not appropriate to site lights in trees.

Consider implications of vandalism. Fittings may have to be bolted down and toughened glass should be used.

Minimise impact of necessary cable runs, consulting with the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser where necessary.

Permissions

You will need a faculty and in some cases planning permission.

Go to the DAC at an early stage to gauge initial comments and identify any issues which will need resolving.

Seek advice at an early stage from the local planning authority.

Discuss with the DAC what experimentation would be worthwhile.

The DAC will want to look at the principle of the scheme and may want to look with you at the financial implications.

The DAC will advise on any additional consultees such as English Heritage, the National Amenity Societies and the Church Buildings Council.

You should consult Natural England to ensure that your scheme does not impact upon any known bat colonies (floodlighting can be extremely disturbing to bats).

Your insurers to see whether your policy will cover the floodlighting if additional cover is needed.

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