



DISTRICT CONSENTS GROUP

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The District Consents Group has been working for just over 12 months. The following notes are intended as guidance for those in the South East District who enter schemes and projects onto the on-line process. Further advice can be obtained from Chris Linford.

1. The Pathway for Consent.

The Group will engage in internal discussion over matters of concern about a project raised by any member of the Group and will give consent when a consensus has been achieved. If a Circuit disagrees with a decision they have a right to appeal to the District Council.

Members of the Group are asked to tell Chris Linford when they are not available due to holidays, ill health etc. During these times the Group will proceed without the involvement of that member if it would lead to an undue delay in processing a project that is ready for consideration.

The Group would normally aim to give a considered response (not necessarily consent) within 14 days of Chris Linford indicating that he thinks a scheme is ready for consideration. Our purpose as a District is to support Circuits and Churches in their mission and ministry so their engagement with the consents process should be one where they are helped to present projects that we can consent to. This may mean that we ask searching question but people should be helped to see that this part of the Methodist way of being church where we watch over one another in love, it also means we are not a rubber stamping group.

2. What mission information is needed?

As much as possible. All projects should include a genuine attempt to provide the information requested and answer the questions fully. Even repairs that draw on capital reserves should be justified from a mission perspective. We need sufficient information for the body to be able to give consent. To some extent the size and nature of the project will influence the amount of detail we need, but all projects requiring consent should have a reasonable attempt to answer the questions answered. This is true for the questions about mission, the technical details and the financial information.

3. Some general issues.

Major building schemes. Wherever possible we will hold a site visit to these schemes. As they often take several years to develop, circuits are encouraged to put them onto the website as early as possible so that a dialogue can be opened up with the Consents Group

A major project being implemented in phases. The application for consent in phase 1 should include reference to the future phases in as much detail is available, which it is recognised in some case may be quite sketchy. The system allows for amendments to schemes and for the linking of related projects.

Older Projects. In the small number of cases where a project was submitted before the consents scheme started there is unlikely to be much information on the website. Chris Linford will ensure the Consents Group are given information that was previously submitted on the old schedules.

Letting a manse. In the current housing climate letting manses rather than selling them is wise stewardship. Most Circuits use a letting agency; The Consents Group is concerned to make sure they know that TMCP must approve any legal documents signed. If Circuits are using proper professional advisors we see no reason in principle for not consenting

Where circuits are regrouping for mission. It is important that we ask those seeking consent in relation to a manse sale or purchase to give us some indication of the strategic thinking that has led to the scheme.

Purchase of a Manse. We need to be given the strategic and mission thinking that has led to the decision and also an assurance that the proposed manse fully complies with the requirements of CPD.

Reshaping a church interior. Each member of the Group has different expertise, and experience. It is appropriate that we are confident that issues of the liturgical ordering of churches have been considered by those seeking consent. However we will not withhold consent if some of us happen to disagree with the outcome of those considerations.

Link with District Grants Group. It does not matter which way round a consent application that also involves application for a District Grant is considered. The Consents Group can still give consent if the box for a grant is ticked as applied for or approved. If the grant is approved, then the Group will be aware that the District Grants Group has already looked at the same mission and strategy issues. If the District Grants Group has not yet approved a grant they should be aware that consent from the Consents Group means they have considered the mission and strategy issues. That does not however imply that a grant will be given at the level requested, as factors such as having the money available, will also affect the decision of the Grants Group.

Alan Thorpe and John Hellyer are both members of the Grants Group, so they should be able to ensure that there is a proper flow of information between the two groups.

Sharing Agreements. These do not necessarily involve any development of the property and are simply legal agreements to jointly manage a property with another denomination under the 1969 Sharing of Church Buildings Act. The process requires the district to give consent. Chris Linford will ensure that the Connexional Ecumenical Office is alerted when these schemes are being considered and when we give consent.

John Hellyer

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