

Getting to Know our Faith and our Church

In the Annual Report the parish church of St John the Baptist, Frome, is now described as a 'Major Parish Church': What does this mean?

In the past there has been a rather self defined network of 'Greater' churches that has now been replaced by a slightly wider network of churches designated as 'Major Parish Churches'. This definition doesn't mean that they are somehow more important than other parish churches which have their own distinctive and often very significant role but it acknowledges in particular those who are effectively running cathedral size buildings on parish size resources. The definition has come out of the Taylor Review on the Sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals which was published on 20 Dec 2017 by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (a pdf copy can be downloaded from the gov.uk website). The review involved significant contributions from Historic England and the Church Buildings Council.

The Church Buildings Council identifies major parish churches as having all or most of the following characteristics: Exceptional significance and/or issues necessitating a conservation management plan, Physically very big (over 1000m² footprint), Grade I, II* or (exceptionally) II listed, Usually open to visitors daily, Have a role or roles beyond those of a typical parish church, Make a considerable civic, cultural and economic contribution to their communities.

The churches within our Diocese that are so designated are: Bath: St Peter & St Paul (Bath Abbey), Bathwick: The Blessed Virgin Mary, Bridgwater: St Mary, Frome: St John the Baptist, Redcliffe Bay: St Nicholas, Taunton: St James, Taunton: St Mary Magdalene, Wells: St Cuthbert.

Being open to the public is a very important part of the criteria and the support (more advisory than financial!) that will result may help us increase the welcome we are able to give to visitors and the variety of ways in which we engage with community within the space that church provides.