

1. Statement of Intent

It has always been the policy of the Benefice of Witney to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its congregation, visitors and employees while they are in its church buildings and associated grounds and, of others who may be affected by their undertakings, and to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and all other allied relevant legislation as appropriate.

2. Objectives

In order to achieve compliance with the statement of policy, the Benefice of Witney has set the following objectives:

- To set and maintain high standards for health and safety through a programme of training, regular and spot audits and proactive responses to accidents and identified hazards.
- To identify risks and set in place programmes to remove or reduce these risks through risk assessment creation and review and the introduction of Safe Systems.
- To ensure that these standards are communicated to all using the churches within the Benefice of Witney using local Intranets; H&S bulletins and notice boards.
- To ensure that all its congregation, visitors and employees are given the necessary information, instruction and training to enable them to conduct themselves in a safe manner.
- To ensure the dissemination and discussion of relevant information on safety and health issues through the Parish of Witney and Parish of Minster Lovell Health and Safety Committees.
- To develop promotional campaigns and otherwise to encourage safety and health awareness of its congregation.
- To monitor its operation.

3. Responsibilities

To ensure the prevention of ill health and the avoidance of accidents, and the promotion of safe and healthy churches, the following responsibilities have been established.

3.1 Parochial Church Councils

The Parochial Church Councils for the Benefice of Witney have established the overall Health and Safety Policy. The Parochial Church Councils:

- Assume overall responsibility for health and safety and thus the implementation of this policy.
- Assume responsibility for ensuring this policy is monitored and reviewed as per the policy statement.
- Assume responsibility for ensuring health, safety, and welfare procedures, practices and safe systems of work are formulated and implemented across the benefice and its material sub contractors.

3.2 Churchwardens

The churchwardens are responsible for:

- Keeping the Health and Safety Policy under review and ensuring that it is revised as and when necessary.
- Ensuring that the relevant resources are made available to enable the policy to be implemented.
- Ensuring Health and Safety forms part of all District Church Council meetings.
- Monitoring the Policy's implementation, and setting targets or objectives where appropriate.
- Reporting on progress to the appropriate PCC.
- Bringing to the Benefice Council's attention any faults or areas of weakness in the Policy or its implementation.

3.3 Deputy churchwardens at the individual churches

Deputy churchwardens are responsible for:

- The practical implementation of the Health and Safety policy, the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and other relevant legislation.
- Ensuring that the activities under their control are, as far as is reasonably practicable, conducted without detriment to the health and safety of their congregation, visitors, employees or others who may be affected by their activities.
- Ensuring that their area of responsibility is subject to risk assessment, regular inspections and audits.
- Ensuring that all accidents, incidents and near misses, within their area of responsibility, are reported, reviewing all such reports and ensuring that a full investigation is carried out and appropriate remedial action taken, where necessary.
- Ensuring that none of their congregation or employees uses equipment or carries out a function for which suitable and sufficient training has not been provided.
- Communicating policy on all health and safety matters within their church.
- Encouraging all the congregation to be involved in matters of health and safety.
- Carrying out periodic inspections to identify unsafe equipment, working conditions, practices and fire hazards, making reports of findings and recommendations regarding the remedying of any defects.
- Consulting with the churchwardens on all issues of health and safety.

3.4 Individual Responsibilities

All the congregation and employees across the Benefice of Witney are required to:

- Co-operate in implementing the requirements of all Health and Safety legislation, related codes of practice and safety instructions.
- Refrain from doing anything which constitutes a danger to themselves or others.
- Immediately bring to the attention of their relevant deputy churchwardens any situations or practices that are noted which may lead to injuries or ill health.
- Ensure that any equipment issued to them, or for which they are responsible, is correctly used and properly stored.

- Be responsible for good housekeeping in the area in which they are present.
- Report all accidents, incidents, dangerous occurrences and near misses, in accordance with guidance laid down by the Benefice of Witney.

4. Health and Safety Committee

The Standing Committee for each parish will act as the Health and Safety Committee for the co-ordination of all health and safety matters within each parish. The committee has responsibility for:

- Identifying all areas of health and safety which have policy implications, including health and safety legislation, with regard to the congregation, employees, visitors and contractors while in the churches and their associated lands.
- Evaluating implications of these issues to the appropriate Parish church council, and their prioritisation with regard to resources and implementation.
- To advise the appropriate Parochial Church Council on all matters concerning health and safety.

5. Contractors

All Contractors working in/on the premises of the Benefice of Witney are required to comply with appropriate rules and regulations governing their work activities. Contractors are legally responsible for their own workforce and for ensuring that their work is carried out in a safe manner.

6. Communication

The name of the person designated with the responsibility for health and safety in each of the individual churches within the Benefice of Witney is to be prominently displayed for the information of its congregation, visitors and employees.

7. Consultation and Training

The Parochial Church Councils are committed to involving the congregations and employees at all levels in the maintenance of Health and Safety standards and to provide them with adequate information, instruction and training. External Health and Safety consultants will be used to provide professional health, safety, and occupational advice, as required.

8. Working at Height

8.1 Scope

The working at height element of the H&S Policy applies to any activity relating to the interior or exterior of Benefice buildings which cannot be progressed from ground level.

It applies to anyone undertaking such activity, including all officers of the Parishes, members of the congregation, employees and contractors.

8.2 Policy Statements

Work which requires the use of a step ladder (or alternate) to increase height by less than 1m can be undertaken by a sole individual. It should not be carried out without others being present in the building.

Work which requires the use of a step ladder (or alternate) to increase height by 1m or more should be carried out by a minimum of 2 people, one to undertake the work and the other to secure the base of the ladder at all times while their colleague is on it.

Care must be taken to ensure the step ladder is erected on a level, non slip surface.

Step ladders should only be used for simple short duration tasks.

Scaffolding should be used for any task:

- Above 8m, or;
- Where the activity requires working at height for more than 15 minutes duration in each location, or;
- Where heavy (non-domestic) machinery is required to undertake the task.

Any project requiring scaffolding must be discussed in detail with the scaffolding supplier, whose responsibility it is to specify the appropriate structure and support base for what is required.

Where ladders or scaffolding remain in situ for more than 1 hour, they must be screened off to prevent access or use.

Exterior scaffolding must be fitted with appropriate alarms and netting for safety and security.

9. Single person occupancy

Where an officer or employee of the Benefice is working alone in a Benefice building, they must carry their mobile phones with them at all times, to cover cases of emergency.

Outside of church opening times, anyone working alone in a Benefice Building must ensure that the building is clear of other visitors, and secure themselves in the building.

The Parish Office and other similar locations in Benefice buildings which house valuables, sensitive information or plant and equipment must always be kept locked when unattended.

10. Covid-19 and other pandemics

The PCCs will work within guidance laid down by the government and the diocese concerning Covid-19 and any other pandemics.

11. Policy Review

The effectiveness of the Health and Safety policy statement will be reviewed annually by the Parochial Church Councils and revised as and when necessary.

Reviewed by Witney PCC 29 June 2026

Reviewed by Minster Lovell PCC 13 July 2026

Signed *Hester Jones*

Counter-signed *Kirsty Morgan* Witney PCC

Counter-signed *Judith Warwick* Minster Lovell PCC

Review date: 1 year from date of adoption