

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

1. This Policy relies on the principles set out in Property Consent – Help and Guidance document of the Methodist Church which are as follows:

- All decisions, particularly those dealing with money or property, should be made openly transparently and recorded in writing. This is to protect those involved in making these decisions from criticism, either when the initial decision is made or if it is reviewed at some time in the future.
- Interests must be declared where a person's decision-making role places them in a position where they could potentially be seen to benefit from that decision by way of finance, business interest or personal gain.
- Situations of potential conflicts of interest must be recognised when they arise and steps should be taken to ensure that such decisions were clearly not adversely influenced.
- Awareness of potential conflict of interest should be a high priority at all stages of decision-making in the local church and the Circuit.
- Conflict of interest such be avoided by e.g. ensuring that other people are available to enter data on the website, confirm grant payments or agree to property proposals.
- Ministers should not be seen to recommend or authorise any work to improve the manse in which they live, or to buy a new one for their occupation.
- Superintendents should not be seen to confirm circuit resources or circuit endorsement of projects in churches within their own pastoral care.
- It is often the case that the District Property Secretary is a circuit minister and they should not be seen to give Consent on behalf of the Consent Giving Body to projects within their own circuit.

Note: It should be noted that the above examples do not mean that post holders with an interest should not be involved in the making of decisions, where their knowledge and experience might be invaluable. However, it should fall to someone else to input the decision on the website so that the 'interested' person is not seen as having made the decision, possibly alone.

2. The above principles shall prevail in the business of local church officers and of members of the Circuit Meeting. Members of the Circuit Meeting are recognised by the Charity Commission as Trustees of the Circuit as a Charity with responsibilities which pertain to such responsibility. [See Gov. UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-essential-trustee-new-guidance-on-trustees-responsibilities> for the six main duties of a Trustee].

Trustees have a legal duty to act only in the best interests of their charity. They must not put themselves in any position where their duties as trustee may conflict with any personal interest they may have. Charity law says that trustees cannot receive a benefit from their charity, whether directly or indirectly, unless they have an adequate legal authority to do so.

3. The Circuit will regularly remind Circuit Meeting members of their individual personal responsibility to declare conflict of interests which apply to them and which may be potentially of consequence to decisions made.
The Circuit will record such potential conflicts of interest and how each was handled.
All legal and property transactions shall be properly authorised by the Circuit Meeting who will hold ministers and circuit stewards accountable for enactment.

July 2017