



Inspection of Churches Guidance notes

Background

An inspection of Church buildings is required by law for all Church of England churches licensed for public worship in England. Although the legislation does not extend to the Diocese in Europe, there may be a local requirement for inspections of Church buildings, and the Diocese also wishes to encourage regular inspections, as a matter of good practice so that buildings are kept in good repair.

Recommendation

Some Chaplaincies will already have appropriate arrangements in place. For those that have not, we recommend that the inspection should be undertaken by a local qualified architect or building surveyor and that an inspection (a QI) should be made every five years. The Inspector should advise the Chaplaincy in the light of local legal requirements and these notes.

We have prepared these Guidance notes to help Chaplaincies undertake inspections. The notes are primarily intended for churches but they may be useful for other buildings owned by the Chaplaincy, e.g. a parsonage.

What can the Chaplaincy do to keep buildings in good repair?

Some costly repair work can be alleviated if the Chaplaincy undertakes frequent checks in the everyday care of the interior and exterior of the building and follow this up with routine maintenance tasks. These checks are outlined in *Appendix I* and cover:

- Care of gullies, drains, down pipes and gutters
- Care of tiles and slates
- Care of metal flashings and stone dressings.
- Care of window glass and window fittings.
- Care of equipment and heating and lighting fittings.

However, we also recommend a professional's regular input with a QI and when necessary to supervise any repairs. Things that a Chaplaincy can do to help an Inspector to undertake a survey are covered in *Appendix II*, summarised thus:

- Provide physical tools e.g. ladders and keys
- Provide documents, e.g. any relating to the building's care or history
- Provide details of any known defects
- Provide guidance on the scope of the report (on the lines suggested in this guidance note).

Why undertake an inspection by an Inspector?

The purpose of the QI is to tell the Chaplaincy if repairs are needed. It should be a general report on the church, concentrating on its state of maintenance and repair and written in non-technical language. It is not a full survey (which would be too expensive for the Chaplaincy) but it should give a rounded “portrait” of the condition of the church.

A QI will often highlight early signs of trouble and save money by allowing a problem to be tackled before it becomes more serious. An Inspector may also be able to advise on sources of potential grant aid.

The Chaplaincy and its Inspector

It is important that a good and close relationship should be developed with the Inspector, who should be seen as an impartial and independent professional adviser. The chaplaincy should trust the Inspector to recommend only what is necessary or beneficial; the Inspector should be able to trust the chaplaincy to carry out recommendations in a proper manner. The chaplaincy should use its Inspector in a creative way, as aids to the preservation and enhancement of the church. It is helpful if the Inspector attends the Chaplaincy meeting at which the report is initially discussed.

The Quinquennial report

Reports will vary greatly in their presentation. However, it is hoped that all QIs will follow the guidelines prepared by the diocese, as suggested in *Appendix III* which cover:

- Preliminary information in report, e.g. name and address of the church, its dimensions, any photographs etc
- Main report, including a commentary on what has happened on any previous report and any new observations
- A report on “Services”, e.g. heating and electrical systems
- A report on the site, e.g. boundary walls
- A report advising on the undertaking routine inspections and maintenance and cost estimates for repairs.

Conclusion

So, on behalf of the diocese, I hope that this guidance will help everyone entrusted with the responsibility to look after your church and any other of your buildings.

Adrian Mumford
Diocesan Secretary

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Appendix I

Everyday care

Members of the congregation may well wish to help in caring for the building. Here are some useful checks to make as often as you can:

Exterior

- Keep gullies clear of silt.
- Clean and renew gratings.
- Lift inspection covers to see that the drains are flowing.
- Grease fitting grooves of cast-iron covers.
- Never plant or bed against walls, rather make a wide gravel drain for access and damp reduction.
- Clean gratings thoroughly.
- Regularly clean and flush rainwater gutters and downpipes (as they are prone to gradual blockage and plant growth).
- Attend promptly to missing and slipped tiles and slates, raised flashings and insecure ridges. If there is a problem that may be causing unseen damage, an expert's inspection is a good idea.
- Don't paint or repaint metal flashings or stone dressings: this will destroy their integrity.

Interior

- Look out for cracks in window glass and inspect all window fittings.
- Keep condensation channels and drains clear and seek advice if condensation is persistent as this means heating and ventilation is out of balance.
- Keep a list of fire extinguishers, alarms, latches, locks, bolts, safes and ladders and check them thoroughly. Replace if necessary.
- Don't lay carpets over stone flag or clay-tile paving as these floors need to breathe to prevent moisture build up.
- Frequently clean heating and lighting fittings, which attract flies and dust.
- Remember to check places that are infrequently visited. Check them carefully, at least once a year.

How to help an Inspector

Remuneration

A church Inspector is a professional person and should be properly reimbursed both for conducting the inspection and supervising work arising from it. A fee for the inspection should be agreed in advance. Fees for any subsequent follow-up repair work should be agreed separately at a later date.

Practical help

On or prior to the visit, the Inspector will be helped by the following practical support from the chaplaincy:

- Plant, tools and keys. Provide adequate ladders to reach gutters, parapets, eaves, levels, lofts, and help in moving them. Where necessary, you should locate drainage inspection chambers, expose them and lift their covers. Keys for all parts of the church should be clearly labelled.
- Documents. All available relevant documents should be made available, e.g. any Church Log Book, any details of the building's architectural/planning status, any Planning approval documents, any guide books and other sources of historical or architectural reference, any copies of previous reports should be provided prior to the Inspection.
- Other information. You may wish to provide details of recent repairs and maintenance work, including dates of execution, drawings, specifications, quotations, contractors' names. You might also include agreements and specialists' servicing details, concerning items such as: electrical installations, alarm installations, heating installations, gas and water installations, lightning conductors, bells, bell-frame, and ropes, clocks, organs, fire extinguishers, certificates re timber decay, wet and dry rot and beetle infestation.
- Additions, alterations, demolitions. Please provide a brief description of any such proposals such, with supporting drawings of any new building or demolition work being considered for any part of the church, internal or external.
- Particular Defects in the Building. Any specific defects which have come to light should be noted for the Inspector's particular attention. Where action has been taken, a brief description of the remedial work (together with the date, contractor's details and other relevant information) should be kept for reference.
- Church drawings. Ideally, the church should have a set of record drawings, updated at regular intervals and available for the Inspector. Where none exists, Local Authorities, previous Inspectors and builders involved in past work may be able to help.

Safety and insurance

Please advise the Inspector of any known hazards and consider informing the insurers of the Inspection date. Ensure that cover applies to all taking part, including the Inspector, including cover for accidental damage to the building.

Recommendations for the Layout of the Report

The Report should be prepared under the main headings of:

1. Preliminary information
2. Main Report, listing detailed condition
3. Recommendations for Maintenance
4. Estimates, Grant Aid, etc.

I. Preliminary Information

- *Name and address of the church.*
- *Archdeaconry in which the church resides.*
- *Local Authority under whose jurisdiction the church resides.*
- *Architectural/planning Status of building.*
- *Name, address and telephone number of the Inspector.*
- *Date(s) of the Inspection and of the next due date, 5yrs hence and Date of the Inspection Report. Date of the previous Inspection and its Report.*
- *Name of the previous Inspector (if any)*
- *Dimensions of the church.* Provide, wherever possible, a site plan with a drawn scale, to enable meaningful reductions via photocopying, etc.
- *Churchyard/cemetery.* Indicate [who is responsible for maintenance](#). List any tree important to a local, regional or national authority. List any ruin in the churchyard/cemetery, designated of outstanding architectural, artistic, historical or archaeological value.
- *Access to the church site.* Indicate pedestrian access (including arrangements for those with reduced mobility). Detail provision for vehicles and parking facilities.
- *Land adjoining the church.* Provide details of ownership. Note possible uses and/or constraints. Mention relevant planning approval details.
- *Historical Background of the church.* Give a [brief architectural history](#) (supported by key drawings with a drawn scale wherever possible), including any acknowledgements of information sources e.g guide books etc. Give names of inspectors, designers, builders and craftsmen who have been involved. List moveable articles of outstanding architectural, artistic, historical or archaeological (or significant monetary) value, or at special risk of being stolen or damaged.
- *Description of the church.* Provide, wherever possible, supporting drawings with a drawn scale, and always make reference to: design (tower and spire); plan form (including galleries and crypt); orientation; constructional method and materials used; seating capacity; toilet provision; kitchen facilities; other buildings on the site
- *Photographs.* Please provide, wherever possible, internal and external photographs as a valuable aid towards a full appreciation of the character and quality of the building(s).

2. **Main Report**

a. *Schedule of Works*

- Schedule the works carried out since the last Inspection.

b. *Previous Reports*

- Inspect the previous Report, this being particularly important if it was prepared by another Inspector.

c. *Outstanding Works*

- Note any work outstanding from the previous Report.

d. *Damage*

- Note any damage since the last Report arising from storm, fire, theft, burst pipes, vandalism or other causes.

e. *Additions, Alterations, Demolitions*

- Note any projects carried out (or contemplated) since the last Report. You should make reference here to new or alteration works and additions, demolitions, re-siting of fixtures or re-ordering.

f. *Works by Others*

- Note any relevant works carried out by adjoining owners, the Local Authority, highways and public utilities, and which may have had detrimental effects on the buildings and environment.

g. *Limitations*

- State whether the Inspection is made from ground level, other accessible floor levels, by ladders and readily accessible locations;
- State that the Inspection is a visual one with or without binoculars. Opening up of enclosed spaces is excluded, even though further inspection of these spaces may be recommended. (If considered appropriate, a list of items not inspected may be included here);
- State that the Report is restricted to the general condition of the building and its defects. It is neither comprehensive nor a specification adequate for use in obtaining estimates and quotations from contractors for the execution of any of the work which may be recommended;
- Advise that further professional advice will, in most instances, be necessary and should be sought in order to avoid inappropriate and possibly destructive repair work.

h. *Further Inspections*

Make recommendations for items requiring further inspection, observation and advice, categorising them as:

- Opening up specified areas for detailed examination;
- Specialist testing of heating, gas, electrical installations, lightning conductors, organs, bells, clocks, fire extinguishers, etc.;
- Chemical analysis of particular elements ([asbestos](#), etc.);
- Items of archaeological importance.

i. Priorities

List items under degrees of priority with their approximate costs. Include items which might safely be entrusted to unskilled labour suitably supervised (or indeed voluntary labour), and others which may qualify for grant aid. Priority 1 should be the highest:

1. Urgent works requiring immediate attention;
2. Works recommended to be carried out during the next 12 months;
3. Works recommended to be carried out during the Quinquennial (i.e. before the next Inspection);
4. Other desirable work for consideration.

Additional information in the Main Report

a. *Weather.* Record the conditions at the time of the Inspection.

b. *Structure Generally (Externally and Internally)*

- Record signs of movement, cracks, etc., which may lead to structural failure in walls, buttresses, piers, arches, etc.;
- Record any indications of foundation settlement;
- Record areas of damp penetration and damp proof courses.
- Record unsatisfactory relationships between ground and floor levels.
- Record indications of failure in structural timbers

c. *Pitched Roof Coverings and other External Features*

- Record material(s), construction, general condition, including ridges, hips, valleys, parapet wall gutters, cesspools and flashings;
- Record special features such as ridge-ventilators (and other types), finials, crosses and weather vanes. Comment on condition;
- Record condition of parapets and copings.

d. *Flat Roofs Covering*

- Record material(s), construction and general condition, noting cracks and signs of failure in construction beneath the covering.

e. *Rainwater Goods and Disposal Systems*

- Record materials, cleanliness and general condition, including cracks and leaks. Comment on the adequacy of the drainage method for rainwater disposal.
- Note the condition of gargoyles;
- Record damage to walls, etc., due to unsatisfactory or damaged rainwater goods;
- Comment as necessary on connection of rainwater pipes to drains via gullies;
- Are facilities for cleaning rainwater goods and gullies adequate?
- Comment as necessary on the fixing of rainwater goods to the building.

f. *Pavings*

- Comment on the materials and condition of paving. Is paving laid to fall away from the building?

g. *Underground Drainage*

- Comment on disposal methods generally (storm drains, soakaway, foul drains, inspection chambers, etc.) and their condition.

h. External Wall Surfaces

- Record materials and general condition;
- Where ventilation is appropriate, refer to the condition of gratings and air bricks: is provision adequate?
- Note particular damage to sills, mullions, string courses, arches, lintels and carved/moulded features, together with pinnacles, finials, crosses, etc.;
- Note the condition of pointing, particularly where unsatisfactory remedial work has been carried out.

i. External Doors, Windows, Metalwork, Woodwork, Paintwork

- Comment on the condition of porches, canopies, lych gates and other timber structures, doors and frames, timber windows and metal frames;
- Note signs of wet or dry rot and insect infestation;
- Do opening lights perform adequately to provide ventilation?
- Note condition of metal hinges particularly where these are mediaeval and preservation is important;
- Where timber and metalwork is painted, note the general standard of maintenance.

j. External Glazing

- Note conditions of glazing (including any lead comes and saddle bars).

k. Towers, Spires, Clocks, Bells and Bell-frames

- Comment on the condition of tower and spire. Refer to roof (towers only), rainwater disposal, gargoyles, pinnacles, weather vanes, windows, louvres, clock faces, etc.;
- Is there satisfactory access to the tower, to ringing and bell chambers (where applicable)?
- Are there provisions for preventing birds entering tower storeys?
- Inspect and report on the condition of the bell-frame, noting the material used and any related structural damage.

l. Internal Roofs, Lofts, Ceiling Voids

- Note those areas which are conveniently, adequately and safely accessible, and those not;
- Report upon the materials, construction and condition of all roof members including comments regarding bearings on supporting walls;
- Note defects, including signs of structural failure, rot, insect attack, and rainwater penetration;
- Where suspended ceilings exist comment on the materials and general condition as in the above paragraph. Where services, pipes and cables have been installed within ceiling voids, comment upon condition, unsatisfactory workmanship, etc.;
- Where insulation of roof spaces is provided, record the type of material used and its condition;
- Is ventilation of concealed roof spaces adequate?
- Where [asbestos](#) based materials have been used in insulation, record and advise upon any action necessary.

m. Partitions, Screens, Panelling, Doors, Door Furniture

- Indicate which partition walls are structural and which not. Note materials, general condition and any defects;
- Report on the materials and condition of screens, panelling, doors and frames (including door furniture and associated ironmongery);
- Comment separately on the condition of carvings, painted panels and items of particular merit.

n. *Internal Finishes, Internal Decorations*

- Note the materials and condition of floors, walls and ceiling finishes (including painted, varnished, stencilled, gilded and special decorative work);
- Record dampness, decayed plaster and any other apparent defects.

p. *Floors, Balconies, Stairways and Balustrades, Platforms*

- Note the construction of floors within the building and any structural defects;
- Where suspended floor construction exists, record general condition, access to voids, structural rot, insect infestation or any other defects. Check cross-ventilation is adequate and any gratings are clean and in satisfactory condition;
- Report on general condition of balconies, stairways and balustrades and record defects;
- Report on general condition of timber platforms when raised above floor levels and record defects.

q. *Fittings, Fixtures and Moveable Articles*

- Comment upon the condition of:
 - various fittings, fixtures and moveable articles, taking account of those which are of outstanding architectural, artistic, historical, archaeological or significant monetary value or at special risk of being stolen or damaged;
 - altar(s) and reredos, communion rail(s), pulpit, lectern, reading desks, screens, seats or pews, sedilias, piscinas, font, candlesticks, communion plate, aumbry;
 - any other fixed or loose items of furniture, fittings and moveable articles.
- Record defects as appropriate and make recommendations for those items of outstanding interest, value or at risk.

r. *Organ Console, Case and “Loft”, and other Musical Instruments*

- Comment only on the visual condition of musical instruments and their locations: the tuning and care of these instruments are likely to be the subject of separate agreements.

s. *External and Internal Monuments, Tombs, Plaques, etc.*

- Comment briefly and generally on the condition of these, recommending action on any which appear hazardous.

"Services" in the Report

a. *Electrical Installation and Heating Installation*

- A statement should be included that comments are based on only a visual examination and no tests have been conducted.

b. *Tests/Inspections*

- State whether evidence of recent inspections/tests were presented to the inspecting architect and recorded in the church's Log Book. If not, advise inspection for both services.

c. *Maintenance Agreements*

- State whether there is a maintenance agreement for the heating installation.

d. *Heating Installation*

Comment on the:

- type of system installed, its age and apparent condition. (Boiler, Pumps, Controls, etc., Fuel used);
- cold water storage tank (location, condition, insulation);
- pipework and insulation type (blue asbestos);
- gas supply, condition and appliances served;
- oil storage tank and associated fittings and general condition, including that of radiators and control valves;
- condition of ducts and floor grilles;
- condition of the Boiler Room.

e. *Electrical Installation*

Comment on the:

- Apparent condition of incoming mains, meters and distribution boards;
- Record type of wiring and apparent condition;
- Types and suitability of lighting fittings;
- Type and distribution of socket outlets;
- Type of block storage heaters;
- Provision of external lighting fittings, their condition and distribution;
- Apparent condition of other electrical equipment (e.g. organ motor, water heaters and ventilation equipment);
- Apparent condition of emergency lighting (if provided).

f. *Lightning Conductor*

- State whether evidence of a recent test was presented for inspection or recorded in the church's Log Book.

g. *Sanitary Accommodation*

- Include a brief description of toilet facilities provided and their general condition, and similarly for kitchen facilities. Comment on the:
 - general standard of hygiene;
 - level of lighting, ventilation and heating;
 - condition of (and materials used for) hot and cold water services;
 - means for providing hot water and its condition;
 - type, numbers and condition of sanitary fittings;
- Note the condition of pipework joints, taps, traps, wastes and overflows;
- Indicate the type of connection to foul drain, to septic tank or cesspool;
- State the condition of the foul drainage.

h. *Fire Precautions*

- Note the number, disposition, and types of fire extinguishers provided;
- Examine records of maintenance of appliances;
- Determine whether the advice of the local [Fire Prevention Officer](#) (if any) has been sought and dated.

i. *Security*

- Comment on the security of the building;
- Has the advice of the Crime Prevention Officer (if any) been sought and acted upon?

Site details (including the Churchyard/cemetery)

a. *Ruins*

- List and comment upon any ruin in the churchyard/cemetery which is designated as being of outstanding architectural, artistic, historical or archaeological value, including any concerns for safety.

b. *Other Buildings on the Site*

- List and comment upon the siting and general condition of sheds, etc., again including any concerns for safety.

c. *Boundary Walls and Fencing*

- Briefly describe the materials and condition of boundary walls, fences and gates.

d. *Grassed and Planted Areas*

- Report on the condition of grassed and planted areas.

e. *Trees and Shrubs*

- Note any trees and shrubs likely to damage persons, the fabric of the building, or its foundations.

f. *Pathways and Paving Steps*

- Note the condition of paths, pavings and steps and give appropriate recommendation where these may be a danger. State if surface water drainage is adequate.

g. *Car Parking*

- Where car parking facilities are provided within the site, note the type of finish and its condition. Again, is surface water drainage adequate?

h. *Rubbish Disposal*

- Comment upon the provision for rubbish and its disposal. Is the provision an eyesore?

3. **Reference to General Maintenance and Costs**

a. *Routine Inspections and Maintenance*

- List items which require routine inspection and maintenance, preferably following the order and headings used earlier.
- Suggest periods during which inspections and maintenance should take place (e.g. As and when necessary; twice yearly; every year; every fifth year; within next 5 years).

b. *Estimates of Cost of Repair*

Please include budget estimates for costs of repairs, emphasising the limitations of the accuracy of "ballpark" amounts stated (even crude estimates are extremely helpful to the Chaplaincy). Please indicate priorities for these costs (e.g. [1] urgent; [2] within next 1-2 years; [3] within next 5 years).

4. **Grant Aid**

Whenever appropriate, indicate items which may be eligible for grant aid.