



## DAC Guidance

# Quinquennial inspections – a parish guide

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### **QUINQUENNIAL – every five years!**

It is a legal requirement that all churches within the Diocese are inspected every five years, and within the Diocese of Bristol, the costs for this are met by the PCC. Each church is assessed as falling within a category of small, medium or large, and fees for the inspection and report are set by the Diocese. The inspection and report is initiated by the DAC secretary, and copies of the completed report are sent to the PCC, the Archdeacon and the DAC.

### **THE PURPOSE OF THE INSPECTION**

The purpose of the quinquennial inspection is to offer strategic advice about the state of the church building and how it has fared during the five years since the previous report. Within the time allocated for the inspection, it is not possible to detail every minor problem; however, the report should discuss the essential repairs needed immediately, or desirable improvements which could be made to the fabric within the next five year period. The report will usually make recommendations for routine maintenance.

### **ACCESS**

It is the PCC's responsibility to provide ladders or access towers as required by the architect or surveyor to facilitate access to normally inaccessible areas. Please arrange for someone – preferably a local builder – to be present with ladders long enough to allow your architect/surveyor to inspect the following:-

- all sloping flat roofs and all gutters on the church and vestries from the outside;
- the wall plates at internal junctions of ceiling and walls; and
- any other places which seem likely to be defective.

All doors should be unlocked to enable the architect/surveyor to inspect every part of the building including the tower, the heating chamber, the vestries and all staircases and cupboards.

The bells should be down.

The builder should have someone in attendance to move the ladders, and he should also bring suitable tools for opening up where the architect/surveyor may need to investigate the

fabric (including a ripper if the roofs are covered with slates). It may be desirable to ask this person to clean gutters, hoppers, etc, during the inspection visit.

PLEASE NOTE that recent health and safety legislation places stringent obligations on all those who lend, supply and use ladders. Wedgings, lashings, guy ropes and pegs need to be available. The architect/surveyor will refuse to climb an unsafe ladder.

### **LOG BOOK**

It is the PCC's responsibility to make available the log book which should contain information on all work undertaken within the last five years. Records should be available of tests of electrical equipment and of any other work carried out on the fabric since the last quinquennial report.

### **ELECTRICAL SURVEY**

Electrical systems and installations should be tested every five years. In order that a comprehensive quinquennial report on the safety of the building can be prepared, it is best for the electrical tests to take place during the inspection visit.

Please arrange for a local electrician to carry out such a test. The architect/surveyor can then discuss with the electrician any faults that the latter may find and assess their seriousness.

### **KNOWN DEFECTS**

Any current known defects – such as leaking roofs, dampness, defective drains, dust from beetle workings or known faults in the lighting or heating – should be pointed out to your architect/surveyor.

### **EXCLUSIONS FROM THE SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION:-**

#### **HIDDEN TIMBER**

The inspection of hidden timbers is a task which is usually impossible for an architect or surveyor to undertake in a quinquennial inspection. If the PCC or the architect/surveyor has any doubts about the condition of hidden timbers, they are strongly advised to seek specialist advice. However, there is a growing concern that much good timber is being removed and unsuitable insecticides being used by some firms. Many of our churches are buildings of historic importance and their timber may suffer from incorrect application of such substances. Care should be taken and advice sought in the case of concern about timber.

#### **ELECTRICAL SURVEY**

See above.

#### **LIGHTNING CONDUCTORS**

Lightning conductors also need periodic testing.

#### **ORGANS AND BELLS**

Organs and Bells are not within the normal scope of an architect's/surveyor's inspection apart from very general comments. The Diocese has experts who can advise on these matters.

## **TREE SURVEY**

It is recommended that regular inspections of all mature trees in the churchyard should be carried out by a suitable arboricultural expert every five years; if possible, a tree report should be annexed to the quinquennial report. (This is obligatory in the case of any tree which is subject to a Tree Preservation Order.) The Chancellor's Guidance "Trees in Churchyards" gives further details.

## **FURTHER READING**

There is more information available on the Churchcare website [www.churchcare.co.uk](http://www.churchcare.co.uk) and the Church Building Council's' booklet A Guide to Church Inspection and Repair (3rd Ed. £6.95 plus postage available from Church House Publishing, ([chpublishing.co.uk](http://chpublishing.co.uk)) covers all practical aspects of quinquennial inspections.

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