

SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

PROVINCIAL BUILDINGS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

GUIDANCE ON QUINQUENNIAL BUILDING CONDITION REPORTS

This paper is issued to provide guidance to congregations (and their inspecting Architects and Surveyors) on the quality and content of Quinquennial Reports. Such reports are required by virtue of the provisions of Canon 60 placing on Vestries, with the rector or priest in charge, a duty concerning the care of the property and fabric of church buildings. Also, the provisions of Paragraph 7.2.2 of the Digest of Resolutions of the General Synod require the obtaining of a written report every five years on the buildings under the Vestry's charge. These provisions are reproduced in the Appendix to the Guidelines.

1. Why have quinquennial inspections?

Purpose: With the great diversity of buildings within the Province not only by way of age, size, fitness of purpose and architectural merit but also congregation number, necessity and financial capability, Quinquennial Building Condition Reports have become a vital tool in decision making on the fabric especially by others outwith the congregation. The ability to finance repairs is often the bottom line on whether a building is closed or survives.

Grant aid is vital with sources of funds ranging from the Province, Charitable Trusts and Historic Scotland/Heritage Lottery Fund. It follows that a Quinquennial Building Condition Report should be comprehensive, contain approximate costs and rank priorities and be presented in a common format not only recognised within the Province but also by those in a position to offer grant aid.

A quinquennial inspection should ensure the early detection of deterioration or defects so that prompt action can be taken, thus avoiding later and more costly expense, e.g. replacing timbers affected by dry rot, or much more drastically, total demolition. It is important therefore that a thorough examination of the property is carried out by professionally qualified persons who are expert in the care of church buildings. A cursory or limited inspection, undertaken by unqualified and/or inexperienced persons, may mean that the very defects that ought to be identified do instead go undetected.

The quinquennial report provides a 'snapshot' of the condition of the church buildings, and is useful in determining progress being made in maintaining the property. It can be an encouraging document when viewed against previous reports! The quinquennial inspection report represents a valuable contribution to the care of a building and a continuing record of the condition of the building.

Selecting the Reporter: Broadly speaking the most fitted professional to report on church buildings is a Chartered Architect or Chartered Surveyor with accreditation in

conservation.¹ Accreditation in conservation is a fairly recent development but it is becoming increasingly evident that HS/HLF funding will not be forthcoming if the reporter is not suitably accredited.²

Accreditation levels:

- a. Straightforward repairs
- b. General repairs
- c. General repairs and alterations requiring an historic knowledge
- d. Specialist conservation work

In all but the smallest of buildings or minimum of requirements for work the services of a Chartered Quantity Surveyor will be required (selected by the architect) to provide approximate costs. All reports will need input on building services either from local tradesmen (which may have to be paid for) or a Building Services Engineer under the direction of the architect. Likewise, if structural distress is noted a Chartered Structural Engineer should join the team.

It goes without saying that the reporter should be professionally qualified and display a degree of enthusiasm for not only the production of a document but also for progressing a potential commission to completion over perhaps 5-10 years. On balance, there is some merit in employing the same reporter for subsequent quinquennials.

2. What form should it take?

The purpose of the quinquennial report, is fivefold:

1. To provide a general record on the condition of the fabric.
2. To identify the detailed condition of **all** parts of the fabric.
3. To detail any necessary works in order of priority.
4. To make recommendations on the maintenance and care of the buildings and their contents.
5. To make recommendations on any areas requiring further investigation.

It should be clear and understandable, encouraging and realistic and provide a framework of goals and objectives.

From the notes taken at the inspection the Architect or Surveyor will prepare a report that covers, in general, the following points. (Not all items will be relevant to all churches.)

¹ A list of Architects or Surveyors with accreditation is available from the RIAS/RICS. If is also intended to retain the professional reporter for the design of new building work, a Chartered Architect should be preferred.

² It is recognised that other professionals can produce reports and this may be the only option if remoteness and finances dictate. The format is still applicable.

Content of Report:

SECTION A BACKGROUND

Commissioning agent (normally the Vestry), format, previous reports, date of inspection[s] and weather conditions. Qualifications of reporter.

SECTION B INTRODUCTION

- A LIST OF PROPERTIES.** Incl. tel. & fax numbers, e-mail addresses.
- B CUSTODIANS.** Rector, Vestry Secretary, Verger & Fabric Convenor incl. tel. and fax numbers and email addresses.
- C BRIEF HISTORY OF CONGREGATION.** Number on Roll, Supplemented in Appendix.
- D BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF BUILDINGS.** Supplemented in Appendix.
- E MATERIALS USED IN THE CONSTRUCTION.**
- F PREVIOUS MAJOR REPAIRS.** Last 10 years from Fabric Record book.
- G BRIEF SUMMARY OF CONDITION.**
- H O.S. PLAN.** [Current, site centred]

SECTION C INSPECTION GUIDELINES [For each building]

EXTERNAL FABRIC:

Tower, spire, including bells and frames

Roofs

Gutters, downpipes and rainwater disposal systems

Walls

Doors and Windows

Metalwork, and woodwork including condition of paintwork.

INTERNAL FABRIC:

Roof structures

Walls, partitions and ceilings.

Doors, windows, woodwork and fittings.

Internal decorations.

Floors, stairways and balconies

Solum

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS:

Furniture and fittings

Organ

Monuments

BUILDING SERVICES:

- Lightning conductor.
- Electrical installation
- Gas installation
- Water supply
- Heating system and ventilation.
- Sound amplification
- Sanitary facilities and hygiene
- Drainage.
- Fire precautions
- Security

GROUND:

Including boundaries, paths, trees, notices etc.

PROVISION FOR THE DISABLED

SECTION D SUMMARY

Identification of the repair works requiring immediate action, essential within the next twelve months or requiring a specialist report together with a broad outline of essential and desirable works. [This section should be self-contained and suited to photocopying for general distribution]

SECTION E APPENDIX.

Additional information relevant to the report should be included e.g. H.S Listing, plans, old photographs etc.

3. Why not keep it short and sweet?

It is sometimes argued that the church building and its condition are well known locally and that only a simple minimal report is necessary. It should be appreciated however that the report is not just for those who are acquainted with the building. Many members of the Church Vestry may not be particularly familiar with the 'out of the way' parts of their building, and clergy, office bearers and Vestry members change over the years. The report may also have to be read, and understood, by people who have no prior knowledge of the building, and it should not be considered superfluous to include preliminary particulars and simple descriptions. It is strongly recommended that the report be supplemented by photographs, which help to identify and record those areas of the building which need care and attention. Vestries should also take note that the quinquennial report is used to assess any application for grant and/or loan funding, both by the Diocese and by the Province. As noted before, a well prepared report can also be valuable in securing assistance from external agencies.

All reports must contain cost estimates for the repairs identified.

November 2004

APPENDIX
CANON SIXTY
OF VESTRIES

1. The Vestry shall co-operate with and generally assist the Rector or Priest-in-charge in all matters relating to the spiritual welfare of the congregation and the mission of the whole Church, subject always to the canonical rights and duties of the clergy.
2. With the Rector or Priest-in-charge the Vestry shall, unless the duty is placed under the Constitution of the charge on Church Wardens or others, have the care of the property and fabric of the Church including the parsonage house or houses, halls, offices and any other properties acquired in connection with the Church and gifts and bequests, unless otherwise directed, accruing to the Church for whatever purpose, and shall see to the safe custody, maintenance, insurance, use and administration of the same.
3. The Vestry shall make such reports on and compile such inventories of the matters committed to its charge as may be prescribed by resolution, and shall take whatever steps it considers necessary or which shall be required by the Bishop in Synod for the safe custody and preservation of such reports and inventories.
4. All such reports and inventories shall be made available to the Bishop when required, or to the Dean as provided in Canon 42, or by resolution thereunder, or to any Diocesan Official upon the Bishop's instruction.

DIGEST OF RESOLUTIONS

7.2.2 Each Vestry, which failing the diocese on behalf of the Vestry, shall appoint an architect, chartered surveyor or other suitably qualified person to supervise the buildings under the Vestry's charge and the Vestry shall obtain a written report in respect of these buildings, at least every five years.

The General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church does not accept responsibility for any loss or liability which may arise from reliance on information or expressions of opinion contained in this document.

General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church
Scottish Charity No SC015962