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December 2005

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Our ref: RAnderton/PCCSecretaries/«Parish»«Church_Name»(«Ben_No»)

**To all the PCC Secretaries for the Diocese of Leicester
(Copy to all Church Architects and DAC Chairman)**

Dear PCC Secretary of «Church_Name», «Parish»

May I please ask you to draw the matters contained in this letter to the attention of the Incumbent, PCC and Churchwardens?

1. Minor Works

Some minor works which involve no change to the fabric, fixtures, fittings and furnishings may be undertaken without faculty and without reference to the DAC: -

1. Routine maintenance of the church fabric such as cleaning, clearing and removal of vegetation from gutters and downpipes
2. Regular servicing (but not repairs or alterations) of equipment e.g. boilers and heating systems, electrical and lighting installations (by approved NICEIC or ELA contractors), bells, organs, clocks, fire extinguishers
3. Routine churchyard maintenance (not including repairs or alterations)
4. Introduction of vestments, robes, bibles and service books (authorised by the General Synod), choir and organ music and altar linen (excluding frontals) and disposal of existing (except hand-bound or other unique or valuable books)

All other proposed works/changes should be referred to the DAC Secretary before any action is taken.

2. Urgent maintenance problems

From time to time, repair problems arise which require urgent attention because failure to attend to the problem might cause additional damage and expense e.g. ingress of water through the roof; there is a danger to people e.g. falling stonework; there is a security problem e.g. arising from vandalism; or because of the loss of a basic service, e.g. boiler breakdown.

In these circumstances, in order to help the PCC take the necessary action quickly, please contact the DAC Secretary who, after discussion with the Archdeacon, will: -

- Usually authorise whatever emergency or investigative action needs to be taken, under the direction of the church architect,
and
- Request that a faculty application be submitted subsequently to authorise emergency work done or further work required after the investigation

It is advisable for the church architect or surveyor to be kept informed.

3. Contractors

We are sometimes asked about recommended contractors to undertake work.

We do not maintain such a list, as available contractors are usually better known by the church architect and others who will be more aware of standards of performance, etc. We recommend the PCC consults its church architect.

Specialists are sometimes required for conservation work of various types e.g. stained glass work, and in addition to seeking the advice of the church architect, you should consult www.buildingconservation.com or seek an Accredited Conservator using the Conservation Register at www.conservationregister.com.

4. Bats in churches

Bats are a protected species and are rather fond of using churches!

This year, a number of PCCs have found bats in the church for the first time – usually because they have gained access through a broken window, which has not been repaired.

The DAC's advice is that a broken window, however small, should be repaired quickly in order to avoid this problem.

5. New Scheme to allow VAT to be reclaimed on the construction, renovation and maintenance of eligible memorials

An interim grant scheme, which returns, in grant aid, the amount of VAT incurred on the construction, renovation and maintenance of eligible memorials was launched on Armistice Day, Friday 11 November 2005, by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The scheme is currently due to continue until 2008. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the March 2005 Budget, that both charities and faith groups that are exempted from registering as charities, can claim VAT incurred on eligible construction, renovation and maintenance of public memorials since 16 March 2005.

An invoice spanning works before and after 16 March 2005 can be submitted, but only the element incurred on or after this date will be refunded. This split must be made clear on either the invoice or the application. There is no minimum or maximum limit on the amount reclaimable. However, only 5 invoices should be submitted per application.

The Government has made proposals to the European Commission for a permanent reduced VAT rate to be charged on memorial construction, renovation and maintenance. The scheme will operate until 2008, unless agreement is reached sooner on a permanent reduced rate. Full details of the new scheme, including the application procedure can be found at: www.memorialgrant.org.uk. The site gives details of eligibility and further contact details.

6. Listed Places of Worship Scheme

We have been asked, by Church House Westminster to provide feedback on the operation of this scheme. If your PCC has any comments on any experiences it has had of the scheme, please let me know.

7. Reminders

a. Contacting us

Please contact us at: -

1 Hill Top
Coventry
CV1 5AB
Tel: 024 7652 1312 (direct line and with voicemail)
Fax: 024 7652 1330

Although you can telephone us using the Leicester Church House number, it is easier for the staff if you use the Coventry number.

When you need to post mail to us, please use: -

1 Hill Top
Coventry
CV1 5AB

If you send mail to Church House, Leicester, there will be delay whilst it is sent on to Coventry.

The easiest way to contact us is by email. If you wish to email us, you do so using either of these email addresses: - Ray.Anderton@CovLec.org or Rupert.Allen@CovLec.org.

b. DAC Advisory Notes

Notes on a variety of subjects relating to the maintaining and caring for church buildings may be found on the website for both dioceses: - www.leicester.anglican.org/dac/advisory.htm

If you have any suggestions for subjects not already covered, and which you would find helpful, please contact us.

Faculty forms and associated papers may also be downloaded from: - www.leicester.anglican.org/dac/faculty.htm

8. 2006 DAC meeting dates

The dates of the DAC meetings and the latest dates by which items for the DAC agenda must be received are enclosed.

The principal reason for what may appear to be a long gap between them is that the DAC is statutorily required to send copies of the agenda and papers to English Heritage, the Amenity Societies and Local Planning Authorities for them to have the opportunity to comment to the DAC on agenda items if they wish. Consequently, this is also the reason why we are unable to accept new items for the agenda after it has been dispatched.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray Anderton', with a horizontal line underneath.

Ray Anderton