



Working with your Architect or Surveyor

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1. Working Relationship

A good working relationship with your architect is invaluable in adequately caring for the church building. Hidden in the building of our churches is the wisdom of many ages and techniques not often found in our houses. A word with the architect, even on what may seem to be a very minor matter, will draw in their expert knowledge of the building and prevent mistakes being made.

The architect is also aware of the process for obtaining a faculty to undertake work under the Care of Churches and Faculty Jurisdiction Measure 1991 and of consulting the statutory authorities which have a right to be consulted, e.g. English Heritage.

2. Repairs and Alterations

The Quinquennial Inspection Survey Report tells you what needs doing in order of priority but does not tell you how to do it – nor does it give you authority to proceed with the work. All repairs specified in the report therefore need, in addition, an architect's specification before they can be carried out. It is at this point that trouble so often begins. For example, a parish may know a local builder who perhaps has always done work for the church, and they resent paying fees for what looks like a “simple job”.

The Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) will usually ask for an architect's specification when the PCC applies for a faculty for all repair work. It may cost each a few pounds now, but in the long run it may save thousands. A perfect example of this is seen in the number of applications we receive for removing old cement mortar used decades ago, and repointing with a new, more appropriate mortar. Often these works were done without the involvement of an architect or surveyor with extensive knowledge of historic buildings, and the PCCs of those churches are now paying the price for those unsuitable repairs.

Re-pointing may seem easy enough – anyone can do it! Get the mortar mix too hard and a few frosts later the bricks and stones themselves begin to break up. Block up a vent that seems to be causing a draught and you may create the right conditions for dry rot. Simple mistakes on the grounds of short term cost savings with expensive consequences later!

It can often be the smaller things that trip us up, when it comes to repairing historic buildings!

3. New work

New work is a different subject for both parish and architect and it is an area in which their partnership is often seen at its best. It is also in this field that the role of the architect is seen most clearly in contrast to that of the good surveyor or builder. They:

- Are briefed, or compile a brief together with the parish members, and respond to that brief
- Design, taking into account the surrounding buildings, planning needs and regulations
- Prepare production drawings, specify materials and their use
- Advise on the need for other consultants and/or specialists
- Set up a building contract
- Visit the site, as appropriate, to inspect the progress and quality of work
- Administer the terms of the building contract
- Generally look after the PCC's interests

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The architect who is engaged to design a new hall or re-design the church's interior need not be the same as the one who carries out the Quinquennial Inspection. Architects understand this well since a wide variety of skills are needed for their work and the PCC may need to choose someone who has a particular flair for a particular task. However, it is both good manners and good practice to let your regular architect know what you are hoping to do and assess their feelings before bringing in another professional.

4. Interior Alterations

Re-ordering, re-wiring, re-decorating and new heating installations should not be done, without informing your architect and inviting comments. The DAC, when considering a faculty application for the work, will wish to note that your architect has been consulted even if they do not fully direct the work.

Re-ordering is a skilled job for which the DAC expects architect's drawings. It often involves new furniture and the re-location of pulpits, lecterns, fonts and pews. An **architect's eye is essential**.

If **structural work** is involved, it may be wise to discuss with your architect necessary direction and, at the same time, negotiate a sensible fee. Architects do not have to set fees as a percentage of the overall costs and can be engaged on an hourly basis or whatever seems appropriate to the task.

Re-decorating needs your architect's advice on two counts. First, materials, and secondly, colour scheme. (See Advisory Note: Re-decorating your Church).

More damage has been done to churches in recent years by the DIY enthusiast with a paintbrush than in any other field. Churches cannot and must not be treated like your home. They behave differently, are usually of traditional construction and have more variable and extreme temperature and moisture conditions.

Changes of colour call for an artist's eye, especially if they are to enhance the building and its worship. Architects should be consulted about colour changes and paint materials.

Re-wiring usually means **Re-lighting** and that, like re-decorating, can have an enormous effect upon the visual appearance of the church. Good lighting is not easy to achieve and requires special skills and a lighting designer may, in the long run, save the PCC both time and expense. (See Advisory note: Lighting and Re-wiring).

A **new heating system** today usually means new fittings. Heating appliances have never been glamorous and great care has to be taken not only to achieve an efficient system for your congregation but one that is aesthetically acceptable. This is what your architect is trained to do. They may well wish to work with a heating engineer who will offer technical advice but they will want to advise about the siting and concealment of heaters. Satisfactory heating often depends upon it looking good as well as feeling good. (See Advisory note: Heating your Church).

The installation of **carpets** should be done with great care and in consultation with your architect. On **no** account should one be laid that has a 'non-breathing' backing.

5. The Key

The key to good care of your buildings is undoubtedly a sound working relationship with your architect. Although inspecting architects are only appointed for each inspection, there is much to be said for keeping

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the same person year by year. This makes the planning of the programme of work over a number of years much easier and establishes the sort of professional relationship that can be both helpful and creative.

Not only that, but in inspecting the church, the architect “learns” a great deal about its history and its problems, and tries to see every part of it., even if access is awkward. Such knowledge as is then acquired will be added to by the same architect at each inspection and during the execution of any work in the intervening years. **Think of your architect as your church’s GP.**

The Quinquennial Inspection Report writer will have a balanced and intimate knowledge of the whole church and we do strongly encourage that this same writer is used as the architect who administers the repairs.

N.B if you are applying for funding for repairs please read the Guidance Note on *Appointing an Architect or Surveyor*. This is because some funding bodies (notably the Heritage Lottery Fund) will wish to see that a transparent procurement process has been undertaken in the appointment of professional contractors.

If, however, the PCC is dissatisfied with the architect, it can appoint a new one but please remember to write a courteous note of thanks to your previous architect.

The care of a church building is a complex matter and specialist equipment (like bells and organs, or ancient materials, stained glass, silver, or ancient monuments) requires specialist knowledge. Your architect is one of the experts we need for that care and they will know the names of other experts they can call on to assist them in the work.

Remember, finally, that although most church architects try to keep their fees to a minimum, time is money, and indecision by PCCs can result in many hours of, perhaps, unnecessary repetitive discussion for them. Also, parish meetings are usually held in the evenings or weekends outside office hours. So make sure, as a matter of courtesy, that they are asked to arrive at the time they are required on the agenda.

Please take good care of your architect to help them to take care of the church!