

## GUIDANCE NOTE

Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches



## UNDERSTANDING YOUR QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTION

The Quinquennial Inspection (QI) report details recommendations for repairs which are intended to help the PCC establish priorities throughout the coming 5 years. It divides works into those which are urgent, those which are recommended to be carried out during the next 12 or 18 months, the next five years (the quinquennium), and those which are desirable. It will also include advice on ways to improve access, any tests that need to be carried out (such as electrical inspections) and ways to minimise health and safety risks. It may also indicate which works the inspector considers could fall under the 'Minor Works' procedure.

Once the PCC has received the report, it may be helpful to divide works into those that can be undertaken by voluntary or local labour (such as maintenance tasks like removing vegetation and clearing gutters and drains, replacing slipped slates), those that will require further input from your architect or surveyor, and those that may need a report from a specialist conservator (such as for monuments, windows, wall paintings etc). Some architects/surveyors indicate this in their report themselves, but if not, the Church Buildings Adviser can assist with dividing the report in such a way, along with advising on what types of permissions may be needed to undertake the works, and sources of funding. Some architects and surveyors will also offer a follow-up visit once the PCC have received the report, to go through the main points of concern, and prioritisation of works.

### Specifications

Although there is no legal obligation upon the PCC to employ the parish's inspecting architect or surveyor to prepare specifications and oversee any repairs (whether arising from the QI or not), it is, however, normal that the professional adviser who undertakes the quinquennial inspection is also employed by the PCC for works to the church. It is good practice that at the very least they are asked for advice on any proposed works, but the DAC would recommend that they are engaged by the parish to prepare the specifications, recommend contractors, and monitor the works on site.

The QI report is *not* a specification of works to enable a builder to price for, or undertake repair works, and it must not be used as such. Except for very simple repairs and maintenance, you will need a specification of works. Neither does it give you authorisation to proceed with the works – you should check with the DAC office to see whether you need any permission, either through the 'Minor Works' procedure or a faculty.

Parishes often ask why it is not recommended that they use the QI report to get builders to quote from. The report is a snapshot of a particular situation on a particular day; further investigation at a subsequent time, when the PCC is actually ready to do the work, may reveal that more or less needs to be done. The inspection of the church is designed to be an overview, and may not be the full and detailed analysis of the problem that needs to be addressed – this would require a further visit from the architect or surveyor and perhaps some investigative opening-up works.

If asking different contractors to price from the QI report alone, as it is not as detailed as a specification, they will interpret the report, and what works actually need to be done, in different

ways. Some may quote for more work than the inspector would advise, some may quote less. So a true comparison of the quotes may not be possible, and the PCC has no way of knowing which contractor's response is the one that will best address the problems.

The cheapest quote might not be the best value – especially if half way through a job the PCC is informed that twice as much work is involved than had been budgeted for. Equally, the most expensive quote might not be the best – the contractor may be planning to do more work than is really necessary and most PCCs do not have the expertise to be able to assess this.

The DAC knows that PCCs may struggle to raise funds for necessary work and are therefore reluctant to “waste” money on professional fees. However, experience has shown that, in the long run, engaging an architect/surveyor and getting a specification may well save money and represent best value, and good stewardship of hard-earned resources and of the buildings entrusted to our care is the key.

For some minor repairs, a detailed quotation from an appropriate contractor *may* be sufficient for the DAC to be able to make a recommendation, and an architect or surveyor need not be involved. However if not enough written information is provided in a quotation, detailing how the works are to be carried out, and with what materials, then it is likely that the committee would recommend that an architect or surveyor is employed to provide the necessary information. However, the DAC is only *advisory* and the PCC is perfectly entitled to reject the advice to get a specification and proceed with a faculty application on the basis of quotations only. The Chancellor will then be able to determine whether he will accept the proposals on the basis of the PCC's application.

NB Where the works concern conservation of a monument, wall painting, work of art, stained glass, screen etc, a relevant specialist's report and quotation will usually be sufficient, and an architect's or surveyor's specification will not be needed, but your Inspector may be able to recommend suitable firms for you to approach for obtain such a report – so do make use of their knowledge!

### **Benefits of obtaining a specification**

- The specification gives a clear and detailed statement of the work that is necessary, the methods and materials to be used and exact instructions about the standard of workmanship that is expected. It also explains the legal framework for the job and outlines the PCC's statutory responsibilities in terms of Health & Safety, archaeological implications and contract issues. This means that the PCC and contractors tendering for the work know exactly what is to be done and what their responsibilities are.
- The specification can be sent out to tender to contractors known to be doing quality work at the present time. They then put in costings on the basis of a given job and their quotes can be directly compared. The PCC knows that the least and most expensive are both going to do exactly the same amount of work and are clear about the standards expected.
- The involvement of the architect/surveyor means that the PCC has a professional on board who can inspect the work in progress and ensure that it is done properly. If there are difficulties about inexplicable delays, the skills being used or the care being taken s/he can act on behalf of the PCC to get things put right.
- If anything goes wrong the architect/surveyor has professional insurance against which the PCC can claim. S/he is responsible for ensuring that the contract is honoured and the PCC fully satisfied that what it believed it was commissioning has in fact be done to the expected standard. Obviously, the DAC hopes that nothing does go wrong but occasionally there are problems and the PCC needs to be aware of the legal and insurance framework from the outset.