

GUIDELINES ON PROCEDURE FOR WORK TO BELLS AND BELL EQUIPMENT

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1 Scope

- 1.1 **Any work to bells, frames and fittings, tower fabric and furnishings requires a faculty.** Some small items - renewal of bellropes or stays for instance - are regarded as 'Minor Works' and need no special authority from the Chancellor, but if there is any doubt the DAC Secretary should be consulted.
- 1.2 These guidelines indicate the procedures, which may be followed, where work is intended that requires a faculty, to enable an application to proceed smoothly.

2 The Value of Bells

- 2.1 Bells have three kinds of value:
 - They are musical instruments, made to broadcast the message of the church to the surrounding neighbourhood: - their musical value and how they are sounded has to be considered
 - Bell frames and fittings have considerable longevity and may be amongst the oldest and historically most important fittings in a church value: - their historical and archaeological has to be taken into account
 - Bells are often fittings of the greatest monetary value in many churches: - work to them needs careful consideration in terms of parish resources.

Quite often the relative merits of these three different kinds of value have to be assessed and agreed by those responsible for the bells.

3 Sources of Advice

- 3.1 Advice on how to assess what work is necessary or desirable may be obtained from the following sources, but this list is not necessarily exhaustive:
 - **Church Architect** should be able to advise on the fabric of the tower. If the work is not straightforward he or the PCC may wish to seek the advice of a consultant engineer or specialist architect who is conversant with structural, acoustic or other problems in towers
 - **Bellfounders** have a fund of knowledge and expertise in the tuning of bells; they and other bellhangers will also advise on bellframes and fittings and give an opinion on whether repair is possible or whether renewal is recommended
 - **The Council for the Care of Churches** publishes a Code of Practice on the conservation and repair of bells and bellframes, and keeps diocesan lists of historically valuable bells that should be preserved. It also has a Bells Sub-committee to which PCCs and DACs can refer for general advice.

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- **The Diocesan Guild of Bellringers** has its own bells advisers who can offer detailed advice on bell maintenance and general advice on other work to bells
- **The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers** –
 - Bell Restoration Committee which can advise on the raising of funds and procurement of grant aid
 - Committee for Redundant Bells which seeks to re-allocate redundant bells to places where bells are needed
- **The DAC Bell Adviser** can also give informal advice to PCCs
- **English Heritage** if significant changes are involved in Grade I or II* churches
- **The Central Council of Church Bell Engineering Experts** - Towers and Belfries Committee can offer general or specialist advice on all aspects of bell work. The Committee has produced a Towers and Bells Handbook and guidelines for bell advisers, for do-it-yourself work and for bell maintenance.

4 Preliminary Steps

- 4.1 Someone will have alerted the PCC of the need for a scheme of bell work. This may be the church architect in a Quinquennial Survey Report, a PCC member, the bellringers or any of the persons listed in the previous section.
- 4.2 Reports should be obtained which:
 - Give a factual account of existing conditions
 - Indicate options or give recommendations for work, which is either essential or desirable.
- 4.3 The source of the report will depend upon the kind of work needed: - whether the tower needs structural repair, whether a bell is cracked, or whether the installation as a whole needs overhaul. If a specialist aspect is involved, or if the relative merits of various options need specialist review, a second adviser may be needed.
- 4.4 The compiler of the report and the adviser should take account of the Code of Practice and the List of Bells for Preservation. Where options include removal of canons from unlisted bells, retuning or recasting any or all of the bells, or major alteration or renewal of the bellframe, the guidelines given in Appendices 1 and 2 for the appraisal of bells and bellframes may be found helpful. At the next stage the DAC may require the information listed in these appendices.

5 Preparing a Submission

- 5.1 At this stage the PCC or a sub-committee of the PCC needs to assess the advice given, some of which may be conflicting. Most PCCs will not have any specialist knowledge, but with the churchwardens they are the custodians of the bells and ultimately they will have to decide what they think is best for the parish. They may wish to discuss options with the diocesan bell adviser since the DAC will also seek his advice.
- 5.2 If a scheme is relatively straightforward the preferred option may be uncontentious but the PCC needs to marshal its case in a clear manner to assist the DAC.
- 5.3 In a minority of cases there may be a genuine conflict of interests that is difficult to resolve. This is usually between the three kinds of value indicated in section 2. In such cases an independent bell adviser may be able to see a way through this problem. The PCC's own carefully considered view is especially important but the chancellor of the diocese is normally the final arbiter.
- 5.4 In order that agreement may be reached where changes to an existing ring of bells is involved, the guidelines given in appendix I should be followed. All possible courses of action need to be shown to have been considered. These may include:
- a) Retaining the bells as existing but removing clapper staples
 - b) Ditto, but tuning some or all of the bells
 - c) Retaining some bells but recasting others (giving reasons)
 - d) Retaining some bells and casting some new bells so that outworn but historically interesting bells may be retired or put to less arduous duties, e.g. as clock bells
 - e) Recasting all the bells
- 5.5 All except option e might be acceptable even if some of the bells are listed for preservation. Options b and c are most often applied. Option a) is rare. Option d is favoured especially where there is a need or desire to keep intact bells that do not easily fit into a musical ring. A good case needs to be made for option e.
- 5.6 Similarly, where repairs or alterations to an existing bellframe are proposed, it should be assessed according to the guidelines given in appendix 2. This will lead to one of the following options, depending upon the importance and condition of the frame:
- a) Preserving the frame without further alteration
 - b) Preserving the frame but strengthening it for continued use
 - c) Retaining but adapting as well as strengthening the frame
 - d) Retaining the whole frame, or a significant part, out of use and installing a new frame for the bells
 - e) Removing the old frame, installing a new frame for the bells.
- 5.7 Bellframes are not yet listed like bells so that considerable consultation may be needed to assess the importance of a particular frame. *A Practical Guide to Inspection and Recording of Bellframes* compiled by C J Pickford is invaluable in this respect.
- 5.8 It should be stressed that, in compliance with the CCC's *Code of Practice*, retention of existing bells and bellframes should be the presumption unless strong reasons are advanced

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to show that alterations are necessary. On the other hand the Code acknowledges that the prime function of bells in a church is that they should be rung to announce public worship.

- 5.9 When the PCC has decided on a preferred scheme quotations, usually competitive, should be obtained or updated on exactly the chosen scheme. Bellhangers nowadays are usually prepared to offer reductions on the cost of a complete scheme if the parish can offer voluntary labouring assistance or a degree of do-it-yourself input. A few parishes, with skilled assistance, have done the greater part of their schemes on a do-it-yourself basis.
- 5.10 At the end of this stage the PCC should submit the scheme for formal consideration by the DAC.

6 Carrying out the Work

- 6.1 Before commencing any work it is essential that all permissions have been obtained including a Faculty and agreement, if this is required, from English Heritage.
- 6.2 The work done must then be exactly that covered by such permission and must not be varied, or be done by a different bellhanger, unless such variations have been agreed by all parties involved. This applies particularly where a bell is later found to be cracked. If variations are an urgent and non-controversial necessity, amended permissions can usually be arranged quite speedily.
- 6.3 The PCC needs to be satisfied that the funding of a scheme is adequate since they will bear the responsibility for the work done.
- 6.4 The Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers may advise on funding. There may be local sources an appeal, or the bellringers may undertake some or all of the fund-raising.
- 6.5 The PCC should ensure that all insurances are in order, for the fabric, for the firm undertaking the work, for any voluntary helpers especially if there is substantial do-it-yourself input, and for third party risks.
- 6.6 A realistic programme should be prepared for the scheme, taking into account fund raising, possible price rises, and the bellhangers and any volunteers' work loads and church events. Firm decisions are needed that are not over-optimistic.
- 6.7 It is usual for there to be a short form of dedication or re- dedication when bells are returned to the church. This precedes the final service of thanksgiving, which may be only a few weeks later when the installation is brought into general use. Although there are reports of rare instances, many years ago, when bells were almost unringable on the opening day, nowadays with the work well done, the thanksgiving service is a joyous occasion when all who have contributed time and talents can feel justly proud of their part in the active life of the church.

APPENDIX 1 - GUIDELINES FOR AN ASSESSMENT OF BELLS

Factual technical information

The following technical data should be established and documented for each bell:

- a) Position of bell in the ring
- b) Identity of the founder
- c) Date of casting and any re-casting
- d) Diameter across the mouth
- e) Weight
- f) Strike note and, if possible, principal partial tones
- g) Thickness of soundbow, whether more or less than normal
- h) Depth of clapper or hammer indentations
- i) Whether quarter or eighth turned, any drilled holes for bolts
- j) Whether it has or has had canons and central argent
- k) General condition and quality of casting, any cracks?
- l) Any tuning marks by hand or by lathe
- m) Whether it has or has had a cast in iron crown staple
- n) Inscriptions, moulding wires, any special features

Qualitative consideration

The following qualitative considerations should be listed:

- a) Is the bell a rare or common example of its founder's work?
- b) Is the bell exceptionally fine or poor in tone?
- c) How does the bell relate in pitch, tone, & size in the ring?
- d) Is the bell historically noteworthy locally or nationally?
- e) Is the bell particularly fine in appearance?
- f) Are there any other features that make the bell noteworthy?

APPENDIX 2 - GUIDELINES FOR AN ASSESSMENT OF BELLFRAMES

Factual technical information

The following technical data should be established for the bellframe. The methodology given in C J Pickford's *Practical Guide to Inspection and Recording of Bellframes* should be used where possible

- a) Materials used in the bellframe
- b) Age of the frame, by date if given, or by style
- c) Name of maker if recorded on frame or documentarily
- d) Design of frame in plan and of framesides
- e) Pre-Reformation or other special features
- f) Details of alterations, especially of pre Reformation frames
- g) Strengths (e.g. tie rods, bracing) and weaknesses (e.g. decay)
- h) Overall quality of workmanship
- i) Overall condition

Historical evaluation

To assist in establishing the importance of a bellframe the following evaluation should be made:

- a) Is it a rare or common example of the maker's work?
- b) Has it especial value as an example of bellframe evolution?
- c) Is it completely or very substantially as originally made?
- d) Does it provide evidence of the evolution of the ring?
- e) Are there any other features that make the frame noteworthy?

Overall assessment

From a consideration of the factual technical information and the historical evaluation an overall assessment may be concluded as follows:

- a) The frame is of outstanding importance and must be preserved without further alteration in-situ even if not in use.
- b) The frame is important and should be preserved but after recording could be adapted and strengthened for continued use.
- c) The frame is good but not exceptional. Retention is desirable but not essential. If not retained, it should be recorded and the retention of a significant part of the frame should be considered.
- d) The frame is of marginal importance. It may not justify retention but should be re-examined by a specialist inspector who should indicate an appropriate grading: a, b, c or e.
- e) The frame is of no historic interest and may be altered or removed.

This note is for guidance only and the DAC cannot bind itself in a particular case, nor can they predict what may be the view of the Chancellor or Archdeacon.