

CLAS CIRCULAR

2024/03 (19 February)

Disclaimer

CLAS is not qualified to advise on the legal and technical problems of members and does not undertake to do so. Though we take every care to provide a service of high quality, neither CLAS, the Secretary nor the Governors undertakes any liability for any error or omission in the information supplied.

It would be very helpful if members could let us know of anything that appears to indicate developments of policy or practice on the part of Government or other matters of general concern that should be pursued.

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FAITH & SOCIETY

Churches and the forthcoming General Election

For information **and possibly for action**

CTBI has relaunched its [Churches' General Election website](#) in partnership with national ecumenical organisations including Churches Together in England. The first resource to be published is [Hosting a Hustings: ideas and advice for churches on holding a question time meeting or hustings for the general election](#), produced by the [Joint Public Issues Team](#). This guidance has been used by local ecumenical groups in previous General Elections and has now been updated to take account of changes to constituencies and to relevant legislation.

[Source: CTBI, 18 February]

PROPERTY & PLANNING

Affordable Homes Scheme expansion

For information **and possibly for action**

The [expansion of the Affordable Homes Scheme 2020](#) provides low-cost flexible and long-term loans to housing providers to help fund investment in new and existing affordable homes across England, including those for social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership.

For the first time, the scheme can also be used to upgrade existing properties, making them warm and decent for tenants. Providers will be able to apply for loans to carry out vital building safety works, such as the removal of dangerous cladding.

[Source: DLUHC, 12 February]

Consultation: Competence and Conduct Standard for social housing

For information **and possibly for action**

The Government is consulting on proposals to introduce a Direction on a new regulatory Standard on the competence and conduct of the staff of registered providers of social housing. The draft Direction specifies that the Standard must require registered providers:

- to have an up-to-date written policy setting out their approach to managing and developing the skills, knowledge, experience and conduct of those of their staff who are “relevant individuals”; and
- to adopt or develop an appropriate code of conduct for those of their staff who are relevant individuals and to ensure that it is embedded within their organisations.

The standard will require senior managers and executives to have, or to be working towards, a relevant qualification. It will ensure that staff have up-to-date skills, knowledge and experience, and that they exhibit the right behaviours to deliver a high quality, professional service and treat residents with respect.

The consultation can be accessed [here](#). It will close **2 April 2024**.

[Source: DLUHC, 7 February]

Regulation of short-term lettings

For information

DLUHC and DCMS have [announced](#) that, in principle, there will be changes to the rules on short-term lettings, *presumably in England only*. Under the proposals:

- councils will be given greater power to control short-term lets by making them subject to the planning process;
- there will be a mandatory national register to help ensure that accommodation is safe; and
- homeowners will be allowed to let out their own main or sole residence for up to 90 nights a year.

The intention of the proposed reforms is to support local people in areas where high numbers of short-term lets are preventing them from finding housing that they can afford to buy or to rent. *However*, this may impact adversely on (eg) a denomination that wishes to let a parsonage house during an interregnum, or a church property that is no longer required for occupation by a church-worker.

[Source: DLUHC/DCMS, 19 February]

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill: update

For information **and possibly for action**

As mentioned in our last circular, the draft [Terrorism \(Protection of Premises\) Bill](#) (aka "Martyn's Law") will impose requirements in relation to certain premises and events to increase their preparedness for, and protection from, a terrorist attack by requiring them to take proportionate steps to deal with any terrorist threat, depending on the size and nature of the activities that take place at the premises. Almost all the provisions of the Bill, once enacted, will apply to the whole of the UK. The detailed requirements will be set out in Regulations under the legislation: at the current rate of progress, we would expect to see them at some point in 2025. Almost all places of worship will be in the "standard tier", irrespective of capacity.

[The ProtectUK website](#) has a helpful explainer on the current state of play, [here](#). In addition, the Archdeacon of London, Fr Luke Miller, has posted a helpful summary of the current proposals (though they are still subject to change) *and an explanation of why it is important for those responsible for places of worship to respond*, [here](#).

Also as mentioned in our last circular, we are currently preparing a response on behalf of CLAS, and it would be helpful to see any individual responses from members.

[Source: CLAS, 19 February]