

**GUIDANCE TO PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCILS
ON THE MAINTENANCE AND RESTORATION OF CHURCH BELLS**

Background.

This guidance is given by the Church Buildings Council to all parochial church councils.

From 1st January 2016, it will be possible to carry out a range of works to bells without a faculty: see List A and List B in [Schedule 1 to the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2015](#). Carrying out works in List A or List B is subject to conditions set out in the list. It is a condition of carrying out any works to bells under List A or List B that regard is had to this guidance.

Additionally, in the case of List B works, the approval of the archdeacon must be obtained before they are carried out and the archdeacon may apply additional conditions.

Introduction

Use of the phrase ‘fit condition to be rung’

In the Schedule to the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules the word ‘rung’ in the phrase ‘in a fit condition to be rung’ should be given its ordinary English meaning, rather than a technical meaning. It is therefore always to be understood in context. This means that if a bell is set up for full circle ringing, it has to be in a fit condition for that. If a bell is set up for chiming, it is to be in a fit condition to be chimed using the mechanism provided.

Because of the diversity of work to bell installations there will always be anomalies where the works proposed do not fit comfortably into either list. Where this is the case then the parish should contact their Archdeacon who will seek advice from the DAC/Bell Adviser and advise if a faculty is required or not. When work to bells has an impact on a turret clock the DAC Clock Adviser should be consulted.

List A

The works in List A may be undertaken without faculty and without informing the Archdeacon. They are to allow for the routine maintenance and inspection of bells that are in regular use and where there is a tower captain, or other person, who has sufficient skills and knowledge to ensure that the work is done with due regard to Health and Safety and the protection of historically significant parts of the installation.

List A is not appropriate for work when a bell needs to be lifted from its bearings or for making alterations to an installation.

Regular visual inspection of the belfry and regular removal of any debris that may be carried into it is vital for the safe and long lasting operation of the installation. It is good practice to only visit the tower when there is someone else present in the church and always to notify someone that you are inspecting the bells and when you expect to complete your work.

If necessary training in belfry maintenance is available from the Towers and Belfries Committee of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (www.cccbr.org.uk). The bell trade occasionally runs training events on maintenance and will normally be pleased to offer advice in this area. It is appropriate to consider putting a contract in place for maintenance, especially if no one is available locally with the necessary skills and experience.

List B

Works in List B require the Archdeacon to be consulted and they will take advice from the DAC and its bells adviser before giving notice that the proposals may be undertaken without a faculty, or advising that they require a full faculty application.

As with List A These works should only be carried out by persons with sufficient skills and knowledge to complete the work to a satisfactory standard, with due regard to Health and Safety and the protection of historically significant parts of the installation. This may require a bellhanger to carry out or oversee the works.

Although a series of relatively minor works may be all that is necessary to bring an installation back into use, the provisions of List B are principally for bells in regular use. If an installation is being brought back into use after a period of over 5 years a professional bell hanger must be consulted to see that all aspects of the ring are fit for use.

List B cannot be used for works that require the removal of the bell from the belfry or for works that involve drilling, or other work that would make a lasting change to the bell.

When a wrought iron clapper is replaced with one of a different material, it is good practice to retain the original clapper in the tower.

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