



Quinquennial Inspections

“Our church buildings are a precious gift from those who have gone before us in the Christian faith. They proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus, faith of His followers in His promise of sins forgiven, a fresh start and a life eternal. They proclaim God’s love for all of his creation. They are places of prayer and contemplation, where we learn and practice compassion and where people find courage in every stage of their lives. I know how much hard work is invested in maintaining our buildings across the Diocese. When we fail to keep church buildings fit for purpose we fail to love our neighbours as ourselves.” Bishop Steven

What is a Quinquennial Inspection?

The Quinquennial Report is one of the key documents which assists the Parochial Church Council (PCC) in the care and repair of a church building. It gives an overview of the repair needs of the building, and lists the defects observed according to their priority.

The survey carried out by your Quinquennial Inspector will cover:

- defects in the condition of the building;
- maintenance deficits and maintenance plans;
- safety of the structure and floors;
- health and safety and access issues;
- trees in the churchyard if they are protected by a Tree Preservation Order, in a Conservation Area, or on the Gazetteer of ancient, veteran and notable trees; or any tree impacting on the building;
- boundary walls, lych gates, memorials and other structures in the churchyard; and
- the Inspector is not expected to be an expert on bells, clocks or organs but these items should be included to ensure that parts of the building which may otherwise be little visited are inspected, and to disclose any threat to the building fabric, and/or to a specialist item of value due to defects in the fabric, and most importantly any threat to the health and safety of persons.

The Inspector may also pick up the following:

- environmental sustainability (eg lighting, heating, rainwater goods, suitability for renewables, opportunities to reduce heat loss through steps such as draughtproofing and insulation);
- moveable items of high value or significance (which may be identified in the Statement of Significance and/or by the Archdeacon); and
- the impact of climate change on flood-risk, rainwater goods, and stonework.

The Inspector should use their professional judgement in bringing other matters of concern to the attention of the PCC. For example, items such as whether the safety of boilers and heated water systems (ie Legionnaires disease) should be guaranteed by regular checks, access issues with paths and public rights of way, and safety of incoming services.

What is the QI not?

The QI report is a schedule of condition and **not** a schedule of works for repairs. The Inspector will describe the defects but should not specify the repair in the report. Therefore, the report should not be used as such to obtain quotations for works to the building. Traditionally constructed buildings perform differently to modern buildings and the use of modern materials in repairs can be detrimental to the building fabric. Even something as simple as decorating walls with an impermeable modern emulsion can compound issues of damp penetration. It is important to consult your Inspector on the appropriate specification of repairs.

Are we legally required to have one?

Under the provisions of the **Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018** all parish churches in the Diocese, all other consecrated churches and chapels including licensed places of worship opted in under the Care of Places of Worship Measure 1999, and buildings licensed for public worship, must be inspected at least once in any five-year period. If you have any doubt about the legal status of your church building please contact the DAC for advice via dac@oxford.anglican.org

Even if your church building does not fall into the categories above it is a good idea to carry out a QI to understand what condition the building is in and to enable you to plan any necessary repairs.

The Archdeacon can use the powers conferred by Sections 47 and 48 of the **Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018** to arrange for an inspection where one has not been carried out and for the inspection to cover extra matters of interest beyond the fabric if necessary.

How do we arrange a QI?

Primary responsibility for arranging the QI rests with the Parish. However, in the Diocese of Oxford some Deaneries have established Deanery Inspection Committees which operate in a number of ways, some simply pool funds to cover the inspection fees, and others organise the inspections. You can find out whether your deanery has an inspection committee in operation and how it works by contacting your Area Dean. Parishes in a deanery that has an inspection committee are encouraged to engage with it.

Who can we appoint to carry out the QI?

Every diocese is legally required to have a diocesan scheme for QIs, which sets out requirements such as who is eligible to undertake inspections. The Oxford Diocese scheme can be found in full [here](#).

The Diocese of Oxford does not have a list of 'approved' Inspectors. However, the DAC is legally required to keep a list of the Inspectors known to be working in the diocese, and that can be found [here](#).

In order to be eligible to undertake an inspection on a church built before 1900 the Inspector must be **conservation accredited** (see below) or have confirmed to the diocese that they intend to retire by April 2029. If the church building is built after 1900 this requirement does not apply. The Inspectors working in the diocese when this requirement was introduced (April 2019) have until April 2024 to obtain accreditation in order to maintain their existing appointments to buildings built before 1900. This only affects a small number of Inspectors.

For many years only Architects and Building Surveyors were eligible to undertake QIs, that has recently changed and the requirement is for the Inspector to be an 'appropriately qualified professional'. In practice this means that people in roles such as Architectural Technologists or Structural Engineers may undertake the inspection.

The appointment of Quinquennial Inspector is a personal appointment, even if made through their employing firm. As such, only the appointed Inspector may undertake the inspection and produce the subsequent report.

It is important that a Quinquennial Inspector's training, accreditation and experience in building conservation is commensurate with the complexity and significance of the church building(s) in question.

All Quinquennial Inspectors must hold appropriate Professional Indemnity Insurance cover and should provide written evidence of this to the PCC when the appointment is made.

Parishes are strongly encouraged to periodically review the appointment of their Quinquennial Inspector in a competitive tendering process, and the most appropriate time would be when the next inspection is due. Reviewing the appointment does not imply that the PCC must change their Inspector, but offers the opportunity to reflect on whether the PCC is receiving good quality service, and has a good relationship with the Inspector.

What is conservation accreditation?

Working with older buildings calls for a particular set of skills and expertise. Professional associations use conservation accreditation schemes to ensure a member's competency in this specialist field.

The diocesan QI scheme identifies conservation accreditation schemes as recognised by **Historic England**. Most of these schemes use the International Council on Monuments and Sites' (ICOMOS) **Guidelines for Education and Training in the Conservation of Monuments, Ensembles and Sites** as the basis of their assessment of a candidate's experience.

In order to retain their conservation accreditation most schemes require the professionals to undertake a certain amount of Continuing Professional Development each year to ensure their knowledge is up to date, and some even fully reassess each professional after a given time period.

The list of Inspectors known to be working within the diocese identifies those Inspectors who are accredited under these schemes, but you can also search the registers directly on the webpage of the organisation to find an Inspector.

Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)

(please note, in the case of the RIBA, only the designations ‘Conservation Architect’ and ‘Specialist Conservation Architect’ meet the requirements of the diocesan QI scheme. ‘Conservation Registrant’, the remaining category, does not require sufficient expertise to be demonstrated in order to comply)

Register of Architects Accredited in Building Conservation (AABC)

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)

Directory of Accredited Conservationists (CIAT)

Conservation Accreditation Register for Engineers (CARE)

Building Conservation Certification Scheme (CIOB)

Professional Accreditation of Conservator – Restorers (PACR)

The **Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC)** also runs a membership scheme but this is not sufficient to meet the diocesan eligibility criteria for conservation accreditation.

All Inspectors are encouraged to join the **Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association (EASA)**.

*Conservation accreditation of a lead professional on a project is also a requirement of many grant givers, including the **Oxford Diocese Development Fund and Historic England***

Criteria for appointing an appropriate Inspector:

Competent to inspect Major Churches (as defined by the **Church Buildings Council**) which includes what used to be Greater Churches; proven experience of working with such large and/or highly significant and complex church buildings is recommended, at least at a junior level under a more experienced professional; and experience of working on Grade I or II* church buildings in a sole capacity. Relevant conservation accreditation as required by the diocesan scheme.

Competent to inspect Grade I or II* churches; proven experience of work in a sole capacity with listed buildings; proven experience of work with such highly designated church buildings at least at a junior level under a more experienced professional; preferably experience in sole capacity. Relevant conservation accreditation as required by the diocesan scheme.

Competent to inspect Grade II churches; proven experience of work in a sole capacity with listed buildings; preferably experience of working with listed church buildings at least at a junior level under a more experienced professional. Relevant conservation accreditation as required by the diocesan scheme.

Competent to inspect unlisted churches; no specific prior experience expected, but evidence of supervision from an experienced professional with experience of church buildings is recommended. For certain buildings, evidence of experience of working with traditional materials may be required. Relevant conservation accreditation if the building was built before 1900 as required by the diocesan scheme.

Given the recent call by General Synod for all parts of the Church to achieve year on-year reductions in emissions, it would be valuable for the Inspector to have proven experience of how heritage buildings can be made more environmentally sustainable. This might include suitable ways to reduce heat loss, different approaches to church heating, and the possibility of renewable energy generation.

Many parishes find that there is advantage in renewing an appointment, as an ongoing relationship with an experienced Inspector who fully understands the building and its needs, and has a good relationship with the PCC and Churchwardens, is invaluable.

Once you have found an Inspector you wish to appoint you must seek advice on the appointment from a member of the Church Buildings Team who will review your proposed appointment on the basis of the criteria [above](#). You can do this by completing this [form](#) and returning it to dac@oxford.anglican.org.

When appointing a new Quinquennial Inspector PCCs should interview at least three candidates through a formal competitive appointment process. This would also allow the Quinquennial Inspector to undertake all publicly funded works within the next five years without the need for further tendering. When assessing which Inspector to appoint the PCC may find this [criteria matrix template](#) helpful.

A template letter of appointment which the PCC can use to instruct an Inspector can be found [here](#).

The Inspector should formally confirm acceptance of the appointment, a template for this is available [here](#).

We have an architect/surveyor in the church family, can we appoint them?

As a rule, it is not a good idea to appoint Inspectors who have a close connection with the parish. Conflicts of interest can sometimes occur which may place the PCC or the Inspector in a difficult position. Even where there is no direct conflict of interest, the relationship may cause difficulty or embarrassment to the PCC, if things do not work out satisfactorily.

This is especially so if the Inspector is doing work for free or for a reduced fee, perhaps as a form of Christian stewardship. A number of parishes have found, in the past, that it can be difficult in these situations to apply the necessary pressure when things have not progressed as smoothly as they should. For this reason, it is usually wiser to maintain a strictly arms-length relationship and to avoid appointing a parishioner or even a close friend of a parishioner, so that the PCC's do not feel that their hands are tied.

Who pays for the inspection?

Fees for the preparation and completion of the report should be agreed between the PCC and the Inspector in advance, before any work is commissioned. This should include any exceptional costs, such as the need to arrange access to otherwise inaccessible parts of the building.

How do we prepare for the inspection?

Before the inspection, it is useful for the PCC to have thought about the following issues:

- Agree the fee with the Quinquennial Inspector. Make sure the Inspector has allowed enough time in the building to carry out a thorough inspection. In very large churches this may be several days.
- Provide the Inspector with a copy of the previous quinquennial report as well as copies of all recent specialist reports, including:
 - a Statement of Significance and/or Conservation Management Plan if such exist.
 - the relevant pages of the Church Log Book and Inventory updated with any works carried out in the quinquennium.
 - all recent written test/survey reports on asbestos, heating and electrical installations, stormwater and foul drainage, fire protection and lightning systems.
 - any arboricultural and ecological reports (eg, bats or other protected or rare species).
 - Access audit, if one has been carried out.
 - Energy Audit, Eco Church Survey, or other environmental report, if applicable.
- Agree any special access arrangements in advance, including suitably secured and protected ladders for inspecting safely accessible roofs. A local builder should be asked to provide long ladders and whatever help the Inspector will need to ensure these are correctly secured. Use of ladders should follow current safety guidelines.
- Agree additional access needs for inspecting high level elements, such as MEWP (Mobile Elevated Work Platform) or scaffold tower. Agree additional labour as necessary for operating access equipment. It may be most practical for the Inspector to pre-arrange this special access. The fees for doing so and hire costs remain the responsibility of the PCC and these must be agreed before the inspection.
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (Drones) may also be used to supplement the visual inspection if legally and properly supervised by appropriately trained and certificated personnel subject to the relevant permissions, including from neighbours, as necessary.
- Where the inspection is to be carried out by one Inspector, it is good practice for a parish representative to check on the Inspector during the inspection for safety reasons and to offer assistance with ladders, hatches etc. Agree in advance with your Inspector who will be available and when for this role.
- Some major churches inspections may be carried out by one or more additional professionals under the direction of the lead Inspector. If more than one Inspector is required, this will be covered by an appropriate fee.
- Access to roofs for the inspection also gives a good opportunity for the gutters to be cleaned, but do not expect your Inspector to do this.
- Keys should be readily available for those parts of the building normally kept locked.

- Bells should be rung down on the day of the inspection. The ringers should be asked to report on any problems with the ring.
- Keep your Inspector up to date with any initiatives in relation to energy saving and other environmental issues.
- Agree with your Inspector whether they would like the heating system to be on or off, or whether it makes no difference. (If they intend taking pictures with a thermal imaging camera, the heating generally needs to be up to temperature.)

Consider the safety of your Inspector

Use of ladders for access for inspection should comply with the Work at Height Regulations 2005. Guidance for this is published by the HSE and includes [Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders and Working at Height: A Brief Guide](#). This applies not only for the Quinquennial Inspection but also for routine maintenance. For further advice regarding the safety of those involved in routine maintenance of churches, refer to the ChurchCare section of the Church of England website.

Selected key points are included here as follows:

- It is strongly recommended that nobody - this includes your professional adviser and church wardens - should climb vertical ladders over 3m in height.
- All ladders must be sound, safe and securely fixed. 'Footing' of ladders by a second person is considered a last resort.
- Hatches should have counterweights.
- There should be ladder extensions of about 1m or handholds beyond the plane of the hatch to assist in getting on and off the ladder.
- A bell chamber should only be entered when any full-circle bells are in the 'down' position.

What should the inspection report include?

- An indicative plan of the building, annotated and cross referenced to photos as appropriate.
- General context photos of the building internally and externally.
- Photos of defects identified.
- Reference to earlier reports and what works have been completed in the meantime, and what remain outstanding in order of priority.

The inspection will generally be carried out from ground level. The quinquennial system assumes that the Inspector will inspect all parts of the building such as internal and external roofs where these are visible and safely accessible. It will state any limitations of the survey, such as areas where it was not possible to gain access, and make recommendations for any further investigations.

The report needs to be understood by people without technical knowledge, so the analysis and language should be as accessible as possible. The report should be logically structured and cover the aspects described above. Photographs and plans can either be included within the text, or set out in an Appendix.

No requirement is made for the Inspector to suggest how much the repair works identified are likely to cost, or what category of diocesan permission they require.

In the context of the General Synod motion of February 2020, recognising the climate emergency and calling on all parts of the church to make year on year reductions in emissions, achieving “net zero” by 2030. This may be achieved by repairing/improving the fabric, by changing the church heating & lighting systems, or by generating electricity through renewables. For more information please see the Church Buildings Council’s guidance on the [Pathway to Net Zero](#).

The report has arrived but it’s very brief!

If the PCC has concerns about the quality of the inspection report, please reach out to a member of the Church Buildings Team for further advice.

What do we do with the report once it has arrived?

A copy of the report must be sent electronically to the DAC, the Archdeacon and the PCC. Your Inspector may not do this so please ensure the PCC forwards the report on to the Church House teams.

When the report is received, it is important for the incumbent, churchwardens and PCC to agree and sign off the report, and understand its recommendations. The report is designed to be a thorough and complete assessment of the condition of the building, and can therefore be a lengthy document. It is very useful for the PCC to walk round the building going through the recommendations. The Quinquennial Inspector should be willing to meet the PCC to go through the recommendations.

The report shall summarise the works needed in the following categories:

- 1 - Urgent, requiring immediate attention
- 2 - Requires attention within 12 months
- 3 - Requires attention within the next 12 – 24 months
- 4 - Requires attention within the quinquennial period
- 5 - A desirable improvement with no timescale (as agreed with the PCC)

The QI is only as useful as you make it!

It may help you to categorize the works – masonry, windows, roofs, rainwater goods – to get an idea of what types of work are required; e.g. re-pointing, decoration of rainwater goods, replacement of tile roof cladding etc. When planning repair projects, depending on the size of your church and the extent of the repairs, the PCC may decide to think in terms of phases of work by part of the building: for example nave, tower, chancel, transepts, vestries.

As many decades may elapse between repair campaigns, we recommend that you carry out, not only those repairs which are necessary now but also those which may be needed before access is next available. The PCC should put urgent works in hand as soon as possible bearing in mind that it may be necessary to obtain consent for these repairs.

The report has identified some repairs are needed – what do we do next?

It is normal practice to instruct the Quinquennial Inspector or another suitably qualified professional, through a separate contract, to prepare a specification and seek tenders from builders of suitable experience.

PCCs should be aware that if public money is involved, procurement rules will apply, meaning that tendering may be required; see ChurchCare for the [CBC guidance note](#) on this. Tendering is normally required for professional fees where over £10,000 for the fees comes from the public purse (including National Lottery Heritage Fund grants).

As already noted, such tendering may not be required if your Quinquennial Inspector has been appointed or re-appointed within the last 5 years through a formal competitive process.

All works to church buildings require faculty permission, unless the works required are contained within Lists A or B. Information on what is on the lists, and how to obtain permission can be found [here](#).

Just because the report has identified the repairs you still need to apply for faculty or List B permission as normal. This should be done through the Online Faculty System.

Register for the Online Faculty System [here](#) and find our guidance notes [here](#).

Help, I'm a new churchwarden and can't find our last QI report!

The Church Buildings Team upload a copy of the reports we receive to the **Church Heritage Record**. You will need to be a registered user of the **Online Faculty System**, with the relevant church building connected to your account to have access to the report.

Prepare a maintenance plan

A maintenance plan can help the PCC to keep on top of the regular maintenance required to keep the church in good condition. The plan can serve as a reminder of when work needs to be done and by whom it should be carried out. The National Churches Trust has a useful maintenance plan [template](#).

Top Tips

- Read the inspection report as soon as possible. Remember that the report is not a specification for repair and should not be used as such.
- Draw up a maintenance plan of regular items to be completed annually and cyclically within the quinquennium.
- Where required, ensure that all consents are in hand before any works are undertaken.
- If in doubt, call or email the Church Buildings Team at dac@oxford.anglican.org or 01865 208270.