

DEANERY INVOLVEMENT WITH QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTION OF CHURCHES

Summary

The Quinquennial Inspection of each and every church by a qualified architect is a legal requirement. These inspections identify the need for repairs to the fabric that, if not attended to, can incur heavy costs at a later date. Deanery Synods have a responsibility to oversee the process. Some do this, and some do not. This paper proposes a way to regularise the situation that meets the needs of both deaneries and parishes.

Background

Quinquennial Inspections (QIs) have been required since 1955, with amendments in 1991. The statutory provision remains that:

- diocesan synods are responsible for establishing diocesan schemes for the quinquennial inspection of churches in the diocese
- the diocesan scheme must contain provision as to the payment of the cost of inspections (which could simply say that PCCs have to pay their own costs), for the appointment of inspecting architects or surveyors and their producing reports, and for the sending of reports to the archdeacon, PCC, incumbent and DAC Secretary
- enforcement of the requirement for each PCC to have its church inspected under the diocesan scheme rests with the archdeacon who can serve an enforcement notice in cases of default, and arrange the inspection him or herself if the enforcement notice is not complied with
- the cost of enforcement by the archdeacon is to be met out of a fund established under the diocesan scheme.

The Diocese of Oxford, at its Synod on 20 November 1993, resolved to establish a scheme to involve Deanery Synods with these responsibilities:

- Set up a Standing or Inspection Committee to oversee the process, with a secretary and treasurer
- Aim to have one fifth of churches inspected each year
- Negotiate rates with architects and set up an account to pay their fees
- Collect dues from each parish to balance the books and present an annual report, with accounts, to the Deanery Synod.
- The guidelines stated clearly that the main responsibility for carrying out Inspections remained with the parish
- If no QI is carried out the Archdeacon has the power to order one and the cost is charged to the *Deanery* scheme.

Consultation

Since then, custom and practice has varied widely. In recent months I have attended meetings in each Archdeaconry in order to consult those Deanery Lay Chairs who were able to attend. This covered 24 of the 29 deaneries. This took the form of general discussions rather than a survey of how each Deanery operates at present.

In summary, the findings were :

- Some deaneries had no process at all in regard to QIs.
- Others followed the rules diligently, but not always to the extent of negotiating rates with architects, which they felt should be left to the parish. They did however provide advice.
- Lay Chairs were unhappy with the idea of a Deanery meeting the cost of a QI instructed by their Archdeacon in the event of a parish failing to submit one.

- Those with a scheme in place were motivated by the ability to help small parishes, in particular, spread the cost over five years. An inspection costs about £1000 including VAT. All those consulted agreed that this facility was useful.
- One deanery ran the scheme so "well" that they built up a large surplus, which was then used to reduce parish share.
- Deaneries were concerned about a shortage of administrative resources and were not keen to have a system imposed.
- Many Lay Chairs said that they or the Area Dean, when carrying out visitations, often asked if a QI had been done, but did not in general ask to see it or discuss its contents.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are put to the Synod:

- The scheme established in 1994 should be abandoned.
- Prime responsibility for carrying out QIs should remain with the parish.
- Deaneries should be free to continue, or establish, a pooled system of spreading the cost of QIs to parishes over time. Any such scheme should be duly reported on annually to Deanery Synods by the treasurer.
- Deanery officers should continue to offer help and advice to parishes on the QI process as their resources allow.
- Area Deans and Lay Chairs when carrying out visitations as deputy of the Archdeacon should always enquire as to the state of the fabric of the church and any developments or alterations that might be under consideration. Reference to the QI can then be made as appropriate.
- In the event, hopefully very rare, of an Archdeacon having to instruct a QI to be carried out, then the cost should be added to the parish share. As with any case of hardship, one would expect the Deanery to be of assistance.

General Points

It is worth adding some general points about Quinquennial Inspections

- Inspecting architects need to be approved by the DAC. There is a list on the website of inspecting architects/surveyors who have already been approved.
- Inspections involve a day on site and another day to prepare the report. At professional rates £1000 is good value, and many architects are prepared to carry them out in the longer term expectation of supervising repairs and alterations. Larger churches will cost more. These fees are low compared with the consequential cost of failing to spot the need for repairs.
- It is anticipated that the central database of churches currently being set up will include a system for identifying any missing QI reports.
- Staff in the DAC office are available to help with any questions or difficulties in regard to inspections.
- As always, parishes are encouraged to contact the DAC well ahead of any repairs or alterations.

I am very grateful to Deanery Lay Chairs for spending time on this subject, and for the Archdeacons in facilitating the process.

Approval

Synod is asked to approve the recommendations outlined above with immediate effect.

Charles Baker Chair, DAC