

# QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTION REPORTS

## Supplementary Guidance for Inspectors



The purpose of this document is to ensure that Quinquennial Inspection Reports (QIR's) are written in a way that helps PCCs and congregations better understand and engage with the content of their QIR.

The observations below have arisen from Historic England's report 'The Value of Maintenance?' published in September 2019 and also in response to feedback on reports received by the Leicester DAC.

They were presented at a joint Leicester and Coventry DAC Training Day, held on 10 October 2019.

**“QIRs should be understandable by the people who are responsible for the building and written in a way that communicates to them.”**

- The primary audience of the QIR is the PCC and congregation of the church.
- Reports should be easy for the reader to navigate and be self-contained. Avoid back references to previous reports as the reader may not be in possession of these.
- Take the reader around the building in a logical order and don't miss parts of the church out, even if there is nothing particular to be noted.
- Ensure that the writing style is engaging, bearing in mind that the average reading age of an adult is 9 years old. Reading age is NOT the same as thinking or comprehension age so simple, readable text can tackle complex and difficult subjects.
- The report should be well formatted and laid out, descriptive, clearly defining defects, stating the severity of them and outlining necessary next steps and/or actions to be taken. e.g. it's not sufficient to simply note that there is a tree growing in a gutter – the report should say what needs to be done about it and how (particularly if the 'how' is not obvious!).
- Photographs should accompany the text to which they relate wherever possible, rather than being placed at the back/in an appendix. It may be appropriate to supplement the report with additional photographs in an appendix and/or on a CD or similar, but again, the report needs to be self-contained and within the prescribed MB size. Arrows on photos illustrating relevant point(s) can further assist.
- It can be reassuring and encouraging to PCC's and congregations if the report affirms their work as volunteers to maintain the building (where appropriate), particularly where significant programmes of repair/development have been undertaken during the quinquennium. The term 'significant' is relative and will vary from place to place and should not be solely influenced/dependent upon the cost of the works, but recognise achievements within the capacity of the PCC/congregation to carry them out.

**“Congregations need to ask Architects/Surveyors to explain what the QIR says about the condition of the building and how that can inform practical action.”**

Reviewing QIR's with the PCC.

- It can greatly assist PCC's and congregations if a face-to-face review of the report is included within your service so that they can properly understand the contents and the implications.

This is hopefully an opportunity to formulate an appropriate plan of work which identifies short, medium and long term considerations and may assess possible funding options. It may help to provide reassurance and set the PCC on the right course.

**“Good QIR's are a Road-map for the congregation to inform regular maintenance, minor repairs and planning for future major works.”**

- It is really helpful for congregations if there is a clear explanation of the necessary next steps/actions to deal with defects and the relative priority of them within the broad categories.

For churches in poor condition further guidance as to which repairs would provide the most positive impact with the funds available would be beneficial and encouraging. Further ranking of remaining repairs could then be rated accordingly.

- Give clear guidance on basic maintenance as some places struggle with this. This is especially helpful where the church has inherent problems which need regular monitoring. Highlight design deficiencies together with possible rectification measures.
- Develop a maintenance plan.
- Encourage PCC's to establish a local culture of volunteer maintenance (if possible/practical). Volunteer help at low level is still valuable even if high level access is needed by others e.g. via a regular contract with local builder or similar for gutter clearance which is highly recommended.

**Roofs and Rainwater Goods**

It will come as no surprise that Roofs and Rainwater Goods (RWG's) are main causes of additional repairs.

- There are cases where these have been rated as low or desirable but have escalated to urgent within the quinquennium, so 'The Value of Maintenance?' report suggests that they should be classed as Urgent.
- Where there have been issues of access to roofs in the past, these should be resolved in order that a proper inspection is possible and is particularly important where there are hidden parapet or valley gutters. This may need flagging with the PCC and checking that appropriate arrangements have been made before the day of the inspection.

## Tracking Defects/Progress between Reports

- Reports should be written in a way that enables deterioration and/or the progress of repairs to be tracked and monitored.
- Avoid back/circular references, such as “a full description of XX is in previous reports...” as the previous report(s) may not be available to the current reader.
- Outline the relative priority of works within the assigned categories.

## Heritage at Risk Register (HaRR)

- QIR to show whether the church:
  - is on HaRR or not.
  - has been added or removed during the quinquennium.
  - should be considered for inclusion on the list – stating reasons for this and referred to Simon Headley in the first instance.

Where a church is on the HaRR discuss the reasons for this, what works are necessary/what works have been undertaken (if any) and the scale of priority within these.

- Churches which have been on the HaRR for  $\geq 3$  years can reach a tipping point where the deterioration is so rapid that a rolling programme of repairs is not enough to keep the building stable. Major financial intervention is then required which may be beyond what is possible.

## Specialist and Legally Required Reports

It is essential that congregations are aware of their responsibilities regarding specialist and legally required reports and they may need advice of where to go/how to obtain these in advance of them becoming due.

Electrical testing is especially key particularly as this affects building insurance and is a legal requirement.

## Archaeology/Recording

Undertaking a QIR gives the inspector unique access to many parts of the building which are normally not seen. The opportunity should be taken to take photographs of things which may be of historical and/or archaeological interest, a good example being plumbers marks and/or graffiti on lead roofs. Depending upon the extent significance of these it may be appropriate to refer these to the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser via the DAC Secretary for further recording. It is not intended that this should add significant time or cost to the preparation of the QIR.

## And finally,

**Thank you!** for all that you do to assist churches and congregations across the diocese with maintaining and looking after their church buildings. A huge amount of time and effort is put in by professionals, contractors and volunteers alike which is gratefully acknowledged.

**Further information/advice to parishes is available from the Church Buildings Team**

Building Development Enabler:	Mrs Gill Elliott	0116 261 5353	<a href="mailto:gill.elliott@leccofe.org">gill.elliott@leccofe.org</a>
DAC Secretary & Database Manager:	Revd Rupert Allen	0116 261 5332	<a href="mailto:rupert.allen@leccofe.org">rupert.allen@leccofe.org</a>
Historic Churches Support Officer:	Mr Simon Headley	0116 261 5242	<a href="mailto:simon.headley1@leccofe.org">simon.headley1@leccofe.org</a>

And from the Diocesan website [www.leicester.anglican.org](http://www.leicester.anglican.org)

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