

London Diocesan Advisory Committee



ADVICE ON THE PRODUCTION OF CONSERVATORS' REPORTS ON CHURCH FURNISHINGS AND WORKS OF ART

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1. PURPOSE OF THIS ADVICE

1.1 This advice is intended to help Parishes commission suitable reports from conservators on historic furnishings, works of art and other features before conservation work takes place. It aims to provide an outline of the information which needs to be contained within these reports so that a

quick decision can be made by the DAC without having to ask the Parish and the conservator for more information.

1.2 The advice aims to cover reports on most church furnishings, in particular those relating to monuments, timberwork, wall paintings, paintings on canvas or wood (including hatchments) polychromy, metalwork and stained glass. For stained glass the conservator is encouraged to use the CVMA system to locate windows. A copy of this is available from the Church Buildings Council (CBC) if necessary. Although the principles behind the advice are appropriate for musical and mechanical furnishings including organs, bells and clocks, separate guidelines for organ builders (agreed with the Institute of British Organ Buildings) are available from the CBC.

1.3 The advice sets out the type of information needed in reports accompanying Faculty and grant applications. Further advice may be sought from the Care of Churches Team and your Archdeacon, including on whether separate or preliminary reports may be needed, and on the possible sources of grant aid for particular investigations.

2. INTRODUCTION

Increasing recognition of the importance and complexity of the historic furnishings and works of art held in churches is reflected in the amount and type of information now required in conservators' reports. Most deterioration of objects has been caused by a combination of inappropriate past treatments, poor management and care regimes and adverse environmental factors. Consequently, the emphasis in their conservation is now on preventative and passive treatments resulting in minimum intervention, and on ensuring their long-term preservation through determining appropriate environmental conditions. Treatment interventions should only be proposed if actually necessary, and should be based on an adequate understanding of the causes of deterioration of the object, its original materials and previous treatments.

3. ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF CONSERVATORS' REPORTS

3.1 SUMMARY

A maximum of one page, summarising the key information from each section of the report / proposal.

3.2 BRIEF

The scope and intention of the report, the conservator(s) who undertook the investigation, the circumstances of examination (including access), the author(s), the persons responsible for the object and building (including the name of the architect).

3.3 DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

3.3.1. Name of parish, dedication of church, diocese and county.

3.3.2. Brief description of the building, including date(s) of construction phase(s) and materials, and major interventions relevant to the object. Summary of the heating, ventilation, and, as appropriate, rainwater disposal systems, and their condition and normal use.

3.4 DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OBJECT

3.4.1. Name and date of object along with name(s) of artist(s), manufacturer(s), designer(s) or other producer(s) if known.

3.4.2. Location within the church (this should be given on a plan of the building and context photographs included), overall dimensions, and method of installation.

3.4.3. General description: to include original materials, details of methods of construction, surface treatments, inscriptions, etc.

3.4.4. Physical history of the object, including previous conservation interventions. This should be based on previous documents (including images) as well as circumstantial evidence if possible. Original and restored elements should be clearly differentiated. References to the sources of information used should be given.

3.4.5. Assessment of the significance associated with the object, such as historical, art historical, social, etc. This significance may be local, regional, national and international. This assessment should be substantiated and referenced. Members of the parish may be able to help with this section. The significance assessment is an important part of the conservator's understanding of the object to be examined and possibly treated. It is also vital information, which allows for informed decisions to be made by faculty and grant-giving committees. In the case of monuments, parishes should try to trace the descendents of the person(s) commemorated, seek their agreement to the proposals for conservation and perhaps ask for a contribution towards the costs involved.

3.5 CONDITION ASSESSMENT

3.5.1. An adequate condition survey should be provided, with descriptions of the different types of deterioration, and with an assessment of the risk of loss. These should be recorded photographically and graphically as appropriate. It is of particular importance that an assessment is made of whether the deterioration is *ongoing*. This should be based on the present condition of the object and the history of interventions to both the object and the fabric of the church.

3.5.2. State the nature of the examination undertaken (e.g. day or artificial light, raking light, ultraviolet light, under magnification, whether a scaffold or ladder was used to inspect the object close up), and whether any diagnostic investigations, sampling and analysis were carried out (these should be reported under section 3.6, Causes of Deterioration).

3.6 CAUSES OF DETERIORATION AND THEIR TREATMENT

3.6.1 The causes of deterioration, which will typically include environmental factors such as heating and drainage, should be identified. Adequate understanding of the causes of deterioration – and proposals as to how they might be improved for the long-term preservation of the object – may require environmental monitoring and/or other studies by an expert.

3.6.2. State the basis for the assessment of the causes of deterioration, including examination, sampling and analysis, and diagnostic investigations, and give the results.

3.6.3. Provide an interpretation of this evidence in relation to the physical history of the object and building, indicating the causes of deterioration. If this is not possible, indicate what further investigations are required.

3.6.4. If the causes of deterioration are related to the building envelope, the internal environment, or the use of the building, what measures are being taken by the parish and/or its architect to address them? Reference should be made to the findings and recommendations of the latest quinquennial inspection.

3.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSERVATION

3.7.1. These should be presented (and justified), as well as prioritised, and individually costed. If possible, or relevant they should be based on small-scale and discrete treatment trials which may be carried out with the permission of your Archdeacon in consultation with the Care of Churches Team. Details should be given as far as possible concerning the

materials and methods proposed, and the rationale for their selection, as well as the personnel who will be carrying out the work. If the application is successful, and the work proceeds, a separate report on the treatment undertaken should of course be provided by the conservator at the end of the project.

3.7.2. Proposals relating to the building, its use and environment should be given with reference to Section 6. Assess what interval (if any) should elapse between the completion of this work and the start of the proposed conservation.

3.7.2. Provide details and results of any treatment tests authorised by your Archdeacon, including adequate photographic documentation.

3.7.3. If you consider that emergency stabilisation work is required, indicate the extent, the materials and methods proposed.

3.7.4. Indicate any significant ethical or practical issues particular to this case.

3.7.5. Describe proposed conservation interventions, their sequence, and the materials and methods proposed. Indicate if there are any alternatives to the recommendations (type of interventions, materials and methods) and explain why the proposed course is the most suitable.

3.7.6. Provide details of the record that will be submitted on completion of the conservation.

3.8 FUTURE RECOMMENDED CONSERVATION REQUIREMENTS

3.8.1. Describe what, if any, additional steps you recommend should be taken following completion of conservation to ensure the continuing wellbeing of the object.

3.8.2. Indicate the nature and frequency of post-conservation monitoring required.

3.9 ESTIMATE

3.9.1. Describe what preliminaries and attendance you would require the parish to provide for your work, e.g. scaffolding, electricity, the architect, a builder, etc.

3.9.2. State accurately the time and cost for carrying out the above work, the qualifications / experience / accreditation status of those who will be undertaking it, and the insurance cover provided. If a phased programme is envisaged show estimates for the phases separately. All on-site costs

such as materials, accommodation, and travel should be included (unless accommodation is the subject of a specific agreement with the parish).

3.9.3. Ensure the estimate cost includes the time to produce the record of conservation work.

3.9.4. Indicate VAT as a separate item.

3.9.5. State terms of payment and duration of validity of the estimate.

3.9.6. Indicate any other terms of contract e.g. insurance liability.

3.10 SOURCES

Provide a list of the sources of information, including published and unpublished materials, historic photographs, etc.

3.11 APPENDICES

Full records of sampling, analysis, diagnostic investigations, monitoring, etc. should be appended.

3.12 ILLUSTRATIONS

3.12.1. The report should be illustrated with good quality, clearly labelled images, including contextual views of the church and the object concerned; images must be captioned, including information on the date taken.

3.12.2. Recording of the current state of the object requires, as a minimum, good quality photographs printed using an archive quality process (i.e. not using desktop printers), and preferably some form of graphic mapping to record both the nature and the distribution of phenomena.

4. EMERGENCY WORKS

In an emergency, for instance after a fire or a water leak, remedial conservation work may be carried out without all of the usual preparatory steps described above. This must happen in consultation with your Archdeacon and the Care of Churches Team.

5. FINDING A CONSERVATOR

The Institute of Conservation (ICON: www.icon.org.uk) maintain an accredited list of conservators. The DAC cannot recommend conservators, however.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This advice draws substantially on the Church Buildings Council Document *Guidelines for minimum information required in conservators' reports accompanying faculty and grant applications*, 2005, with the kind permission of Mr Andrew Argyrakis.

Further information and advice was provided by the DAC's Paintings & Drawings Consultant, Mr Martin Royalton-Kisch.

**London Diocesan Advisory Committee
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