



SKILLED VOLUNTEER LABOUR AND CHURCH REPAIRS

Many parishes are fortunate in having the support of volunteers who are skilled or semi-skilled in building maintenance and repairs. However, difficulties and complications can and do arise of which parishes should be aware to enable them to consider and safeguard their position and protect their volunteers.

There are several matters requiring careful consideration:

- ❖ To establish competency
- ❖ To ascertain if the work will involve the use of hazardous substances
- ❖ To ascertain if machinery or equipment will be required and, if so, who will erect, dismantle and operate it
- ❖ To consider the competent supervisor of the works
- ❖ To identify health and safety hazards that may be encountered and to make suitable risk assessments
- ❖ To ensure suitable and sufficient arrangements are put in place before work starts

Competence

It is essential that volunteers are competent and trained in the task they are agreeing to undertake; if they are not, then can they be trained and instructed in the work and if so, who will provide the necessary training and instruction? Your inspecting architect will know of the skills required and can advise in establishing whether or not the willing volunteers have them.

Hazardous substances

The use of hazardous substances (eg lime which burns the skin) can pose hazards to the health and safety of volunteers. Your inspecting architect will again know about such substances and can advise in making the required assessments and in the precautions required to minimise the risks.

Machinery and equipment

If machinery and equipment is required to undertake the work (eg scaffolding to gain access at high level) then are the volunteers used to or trained to operate it? If not, who will provide and operate it and what arrangements will be put in place to ensure its adequacy and to ensure it is in suitable condition and has a current test certificate?

Supervision

All works of building repair and maintenance must be supervised by a competent person even though the workforce may be volunteers. It is also good management to put someone in charge of any project. Such a person should be identified and entrusted with the task who must be competent and experienced in the work that he is to supervise.

Health and safety hazards: Risk Assessment

Current legislation requires employers and client bodies to identify hazards to health and safety and to make suitable risk assessments. This should be done in a formal way and the advice of your inspecting architect taken in these matters

Suitable and sufficient arrangements

Before such works commence, a comprehensive specification and schedule must have been prepared and submitted to the DAC for formal advice before a petition for the required faculty is made. Alternatively, if the works come within Archdeacons' de minimis provisions then his authority must have been sought.

In all applications for work to be undertaken by volunteers the DAC or the Archdeacon will want to be satisfied that:

- ❖ A suitable specification and description of the work has been prepared
- ❖ Suitable arrangements have been made for supervision of the works
- ❖ The church's insurers have been informed of the proposals, particularly recording that volunteer labour is to be used
- ❖ The volunteers are competent and skilled in the tasks they are to undertake
- ❖ The appropriate amenity society and/or English Heritage have been consulted where necessary
- ❖ Proper arrangements are in place to ensure the security of the premises and suitable safeguards are to be taken to prevent the outbreak of fire
- ❖ The inspecting architect will direct the works and will sign them off on satisfactory completion.

The use of volunteers for simple works of maintenance is encouraged provided that suitable and sufficient safeguards are in place.