

PROTOCOL FOR PARISH BUILDING INSPECTIONS

Introduction

This protocol is in relation to the constitutional requirement to inspect glebes and is in accordance with the 'Commissions of Repair' outlined in Chapter 13 of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland. The protocol relates to the inspection of glebes and other church property vested in the Representative Church Body as part of the quinquennial inspections by Building Surveyors appointed by the Diocese of Connor. Other properties, not vested in the R.C.B., may be subject to inspection and in that event should also follow this protocol. Similarly, non-routine inspections of the glebe will be necessary if a vacancy occurs in any parish.

Chris McCollum Building Conservation Surveyors Ltd (Surveyor) is the appointed Building Surveying practice (working in collaboration with Michelle Atkinson Surveying Limited) and will carry out quinquennial inspections (the Survey) and prepare reports for the Diocese. The cost of the inspection and report is charged to the Dioceses, not to individual parishes.

Protocol

1. The Yearly programme of visits will be agreed between the Diocesan Glebes Secretary and Surveyor. This programme will take the form of a monthly schedule. On a quarterly basis the Surveyor will detail visits for the next quarter, providing actual inspection dates. This quarterly programme will be agreed with the appropriate Rural Dean, Diocesan Glebes Secretary and Diocesan Office. The Diocesan Glebes Secretary will forward the final agreed schedule to the Rural Dean.
2. The Surveyor will advise the appropriate Parishes (the Incumbent and also the Honorary Secretary of the Select Vestry or Glebewarden) of the date set for their inspection. This will normally be one day only, unless there are several properties to inspect.

If the date agreed needs to be altered by the clergy for that Parish, as much notice as possible should be given. Ideally two weeks' notice would allow the Surveyor to reschedule the inspection. The clergy should alert the Diocesan Glebes Secretary who in turn will liaise with the Surveyor and rearrange the date of the inspection. The Rural Dean will be informed by the Diocesan Glebes Secretary of any such changes.

3. In accordance with Chapter 13, Part III, Rules, Section 12 of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland, on the day of the inspection (the 'Commission of Repair') the following personnel should meet at the rectory for a short introductory session to highlight any pertinent issues. This will commence at an agreed time.
 - A member or nominee of the Diocesan Glebes Committee (usually the Glebes Secretary).
 - The Rural Dean (or other Clergy appointed by the Bishop as his substitute).
 - The Incumbent's Glebewarden.
 - The Vestry Glebewarden or Glebewardens (or other appointed deputy from among the Select Vestry).

Three of the above constitute a quorum and the representative of the Diocesan Glebes Committee will Chair any discussions. At the rectory the Incumbent and his/her spouse may be in attendance but will not be considered as part of the quorum. The Surveyor also will obviously be in attendance.

It is anticipated that there will then be a short "walk around" lasting no more than 30 minutes and this will focus on information which the Parish wishes to be conveyed to the Surveyor. Those participating in the "walk round" will normally only be the incumbent/spouse and the surveyor with possibly one glebewarden in attendance.

4. The Surveyor will then begin to inspect the property unaccompanied. They are professionals who have been appointed by the Diocese of Connor to produce a survey report and they should not be hindered or delayed.
5. The Surveyor will then move on to any other building(s) to be inspected (church and/or curatage) and a similar "walk round" with parish representatives may be organised.
6. The parish is required to notify the surveyor if any telecommunication transmission equipment is on church property, as this is a health and safety issue. It is the responsibility of the parish to have this equipment 'powered down' during an inspection.
7. Those churches with bells need to make sure that the bells are set in the "Down" position to ensure that the bell does not start to peel when the surveyor is in the bell tower.
8. On completion of all the inspections later in the day, the Surveyor will brief representatives of those listed at paragraph 3, either in person (arranged during the "walk around") or by mobile telephone. The Parish representatives are free to raise any issues during that briefing.
9. The Surveyor will produce a condition report for each property surveyed and forward copies to the Diocesan Office within two weeks of the survey being conducted. The Diocesan Office will forward copies of the report to the Diocesan Glebes Secretary, the Incumbent, and the Honorary Secretary and the Glebewardens of the Parish. The Diocesan Glebes Secretary will confer with the appropriate Rural Dean.
10. The Surveyor's Report should be brought before the next Select Vestry meeting of the parish. After reviewing all the points raised in it, decisions should be taken with regard to remedial action if problems have been identified which require immediate attention. The Select Vestry should prepare a plan of action to deal with the other recommendations in accordance with the time limits stated in the report. If the Select Vestry wishes to discuss the contents/recommendations within any report, the Surveyor is available to meet representatives.
11. The Diocesan Glebes Secretary should, on receipt of the survey report, write to the Honorary Secretary of the relevant parish, requesting a reply relating to the parish's response to the work outlined in the report. After an appropriate period of time, the Glebes Secretary should also ask to be updated about work already undertaken and that scheduled for the future. In all matters relating to inspections, the Diocesan Glebes Secretary should keep the Glebes and Architectural Committee informed of events and progress.

12. In the case of a Vacancy, the Rural Dean will represent the Incumbent in pre- and post-inspection discussions and lead the Select Vestry in expediting repairs/improvements identified in any report.

It should be noted that if, in these circumstances, substantial work is required on any glebe, the appointment of an incumbent may be delayed until the Bishop is satisfied that the accommodation is acceptable.

13. Under Chapter 13, Part III of the Constitution there is a provision for an annual inspection of each glebe. It is the responsibility of the Rural Dean to ensure this is carried out and that a report is submitted to the Diocesan Glebes Committee as well as to the Select Vestry.

"There shall be held by the rural dean, or that rural dean's appointed substitute, together with the glebewardens and a nominee of the Diocesan Glebes Committee who, if possible, shall be an Architect, Engineer, Surveyor, Builder or Tradesperson, an annual inspection of each glebe of a parish and of the exterior and interior of each glebe house of a parish. A substitute shall be appointed when the glebe to be inspected is occupied by the rural dean.

The inspectors shall report to the Diocesan Glebes Committee on the glebe house, furnishings and fittings, garden, avenue, and curtilage, land, fences, and trees, as well as any sub-letting or tree felling."

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