



GUIDANCE NOTES FOR PCCS WHEN COMMISSIONING A NEW WINDOW FOR A CHURCH

1. BASIC QUESTIONS

Why stained glass at all? Before a parish starts the process to commission a new stained glass window, the PCC needs to explore fully the whole range of alternatives. These options could include replacing the existing window with good plain glazing, an etched glass design, or even commissioning an alternative project elsewhere in the church.

The following questions will be of assistance in this preliminary discussion.

- What glass already exists in the church?
- Is a completely new window needed, or should the commission be restricted to a single light or the tracery?
- What type of glazing would be most appropriate to the atmosphere of the church?
- Would the new window affect the external architectural aesthetics of the church?
- What colours, techniques, designs and styles would be compatible with the existing windows, and appropriate to the architectural context?
- Should the design be representational or abstract?
- What are the cost limitations?
- Has expenditure on insurance, future conservation and window protection been taken into consideration?
- Would the external background (e.g. trees, buildings, raised ground) exert a visible effect when the window is viewed from the interior of the church?
- What is the orientation of the window (e.g. south-facing) and what are the implications on the amount of light (daily and seasonal) that the window will receive?
- Will the new window affect the existing interior lighting?
- If a donor is involved, how does he/she envisage the new design?
- Does the proposed design take notice of the external appearance of the proposed window's ferramenta, and its relationship to that of the existing adjacent windows

It is essential that the PCC involves the church architect and the DAC stained glass adviser as early as possible in these discussions to facilitate the progress of the project.

2. THE BRIEF

Once decisions on all of the above questions have been reached, the PCC needs to prepare a detailed brief on the window's content and style before searching for a designer. Crucially the brief must contain guidance on the window's subject matter. The religious imagery needs to be specified. It is not acceptable to produce a wholly secular design, overlaid with a religious text. Local references may well be part of the design, but they must be subservient to the main spiritual iconography of the window. The whole project needs to be seen from a theological standpoint, even if the window is a memorial to a local member of the parish.

3. CHOICE OF DESIGNER

Local enthusiasts need to be treated with caution, particularly if they have no previous experience of stained glass design. The church architect may well have experience of

working with stained glass designers, and the DAC will be able to refer the PCC to recent commissions in the Diocese. It is always desirable to see the work of any recommended designer actually in its architectural context rather than relying on photographs or coloured drawings. Visits to see new windows in other churches can be very valuable. Advice can also be sought from the Council for the Care of Churches, the Worshipful Company of Glaziers and the British Society of Master Glass Painters. In approaching any of these bodies, it is essential that the PCC have a clear and detailed brief to present to them.

4. THE DESIGN

Successful relationships between PCC and designer are usually achieved when the designer develops a design to harmonise fully with the church's unique character and atmosphere, rather than seeing the building as simply a location for his or her own artistic creation.

Agreement must be reached between the PCC and the designer over the costs. These will vary with the artist's reputation, the size of the area to be glazed, the techniques to be used and the cost of materials. The costs of the preliminary sketches need to be included, together with any extra expenditure on stonework or metalwork that might be necessary.

It is worth remembering at this stage that there are six main areas of concern that may cause the DAC to withhold its approval of some designs.

- Effect on the interior - where a heavily coloured window, for instance on the south side of a church, would affect the amount of light entering the building.
- Effect on balance - where a prominent window, e.g. in an aisle, would unbalance the interior.
- Subject matter - where the subject matter was felt to be too secular or theologically unsound.
- Relationship to other windows - where the design is seriously at variance with the other windows of the church.
- Design quality - where the quality of the design is not equal to the importance of the commission.
- Relationship to the architecture - where the design does not take into account for instance the mullions of the window, and spreads over adjacent lights.

Many of these objections to a design can be resolved at an earlier stage if the parish uses the expertise of DAC members. These requests can be for written advice and/or for site visits to meet the PCC and perhaps the church architect.

5. APPROVAL PROCESS

When the final design has been agreed between the PCC and the designer, and the manufacturing and installation details completed, formal application for a Faculty can be made. It can greatly speed the process if all the following details are included in the application.

- Photographs of the existing window that clearly show its architectural features and its position within the general context of the church.
- A ground plan of the church with the window clearly marked.
- Details of what is to be done with the glass of the existing window.
- A good sized drawing of the design (A3 minimum).

- A good sized coloured drawing of the window cartoon (not full-sized) that clearly shows essential technical features such as the glazing colour scheme, the position of the lead calmes and all saddlebars, and the full wording and script to be used of any inscriptions.
- A full technical specification of the installation of the new window including details of the glass, metal components and type of mortar to be used in the installation.
- Full costing of the window and its installation.
- Full details of any window protection that is to be fitted when the window is inserted.