Guidance on the stewardship of meeting houses & other properties

1. Index

* Sections regarding remits are also provided in Word document format so that you can easily paste or adapt text for your own remit to instruct the surveyors.

Click to download Quinquennial survey remit and Remit for building energy survey and advice.

2. Introduction

This suite of documents was first written by Quaker Stewardship Committee in 2015. It has since been updated as part of the Property Support project. The sheets provide guidance on the stewardship of meeting houses and other properties. Appropriate professional advice should be taken, where needed.

It should be used in conjunction with other resources found on the property page of the Quakers in Britain website at www.quaker.org.uk/property.

- In particular, Friends involved in looking after meeting houses will find the recently published **Quaker Meeting House Handbook** a valuable tool. You can use this template to make a handbook for your local meeting.
- The **property advice e-group** is a very helpful source of guidance and support where members can ask questions of the rest of the group and seek their experience. Membership is open to all Friends via a sign-up link on the property page of the website.

Further enquires should be sent to Helen Griffith at heleng@quaker.org.uk.

July 2019

3. Record sheet of basic information

To be held by area meeting trustees and by the local meeting.

Keep in a safe file containing copies of the site plan and building plans.

Much of this information will be contained in the Quaker Meeting House Handbook if this is used. A copy of the handbook template can be downloaded from the property section of the Quakers in Britain website at www.quaker.org.uk/property. You should check the accuracy of information with Friends Trusts Limited if it is needed for legal purposes.

Check periodically and update as necessary.

Property / meeting house at: .....

.....

Date information entered or revised: .....

Date of erection/purchase of property : .....

Is it listed? ❑ Yes ❑ No

If listed, what grade? .....

Is it in a conservation area? ❑ Yes ❑ No

If yes, see also ***Sheet 7: Historic meeting houses, other buildings, and conservation areas, including those buildings that are listed or in a conservation area***

Are there any trees with preservation orders? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Are there any rights over the site?

❑ right of way ❑ ancient lights

❑ easements ❑ overhead or buried cables, pipes and sewers

❑ other .....

Are there restrictive covenants on the use of the property or its development?

.....

.....

What is the ownership of site boundaries?

.....

.....

Systems and appliances installation data

	type	installer	date
Central heating system:			
boiler			
fuel			
Individual gas appliances			
Electric rewiring:			
lighting			
power			
Hearing loop			
Lift			
Photo voltaic systems			

4. Check list & annual report of premises safety

Local meeting: ..... **For year:** .....

Compiled by: ..... **Date:** .....

Part 1: Outside maintenance		yes	n/a	no	comments
1	Are the gutters and down pipes cleaned out regularly?				
2	Are any drains/valleys kept free of leaves/debris?				
3	Are any access chamber covers lifted regularly to make sure drains are working satisfactorily?				
4	Are there any overflowing waste pipes/drains during heavy rain?				
5	Can you see any loose/missing tiles or slates?				
6	Is the roof free of leaks?				
7	Is the outside of the building clear of waste/rubbish?				
8	Are the ventilation bricks/grids clear/ unblocked?				
9	Is the external painting sound/okay for the next year?				
10	Is all the woodwork sound/free of rot/ decay?				
11	Are all locks/bolts in good working order?				
12	Is there any cracked or broken glass?				
13	Has the lightning conductor been checked this year?				
14	Are all pathways/paved areas/ramps/ handrails in good order?				
15	Are any trees nearby causing/likely to cause problems?				

Part 1: Outside maintenance		yes	n/a	no	comments
16	Are any walls/fences/gates in good condition?				
17	Is the masonry free of significant cracks/crumbling of brick/stonework?				
18	Do the chimneys/other roof features seem sound and in no need of work?				
19	Do all the external lights work properly?				
20	Are any aerials/other exterior features safe?				
21	Is any external notice board safe and legible?				

Part 2: Inside maintenance		yes	n/a	no	comments
1	Do all windows/locks/latches work properly?				
2	Are all doors in good working order?				
3	Is the inside free of any significant cracks?				
4	Are the inside walls free of damp?				
5	Is there any mould on the walls (especially in the kitchen/WCs)?				
6	Is any wood (floors/panelling) showing signs of rot or infestation?				
Water		**yes**	**n/a**	**no**	**comments**
7	Can the stopcock be turned off easily?				
8	Do all plumbing devices work satisfactorily?				
9	Are there any signs of leaks?				
Electrical		**yes**	**n/a**	**no**	**comments**
10	Do you have an RCB (circuit breaker) at the electricity meter/box?				
11	Are all the circuits clearly labelled?				
12	Do all electric windows/locks/latches work properly?				

13	Has a check been made to ensure no electrical equipment gets unduly warm?				
14	Is any emergency lighting tested, at least once a year?				
15	Has any living accommodation (full inspection normally five-yearly; visual inspection annually) had the required electrical inspection during the year and been given a certificate?				Please give date
16	Has the meeting house (full inspection five-yearly; visual inspection annually) had the required electrical inspection during the year and been given a certificate?				Please give date
17	Has the meeting house had the required PAT testing during the year and been given a certificate?				Please give date
Heating		yes	n/a	no	comments
18	Does the heating system work satisfactorily?				
19	Are the boiler and radiators free of any visible leaks?				
20	Are safety controls on the boiler working satisfactorily?				
21	Are all gas flues/vents unobstructed?				
22	Are any fuel supplies safely stored?				
23	Are all hot surfaces kept clear of combustibles?				
24	When was the boiler last serviced and flues cleaned?				Please give date
25	Has the heating system been tested during the year?				
26	Has the gas system had the required inspection during the year and been given a Landlord Gas Safety Certificate?				Please give date
27	If there is a lift, has it had an annual safety check?				Please give date

Evacuation and fire escape		yes	n/a	no	comments
28	Are all emergency exits clearly marked?				
29	Are any fire alarms tested/checked regularly?				
30	Are all smoke alarms tested, at least once a year?				
31	Are all fire extinguishers in place?				
32	Are all fire extinguishers of the appropriate type?				
33	Have the fire extinguishers had the required inspection during the year and been given a certificate?				Please give date
34	Are any fire blankets in place?				
35	Have you carried out an annual fire safety risk assessment?				
36	When did you last have a fire drill?				Please give date
37	Have you recommended actions where the risk level is considered unacceptable for all who might use your premises, not forgetting children and people with disabilities?				
Kitchen		yes	n/a	no	comments
38	Is all kitchen equipment working satisfactorily?				
39	Is food suitably stored?				
40	Is the kitchen free of cracked tiles and other potential food hygiene hazards?				
41	Does the kitchen floor have a suitable anti-spill/anti-slip covering?				

Part 3: Other health and safety items		yes	n/a	no	comments
Who is the Friend responsible for health and safety matters?					Name:
1	Are all general floor surfaces free of hazards?				
2	Is there a first aid cabinet and is it regularly checked?				
3	Does the meeting display the HSE Health and Safety Law poster?				
4	Is there any asbestos in your premises?				
5	Is the premises committee familiar with the area meeting health and safety policy?				
6	Has there been a health and safety survey in the last year?				

Part 4: Miscellaneous		yes	n/a	no	comments
1	Is the meeting house fully usable by people with disabilities?				
2	Are you aware of the area meeting policies on safeguarding children and vulnerable persons?				
3	What steps are you taking to ensure the legal requirements to protect children and vulnerable persons are complied with?				
4	Have you had any data protection enquiries in the last 12 months?				
5	Are you complying fully with the Data Protection Act?				
6	What action are you taking to reduce the environmental footprint of your meeting house and meeting? See booklet 'Carrying out an environmental audit in your meeting' at www.livingwitness.org.uk/buildings.html				
7	Please send any suggestions for improving this questionnaire to propertysupport@quaker.org.uk.				

4. Check list & annual report of premises safety

Property management		comments
1	Who is clerk to your premises committee?	
2	Please give estimated expenditure on repairs and maintenance for the coming year. It would be helpful if high priority work (including health and safety) could be estimated separately from planned maintenance.	
3	Please give information on any major repairs or alterations that you are considering for the next four years.	

Further comment:

5. Quinquennial survey

1. The need

It is good practice in church building management to commission a professional survey of the premises every five years, known as a quinquennial survey. This is intended to identify hidden problems before the evidence becomes obvious, and while the defects are relatively cheap to cure. It will involve inspection behind the normally visible surfaces, for example under floor boards, in roof voids, behind chimney stacks and paneling. It is therefore a job for specialists.

The principal objective of the survey is to safeguard the long-term future of the premises by anticipating potential problems and allowing for planned maintenance.

A joiner may be needed to open up inaccessible spaces by installing a permanent trap door, under the guidance of the surveyor.

2. The surveyor

A professional surveyor will be needed for the building itself, either a registered architect or a surveyor with RICS qualifications in buildings. Most area meetings ask a surveyor to carry out the inspection of all of their buildings over a period rather than relying on individual local meetings to each find a surveyor. A template remit for a survey is found in the next sheet. Any surveyor employed should be familiar with buildings of the age being surveyed, potentially old historic buildings, although they do not need to be a churches specialist. Finding a suitable surveyor is best done through recommendation from personal knowledge, asking a neighbouring meeting, or asking other churches for names of those they have worked with. They may need to employ a specialist with CCTV equipment to inspect drainage if you decide to include that in the survey.

3. The report

The report will indicate for each defect the probable cause, suggested remedy, its urgency and the estimated cost. It should be accompanied by dated photographs. The report should also indicate areas not inspected, though with today's equipment these should be few.

The report will not necessarily be sufficient information to decide what repair work should be done. You may have to undertake a more detailed investigation of possible remedies. You may also need to produce a more detailed specification in order to instruct a builder to do the correct work satisfactorily.

4. The cost

The fee should be agreed with the surveyor in advance, where appropriate, for all the properties in the area meeting, and a programme agreed to cover them all in due order. If other trades people are needed to enable the survey to be carried out, such as a joiner to create a roof hatchway, it should be agreed in advance as to who will pay the joiner, electrician, etc.

6. Quinquennial survey remit

The below may be used as the basis for your letter to brief a surveyor. The quinquennial survey report will not necessarily be sufficient information to decide what repair work should be done. You may have to undertake a more detailed investigation of possible remedies. You may also need to produce a more detailed specification in order to instruct a builder to do the correct work satisfactorily.

Remit for building inspection – xxx Quaker Area Meeting Buildings

Introduction

xxx Quaker Area Meeting Trustees wish to commission a quinquennial inspection of the following buildings and burial grounds:

1. xxx Meeting House and burial ground, address ...
2. xxx Meeting House
3. xxx Meeting House, hostel and warden's cottage
4. Other burial Grounds ??
5. Other buildings ??
6. Residential properties at xxx, xxx, xxx

Please provide an itemised priced proposal for carrying out this work.

Background information

Previous quinquennial surveys for xxx, xxx and xxx Meeting Houses are available for reference if requested. Historical information and details of some more recent changes to the building are available as part of a national historical survey of all meeting houses in England, Wales and Scotland. See http://heritage.quaker.org.uk.

Survey

The survey and report should include but not be limited to the following:

- structural condition of building, internal, external and fittings
- the roof condition (where access to the void is available, this space should be inspected)
- exterior areas (e.g. roads, parking areas, footpaths and steps, walls and fences, trees, gravestones etc.)
- comment on services (water and waste water, electricity, gas)
- a CCTV survey of the drainage to the septic tank, or connection with the public sewer or property boundary whichever is further from the building (please provide CD of the survey

and incorporate comments on the survey findings in main report)

- general building safety provision and requirements (including fire prevention and management, kitchen hygiene and safety etc.)
- suggested planned preventive maintenance routines
- opportunities for sustainability and energy savings measures to be incorporated into the existing building
- opportunities for accessibility improvements such as providing for people with mobility, seeing and hearing difficulties
- security issues and measures to address them
- any legal and regulatory requirements not dealt with by the above items
- recommendations for any investigations beyond visual inspections.

Report format

A separate report should be provided for each location. Each report should be a text document with photographs and relevant diagrams concentrating on the condition findings and recommendations for work or further investigations. Extensive description of the form of construction etc. is not required. The report should include an appendix summarising work required in a table under the following (or similar) headings:

- Location
- Element
- Condition
- Work required
- Suggested timescale (within 12 months, 5 years, 5–10 years)
- Estimated cost of work

Two paper copies of each report along with a digital copy should be provided. A meeting on site with Quakers to talk through the report should be allowed for when pricing the work.

Pricing

A price should be quoted (inclusive of all costs including access arrangements and VAT) for each of the following.

List each location – taken from the list on the first page.

Timetable

Please indicate the expected timetable for surveys and providing of reports for each property.

Contact and Liaison

The contact for the inspections and overall liaison should be with: xxx, xxx, xxx

To arrange access to individual locations the following people should be contacted directly: xxx

7. Historic meeting houses, other buildings and conservation areas, including those buildings that are listed or in a conservation area

This guidance sheet concentrates on historic meeting houses, many of which are on the national list of buildings of architectural and historic importance. The guidance in this section applies as much to historic unlisted meeting houses as to those specifically listed. It is also applicable to other historic buildings that are the responsibility of the area meeting. The best general guidance on dealing with historic meeting houses is on the following national agencies' websites: English Heritage, Historic Scotland and Welsh Heritage (CADW). There are special sections on historic churches, but those sections dealing with smaller properties, such as domestic buildings, are also very informative.

What is a listed building?

A building is listed when it is of special architectural or historic interest considered to be of national importance and therefore worth protecting.

As the term implies, a listed building is actually added to a list held by the national agencies listed above. Their websites are noted at the end of this sheet. These lists are published online and you can use them to discover what grade a building is. You may also be able to find out what is particularly significant about the building. Some listing records are more detailed than others. Listed buildings in England and Wales come in three categories of 'significance':

- Grade I for buildings of the highest significance
- Grade II*, and
- Grade II.

Most listed building owners are likely to live in a Grade II building as these make up 92 per cent of all listed buildings.

In Scotland, buildings are placed into categories A, B or C, with A being the highest category.

How does listing affect owners?

Listing means there will be extra control over what changes can be made to a building's interior and exterior. Owners will need to apply for Listed Building Consent for most types of work that affect the 'special architectural or historic interest' of their meeting house.

Listing covers a whole building, including the interior, unless parts of it are specifically excluded in the list description.

It can also cover:

- other attached structures and fixtures
- later extensions or additions
- pre-1948 buildings on land attached to the building (in the planning system, the term 'curtilage' is used to describe this attached land).

To check a specific listing use the relevant website e.g. English Heritage, Historic Scotland and Welsh Heritage (CADW) for the building.

Drawing up a maintenance plan for your historic meeting house

This can be done as part of your meeting house's quinquennial review. It would identify specific items needing attention in the next five years. It would identify weak points and anticipate where problems might occur. For example, hard-to-access gutters, particularly if they're hidden from view, can get forgotten. It would consider the building as a whole, including its interior and the surrounding site, and assess such issues as surface water drainage or the proximity of trees.

It would include services, especially electrical and plumbing systems. Fire and flooding pose particular threats to historic fabric.

A maintenance plan would include inspection after severe weather or unforeseen events. In this way damage to the building can be spotted quickly.

Simple maintenance work, defined as routine regular tasks to keep your home in good order, should not need any form of consent.

If you want to make significant repairs to your meeting house, as opposed to maintenance work, you may need permission and should seek advice from the local authority. Unlike maintenance, repair involves specific major work to remedy defects caused by decay, damage or use (for example, retiling a roof). If you are unsure about whether your need consent for works contact your local authority conservation officer and ask their view.

Repair

A thorough maintenance regime will help keep major repairs to a minimum. But there are many different reasons why work might still be necessary. You may need to make repairs because a building has been neglected or previous repairs have failed. Inappropriate repairs could create new problems, as could badly thought-out alterations. The use of unsuitable materials in the past could interfere with the building's ability to 'breathe' – for example, use of modern mortars instead of lime mortar.

Repair is preferable to replacement. Many people think repair is short-lived and inferior to rebuilding part of a building. But you can damage the building's character and significance if you remove too much of what makes it special. A worn and carefully patched old door will look better than a modern replica, however faithfully copied.

7. Historic meeting houses...

A conservative approach to repair is the best way to conserve the appearance and character of an older meeting house. Retaining as much of the original fabric as possible, and keeping changes to a minimum, are key.

Finding professional help

There are a number of professions – from architects and building surveyors to structural engineers and quantity surveyors – that can help you plan and carry out work to an old building. Going it alone, without the help of a professional to save money, often proves to be a false economy.

There are more than 30,000 architects registered in the UK but only a small proportion specialise in the repair of old buildings. Those who do may apply for conservation accreditation through the Register of Architects Accredited in Building Conservation (AABC) – www.aabc- register.co.uk.

A properly accredited architect can give advice on which other professionals you need to employ.

Your meeting house's history

To help in looking after your meeting house it is a good idea to have a special report both on its architectural significance and its historic importance. The 2016 survey of meeting houses produced a specialist report for every Quaker meeting house in Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM). These can be found at http://heritage.quaker.org.uk.

These reports help with directing attention to points of value in a particular building, thus informing maintenance and repair work. Establishing the contribution that a particular building has made to the Quaker movement as a whole is particularly significant.

If a listed building application needs to be made this report is a vital contribution to help the local authority understand the application. It will also contribute to the statement of need for the alteration that will form part of the application.

How to find out

The primary source of information about a listed meeting house is the online National Heritage list for England, Scotland or Wales. There are many other sources of information including those held by the local authority and the county record office for the area. The National Heritage websites have large archives available online and the websites are very useful in detailing the wide variety of information available.

Alterations to your historic meeting house

Some general principles:

- Talk to your local authority conservation officer at the start of your thinking. They will help you to understand what might be allowable and what they would object to. This will save many months of wasted time and effort developing ideas that will not be approved.
- Unless you are confident about what you wish to do and what the local authority might approve, you may wish to obtain advice and support from an architect who has experience of working with historic buildings.
- You will need planning permission from the local authority if your alteration materially changes the outside of the meeting house. If your meeting house is listed, you will also need listed building consent.
- Doing some research on the history and architecture of your meeting house will enable you to understand its importance.
- You will learn a good deal about your historic meeting house during the work. A full record of the work and what is revealed should be made. In the case of particularly 'special' meeting houses this may well be of interest to your local or county record office.
- Use traditional materials where possible, such as oak or pine. Avoid unsympathetic modern materials, for example uPVC windows. If at all possible, repair original features rather than replace them.
- The heritage agencies' websites contain much useful guidance about dealing with specific problems such as windows, doors, re-roofing, etc.

Saving energy in historic meeting houses

Useful advice on the details of saving energy in historic meeting houses is contained in the domestic parts of the heritage agencies' websites. However, here are some general principles:

Draughts can be a major source of discomfort in older buildings, and eliminating them could make a major difference to your energy costs. Although ventilation helps to prevent dampness and decay in older buildings, too much of it can lead to uncomfortable draughts. You therefore need to strike a careful balance. Older buildings can lose around 15–20 per cent of their heat via draughts, but there are many ways to tackle this without damaging the historic character of your building. Original windows and doors are a key part of the character and interest of older buildings and should be retained where possible. Draught-proofing is one of the cheapest and least intrusive methods of cutting down on heat lost through windows and doors, and the costs can be quickly recovered by the energy savings.

- Secondary glazing can provide very effective draught-proofing. This lets you keep your historic windows in place while improving their overall efficiency. If well designed, secondary glazing can be discreet and reversible.
- As unwanted draughts are prevented it is essential to ensure controlled ventilation in order to prevent damp and mould.

- It is advisable to avoid placing furniture against cold exterior walls as mould can appear where there is a lack of air circulation where surfaces are cold.
- Installing double-glazing rather than draught-proofing invariably results in the historic windows and glass being lost, and there is usually a poor visual match between the original windows and those that replace them.
- Gaps in timber-suspended floors can also let draughts in. A quick way to reduce them is to put down a heavy rug or carpet. You could also fill in the gaps, for example by using narrow strips of timber or a clear sealant.
- Insulation is a very effective way of saving energy, but you need to make sure it is properly installed so it doesn't cause other problems. Some types of work may need permission and you should seek advice.
- Adding insulation to your loft or attic is one of the easiest and cheapest ways of improving a building's energy efficiency. Relatively thick layers of insulation (270+mm) will not cause problems if installed carefully.
- Ensure that the area above the insulation remains adequately ventilated.
- Many meeting houses have wooden floors, but if the void below is inaccessible, this may mean that all the old floorboards have to be raised to provide insulation. This may damage them, unless done very carefully. If there is a cellar with access then providing under-floor insulation is much easier.
- A large proportion of traditionally constructed buildings were built using solid masonry walls, either of brick or stone, or sometimes a combination of the two. Although these materials look very different their thermal properties are quite similar. Masonry walls are not good insulators and often feel cold.
- Solid walls can be difficult to insulate for a number of reasons. There is a danger of trapping moisture. Skirting boards, architraves and services will need to be removed and refixed. Adding insulation can reduce the floor area which, if the room is already small, could be a significant issue. Existing timber panelling provides reasonable insulation and should not be removed. Adding insulation to the outside of solid walls will in most cases radically alter a building's appearance and character.
- Solid walls should not get cold in winter. A source of low heating will benefit both the building and the users' comfort.

Grants

There are many trusts and some public bodies who offer repair grants for listed buildings. A list of some grant-making organisations can be found on the property page of the BYM website at www.quaker.org.uk/property.

Repair grants from Britain Yearly Meeting can be applied for if the area meeting is unable to help.

VAT

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport runs the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme which will repay any VAT incurred in most works to listed buildings used for public worship (see www.lpwscheme.org.uk).

Conservation areas

You can find out if your meeting house, other properties or burial ground is in a conservation area via your local planning authority (LPA) website. This will tell you when it was created, how far it extends and the reason for its creation, and the level of legal protection it has in place. The LPA will be able tell you what permissions are required before any alterations are made to a property, or trees and shrubs are pruned or felled. Each local authority will have its own approach to ensuring a conservation area is observed properly. An early conversation with them will help save time and effort.

Website information

England: www.english-heritage.org.uk

Scotland: www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

Wales: www.cadw.wales.gov.uk

Listed Places of Worship grants: www.lpwscheme.org.uk

8. Building maintenance

Annual check

In addition to the five yearly quinquennial survey, inspections should take place at least once a year using the checklist given in ***Sheet 4***. This is best done by two or three Friends from the premises committee together with the warden (where such a role exists) walking round the building and working through the checklist.

All buildings deteriorate with age, but good maintenance will slow that process and keep your meeting house a safe and pleasant place to be. Maintenance is also cost-effective. Tiny problems can soon escalate and even risk permanently damaging your meeting house if they're not tackled when they're first spotted. Ignoring them can prove costly at a later date.

It is important to watch for any tell-tale signs that may mean trouble. Expert advice may be necessary if any of the following symptoms become apparent:

- fresh cracks in plaster (possible structural movement)
- damp patches (leaking roof or pipes, or rising damp?)
- musty smells (possible damp or rot)
- small holes in woodwork or unaccountable wood dust (possible beetle infestation)
- white root-like threads or leathery fungus on woodwork or spores like ground coffee (possible dry rot).

These symptoms require attention and should not left until the next quinquennial inspection.

The most important thing is to stop damp from getting into your meeting house. You need to check roof coverings, gutters, downpipes and drains regularly to make sure they're working properly. A leaky roof is the most obvious issue, but damp from overflowing gutters or badly ventilated spaces can also cause timbers to rot, plaster to flake off, and bricks to crumble. It can eventually lead to major structural problems.

External maintenance

Listed buildings

First refer to ***Sheet 7: Historic meeting houses, other buildings and conservation areas, including those that are listed or in a conservation area***

Roofs: If there is no access to the roof space, have one made. It is essential to be able to inspect all wood structures regularly in order to catch fungus and woodworm attack at an early stage and thus avoid high repair costs. Check especially the bottoms of the rafters where visible

and the wall plate on which they rest, as this part is particularly vulnerable to rot.

Make sure that the roof is sufficiently ventilated to carry away the humidity from below, which can otherwise condense and cause rot. Where there are ventilators or air bricks, make sure that there is fine gauze across them to prevent entry of insects such as bees and wasps.

Ensure that loft insulation does not block the ventilation. Ensure that there is adequate insulation to the ceilings of rooms below the roof, and check that it has been properly replaced after work in the roof space. Leaks in the roof should be repaired as soon as they are noticed. Remember that the damp patch on the ceiling is rarely directly below the leak.

So-called ‘waterproof’ finishes applied to slates or tiles are a short-term expedient and should be avoided. These finishes encourage internal condensation leading to battens and rafters rotting in addition to preventing reuse of the slate/tiles.

Walls: Repointing should only be necessary at very infrequent intervals, but when it has to be done the raking out should be thorough and advice should be taken as to the composition of the mix. The mortar should not be harder than the materials it joins; a mortar too rich in cement can cause the brick or stone to spall and may well fall out in chunks due to the effects of frost; on the other hand, too weak a mix will not last. Lime mortar was frequently used on our older buildings and should be used when repairing or maintaining. Many fine walls have been ruined by the wrong mix and form of pointing. Take advice from a surveyor or architect if you are unsure.

There is no cure for spalling bricks or stone except replacement. Most ‘cure-all’ surface treatments result in the formation of a hard skin, which itself flakes off in time and extends the area of damage.

If your building has rendered walls, smooth or pebble-dash, you must try to keep the water out by application at roughly five-year intervals of an external ‘paint’ treatment, which will keep the hairline cracks filled. However you must take care not to prevent the wall from being able to breathe which can cause damp problems inside the building when moisture cannot escape via the walls. If you are unsure as to what treatment is correct seek advice from a surveyor or architect with an understanding of old buildings. Remember that if you start to use paint on external render you are committing future generations to do the same.

Woodwork and painting: Painted wooden window frames, doors, soffits, fascias, bargeboards etc. need regular redecoration. Regular painting of external woodwork is often the most significant of the regularly recurring expenses a meeting has to face.

There is a tendency for the paintwork in some parts of a building to deteriorate faster than the rest, such as horizontal ledges and window sills. In such cases it can be beneficial to have them touched up after about three years. In addition to being better protected in the meantime, these parts will then provide a better base when the main five-year painting comes to be done.

Varnished woodwork will have to be renewed every two years, particularly where it is exposed to the sun and the rain.

When repainting, make sure the old work is cleaned down to a firm base and use a good quality paint system; that is, primer if needed, one or more undercoats and topcoat, all from the same

manufacturer, and all carefully applied. It is easy for a painter to do a ‘cheap’ job that does not look too bad initially but does not last.

Cast iron gutters should be painted on the inside as well as outside face similarly the backs of gutters and pipes should be properly painted – those are the first parts to rust away.

Internal maintenance

Walls: Check regularly for cracks. If records over a period of time show that they are getting worse, seek advice from a surveyor and take action based on their recommendations.

Cracks can be caused by:

- an unusually long dry spell of weather causing the ground and plaster to walls to dry and shrink
- shrinkable clay subsoil that expands and contracts seasonally
- thermal movements, more common in modern rigid construction. These do not normally cause serious trouble, but cracks from other causes, such as a leaking drain near the foundations, can cause more serious damage, which is why expert advice is needed. Note any sign of dampness and try to ascertain the cause.

Damp can also have several causes:

The symptoms of damp due to condensation will show on cold surfaces and high up in a room. Black or green mould on walls or ceilings is usually caused by condensation. Try to remove this with water and household bleach, and then get advice about stopping the condensation, which normally entails improving ventilation of the moist air and sometimes adding insulation. See also ***Sheet 12: Condensation in buildings***.

Damp can sometimes be traced to an overflowing gutter, a damaged rainwater pipe or a leaking water pipe. These causes can usually be repaired easily.

Rising damp will be seen low down on walls and often be caused by a build up of earth or debris adjacent to the building wall causing the damp course to be breached. This material should be removed to ensure the ground is at least 150mm below the damp course level. In some cases the damp course may have failed in which case a specialist contractor can provide a new one. Older buildings were constructed without damp courses and are designed to function without one. If ground water levels have changed over time the effect can be to cause damp in the walls at a low level. While a damp course based on drilling and injecting a fluid into the wall can be effective in brick walls it will not normally function effectively in a stone wall.

If you are uncertain seek advice from an independent surveyor rather than a damp course contractor who will frequently be tempted to offer their product as a solution when it may not be appropriate.

Floors: Avoid slippery materials, finishes and polishes for floors. Ensure that only appropriate sealing and cleaning preparations are used. Impervious sheet materials such as linoleum or plastic sheet or foam-backed carpet on wooden floors tend to trap condensation and water from washing, producing ideal conditions for rot. A particular danger occurs in kitchens and toilets where a lot of water may be present.

Inspection traps in all timber ground floors enable the underside of the floor to be inspected for rot or insect attack. Get expert advice on where to place the traps and use them regularly. Any sign of rot or insect damage should be dealt with immediately. Ensure that the space under ground floors is well ventilated.

If wood floors are badly worn, they may be smoothed with a sander. Do not use hard varnishes like polyurethane, which chips; it is better to use a sealant or oil seal and then lightly wax occasionally. Similar treatment is applicable to cork. Vinyl tiles may be rubbed over with fine steel wool to brighten them considerably, but be careful to treat them with the polishes recommended for plastic flooring; do not use wax polish.

If you decide to fit carpet over an existing floor, remember that the floor must be completely smooth and level or the carpet will rapidly show wear. Make sure that the underfelt is self-ventilating. Patterned carpets can disguise stains more easily than single colour carpets. Carpet or carpet tiles in modern materials will give you a quieter and more comfortable room.

Decorating: Walls and ceilings should be redecorated every 5–10 years depending on the use the building receives.

Make sure that the old work is thoroughly rubbed and washed down before redecoration starts. Rake out cracks in plaster before attempting to fill them. Remove all rust from metal work and treat with a good rust inhibitor before painting. *See **Sheet 9: Specification for painting***

Carrying out work

A few meetings have a member with the time and skills to manage builders carrying out larger works. However if you do not have such a person you should use an architect or surveyor to help ensure you get what you want at the right quality and at the right price.

Over the years any building will need the services of several tradespeople, often urgently, for example for reglazing or leaking pipes. Establishing a long-term relationship with these tradespeople is worth a lot to the meeting.

It follows that firms giving such service should not be excluded from larger jobs about the property. Therefore, think twice before embarking on competitive tendering. If mutual confidence exists, prices and standards should be reasonable. Estimating cannot be an exact science.

A lesser price might well be obtained from a firm expecting to use cheaper materials or less preparation: the meeting will not be equipped to supervise the work at this level, nor to seek a remedy if the work fails prematurely.

9. Specification for painting

This specification should be used in conjunction with the general clause on ***Sheet 11: Contracts for small works and painting***

1. Preparation

New work or previously painted surfaces shall be thoroughly prepared including rubbing down, cleaning, washing, sanding, knotting, priming, stopping, sealing as appropriate for the material and surface and as recommended by the manufacturer.

Where instructed the paintwork should be completely stripped off: rub down with glass paper or pumice, stop all cracks, holes, etc., apply one coat of aluminium sealer and wood primer and allow to dry. Inform the Quaker contact if any timber is found to be too defective to paint effectively. Repair work should be agreed before proceeding with painting.

2. Paint

Paints shall be used according to their instructions; the use of thinners, driers or other materials will not be permitted except where in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Paints, varnishes and protective stains shall be applied with the number of undercoats and finishing coats as appropriate to and in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications for the surface and material to which the paint is to be applied; and in accordance with the particular specification, which will generally call for two-coat work on external new work or previously painted surfaces. No material is to be applied on external work during inclement weather or to any surface upon which there is moisture.

3. Metal work

Clean and remove all dirt from eaves, gutters (inside and out), brackets, downpipes, vent shafts, water pipes, air gratings, gate fittings, railings, metal flashings, etc., and proceed with three-coat work. Where existing downpipes, etc., are vitreous enamel, PVC or asbestos, these shall not be painted. Metal work previously coated with bitumen shall be re-finished with a similar material.

Leaking metal gutters are to be repaired first using a suitable sealant. In appropriate situations a proprietary finish may be approved.

4. Mastic pointing

All window and door reveals shall be sealed with a suitable sealant.

5. Glazing

Replace any broken panes when decorating windows. Avoid painting glazing sealants except traditional putty.

10. Obtaining tenders

There needs to be a distinction between smaller items of work that can be managed by members of the meeting and larger more complex work that is best managed professionally. Some meetings have building professionals within their membership who are able to tackle more challenging works. However major works should always be undertaken through a professional surveyor or architect. This is because of the potential complexities over specification of the work, compliance with regulations, financial control, and legal and insurance considerations. The cost of employing a professional is well worth the potential problems avoided.

This advice is limited to simpler work such as repainting or small repairs.

1. Purpose

Most problems arise from failures to understand or explain properly the costs of the work, the extent of the work, how it is to be done and by when, and even when it is to be paid for.

Whenever building or maintenance work is carried out for reward, a contract is needed, which can vary from a verbal agreement for very small jobs like repairing a burst pipe to a formal legal contract complete with contract documents.

2. Short list

Tendering is a costly business and only one of a group of tenders can be successful. The client should not involve others in unnecessary costs. The number of tenders should normally be limited to three for smaller contracts. Your Area Meeting may have guidance on financial thresholds for tendering contracts. The choice of builders to invite is most important.

Select those of known integrity who have done satisfactory work in the locality and who are well organised. If the builder or tradesmen are competent and trustworthy and are treated with respect, the formality of the contract will be unnecessary in your dealings with the contractor.

3. Tender information for small works

It is essential to provide the same information to all tenderers and to ensure that each is treated fairly and equally. That information should include the following:

- The content of the work expressed clearly and unambiguously with a written and detailed specification and accompanying detailed drawings. Don’t assume anything, if you write down what you want then the builders know what you want and don’t have to guess.
- Two copies of all tender documents, one for the tenderer’s own use and one for return with the tender and for subsequent use as a contract document.

- A statement of the basis of payments, usually a single payment on completion.
- Two copies of the quotation with spaces for the cost of the work expressed in words and figures and for the signature of the tenderer.
- The date for return of tenders and a pre-addressed envelope.
- Value Added Tax should be excluded from the quotation, but the tenderer should be asked to insert his estimate of VAT.
- Arrangements for the tenderer to make a site visit. The name and address of the person to whom the tenderer may address questions.
- A statement that the client reserves the right to accept or to reject any tender and will not pay for the preparation of any tender.
- Adequate time should be given for tenderers to examine the information, send out and receive quotations from subcontractors, and prepare their tender. A minimum of three weeks is normally allowed.

4. Contract period

The dates for start and completion of the contract should either be stated in the tender document or, if left open, should be ascertained before acceptance.

5. Acceptance of a tender

Careful selection of firms invited to tender implies that the lowest tender should normally be accepted. There may, however, be other factors such as contract duration that can make a tender other than the lowest more attractive. In such cases the reasons for acceptance should be clearly recorded.

The successful tenderer should be informed promptly and the contract signed. After confirmation from the successful tenderer, the other tenderers should be informed that they have been unsuccessful.

6. Variations

After a contract is entered into any changes by the client can be costly and disruptive and should be avoided.

Even with the strongest discipline some variations may be unavoidable due to external factors, for uncovering more extensive rot than expected or unavailability of materials. In such circumstances it is advisable to agree the cost effect with the contractor before the work proceeds.

11. Contracts for small works and painting

Employer (Quaker meeting): .....

Contractor: .....

Location of work: .....

Description of the work: .....

1. The Contractor will carry out and complete the work as outlined in the attached specification/ drawings in a good workmanlike manner in accordance with all relevant Regulations, and Codes of Practice, all for the sum of:

£ ..... (in words: .....) .....

List of documents attached:

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

2. The Contractor will provide all the labour, plant, materials and equipment necessary to complete the work.
3. The Contractor will remove all rubbish as it accumulates and all tools, surplus materials, etc., from the site and leave it in a clean and tidy condition.
4. The Contractor will comply with all statutory requirements, local and national regulations and by-laws that relate to the work. The Contractor will make all notifications, arrange inspections, etc., in connection with the works.
5. The Contractor shall keep the meeting house available for use at the times agreed, including clear access and fire escape routes.
6. The Contractor shall take out all necessary insurances.
7. The Contractor will be responsible for the making good of defects to the reasonable satisfaction of the Employer for a period of six months after completion of the work.

8. Once the contract is completed to the reasonable satisfaction of the Employer the Contractor will submit a final account to the Employer, adjusted to take into account any variations. This will be paid within 14 days by the Employer subject to a retention of 5 per cent to be held until the satisfactory remedy of any defects at the end of the defects liability period.

Signed by the Employer: ..... Date: .....

Contractor: ..... Date: .....

12. Condensation in buildings

1. Source

As standards of comfort and of building insulation improve, the likelihood of condensation increases, as does the risk of consequential damage to the hidden parts of the structure as well as to the more obvious parts such as window-boards and paintwork.

Air holds water vapour. As the air gets warmer it can hold more water. During a meeting people present breathe out a lot of moisture, which the warm air can absorb. However when the warm moist air comes into contact with cold surfaces the air cools and cannot hold the water. The water vapour condenses on windows, cold walls, and tiled floors.

Kitchens and toilets will also add to the moisture in the air.

2. Hidden conditions

Air also deposits moisture in hidden places, such as in partitions that separate a warm meeting room from a cold room adjacent to it, or other voids such as in the roof. A state of continuous dampness is conducive to mould growth that can be unhealthy and lead to rot.

3. New insulation

Professional advice should always be sought to obtain a sound specification that will avoid the possible problems noted above.

4. Slate or tile roofs

In old-fashioned slate or tile roofs there is so much air blowing through the roof space that the moisture evaporates harmlessly. In such roofs the flat part over the ceiling below can be insulated without moisture being trapped.

In similar roofs, where the underside of the rafters has been thoroughly sealed with sheeting, boarding, felt, etc., timbers have been known to rot because damp gets trapped and cannot escape. The introduction of a moderate amount of cross-ventilation, which can normally be done quite cheaply, will usually solve this problem.

5. Flat or hi-tech roofs

Difficulties can arise with wooden roofs that are flat or hi-tech and are covered with an impervious surface such as metal sheeting or bituminous felt. Moisture cannot get out, and in cold weather condenses on the underside of the covering. No-one can see it until signs of

excess damp or even rot start appearing below, by which time it is usually too late. It is possible, when removing a small section of covering to inspect such a roof on a cold damp day, to find the boarding just below not just damp but glistening with standing water.

6. Prevention

Preventing condensation can be tricky. It can sometimes involve simply ensuring there is good ventilation to rooms such as trickle ventilation to windows or a fan in a well used kitchen. Managing the temperature fluctuations in a building may improve the situation in some cases.

Experiment with the simple changes possible with ventilation and heating to see if that improves the situation. If this is unsuccessful consider employing a building surveyor or architect to advice on more significant changes that might be helpful.

7. Furniture

Condensation and mould can occur on cold walls where there is inadequate space for air to circulate such as behind furniture. Therefore ensure that there is space for air to circulate behind furniture, or where possible avoid arranging furniture in front of cold outside walls.

8. Action

It will be seen that condensation is a complex subject that requires often expert attention either to prevent or to cure.

13. Sustainability

When thinking about improving the sustaiblity of a building don't be overawed by the apparent complexity of the task, there are simple steps that a meeting can take which will add up to a big difference over time. Having a listed building can increase the challenges when making some more major changes, depending on the nature of the building and approach of the local authority planning department. Appointing a small group to work on sustainability over a period of several years will help with taking a shared approach that will lead to the whole meeting engaging in the process. Below is a series of ideas for improving the sustainability of a building. Not all will work for all buildings so choose those that are most straightforward initially.

Some simple actions

1. Seal up drafts around windows and doors.
2. Carpet floors, especially the meeting room, it feels warmer and covers floorboard gaps.
3. Be aware that extensive draft proofing can lead to ventilation problems, so be alert to development of mould growth after draft proofing measures. Mould can affect people's health and increase the incidence of respiratory disease. Consider taking specialist advice on mechanical ventilation should this occur.
4. Insulate your loft with at least 270 mm of glass wool or approximately this depth of other materials such as rock wool or lamb's wool.
5. Have lined curtains (ideally bump wadding interlining) or blinds in rooms that are used during darkness to retain warmth.
6. Purchase electricity (and gas) from a renewable energy supplier (BYM has negotiated an arrangement with Good Energy but there are also others in the market), but still economise as much as possible.
7. Monitor fuel use via the bill statements or monthly meter readings. Consider displaying the readings on the noticeboard – it might inspire building users to think about use of heating etc.
8. Form an environmental action group within the meeting, but do not allow this to mean that all environmental concerns are compartmentalised to that group. Find out more about the subject using the Eco church scheme or other means. As people become more informed and aware of the changes they can make, the effect will ripple out into their personal lives where their carbon footprint is probably much bigger than their share of the meeting house footprint.
9. Get an energy surveyor and advisor to visit and report on:
   a) what actions can be taken
   b) what effect they will have
   c) what the actions would cost

A template for an energy survey remit is available in ***Sheet 14***.

Medium term possibilities

1. Ensure that any damp coming in from the roof or walls is dealt with properly. It makes the place feel cold and encourages mould growth which is unhealthy and damages walls and wooden windows etc.
2. Replace the gas boiler if it is more than about 10 years old. The more recent condensing gas boilers are much more efficient than older ones. The time to replace them is a judgement call, if you use it a lot during the week then it is probably financially worth replacing boilers less than ten years old. Conversely, little used boilers are probably not worth replacing until they need an expensive repair or are 15+ years old.
3. Heating controls can increase the efficiency of your heating system. Consider more advanced controls with 'weather compensation' (which adjusts boiler function to external temperature) and 'optimum start' (which ensures that the building reaches its correct temperature when you want it to, not hours before). Have heating controls that can be set to reflect the times when heat is needed in the building. Well-designed heating systems with good control systems allow a building to be zoned so that you can heat some rooms but not others at different times. Try reduction of temperatures for some times/users. Use the system to its full extent.
4. If the building is not used much other than for Sunday meeting for worship and it feels damp and cold, experiment with having the heating operating for a short period each day or at a low level (storage heaters) for part or all of the week. This will probably use more fuel but make it warmer on Sunday mornings. Try monitoring temperatures and fuel consumption with a variety of regimes and see how the building feels to users and how much fuel you are using. Sustainability doesn't mean you need to sit in the cold on Sunday mornings – though Quakers wore hats or bonnets in days of old during meeting for worship! Maybe have some blankets available for members of meeting to use if it is slightly chilly.
5. Double glaze windows or secondary glaze if double glazing is problematic. The financial pay back is likely to be quite long in terms of fuel savings, so there may be better things to spend money on. Secondary glazing can be very effective at reducing drafts from leaky windows but less good at insulating from the cold outside.
6. Switch to efficient lighting – fit Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs) wherever possible as these use only a fraction of the energy of old style filament bulbs, earlier generation halogen long life bulbs or even fluorescent and compact fluorescent fittings. LEDs are more costly to buy but the price is coming down quickly, widely available and they have a longer life span than other types of bulb.

Longer term thinking

1. Look at the layout and use of rooms, can this be changed e.g. an internal door or room hires concentrated in fewer rooms – therefore less heat needed?
2. Remember that significant investments in the building fabric efficiency need to be thought through carefully. The best guidance now says that it is important to develop a plan for the whole building before undertaking major work. This must include insulation measures, addressing the issue of thermal bridges, airtightness and an appropriate ventilation strategy.

Making major investments without understanding how everything will work together can be ineffective and potentially risky both for the fabric of the building and Friends' health.

3. Major measures that could be considered include:
   a) zoning the building to have higher and lower insulated areas with different uses, and maybe seasonal uses
   b insulating walls to high standards, including dealing with thermal bridges
   c) insulating floors
   d) improving airtightness
   e) installing mechanical ventilation with heat recovery
   f) creating an entrance 'buffer' space, e.g. external or internal porch or vestibule area
4. Photovoltaic solar panels could be considered, or the installation of heat pumps (ground source or air source), although this may not be the best use of significant capital spend, depending on the current regime for feed in tariffs and renewable heat incentives.

Not just heat and light

1. Install low flush/dual flush toilets to reduce water use.
2. Consider rain water butts for the garden.
3. Think about food miles when buying food for meeting events. Primarily plant based diets have much lower environmental impact, so consider a policy of only vegetarian or vegan food in the Meeting House. Encourage Friends to consider their diets.
4. Think about a Meeting travel plan to and from the meeting house, maybe lift sharing, hold meeting for worship at times to suit public transport timetables. Encourage cycling and include suitable facilities – locking points for bikes or even a covered bike area.
5. Recycle whatever the council waste collection will take. Compost 'green' waste if you have a garden and enthusiasm.

Radical

1. Move to very efficient airtight approach to the building which will need major work and advice from architects or other specialist building/energy advisors. This is likely to need substantial money and change to the building and is only practical in some cases.
2. Sell up and move to a modern building created with high sustainability standards i.e. Passivhaus or similar plus consider material used carefully for their sustainability impact!
3. BUT, always consider the most effective use of time and money. Should the priority for time and money be on the building or maybe on other environmental measures in the community? How much is the building used, does it justify major investment of time and money? Would Friends' energy be more effectively used on environmental campaigning? Discerning the answer to these questions might be an important step for any meeting.

14. Remit for building energy survey and advice

The below may be used as the basis for your letter to request an energy survey and advice.

Remit for energy survey and advice – xxx Quaker Meeting

Introduction

xxx Quaker Meeting wishes to commission a survey and report to provide advice and practical options for improving the energy performance of the building. You are invited to submit a proposal to carry out this work.

Background information

The address of xxx Quaker meeting house is xxx.

The most recent quinquennial survey of the building is available for reference if wanted. Historical information and details of some more recent changes to the building are available as part of a national historical survey of all meeting houses in England, Wales and Scotland. See http://heritage.quaker.org.uk

Sustainably and energy

xxx Quakers would like to understand what options there are for improving the meeting house's sustainability i.e. reduction in the building's fuel and water use leading to a reduction in the building's carbon footprint.

To help xxx Quakers understand what is possible, what any changes might cost and the expected impact of any changes, a building energy survey is required including:

- an estimate of the breakdown of energy use on-site, in terms of the main energy users during the week,
- an analysis and explanation, in lay terms, of how the building functions from an energy perspective,
- options and recommendations for improvements to the heating systems,
- options and recommendations for improvements to the lighting systems,
- opportunities for installing renewable energy systems on site,
- opportunities for water use reduction measures, and
- opportunities to make changes to the building itself.

The survey should include determining the adequacy of existing insulation in the building, roofs, walls and floors. It should also include assessment of the adequacy of current windows and

doors and what can be done to achieve a higher energy performance. This building assessment could be provided using a modelling tool if valuable.

We would like the report to include a range of energy and cost-saving opportunities and their likely impact, ranging from the no and low-cost opportunities to those that require significant work to the building, heating system etc. The likely cost AND expected impact of those changes should be made clear in the report.

While the pattern of building use, times of day, days of the week etc. is not expected to change in the near future, an understanding of the implications of changes on energy consumption and therefore what measures could be considered should be part of this exercise.

Report format

Two paper copies of each report along with a digital copy should be provided.

Once the report is complete, a meeting at the meeting house to talk through the report contents should be allowed for.

Pricing

A price for the survey and report should be provided inclusive of all costs such as access arrangements and VAT.

Timetable

Please indicate the expected timetable for the survey and providing the report.

Contact and Liaison

The proposal for the survey and overall liaison on behalf of xxx Quaker meeting should be with:

xxx

15. Making buildings accessible

There is no such thing as a standard person. We all, to some degree, have particular needs when in a building. For instance, a computer screen can normally be adjusted to suit an individual's height, arm length etc. to ensure it is comfortable to use. Buildings are the same. Many of us can manage the normal range of buildings that exist without difficulty. However young children will, for instance, have difficulty using standard tables and chairs so we have low ones to suit them. Some older people have mobility difficulties making stairs a problem, so lifts are now common place at railway stations, shops etc.

Many Friends will be able to relate to having a child in a pushchair and facing half a dozen steps to use the front door of a building. If that building had been designed differently – as are modern ones, then there would have been no steps to negotiate. Many older public buildings have now added some kind of ramp or provide an additional entrance to deal with the historical problem of entrance steps.

The law asks you to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of people who you can foresee using the building. It does not expect you to spend a lot of money on expensive changes that will barely be used. However as a meeting you should consider what you feel you want to do in addition to what the law requires of you. When building a new meeting house accessibility will be integral to the design. Planning a major upgrade of an existing building is usually the time for a significant change such as remodelling your toilets or removing small flights of steps and replacing them with a ramp. Small changes like installing a hearing loop or better quality lighting in dark areas, using light paint colours are much more straightforward and should not cause practical difficulties in most situations.

When thinking about your meeting house consider the different users, both Friends and others. Consider also the different needs people have whether that's with seeing, hearing, mobility or whatever.

Building regulations contain the requirements for new build or major alterations to a building. Employ an architect to help you with thinking and understanding what can be done and at what cost. This enables you to consider what is reasonable in your circumstances. It is worth considering that as Friends grow older they have additional needs. If we want to remove barriers to attending meeting for worship then changes may be needed.

It may be more difficult and or expensive to make changes to a historic meeting house than a younger building. However, with imagination, improvements can be often done and sometimes it is not so difficult.

16. Requirements of a meeting house

If you are considering building a new, or altering an existing meeting house, the planning group should review the whole of its potential use and its function in the community, present and future. You should consider what role the meeting house can or should play in providing for the needs of Friends and of the public. It is important to involve the whole meeting in this process. It will take time to reach a decision that everyone is content with. The following check list may aid this exercise.

If seeking funding through grants, you should check on the requirements of the grant-awarding bodies. For example, the Meeting Houses Fund will expect there to have been proper consideration of sustainability issues.

Is the meeting house well suited for:

- meeting for worship
- public meetings
- use by people of all ages and those with disabililties
- area meeting
- children's meetings
- special interest groups?

Does the entrance area provide:

- a welcoming image
- information in the form of notices, posters, pamphlets, etc., with ample space
- a useful space
- a safe space for coats, etc?

Does the main meeting room provide:

- quietness
- good acoustics
- comfortable seating
- blackout
- good ventilation

- emergency exits
- seating for public meetings
- flexible lighting
- responsive heating
- a hearing loop?

For any rooms intended for children's activities (possibly for every room), make sure that doors have windows so that it is possible to view what is going on in a room without having to enter. Make sure that there are no cubbyholes or alcoves that cannot be observed from the door.

Are the smaller rooms suitable for:

- committees, with tables
- meetings for older children
- letting to special groups (e.g. art classes)?

Is there a children's room with:

- appropriate furniture
- access to water and drainage
- soft, impervious flooring
- a pin-up wall
- storage for materials and equipment?

Library facilities – should the books be:

- in lockable bookcases
- in general circulation space, easily accessible to enquirers
- open, in a special room?

Rooms with direct access into a garden or burial ground:

Consider having two doors or a double door to allow access into a garden or burial ground as holding events where lots of people are trying to go through a single doorway in both directions will be a bottleneck and cause overcrowding.

Does the kitchen provide:

- ample preparation and washing-up space
- easily cleaned surfaces

- a first-aid kit
- generous space for helpers
- good storage space
- adequate ventilation
- a fire extinguisher
- space for service trolleys?

Catering:

- Can the kitchen serve directly into a generous social space?

Do the toilets have:

- adequate accommodation and access for the disabled
- fast-fill, quiet flushes
- isolation from the main rooms
- mechanical ventilation
- point-of-use water heating?

Is there adequate storage for:

- extra seating, tables, etc.
- cleaning equipment and materials
- refuse
- records, files, etc.
- ladders, tools, etc.
- all occasional equipment?

External noticeboards, poster sites, etc:

This is a very important outreach service – they tell people who you are and what you think. Are they adequate, easy to service and maintain, durable, and attractive?

Parking:

- Is there adequate parking for all users (and note local authority parking requirements)?

17. Gardens and burial grounds

Maintenance of gardens and burial grounds

Gardens and burial grounds can be a haven for wildlife especially in a city. Consider how the space is maintained and plan your work to enable plants and animals to prosper. There is a wealth of advice available on the internet.

Trees

Some trees are subject to an individual Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and all trees in a conservation area should be treated as if a TPO were in place. Before major pruning or removing trees you are advised to check with your local planning department whether your burial ground or garden are located in a conservation area or if any of your trees are subject to a TPO.

Use of burial grounds

Please refer to 14.31–14.35, and 17.11–17.15 of the fifth edition of *Quaker faith & practice*.

It is sensible for area meetings to have a clear policy on the use of their burial grounds in readiness for a request for a burial.

The following is an example of the policy and advice adopted by an area meeting (Gloucestershire):

Burials, Interment of Ashes, Scattering of Ashes

Policy and Guidance

POLICY

We draw attention of all Local Meetings to the Minute 07/06 on eligibility for using our burial grounds:

“It was reported that there is a growing shortage of burial grounds. We therefore agree that only Friends, their spouses or partners or their dependent children and long-term Attenders, their spouses or partners or dependent children can be buried in our Quaker burial grounds.”

The Trustees clarify that the Order applies to Meeting House grounds as well as burial grounds and to the interment of ashes and the scattering of ashes, as well as burials.

GUIDANCE

Orders for Burial and Scattering of Ashes

We agree to the procedure as outlined below:

1. Local Meeting appointed person for funerals contacts Clerk of Area Meeting Trustees to request an Order for Burial, Interment/Scattering of Ashes.
2. Order issued by Clerk of trustees to LM appointed person.
3. After burial, interment/scattering of ashes the LM appointed person completes relevant section of the Order and sends to Clerk of Area Meeting.
4. Clerk of Area Meeting signs off the Order, notes it for inclusion in next Area Meeting News of Friends and returns Order to Clerk to Trustees.

Agreed by AM Trustees 20 July 2009

AVAILABILITY

Burial Grounds

The current position of availability:

- Cheltenham. Meeting House Garden. Open for scattering of ashes.

  Contact: Convenor of Premises Committee.
- Cirencester. Meeting House Garden. Open for the interment and scattering of ashes.

  Siddington burial ground. Closed.

  Contact: Clerk.
- Gloucester. Meeting House Garden. Open for the scattering of ashes.

  Contact: Convenor of Premises Committee.
- Nailsworth. Shortwood burial ground.

  Open for burial, interment of ashes and scattering of ashes.

  Meeting House Garden. Open for the scattering of ashes.

  Contact: Convenor of Premises Committee.
- Painswick. Dell burial ground. Open for the scattering of ashes.

  Meeting House Garden. Open for the scattering of ashes.

  Contact: Friend responsible for funerals.

ADVICE: GRAVESTONES, SCATTERING AND BURIAL OF ASHES

Friends are left at liberty to adopt the use of plain gravestones in any burial grounds: it being distinctly understood that, in all case, they are to be erected under the direction of the area meeting so that, in each particular burial ground, uniformity is preserved in respect of the materials, size, form and wording of the stones, as well as in the mode of placing them, as may effectively guard against any distinction being made in that place between rich and poor.

Gravestones at Shortwood Quaker Burial Ground, Gloucestershire Area Quaker Meeting

We ask that future gravestones:

a) are modest in size, use local stone and are sympathetic to existing gravestones.

b) have wording consisting of only the name of the deceased, together with full dates of birth and death, plus age if desired.

c) have only simple, incised lettering (not filled with lead or other material and with no symbols or decoration).

We ask Nailsworth Quaker Meeting to be responsible for ensuring the observance of these requirements.

Burial of Ashes

Where there is a wish for ashes to be buried we ask that the following be observed:

i. if a casket is used it should be biodegradable;

ii. the turf is carefully removed, and is replaced neatly afterwards;

iii. the ashes are poured into a hole of sufficient depth to allow at least 150 mm or 6 inches of soil and turf above;

iv. no marker is placed to record the spot;

v. the position is immediately recorded on the plan of the burial ground or garden.

Recording the Burial and Scattering of Ashes

Whilst it has been the custom in the past to use gravestones to mark the position of burials, we advise that it is more appropriate that where a family wish to provide a memorial it could take the form, after discussion with LM, of a garden seat, tree, shrub, or equipment for the meeting house. In such cases we would not object to a small plate or discreet inscription recording the name and date of the deceased, which we would expect to last during the memory of those who knew the deceased, and not necessarily longer.

18. Electricity and electrical installations

Poorly maintained electrical equipment and wiring can be dangerous.

It is recommended that fixed electrical installations be inspected and tested every five years in accordance with IET (Institution of Engineering and Technology) guidance and an inspection certificate obtained in every case.

Any work required on the installation should only be undertaken by contractors registered with the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC) or the Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA).

Lifts and other large electrical equipment should be serviced in accordance with manufacturer's guidance.

Portable electrical equipment should be inspected on a regular basis and you should ensure that worn flexes, broken plugs or sockets, etc., are replaced immediately.

The Quaker Meeting House Handbook has useful information to help with maintaining electrical installations and equipment.

19. Gas installations and appliances

The Quaker Meeting House Handbook has useful information to help with maintaining gas installations and equipment.

Operatives must have appropriate qualifications and be registered with Gas SAFE to work on gas installations and appliances. It is important to note that plumbers are not necessarily gas engineers unless they have additional qualifications and are Gas SAFE registered.

Landlords' Gas Safety Certificate – duties of landlords

Landlords of tenanted living accommodation must have gas equipment serviced annually. A 'landlord's certificate must be provided to the tenants.

It is strongly recommended that meetings have their gas appliances serviced annually to ensure that they are working safely and efficiently.

Ventilation of gas installations and appliances

Ventilation grills into a property should not be restricted or blocked. Most gas appliances and some gas installations require positive ventilation to outside air. In the past it was customary to site ventilation grills behind radiators so that the incoming air could be warmed by the radiator. This method of ventilation is now illegal and a gas engineer should be asked to move the appliance to allow free movement of the incoming air.

20. Information index

21. Relevant extracts from *Quaker faith & practice*

From *Quaker faith & practice*, fifth edition

Meeting houses

Certification and registration

14.24 Meeting houses in England and Wales should be certified as places of worship under the Places of Worship Registration Act 1855. Forms for this can be obtained from the superintendent registrar of births, deaths and marriages for the district in which the meeting house is situated. Such certification will establish the meeting house as a place of worship for the purpose of any legislation where evidence of use of the property is required. Places of public religious worship are exempt from the payment of non-domestic rates and there are significant concessions for other property used for charitable purposes. In order to ensure that the full entitlement is obtained, it is necessary to inform the rates department of the local authority of the nature and purposes of such property. There is no provision for the registration of places of worship in Scotland and liability to or exemption from rates is governed by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1991.

Care of premises

14.25 A meeting house should not be regarded primarily in terms of bricks and mortar, or merely seen in relation to potential site value. Its real value derives from the worship and service of the meeting. Even so, our meeting houses no less than our own homes deserve our care, attention and imaginative thought, so that they may be attractive both to ourselves and to others whilst remaining faithful to our commitment to simplicity, care of the environment and equality. Care of our premises is an important and sometimes exacting responsibility, which should be exercised by or on behalf of the meeting to which it belongs. Area meeting trustees and local premises committees should be vigilant so that small defects do not pass unnoticed and lead in the future to extensive and costly repairs. It is recommended that premises be professionally inspected at regular intervals.

New meeting houses

14.26 In the provision of meeting houses, area meetings should, wherever possible, choose sites which allow for the greatest possible use by the whole community. The acquisition of older property for conversion to a meeting house may involve difficulties which should be assessed by a surveyor before the area meeting considers purchase. In contemplating the building of meeting houses, area meetings should have regard to Quaker testimonies and the suitability of the building as a place of worship. Relevant criteria include simplicity of design, soundness of

construction, minimising environmental impact, enabling easy access for people with disabilities, and avoiding extravagance.

Loans or grants, or both, may be available in suitable cases to area meetings to meet part of the cost of building new meeting houses; for the purchase and adaptation of properties to make them suitable for use as meeting houses; and for major alterations to existing meeting houses and major repairs to historic meeting houses. Information about the Meeting Houses Funds is obtainable from Quaker Finance & Property (and see www.quaker.org.uk/qfp).

Use of premises

14.27 Area meetings are advised to permit and encourage the use of their meeting houses for educational and other suitable purposes which serve the needs of the people living in their neighbourhood. Such users should be expected to make an appropriate financial contribution to the running expenses and upkeep. It should be borne in mind that the primary purpose of the meeting house is as a place of public worship.

As premises used by the public, meeting houses must meet certain statutory requirements in respect of fire precautions, safety and hygiene. All premises must be adequately insured, including liability insurance as well as buildings and contents insurance; the Treasurers' handbook* should be consulted for more detailed advice.

In considering the proper use of their meeting houses, area meetings should be sensitive to the feelings of the worshipping community, whose members may object to the introduction of alcoholic drinks onto the premises or to other practices by other users of the meeting house. Hiring policies in respect of particular premises should be agreed between area meetings and local meetings, and conditions made clear to prospective users. The use of Quaker premises by political parties, and by other religious or secular organisations with whose principles or practices Friends might not be in sympathy, will always require careful consideration and full consultation with Friends in the meeting most closely concerned. Particular care must be taken to avoid bookings by 'front' organisations with undesirable aims; the bona fides of new users should be checked. In all cases it is important to ensure that any publicity given to meetings held on Quaker premises makes a clear distinction between those organised by a meeting, committee or other Quaker body as such, and those for which others are responsible, in order to avoid confusion in the public mind.

Meetings and committees involved in letting Quaker premises should always bear in mind the need to minimise disturbance to neighbours, hurt to individual Friends, division among the membership, and erosion of our distinctive Quaker identity.

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* The Treasurers' handbook (edition 4.01) was last published in February 2013. It has been superseded by a subscription for all Quaker meeting treasurers to the ACAT (Association of Church Accounts and Treasurers) handbook. This is supplemented by the Quaker treasurers' guidance sheets. Information about both is available at www.quaker.org.uk/treasurers.

Sale and other disposal of property

14.28 Area meetings or other owning bodies should assess realistically all the circumstances before offering for sale any land or buildings in connection with a meeting house. There have been cases in the past where a small meeting has been revived or one long discontinued has been reopened. It has become increasingly difficult to find suitable sites or buildings for the development of new meeting houses. This may be an additional reason for retaining existing meeting houses in Quaker ownership, in case one day they may be required again, but meetings should not allow themselves to become overly burdened by their property.

In England and Wales, trustees are responsible for the sale, transfer and other disposal of property. Buildings and land held in charitable trusts shall not be mortgaged, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of unless the trustees have first followed the procedure required by law and as detailed in the Area Meeting Governing Document and, where applicable, as defined in a scheme registered with the Charity Commission. In Scotland there are no restrictions on the disposal of charity land provided that it does not contravene the terms of the trust. However it is recommended that meetings in Scotland should, as a matter of good practice, follow the same procedure.

14.29 (part) The prime consideration in the sale or other disposal of property is the best interests of the charity. Charity law does not require a disposal for the best price.

14.30 Scottish meetings are subject to regulation by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, which was established under the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. The regulations on trusteeship and accountability are much the same as those which apply in England and Wales.

More specific references are included in the text of various sections of this document.