

ADVISORY BOARD FOR REDUNDANT CHURCHES

Cowley House, 9 Little College Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 3SH

Policy on Bells and Bell Frames

Adopted 2005

Legal & Advisory

Bells and bell frames are not specified in the **Pastoral Measure** and therefore are subject to s. 64, covering the disposal of contents.

The **Code of Practice to the Measure** advises (2001 p.161) consultation with the 'appropriate bodies'.

The **Redundant Churches Guidance Note on Contents (RCG 1, para. 5.9 - 10)** notes that "bells are part of the fabric of the building and their removal requires listed building consent" [where appropriate]. RCG1 advises against lowering bells during the use seeking period and recommends that dioceses consult the DAC or CCC.

The Keltek Trust (Reg. Charity 1061224, <http://www.keltek.org>) is recognised as a body prepared to arrange for the removal and storage (at no cost) and willing to assist in finding new homes for redundant bells. The Redundant Bells Committee of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers offers similar assistance. A fair number of Diocesan and County associations of ringers are able to help in this way.

RCG1 also states that "old bells should be preserved whenever possible and not sold as scrap except as a last resort, or where an expert has indicated this to be the most suitable course".

A Code of Practice for the *Conservation and repair of bells and bell frames*, issued by The Council for the Care of Churches, is accepted as standard.

Criteria

The Council for the Care of Churches (CCC) has drafted revised criteria for its 'Lists of Bells and Bell Frames for Preservation', which will be available 2004/5. The inclusion of bells and bell frames on CCC lists should be noted on a church's Statement of Significance and ABRCs Critical Information Summary.

Criteria for preservation will be informed by an assessment of the historic importance of bells and frames in their architectural context, the historic importance of bells and frames in terms of date, quality, tonal excellence, significance of foundry or maker, completeness of ring or installation, historic material, and technical innovation. Historic windlasses, single bells, and bells hung solely in association with clocks and not forming part of a ring or chime, might be regarded as a separate category.

Security

The received wisdom is that bells & bell frames are best left *in situ* (i.e. hung). Once on the ground, bells are at risk from theft or damage (even breaking up). Portable bells have some value in the antiques market. All bells are at risk when the value of bell metal is high.

Access

Bells belong to the church, and those who consider them to belong to the community should present a case for the future and disposal of bells and frames where they consider it a matter of public interest.

Bells in church towers not forming part of the ring or chime and hung solely in association with clocks as part of a 'public timepiece' might be affected by church closure and disposal.

Bells & frames in churches vested in Trusts, including The Churches Conservation Trust

Policy:

Leave in situ. Information on bells (dates, makers, inscriptions, etc.), fittings and frames (type, material, condition) to be included in inventories

Bells in churches for freehold disposal

Policy:

Rings and Chimes: *If not required for an appropriate use (i.e. ecclesiastical, community, or clock uses) then remove and relocate.. Where possible, the bells of a ring or chime should be re-located together. Information on bells (dates, makers, inscriptions, etc.), fittings and frames (type, material, condition) to be included in inventories.*

Because the future of historic bells needs to be assured, proposals for their removal or retention in situ will be judged on their merits.

Singles: (including Sanctus bells, independent service bells and unwanted clock bells). *Remove and relocate, with information recorded as before.*

Bells in churches for leasehold disposal

Policy:

Rings and Chimes: *If not required for an appropriate use (i.e. ecclesiastical, community, or clock uses) then remove and relocate. Where possible, the bells of a ring or chime should be re-located together. Information on bells (dates, makers, inscriptions, etc.), fittings and frames (type, material, condition) to be included in inventories.*

Because the future of historic bells needs to be assured, proposals for their removal or retention in situ will be judged on their merits.

Singles: (including Sanctus bells, independent Service bells, and unwanted clock bells) *Remove and relocate, with information recorded as before.*

Bell Frames

[Note: In general museums do not want bell frames, however historic, and if taken the frames are almost always taken apart and stored]

Archaeology & Recording

The unrecorded removal or relocation of frames, even within the same tower, risks the loss of information of value to assessments of their archaeological significance.

The removal of bell frames can necessitate the loss of original material, cutting of frames, loss of bearing positions, roping positions, the positions of sliders and other details relating to their history, use, and archaeology. Frames have been similarly and unnecessarily damaged in order to remove the bells the 'easy way'.

Policy:

Historic bell frames should be left in situ wherever possible. Removal of bells should normally be undertaken without cutting or otherwise damaging the frame.

Where historic bell frames cannot be safely retained in situ, their original position, structure and detailing should be recorded in accordance with requirements for preservation by record under PPG 16.

Clock bells & Clock chimes (not forming part of a ring or service chime)

Policy:

Local arrangements (with Local Authorities or other parties) for maintaining clocks and clock bells and chimes (i.e. those hung solely for use with a clock) should be ascertained in standard information gathering, and appropriate provision made for ensuring continuity.

Where clocks and clock bells are no longer required as a public service, the future of bells and frames should be determined in accordance with policy for bells in churches for either freehold or leasehold disposal.