

A conservator wearing a blue jacket and a yellow helmet is working on a stone sculpture in a church. The conservator is positioned on the right side of the frame, facing left, and is focused on the task. The background shows a large stone column and other architectural details of the church interior. The title 'MANAGING CONSERVATION PROJECTS' is overlaid in large white letters on the image.

MANAGING CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Introduction

This guidance will help you through the necessary steps for conserving your church's artworks, furnishings and fittings, including memorials in the churchyard.

If you have discovered signs of decay or damage to an artwork or object in your church you should contact your inspecting architect and DAC who will advise you on how to select an accredited conservator and how to proceed. Your architect may also want to investigate the cause of the damage and whether it affects the whole building, as for example in the case of water damage. This may need to be resolved before conservation takes place.

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Choosing a conservator

Your DAC Secretary and inspecting architect can advise you on choosing a suitable conservator. In the first place, you should consult the [Conservation Register](#), a database of accredited conservators in the UK and Ireland run by the [Institute of Conservation \(ICON\)](#). For organ builders, the [Institute of British Organ Building](#) provides an equivalent [database](#).

Accreditation, such as the PACR scheme (Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers) in the UK, is an indication that the conservator has been accepted by the accrediting body as having the required training and experience, fulfilling the highest standards of the profession and working within the professional guidelines and codes of ethics of the accrediting body.

For more important and complex items, it may be advisable to approach several conservators and compare their approaches and estimates. If you are applying for outside funding, some grant giving bodies will expect you to do this. It is sensible to ask a conservator for referees, such as past customers, and ask about their experience, before you make a decision. It may be helpful to discuss with your architect too.

The conservation report

You should ask your chosen conservator to prepare a report which will include their assessment of the object's condition, the causes of deterioration, proposed treatments, recommendations for future care and an estimate.

In order to write the report, conservators will need to see the object and its context in person and you will need to provide them with more detailed information, such as any previous treatments carried out on the object, the specific problem you are concerned about and the anticipated future use, display and storage of the object.

It is recommended you consult your inspecting architect and DAC on the proposals; they will be able to advise you on their implications. The Church Buildings Council has prepared [guidelines](#) for the minimum information it requires in conservation reports and organ builder's reports (available for download on the ChurchCare website).

Conservation reports are required for a faculty application and will also help you plan the long-term care of the object. When you apply for a faculty, make sure you have enough information to show in detail what the conservator proposes to do.

Be aware that there will be a fee required to prepare a conservation report. The Church Buildings Council is able to provide some funding towards the preparation of [conservation reports](#) (further information is available on the Churchcare website).

Finance

A conservation report is also essential documentation for grant applications. Depending on the type of project, you may be eligible for grant aid. In addition, you will also need to do some fundraising yourself. Most funders are more likely to assist you if you can demonstrate that you are actively trying to raise money. The ChurchCare website gives further and more detailed advice on [grants](#), funding and fundraising.

Make sure that you have all the necessary funding before you give the go ahead. For bigger projects it may be necessary to split the project into several stages which can proceed while funds are being raised for the next stage.

The legal process

Before any conservation work is undertaken you will need to apply for a faculty. Your application needs to be accompanied by the conservator's report and provide a detailed specification of the works to be carried out.

There are some circumstances where you will be required to go through a formal tendering and procurement process. More information on [procurement](#) is available on the Churchcare website.

For structures in the churchyard which are listed in their own right (e.g. some tombs or walls), you will also need to apply for listed building consent if you are making any alterations to the structure. Consult your local authority conservation officer.

Commissioning the work

The conservator who executes the work may not necessarily be the same as the one who wrote the report. If the conservation report is to be used as a tender document, this should be made clear at the outset and the conservator should give their permission for it to be used in this way.

Composite objects of more than one material may need to be conserved by specialists from a number of fields. The author of the report may also delegate the execution of the works to another conservator.

It is common for the conservator to discover further information during their conservation work which might alter the initial treatment proposal. In this case, you should be consulted on any changes or additional work. Remember that changes to the proposals may need further approval through the faculty process and from grant givers.

The final report

Documentation is an important part of professional conservation and after the completion of the works you should receive a final report. This report should give details of the conservation techniques and materials applied, accompanied by photographs of the object before, during and after treatment. The final report is an important source of information for possible future treatments and should be kept together with the initial treatment proposal in a safe place.

Once the repairs works have been completed, do not forget to send a certificate of completion to the Diocesan Registry.

