

DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD

DIOCESAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE



**THE MAINTENANCE OF RAINWATER GOODS; GUTTERS,
VALLEYS AND DRAINS**

GUIDELINES TO ASSIST PARISHES

Issued August 2004

THE MAINTENANCE OF RAINWATER GOODS; GUTTERS, VALLEYS AND DRAINS

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Commonest causes of failure in old buildings are: substandard construction, poor repair methods and neglect. This paper addresses the last; inadequate maintenance is neglect. The old advice on caring for a building is to keep its head and feet dry. This leaflet deals with the ways that rainwater and snow are collected and taken away from the church.
- 1.2. When maintaining the rainwater system, there is also an opportunity to identify other failures that may need attention, broken tiles or slates, flaking masonry, dislodged copings etc.
- 1.3. If the parish has a maintenance contract with a contractor all the matters in this document should be addressed.

RAINWATER GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES

- 2.1 Before starting, address the matter of safety. In the light of Health and Safety requirements, no maintenance should be carried out from unfixed ladders and when ladders are fixed they must be moved regularly in order to ensure that the cleaner does not have to reach too far. Stainless steel fittings set into the masonry, and to which ladders can be fixed, can be installed by specialist firms. (This will require Faculty consent). The installers can provide certification to satisfy Health and Safety regulations. These fixings should be checked for safety every two years. Never lean ladders onto plastic gutters and do not rely on the security of metal gutters. There must always be at least two people present during cleaning.
- 2.2. Cleaning gutters and valleys must be carried out at least twice a year, preferably in the late autumn (leaves) and early summer (more leaves and abandoned nests). Never flush or sweep debris into hopper heads and down-pipes, always collect and dispose of it (leaf debris is good compost). Always start cleaning at the upper levels.
- 2.3 Inspect the gutters; the inner surface, as well as the outside, should be painted regularly. Check the effectiveness of gutter joints and ensure that there is a steady fall to the outlet. If the fall is away from the outlet a builder may have to be called in to correct it. Try to inspect the system in heavy rainfall when leaks and overflows can be seen. Replace missing or broken elements.
- 2.4 Lead, zinc, stainless steel or copper parapet gutters and valleys must be carefully swept clean. Remove all vegetation. Care must be taken to wear suitable footwear to give

a safe grip but sufficiently soft as not to damage the metalwork. In particular take care not to damage the seam joints and steps in the sheeting. Inspect the metalwork for corrosion, cracks, and defective flashings.

- 2.5 Consider what damage might be caused by a heavy snowfall. If this is likely to be a major problem consider the installation of thermostatically controlled electric heating tapes to inaccessible positions.
- 2.6 Remove all vegetation from within and around hopper-heads and down-pipes. Ensure that all hoppers are cleared and all down pipes run clear; check with a hose. Make certain that hoppers and down-pipes are securely fixed and ensure that the spaces behind down-pipes are clear. Hoppers should always have weir overflows; when new replacement hoppers are fitted, ensure they have weir overflows; when new replacement hoppers are fitted, ensure they have weir overflows. Check all joints and wall fixings to down-pipes. Replace any cracked pipes. Replace missing or broken elements. Paint where necessary.

DRAINS

- 3.1 Clear out gullies and ensure that drains run clear.
- 3.2 Down-pipes should always discharge over gullies. Pipes that connect straight into drains cannot be checked to run clear. If there are no gullies and it is impossible to confirm that water is running away from the building, consider having gullies installed. If the drains run to soakaways and do not run away rapidly they should be rodded. If this does not improve the matter, it may be necessary to dig out the soakaway and renew, or construct a new one (for which Faculty consent would be needed). If the drains run to a drainage system, and do not clear quickly after rodding, inspection chambers must be checked.

POLICIES

1. Every PCC should have a member responsible for inspection and maintenance of all rainwater goods and drains.
2. The PCC should ensure that gutters, valleys, down-pipes and gullies are inspected and cleaned out at least twice a year.
3. Steps should be taken to ensure safety during inspection and cleaning.
4. Any defects in the rainwater disposal system identified at the quinquennial inspection should be given priority for urgent action.
5. Churchwardens should refer to maintenance inspections in the Annual Fabric Reports.

This is one of a series of guidelines published by the Diocesan
Advisory Committee

Copies can be downloaded from the Diocesan website :

(www.chelmsford.anglican.org)

or can be obtained from the
DAC Secretary at the address below.

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