

Telecommunication installations



General

1. The decision on whether or not Telecommunication equipment should be installed in a Church rests mainly with the Parochial Church Council. A Faculty will be needed.
2. The PCC should take professional advice in regard to any negotiations with the Telecommunications Company. Professional advice can ensure best practice, best income, and best terms in any legal document.
3. The installation of aerials on the top of Churches can increase the incidence of lightning strike by a factor of up to ten-fold. The PCC should take advice from a lightning conductor expert.
4. The installation of Telecommunication equipment can damage the building, and to that end the DAC draw to the attention of the PCC the notes produced by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, a copy of which is printed on the reverse of this sheet.

It is always worthwhile consulting your architect before installing such equipment on or in your Church.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INSTALLATIONS IN CHURCHES

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) is aware of the increased number of proposals to install radio aerials for mobile telephone operators in Church towers and spires. The Society urges that those responsible for such projects consider the potential impact on the character and aesthetic quality of Churches of historical or architectural importance. The SPAB Technical Panel offers the following practical guidance:

1. The insertion of an aerial together with associated cabling and equipment can potentially be very damaging. Where there is likely to be a detrimental effect on historic fabric, the Society urges that an alternative site be sought for the installation.
2. All necessary consents must be obtained before work commences. In addition to a Faculty from the Diocesan Chancellor, English Heritage approval and planning permission from the Local Authority may also be required.
3. The Society advises that no scheme be accepted without the approval the Church inspecting architect or surveyor, who is usually best placed to understand the implications of the work and should be engaged to oversee its execution. It must not be assumed that the installation contractor will be aware of the highly sensitive nature of the historic fabric.
4. There is considerable potential for damage to archaeology, both below and above ground. The advice of an archaeologist needs to be obtained at an early stage.
5. A formal legal agreement should be entered into with the telecommunications company. It is suggested that this covers not only installation but minimum reasonable access requirements (for example, access to the belfry by bellringers). The agreement should be vetted by the Diocesan Registrar.
6. The Society stresses that installation should be designed and fitted with regard to the importance of the building, including any historic floors or bellframe: the principle of reversibility should be applied at all times.
7. Due regard should be made for the impact of all parts of the installation on the structural stability of the building.
8. Where it is proposed to strengthen an existing floor to carry equipment, reversibility may be hard to achieve; in such cases, the Society urges that consideration be given to other options, such as the insertion of a reversible new floor.
9. The Church's insurer should be notified before work starts, to ensure adequate cover. The SPAB may be able to suggest names of suitable specialist brokers or companies.
10. The re-use of telecommunications equipment by others may be desirable, in order to minimise potential damage to the building by replacing it when a licence is awarded to a different operator. All equipment should be removed at the end of its use, overseen by the Church architect or surveyor.

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