

Property Guidelines and Processes in Presbytery of Perth

Updated April 2025

This paper outlines the processes and procedures relating to ALL property matters including alterations, repairs and developments in buildings in the care of congregations within the Presbytery of Perth. Jamie McNamara, our Presbytery Buildings Officer, is both a qualified surveyor and historic buildings conservator and can offer advice on all aspects of this paper.

Key Points

- The Presbytery Property Committee is your *first line of contact* with regard to any property matter and they are there to advise, support and encourage. In order to ensure best practice, it is important that the Presbytery Property Committee is made aware of all proposals, large or small, self-funded or requiring financial support. This, we see as a simple exchange of information and not as “checking up”!
- The permission of Presbytery, and where appropriate of the General Trustees, must be sought and obtained before work commences on major alterations, and/or any additions, and/or repairs to property, whether or not the titles are vested in the General Trustees.
- The cost of work must include all work to be carried out, even if phased, and must include all fees for all legal work, architects, surveyors, VAT, and any other costs which may be incurred.
- In the event that repairs are urgently necessary in the interests of safety or to maintain the building in a wind and water tight condition, the work may proceed without prior consent, in consultation with Presbytery Buildings Officer and the Convenor or Vice-Convenor of the Property Committee.
- Such work shall be noted in the minutes of the next Property Committee meeting and submitted for homologation at the next ordinary meeting of Presbytery.
- Four weeks’ notice shall be given to the Property Committee to consider plans and submissions for the subsequent meeting of Presbytery. Submission must include full details, plans, costings (estimates), details of financial reserves, along with any fundraising plans.
- Additionally, evidence of three competitive tenders must be produced and details should be included of the last two financial years expenditure on the congregation’s properties.
- Where there is doubt whether work is an alteration or a repair, the matter should be raised with the Property Committee for clarification and the Presbytery Buildings Officer.
- Congregations are reminded that expenditure on property is approved by Presbytery without prejudice to any future negotiations on readjustment.
- When work on a heating system is involved, prior consultation with the Church's Energy Consultant is mandatory. Where work on lighting or sound systems is contemplated then it is recommended that advice be sought from the Consultants on these matters appointed by the General Trustees.

Financial Limits

- Perth Presbytery, has a limit of £5,000 (inc VAT) per project, below which congregations (in both A and B Categories*) may undertake work without informing the Property Committee or applying for permission.
- Works costing between £5,000 and £25,000 (inc VAT) for Category A buildings are noted by the Presbytery Property Committee and the committee must be informed of works in this category.
- Works for Category A buildings between £25,000 and £50,000 can be approved by the Presbytery Property Committee following submission of an **Application for Approval of Works**. The PBO must also see this completed form.
- All works for Category A buildings above £50,000 must be submitted to the committee using the above form and, if approved by Presbytery, shall be submitted to the General Trustees for their consideration. This will happen in one of three ways: either the cost of the present work exceeds £50,000, or the cost of the present work PLUS the cost of the work at the same

building which has been authorised by Presbytery in the past three years exceeds £50,000, or the cost of the present work PLUS the cost of work at the same building which you are likely to have to carry out in the next three years exceeds £50,000.

- You will find the Application for Approval of Works form on both the Church of Scotland/Perth Presbytery website. It should be noted that although the official form asks that it should be sent to the Presbytery Clerk, in Perth Presbytery the first consideration is made by the Property Committee. To save your application from being re-routed, please send it to the Convener of the Property Committee, Ian McVean, ianmcvean@yahoo.co.uk If Financial Assistance is also being requested, once approval of the work has been given, the Application Form will then be forwarded to the Presbytery Clerk for onward transmission to the necessary body. If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch.
- All proposed repairs for Category B buildings between £5,000 and £25,000 (this being the limit for such repairs) may be approved by the committee using powers between Presbytery meetings and the Application for Approval of Works form should be submitted as detailed above. ***Spend on B category buildings is limited to wind and water tightness repairs only.***
- The intention of this information exchange is to enable the Presbytery Property Committee and the General Trustees or other bodies to offer guidance, assistance and sometimes, financial grants to congregations. The underpinning principle is to assist congregations to undertake alterations and developments which support the mission of the Church.

Manses

- As well as churches and halls, it should be remembered that all manses must be approved by Presbytery as suitable and appropriate. It is not necessarily the case that a current manse which has been in use will be approved in a period of vacancy as acceptable for future use.

Quotations

- The issue of “obtaining three quotes” for works, as advised was discussed with the General Trustees. The conclusion is that whilst every effort must still be made to gather these quotes, it will often come down to local knowledge, recommendation and common sense. We must, of course, be aware of the need to be good stewards and to always be satisfied that we have the best contractor at the most reasonable price.

Additional Notes

- Congregations are reminded that the requirements set out within this paper do not obviate the need to ensure compliance with Local Authority statutory approvals such as Planning Consent, Listed Building Consent, Conservation Area Consent and Building Warrant.
- Congregations should check with the relevant Local Authority during the preparatory stages if any proposed works require consents. All necessary approvals must be in place before work commences. If in doubt professional guidance should be sought.
- Congregations should note that even if a Building Warrant is not required all work must be carried out in accordance with the Building Regulations. Contractors must be appropriately qualified to undertake works, particularly in respect to those associated with electrical and gas installations.

*Category A Building – to be retained beyond the five years from the date of the Approved Mission Plan.

Category B Building – to be sold, let or otherwise disposed of by a specified date within five years from the date at which the ecclesiastical building is first categorised as (b).