

# Quick Guide...

## Commissioning Window Conservation Repairs

*Prepared by the Committee on Church Art and Architecture's Stained Glass Group*

The church windows are an integral part of the building fabric and are key to keeping the building wind and watertight. Traditional windows often have leaded small pane panels, possibly decorative stained glass, or may be timber sash and casement windows with clear glass.



Weather conditions have a considerable impact on their performance and condition and when they start to age, the maintenance and repair methods are an important responsibility, particularly for an historic building.

Ensuring that any repair works are carried out by the right person is important in the interest of preservation of valuable original windows, even for small incidental or localised damage of a pane of glass.

### Selecting the right person for the repairs

There are various people who may consider they can repair your windows, and it is important to ensure that they have the experience and skills necessary to do this with appropriate materials and techniques:

- Good quality leaded and stained glass should only be repaired by a specialist conservator who is experienced and ideally is an ICON (Institute of Conservation) accredited conservator: [www.conservationregister.com](http://www.conservationregister.com)
- A stained glass artist *may not* have the skills to repair historic glass

- A general glazier is not likely to have the materials or techniques for leaded glass repair
- Zinc leaded windows are more rare than leaded glass and repair requires different experience
- A joiner should be able to repair a timber sash window, but not deal with historic or leaded glass
- A stonemason will be required for the repair of stonework and to work alongside the window conservator
- Installation of external protective glazing or environmental secondary glazing systems such as “isothermal frame installations” should be carried out by someone with experience

### Seek Advice

Repair work is costly and the long term damage that can be caused by incorrect methods and techniques, can be avoided by taking advice before work begins.



Ask for professional references and to see examples of previous work carried out by the person you are going to employ to carry out the repairs.

Contact the General Trustees fabric committee, CARTA and the Stained Glass group for advice on repairs and how to find an appropriately skilled person to repair and preserve the beauty of decorative and historic church windows.

Further good practice in the up keep of your windows which will allow you to take appropriate action if repair is required is as follows:

## Recording your windows



Understanding the quality of the church windows and recording the date, subject and any artist, memorial dedication or benefactor involved is a first step to caring for the windows. Get good photographs of the windows and details and look out for signatures, often found lower right hand side.

“Stained glass” describes a number of different ways in which a decorative window has been coloured, including use of coloured or textured glass, applied paint on to the surface and “plating” (more than one layer of glass). The colour and detail can be very fragile and great care must be taken with repair and cleaning, which should only be carried out by an experienced conservationist. Each window is a unique piece of art and may be of considerable value.

## Condition of the windows

Regular checks on the window should be part of the maintenance regime by the property convenor and will also be checked as part of Quinquennial condition inspections.

Look out for problems:



- Water penetration/  
Rusting bars/Sagging glass/Cracked or broken panes of glass/Cracked and loose putties and sealants/Decoration of timbers and decay or rot/ stone erosion of tracery, mullions and cills
- Windows that have had modern secondary glazing of glass or perspex added as external protection from the weather can cause and contribute to problems and decay.



If problems are noted it is time to get a specialist to come and survey the windows for you and give recommendations on appropriate repair and likely costs.

## Whom to Contact

Anyone wishing to contact the Committee should complete an enquiry form which can be found on the Resourcing Mission website ([www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/carta](http://www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/carta)) and email it to: [gentrustees@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:gentrustees@churchofscotland.org.uk). Alternatively, you can telephone 0131 225 5722 and ask to speak to someone in the CARTA office.

## CARTA Quick Guides

Other Quick Guides include advice on lighting, audio visual, stained glass and communion ware.

These can be found on the Resourcing Mission website ([www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/quick-guides](http://www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/quick-guides)).



## About the Author

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