

## **HEALTH and SAFETY REPORT for APCM (4th May 2025)**

### **St JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH, OLD SODBURY**

Period from April 2024 to March 2025

Inspection undertaken by Richard J Purdom

Date of Inspection March/April 2025

Date of Previous Inspection – March 2023

The Church H&S Inspection Report from 2023 has been updated for 2025.

Details of action areas are in the attached Inspection Report for 2023 but below is additional information for some key actions.

#### **Churchyard Trees:**

There had been a considerable concern earlier in the year regarding the safety of the churchyard trees during stormy conditions. Professional advice was sought and the advice accepted. As a result, the trees have now been trimmed back to ensure that they are safe. It should be noted that this maintenance work must be repeated about every four years and as it is a considerable cost will need to be budgeted and planned so that it is affordable and done in a timely manner.

#### **Clock and Tower Safety:**

Maintenance work has continued to the clock to bring it to a fully working condition. When the clock is running it must be wound at least every 8 days and, in the past, a small number of people have volunteered to go up into the tower on a regular basis to do this. A few years ago, the long metal ladder in the Vestry to the trapdoor (which was unsafe) was replaced by a fixed safety ladder with good back hoop fall prevention. Access to the winding mechanism is now much easier, but concerns remain. The major worry is a volunteer slipping and falling from height which could cause serious injury or death. No amount of insurance compensation or training can mitigate this concern. There is no doubt that the ladder and trapdoor can be made safer and there is a concern with the ladder installation which need to be rectified. This is an ongoing discussion.

Subsequent to this, as Health and Safety Officer, I carefully inspected the clock mechanism in the clock tower and as a result of this I issued an instruction that there must be two people in attendance when the clock is being wound so that in the event of an accident there would be someone on hand to deal with the situation. I then spoke to a local contractor and asked him to quote for increasing the stability of the platform adjacent to the clock mechanism. This is where the clock is wound. I also asked for handrails to be installed and for the access ladder to be altered. I also made it clear that when the person is going up the tower to wind the clock, once at the top of the access ladder the trap door must be closed shut whilst there is anyone in the clock tower.

#### **Flagpole and access to roof area.**

When the new flag pole was installed, it was not installed correctly in that it had been connected to the existing structure holding the weather vane and in my view there was a possibility that in a strong wind the force transferred to the structure might be excessive and could cause damage not only to the structure holding the weather vane and flag pole, but also to the parapet wall of the building. The access from the top of the existing aluminium

ladder in the Vestry up to the roof is difficult and dangerous. I have therefore issued an instruction that no one is to get access to the roof until it is decided how to provide acceptable and safe access. In addition to this we must not fly any flags from the new aluminium pole until it has been approved.

### **The Priests Chair and Platform:**

Over the last year the priests chair has become more unstable and has received comment from celebrants. This has been investigated and the platform beneath the chair was found to be rotting, meaning that support for the chair had become unstable. A temporary repair has been done, but the whole structure needs to be dismantled and remade. At the same time the observed trip hazard from the microphone leads can be resolved by moving the sockets to the side position. This platform and the trip hazard has been an outstanding action for a number of years.

### **Safeguarding:**

Many members of the PCC have done basic safeguarding training during the year either online or by attending a session in the Church Centre. Wardens and other key members have been trained to a higher level. However there are a number of new PCC and church members who are volunteering for children facing tasks who will need training and potentially an enhanced DBS check. This needs to be actioned quickly.

### **Documentation:**

The Church Health and Safety Manual dating from August 2018 is out of date and needs revision. This is a large task as the Manual is some 50 pages long. Some of the new concerns in the annual Inspection Report will also need to be added and any new legislation considered.

### **Asbestos:**

It is thought that the boiler house roof contains asbestos (which may be of the white variety). This is clearly a major health risk, although if the roof is not disturbed the risk is much lower. This will need to be addressed and, as seems likely, a professional company will have to be brought in to remove the material and clean up the area. This will be expensive.

### **Gravestones:**

Many of the gravestones in the graveyard are leaning and it is important to conduct a wobble test to establish if any may topple. This is clearly a risk to members of the public or gardeners, and any gravestone found to be unstable should be repaired or laid down.

### **Gully Around the Church:**

There is a deep gully around the church which is a potential danger. There are warning signs but many of these have fallen down or disappeared. The warning signs need to be replaced to clearly identify the danger.

**Richard J Purdom**

**Health and Safety Officer**

**April 2025**

## **Health & Safety Inspection Report for St John's Church Old Sodbury**

Date of Inspection: March 2025

Inspection undertaken by: Richard J Purdom

Date of Previous Inspection: April 2024

List of improvements / actions to be completed from previous inspection and with progress made to date:

No	IMPROVEMENT / ACTION	PROGRESS MADE	STATUS
1/2	Confirm that the organ maintenance contractor has completed a risk assessment and has his own insurance.	Contact is being made with an organ maintenance contractor	COMPLETE
1/3	Fire Extinguisher inspection and training to be conducted annually	Training last done June 2018. New training required for current people. Extinguishers checked and up to date 21st March 2023	COMPLETE
1/4	Elimination of trip / step risk around priests desk (extension of flooring and improve positioning of power and microphone cables)	Temporary work done to stabilise the priests chair, but the trip hazard of microphone wires remains and the access to the dais is poor. Microphone sockets should be moved to remove the trip potential.	ONGOING
1/5	Arrange for the clock and weight system to be checked and maintained.	Repair of the clock and establishing a maintenance plan is in hand. Consideration is being given to an electric winder.	COMPLETE
1/6	Repair the Sound System cabinet lock	The cabinet lock is yet to be repaired. This is in hand	OUTSTANDING
1/7	Explore whether the process of maintaining the organ can be improved	New improved arrangements now put in place with organ maintainer. Reported as complete but the details were not known for the inspection.	COMPLETE
1/8	Pointing should be examined on the external churchyard wall at the entrance and towards the corner by Church Lane.	Previous work needs to be re-inspected	COMPLETE
1/9	Explore the possibility of improving the dampness on the south wall of the kitchen	In progress. The dampness appears to be due to blocked guttering.	GUTTER UNBLOCKED
2/0	Update the H&S Manual to reflect the removal of one of the fire extinguishers as a result of the annual fire inspection.	The H&S Manual dates from August 2018 and requires a substantial update. Further inspection of Fire Extinguishers may be required (from the Fire Brigade?)	OUTSTANDING
2/1	Arrange for the annual PAT testing and establish a listing of all electrical items.	PAT testing was last done in 2019 and needs re-doing. It was done in March 2023	COMPLETE

2/2	Explore the possibility of improving the dampness on the south wall of the vestry in the same way as recently undertaken in the toilet.	Pointing work to the tower recently done is crumbling and needs to be replaced. It seems that materials may have been substandard. A re-work is in hand.	COMPLETE
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List of improvements / actions to be completed as a result of latest inspection

No	IMPROVEMENT / ACTION		
5/1	A lock is required on the cleaning supplies cupboard in the kitchen	Cleaning chemicals need to be kept in a locked cupboard.	NEW TASK
5/2	Kettles should not be kept in the under sink cupboard as the drain may leak. It is not a very hygienic area.	The kettles should be stored in a hygienic way away from the under sink cupboard.	COMPLETE
5/3	General update of the H&S Manual	The H&S Manual dates from August 2018 and requires a substantial update.	NEW TASK
5/3	The H&S arrangements for the clock tower are under active discussion relating to the new ladder and trapdoor to the first level. Access to the tower is required once a week to wind the clock. Procedures and training are required.	General agreement is needed on the level of risk and necessary procedures to mitigate this. Restricting access may be required.	COMPLETE
5/4	A wobble test of all the gravestones is required.	Any gravestone found to be unstable should be repaired or laid down.	NEW TASK
5/5	Warning signs adjacent to the gully around the church are missing	Warning signs need to be replaced to ensure it is clear that there is a danger here.	NEW TASK

Date of Next Inspection: March 2026