

REVISED 10th November 2020

COVID-19 EMERGENCY

In the Diocese of Blackburn

Notification of Faculty Petitions in relation to Churches and Churchyards

Directions by the Chancellor

Introduction

Everyone is aware of the lockdown restrictions imposed by Government as from 5th November 2020 as a result of the continuing health emergency. These include Places of Worship being closed for regular services, and only available for private prayer, and also closed for marriages and baptisms. Few individuals are likely to enter the church building or have an opportunity to see any notices displayed. People, save for specific exceptions, are required to remain at home, and only allowed outside for limited purposes. Further restrictions are imposed when illness is suspected.

It is consequently impossible to comply with the directions in Rule 6 of the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2015 relating to **the display of Public Notices in connection with petitions for faculties**.

In summary, these directions usually involve details of the proposed work being notified for a period of 28 days on notice-boards inside and outside parish churches, (or in some other prominent position). Additional requirements are imposed in relation to other churches (those that are not parish churches).

The Notices alert Parishioners or other interested parties to what the PCC wants to do in the church or churchyard, by way of alterations or repairs, and gives an opportunity for comments and objections to be raised.

It is an important part of the whole process of obtaining permission. It will be largely ineffective where entry into the church building is so restricted.

I have **power under Rule 6.7 to dispense with the giving of the usual Public Notice**, where factors arise (such as this health emergency), and to give different directions, where it is expedient to do so.

In exercise of that power **I THEREFORE ORDER (until 3rd December 2020 or the end of any extension of that period)**, that in respect of any petition where 'normal' Public Notice has **not** already been started before the relevant church was closed, or in relation to any application which will go before the Diocesan Advisory Committee at its meeting in November 2020 or thereafter

- 1) The usual requirements for **Public Notices** (as summarised above) are **hereby dispensed with**
- 2) Petitioners should instead **give Notice by** in the following **TWO Ways** :
 - A) Putting *details of the proposed work** in any form of **newsletter or information leaflet**, whether electronic or hard copy, being used to communicate generally with parishioners and other members of the church, **and** on the parish website, if there is one.
(*'Details of the proposed work' means such information that anyone without access to plans or specifications or other sources, can gain a good idea of the main heads of what is proposed eg removal of two front pews in nave, relocation of font to north arch of chancel, re-decoration of vestry, and so on)

- B) By using the church's external notice boards**, so far as possible, to inform **parishioners and members of the local community generally**, if they are able to accommodate documents safe from the effects of weather, and if their location is such that there is likely to be a reasonable number of people who will see and read the contents
- 3) **The Notice must include** details of where **further information** can be obtained in respect of applications started by providing an email address to which requests for sight of documents can be addressed. For applications commenced on or after 1st April 2020, information can also be viewed on the following website: <https://facultyonline.churchofengland.org/public-notices>
 - 4) **Any paper Notice should be exhibited for 28 days**
 - 5) **The Notice must state the address to which any comments or objections are to be sent, and the date 28 days after first publication of the Notice, by which that is to be done**
 - 6) **At the end of the 28 day period, the petitioners must prepare and supply to the Registrar, a Certificate of Publication, in the same form as that contained in Form 4A of the Rules, setting out details of what steps have been taken to comply with the above Directions, and give details of any responses received**
 - 7) **TAKE NOTE** that it is open to the Registrar or Chancellor to direct additional efforts are to be taken in any case to publicise the proposals where that is thought necessary.

John W. Bullimore
Chancellor
10 November 2020