



The Church of Scotland  
Mission and Discipleship Council



# Better Lighting for Churches

An information leaflet from the  
Committee on Church Art and Architecture (CARTA) of the Church of Scotland

January 2013

## Why change?

Your church will have electric lighting. So why do you want to change what you have? You may think that the answer is obvious, but further thought probably will see several other reasons emerge. Your motives may derive from issues such as on the list below:

- The present fittings are obsolete / lamps and replacement fittings are no longer available
- Running costs are high
- Rewiring is needed in the building
- Fittings cannot be serviced safely without the expense of employing a contractor
- Light fittings do not produce sufficient light
- You are unable to change light needs or levels
- Some floor areas are dimly lit
- Conduit and surface mounted apparatus needs to be hidden
- Fittings simply look past their best
- Emergency lighting needs upgrading
- You are carrying out alterations and adding lighting changes seems appropriate
- The exterior of the building is dark and unwelcoming
- The car park extension is unlit
- Paths are badly lit
- Can consideration be given to alternative energy sources and energy efficiency
- Your worship would benefit from better lighting

The list can go on and no doubt you could add your building's quirks to it, but producing a list like that above gives the opportunity to air issues that might not have been your primary motive, but which might be done at the same time.

The last bullet point is what we suggest should be your primary motive; the others being a means to achieve that.

*Could better lighting add to your worship experience?*

Having looked at the issues with what you already have and identified roughly what you would like to improve or add, how can you explore what might be possible and at what cost?

## What do you want the system to do?

You need to decide firstly as best as you can what you want any new system to do for you. Any consultant or contractor will expect you to have given this some thought before approaching them to design and install a system for you.

Are external areas to be included?

Which internal apartments are to be included?

Do you envisage any special lighting – perhaps to stained glass or to building features?

Do you have particular activities in the rooms concerned that will require special attention?

Do you wish to retain existing lighting features?

How would you wish to control lighting – connected to audio visual systems perhaps?

How much are you intending to spend?

## Advice

At this stage note that you may choose to engage any of those in the glossary below to help get your scheme going or to carry it out for you:

### Architect

A professional consultant generally with all round experience of designing buildings and administering their construction. An architect may have specialist expertise in lighting design, but this should be confirmed.

### Surveyor

Covers a range of professionals. Building surveyors can do much the same as architects, but tend to be more technically experienced. Again, check on expertise.

### Lighting designer/consultant

These are specialists in the lighting field who design (and administer if required) lighting schemes. Generally are independent of manufacturers or contractors.

### Lighting contractors

Generally electrical contractor companies with experience in lighting installations. Some may have design expertise.

### Lighting suppliers

Manufacturers of lighting fittings and equipment, some of whom may offer a design service and / or an installation service.

If you are unsure of your lumens or your footcandles from your decibels then engage a professional to guide you. That route is more likely to be successful.

There are various avenues to follow for advice and various ways to execute the project. Consider the list below:

- Ask CARTA for advice and a visit. CARTA has examples of work done in other churches, names of consultants who will give advice on initial schemes at a small charge as well as general advice on church building changes.
- Ask around to find other churches or like buildings that have new lighting schemes and visit them. Ask how things were planned and executed, if the scheme does the job (or better) and how much it cost. Ask about contractors and how well they performed. Will the schemes you see suit your needs?
- Enlist the advice of a CARTA recommended lighting consultant to give initial advice.
- Enlist the advice of a lighting consultant directly.
- Follow advice from an architect if one is engaged on other work for you or engage an architect/building surveyor.
- Go directly to a contractor/supplier.
- Ask your presbytery for advice and to determine how to gain church approval for your project.
- Check your local authority for Building Control requirements.

Consider what you find by doing this and from there decide how you will proceed and how the project will be managed. For this you should draw up a more detailed account of your requirements. If you have engaged a consultant then they will help do this with you, but if not your list should include information on:

- Where the building is
- Who is the client
- What roughly is to be done
- Who is your responsible nominated person (note that this is important in respect of Health and Safety legislation)
- What is the work to be done and what is it to achieve
- The budget available
- When replies are to be sent back and to whom to send them
- What information (plans etc) you have on your property

## Choosing a supplier/contractor

If you are using a consultant then recommendations will be made by them. You can add to their list if you wish.

If not then look for advertisements in trade magazines or in Life and Work. Ask the supplier/contractor if they have carried out work in your area, ideally in another local church. Visit those premises and speak to the person who commissioned the system. Are they happy with it? Did it cost more than they were quoted? Does it do the job?

Most suppliers/contractors will do a technical survey of your premises at a cost. This cost is usually refundable against the purchase of a system from them but beware of technical sales people. Make sure that a thorough survey is done to avoid reasons for additional costs that should have been included and seen at time of a survey.

If proceeding in this way, ask for reports on proposals and subsequent tenders for work to be written in plain English – remember you are setting them a system specification. It is up to them to show you how what they are proposing meets your needs.

Make sure that everything is included in tender costs. This includes Health and Safety issues, Insurance of the building, Building Control (if applicable) visits, protection for building users, all necessary certification (including electrical and Building Control), details of costs and of how any unforeseen costs are to be priced. How the money is to be paid, sanitary and other arrangements for workers, reinstatement of the building fabric as well as a full specification of the work, materials and fittings/equipment. Costs should allow for commissioning and manuals.

## Contract

Like any other technical work there should be a contract that will lay out in detail what the contractor is to supply and to do. Your consultant will advise on the contract.

If you do not have a consultant then check that the document contains the following:

- The form of contract should be set down in the document
- The contract should show the agreed cost and, if the contractor is to supply and fit the equipment, of if they will use sub-contractors
- Ideally the supplier will supply, fit and install all the equipment and vitally important, demonstrate to you that it is working to the specification you agreed
- The items mentioned above against tenders should be set out in detail in the contract document. Details and precise specification are important
- There should be a guarantee period but unlike domestic guarantees this may mean returning the defective component to the supplier. This could mean that parts of your system are out of action for a number of weeks. Agree a maintenance service agreement which suits your needs and which provides replacement equipment while yours is being repaired.

As with all electrical contractors ensure that who you intend to employ is fit and competent to undertake the work and that they are fully insured for third party risks and have indemnity insurance.

## Further information

Ask the General Trustees [gentrustees@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:gentrustees@cofscotland.org.uk). More information, and other guides in this series, can also be found on the Resourcing Mission website at [www.resourcingmission.org.uk/carta/about](http://www.resourcingmission.org.uk/carta/about).

Use an internet search engine to search for headings such as 'lighting consultants', 'church lighting', etc.

Comments and suggestion for inclusion in any revision of this pamphlet are welcomed.

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