

URC Wales Trustee Guidance

Details of issues specific to the URC in Wales, as a supplement to the general guidance for trustees from the Charity Commission

Building Work

Control of works to listed buildings has returned to secular authorities. But please contact the Property Officer at an early stage to discuss proposals to buildings, listed or otherwise. Certain policies and procedures apply when: a building is listed or in a conservation area; expenditure is greater than £100,000; another group wishes to use the premises; another church fellowship wishes to enter into a sharing agreement; a property is bought or sold; a grant is needed.

Charitable Status

Holding charitable status requires compliance in several areas, such as financial reporting, investments, and the disposal and lease of land. But benefits include Gift Aid and no Land Transaction Duty on the purchase of residential property.

Please note that the URC (Wales) Trust is a registered charity, but most individual churches are not. If a church's income is below £100,000, the church will hold excepted status. If asked for proof of charitable status, please do not quote the Trust's number. We can provide a letter confirming the church's charitable status for banks, grant-making organisations etc.

Health and Safety

Your Church Secretary holds a folder which covers health and safety, food hygiene, and fire risk assessment. In addition, Elders are the duty holders under the Control of Asbestos at Work, which requires regular review.

Insurance

Remember to read your policy so that you understand what is – and isn't – covered, and what your duty of disclosure means. Ensure that the cover includes public liability, employer liability, all buildings and land, contents, and any church-owned vehicles.

Internal Governance

Compliance is required with the URC Acts and with any Synod policies or procedures.

Land Registry

Your Church Secretary should have a copy of the Land Registry title plan for all church property. Title deeds are held securely in the Synod Office.

Legal Duties

These will depend on your church's circumstances, but all churches will need to comply with requirements concerning health and safety, safeguarding, and non-discrimination. Other issues include asbestos, Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales for playgroups / nurseries, copyright, food safety and hygiene, Japanese knotweed, public entertainment licences, registration for same sex marriage.

Please note that only the URC (Wales) Trust can enter into a legal agreement on behalf of a church, such as in the case of a lease, tenancy agreement, disposal or purchase, contract, sharing agreement, deed of trust or legal charge. Such agreements are authorised through the Finance and Property Board meeting jointly with the Trust Company.

Manse Management

Each manse should have a folder containing important information, such as any restrictive covenants or agreements affecting the property. It should also contain a copy of the boiler service agreement and details of who to call in an emergency. Manses should be routinely inspected and a checklist is provided to aid this process.