

# Rainwater Goods

## What Can Go Wrong?

Clean and well-maintained rainwater goods (gutters, downpipes etc.) are vital in protecting a church against damp. If gutters are full with debris such as leaves from trees then rainwater runoff cannot flow through them and drain away. If the fittings are not adequate the downpipes may leak or the gutters may split. If the rainwater goods fail, they will flood onto your walls, excessive water on your walls will lead to damp regardless of the quality of your wall, there will also be the growth of plaster mould which can harm those who use the church. Externally the masonry joints that hold the wall together could erode which weakens the wall structure, as well as the growth of algae which restricts the 'breathability' of the wall. In short, a number of problems can arise from faulty rainwater goods.

A **damp** building is a **cold** building; therefore, it is imperative we avoid your rainwater goods arriving at a state where they are **harming** the building, rather than **protecting** it.

## How Should They Be Maintained?

Poor maintenance and detailing are the main reasons for the failure of rainwater goods. To maintain them, they need to be clear of debris such as leaves twice a year minimum by an appropriate contractor, they need to be checked every month by an appropriate fabric officer to make sure they don't need to be more regularly cleared. For the detailing, which includes the joints and fittings of the downpipes and gutters, an appropriate contractor should check for leaks, corrosion or splits in the rainwater goods twice a year. An appropriate contractor can repair small breaks easily using safe welding techniques, but this is only possible with regular maintenance!

On a more long-term basis, redecoration of the rainwater goods can stave off corrosion, this is to be done every seven years by an appropriate contractor. Corrosion can accelerate the degradation of rainwater goods and lead to costlier and more invasive repairs.

The **maintenance** of your building is a **List A item**, as are **minor repairs** as long as **historic fabric** is **not** affected.

The **re-decoration** of your rainwater goods is a **List B item**.

## **What if Repair is the Only Option?**

If your rainwater goods are at a stage where scheduled maintenance cannot save them, then it is important that the repair is sympathetic to the building and materials.

This means that when repairing rainwater goods, the repair must be using like for like materials. For example it is inappropriate to replace a cast iron pipe with a PVCu one, as this erodes the historical character of the building and can have an effect on wider conservation areas.

There is however one example where using a different material may be appropriate, this is when access for redecoration may prove highly difficult in the future, so it may be appropriate to replace a traditional material with painted cast aluminium, to alleviate problems with cyclical maintenance of a hard to reach area.

Replacing **like for like** historic material during a repair is a **List B item**.

If you are planning on replacing **historic** material with a **different** material during repair, this will require a **full Faculty application**.