

Scrap Chancel Repair Liability

We are seeking the abolition of an ancient ecclesiastical law which leaves landowners in England and Wales, including domestic landowners, liable for repairs to their local Anglican church.

What's the problem?

Chancel Repair Liability (CRL), dates back to the time of Henry VIII and gives some churches the right to demand from some local property owners financial contributions towards repairs to its chancel.

The liability is due whether or not the landowners are Anglicans, and applies even if they are not (and have never been) Christians.

The Church is able to demand, in some cases, payment for the full cost of repairs. For such ancient churches, this can be very substantial indeed, sometimes running into hundreds of thousands of pounds. Though unwilling to press these claims, the presence of the liability on land blights properties and requires owners to take out insurance against the risk of the Church changing its mind and claiming the money.

As long ago as 1985, the Law Commission described the impact of CRL as "wholly capricious", and considered "that this relic of the past is ... no longer acceptable".

Its report concluded: "It is hard today to see any justification for this imposition".

Both the Law Commission and, more recently, the Law Society, have therefore recommended that the only equitable solution is for CRL to be phased out.

Despite all this, abolition has not taken place.

What are we doing?

- The NSS has highlighted the gross inequity of CRL to the Government at ministerial level, but it is clear that the Government is not prepared to initiate any abolition of CRL, unless requested to do so by the Church.
- The NSS is continuing to campaign energetically for abolition of this deeply unfair and anachronistic liability. Nevertheless, recognising that this may have to be a medium-term goal, it is also seeking to broker solutions which in the meantime mitigate the most inequitable impositions of CRL. This work has been undertaken by conversations, meetings and correspondence with the relevant government Minister and head of civil law at the Ministry of Justice, as well as a number of MPs and parliamentarians, specialist lawyers and other interested parties.

What you can do:

Write to your MP

Ask your MP to scrap Chancel Repair Liability

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