

CHURCHES AS CHARITIES – Update November 2020 *REGISTRATION EXTENSION*

The regulations that grant charitable status to churches without the need for churches to register with the Charity Commission as charities were due to end on 31st March 2021, by which date all churches with an annual income above £5,000 per annum would have had to register. However, the Charity Commission are not in a position to cope with that timetable and the DCMS (the Government Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport – which has responsibility for charities) have just issued this notification which we pass onto you.

“We have carefully reflected on all the feedback we received. DCMS intends to extend the Regulations by 10 years to give excepted charities time to prepare for registration and to allow the Charity Commission as much time as possible to register all excepted organisations in a coordinated way.

DCMS and the Charity Commission are working on a plan to phase more organisations onto the register in a manageable way over the extension period and we will share further details in early 2021.

Extending the Regulations beyond 31 March 2021 requires Parliamentary approval, through Secondary Legislation. We intend to lay the necessary Statutory Instrument in early 2021.”

We cannot advise you at this stage what the expression “*working on a plan to phase more organisations onto the register in a manageable way*” actually means. It probably means reducing the upper income limit at which churches are compelled to register from £100,000 per annum down to £5,000 per annum over the next 10 years on a phased basis, but we await further information from the Government on that point.

As soon as we know anything further, we will inform you, but it will not be until sometime “in early 2021”. Certainly, what we do know is that the Charities (Exception from Registration) Regulations are being extended for another 10 years but with a plan to phase in registration for all churches with an annual income above £5,000 per annum over that period.

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