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Client Checklist for Photographic Commissions

Crucial to a successful photographic shoot are prior knowledge of what to expect on location and permission for flexible access. Commissioning parties can do much to help the photographer by providing information relevant to the brief, and by communicating with their client in order to ensure that the photographer is fully supported on site.

Permission: The commissioning party should ensure that I have permission to access and photograph the building or property. The reason for taking the photographs should be fully explained to a senior decision-maker (building owner, facilities manager, communications director, etc.). It should be mentioned that multiple visits may be required (usually with only 24 hours notice) and that each shot will typically take an hour to set up. If people are to be included in the shots, further permission may be required.

Contact Details: I prefer to make arrangements for the timing of the shoot directly with the person in charge of the building. Full contact details for this person, and advance warning that I will be getting in touch, are required.

Stakeholders: The cooperation of the people in charge of the building is vital (I may have to ask to move furniture, switch lights on and off, open or close windows and blinds, ask for cars to be moved, etc.). Therefore, it is best if the people I encounter on site are stakeholders in the photographs. Ideally, the owners of the building should be joint-commissioning parties from the outset (see below).

Location: Please provide location details for the building: full postal address (including post code) and an A4 location plan in the case of new sites that have not yet been mapped.

Plans and Photos: It is often possible to agree a shot list in an office-based meeting with reference to plans and progress snap shots. A4 plans (with North clearly marked) and A4 contact sheets should be supplied at the meeting.

Site Visit: Site visits are the least ambiguous way of agreeing a shot list. They allow us to compare options and to see opportunities and constraints first hand. An A4 plan (with North marked) for each floor of the building should be supplied at any site visit.

Joint Commissions: Joint commissions are a very effective way of spreading the cost of photographs between several parties (owners, architects, developers, consultants, etc.). Joint commissions must be agreed in advance. A surcharge (typically 25%, though this can vary) is applied before the split of costs.