

# **Faith in Maintenance**

## **First year Evaluation Report**

Prepared for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings by

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## Introduction

This is the first of four annual external evaluation reports which contribute to the overall review and evaluation of the Faith in Maintenance (FiM) Project. The project is managed by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and will run from April 2007 – December 2011. The external evaluation reports are produced by Oakmere Consulting and complement the annual reports produced by the project team. This first report covers the period March 2007 – March 2008.

The external evaluator's role is to provide external scrutiny, validation, and evaluation against the aims of the project, and make recommendations for development and future action.

The report is structured as follows:

- ❖ Faith in Maintenance Project aims
- ❖ Project activities
- ❖ Evaluation Methodology
- ❖ Data
- ❖ Key findings: Pre course
- ❖ Key findings: Post course
- ❖ Summary
- ❖ Recommendations

## Faith in Maintenance Project Aims

The external evaluation of Faith in Maintenance seeks to assess the achievements of the Faith in Maintenance project against its aims and targets. These are:

- ❖ Project aim 1: Deliver a maintenance training course appropriate to the needs of volunteers who care for historic buildings used as places of worship in England and Wales;
- ❖ Project aim 2: Devise an effective support system in order to provide readily and freely accessible information across the range of media to assist volunteers in the care of the fabric of places of worship and their contents;
- ❖ Project aim 3: Reach as many and as diverse a range of volunteers as possible;

- ❖ Project aim 4: Raise awareness generally of the need for places of worship to receive regular and basic routine maintenance in order to save historic fabric and money;
- ❖ Project aim 5: Encourage greater understanding of the history and interest of historic places of worship and their importance and value to the sense of national identity and to their local and wider communities;
- ❖ Project aim 6: Enhance the skills expertise and personal development of volunteers and thereby to increase their interest and enjoyment of their duties and tasks and improve the quality of their volunteering experience; and
- ❖ Project aim 7: Promote the philosophy espoused by the Society for the Protection of Ancient buildings with its emphasis on daily care conservative repair and the use of traditional materials.

## Project Activities

The Faith in Maintenance project involves a number of activities:

- the delivery of a standard **one day training course** aimed at volunteers who maintain places of worship. Attendance at the course is free of charge;
- the production of a **Faith in Maintenance Handbook** which includes advice and tips on maintaining historic buildings which is provided to course attendees;
- a **maintenance calendar** provided to course attendees;
- a **web site**;
- a telephone **advice help-line** for one to one support.

In the second and subsequent years of the project, special events to introduce young people to maintenance issues in historic buildings are planned.

The focus of evaluation in year one has been the one day training course. Course content seeks to address practical issues of how to identify and carry out maintenance in historic buildings, safe working practices and how to maintain records. It also includes sessions on traditional building materials, construction techniques and the significance of places of worship in and for local communities. Courses are offered at places of worship and organised in liaison with local faith groups.

# Evaluation Methodology

Project external evaluation is carried out by analysis of data gathered by the FiM team through the booking process and pre and post- course questionnaires. A pre-course questionnaire is completed by participants at the beginning of the training day. It gathers data on confidence levels, attitudes, current maintenance practice, and expectations of the training event. The post-course questionnaire is completed by participants at the conclusion of the training day and records levels of confidence, skills and understanding of maintenance, attitudes and future intentions. Both questionnaires use a combination of structured and unstructured questions generating quantitative and qualitative data.

For the second year's evaluation telephone interviews will be undertaken with samples of course participants and other stakeholders, such as clergy and Diocesan Advisory Committee Secretaries. These interviews will explore the longer term impact of the training day on participants and on maintenance of places of worship. The outcomes of this work will be combined with site visits to inform case studies of practice and will be included in future evaluation reports.

## Data

From March 2007 – March 2008, 18 training courses, involving 660 participants were delivered in England and Wales. Evaluation tools and approaches were piloted and feedback gathered resulting in robust data gathering instruments being in place for the latter courses. The sample data which informs this report came from the last three courses offered in October and November 2007 in Kendal (24 participants), Chester-le-Street (27 participants) and Braintree (11 participants) – a total of 62 participants. This data is supplemented by informal feedback from 3 other training courses in Ipswich (55 participants); Betws-y-Coed (46 participants) and Croydon (46 participants) and by participant observation of the course in Ipswich. Quotations in the report are taken from the questionnaires and course observation and are used to illustrate participants' views.

## Key Findings: Pre-Course

### Participant expectations

The expectations participants had of the course can be grouped into the following broad headings:

Increased knowledge and understanding of maintenance	28 people (61%)
Advice and tips	7 people (11%)
Confirmation of existing practice	4 people (11%)
Increased understanding of legal or other requirements	

(eg from English Heritage).  
Increased confidence

7 people (11%)  
6 people (6%)

Participants generally view their place of worship as more than just a building, recognising its role within a particular faith and also its place in the history and culture of a community. Understanding more about the wider significance of places of worship was a motivator for some participants to attend the course:

“I want to get more skills and knowledge about what maintenance we should do but also more awareness and interest in the building and what is special or unusual about it” *Ipswich June 2007*

It was apparent from course feedback that participants take their volunteering role seriously and want to do their best for their place of worship. However, it was also apparent that volunteers derived significant personal satisfaction from their role and saw attendance at the course as a way of enhancing personal development:

“(I want to get) basic hints and tips to promote confidence and suggest learning activities for further personal development” *Chester-le-Street October 2007*

### **Participants’ confidence**

The course was designed to build confidence and awareness in participants. To evaluate this aspect, participants were asked to assess their confidence across the following four specific domains before and after attendance:

- ❖ identifying maintenance issues;
- ❖ taking action on maintenance problems;
- ❖ seeking professional advice; and
- ❖ assessing health and safety risks.

Analysis of responses shows that participants joined the course with high levels of general confidence: 19% of participants were very confident; 60% quite confident with only 21% not feeling confident.

While general confidence was high, there was some small variability across the four domains with participants feeling least confident in health and safety and taking action on maintenance problems and most confident in identifying maintenance and seeking professional advice (see Charts 1 – 4, page 9).

## Perceptions of the value of maintenance

When they joined the course, all 62 participants felt that maintenance of places of worship was either 'very' or 'quite important'. This is not surprising given that participants were self-selected attendees already involved in maintenance as church wardens or carrying out related volunteer activities.

## Types of maintenance tasks carried out by participants

68% (42 people) said that they currently carried out maintenance in places of worship. The wide range of maintenance tasks that participants carried out are listed below:

Maintenance tasks carried out by volunteers	Number of times mentioned	% of mentions
Cleaning gutters, gulleys and down pipes	16	13%
Monitoring and inspection of the building and grounds	14	12%
Changing light bulbs	12	10%
All aspects of maintenance	11	9%
Painting and decorating	10	8%
Organising repair and maintenance	9	8%
Minor repairs	8	7%
Cleaning	7	6%
Grounds maintenance	7	6%
Heating maintenance	4	3%
Clearing drains	4	3%
Repairing roofs	4	3%
Minor electric work	3	3%
Plasterwork repair	2	2%
Weeding	2	2%
Pest control	2	2%
Paving repair	1	1%
Cleaning sinks	1	1%
Removing birds nests	1	1%
Window repair	1	1%

Individual participants carried out a wide range of tasks and the following was a typical response:

“Cleaning out gutters, repointing as needed, keep air bricks clear, repainting where required, checkout roof slates, check out roof space, regular check on electrics (reduce fire risk), check out timber roof ties (internal)” *Braintree November 2007*

Some participants were 'experts' themselves, being retired builders or surveyors but more typical was the volunteer as 'jack of all trades':

"Gutters, lights - you name it, I sort it" *Kendal October 2007*

## Keeping Records

37 of the 42 participants who carried out maintenance, kept a written record of their activities in a log book or similar form. Others said that maintenance was recorded in Parochial Church Council minutes or monthly reports to the Diocesan Church Council. Activities regarded as low level or routine such as changing light bulbs and cleaning were not recorded.

## Key Findings: Post-Course

### Perceptions of the course

All 62 participants found the course either 'very useful' or 'useful'. 98% of participants said they got what they wanted from the course:

"It's been an excellent day" *Kendal October 2007*

### The most useful part of course

Participants were asked to identify which aspect of the course they found the most useful, and their responses generated the following list:

Most useful aspect of the course	Number of times mentioned	% of mentions
Guidance from experts	14	18%
Everything	11	14%
Visit to the church and practical fault spotting	10	13%
Learning about specific potential problems and remedies	9	11%
Presentations	6	8%
Checklist, calendar and handbook	6	8%
Session on use of lime	5	6%
Learning from each others' problems and solutions	4	5%
Finding out how to get further advice	3	4%
The combination of theory and practice	3	4%
Health and safety tips	2	3%
Information on grants	2	3%

Advice on how to carry out systematic inspection	2	3%
Guidance on how to create records using log book and photos	1	1%
Cleaning tips	1	1%

Participants valued the opportunity to learn from experts and also from each other. Networking time is built into the course programme and this is a welcomed opportunity to share experiences:

“There was a good cross-fertilisation of ideas with other people”  
*Kendal October 2007*

The hands-on, practical activities were particularly enjoyed by participants:

“Moving from the theory of what to look for when inspecting your building, into practical application. Having experts on hand as we carried out the practical session taught us more and reassured us that we were noticing the right thing” *Chester-le-Street October 2007*

The course handbook, checklists and calendar were all well regarded and participants anticipated using them in the future:

“The Faith in Maintenance handbook will prove invaluable” *Kendal October 2007*

There was some evidence that in making decisions about maintenance, participants could be overly focused on taking the correct action for the building without being aware of competing considerations. For example, while clearing outside bushes and trees may be to the benefit of the building, these could have a negative effect on the aesthetics of the building as well as the wild life in the grounds.

## **Keeping records**

Where there was pre-existing practice of keeping records, these were predominantly written. The course places particular emphasis on the importance of record keeping and at the end of the course 93% of participants said they would make more use of a log book and a few participants were planning to use a camera to make visual records of maintenance problems and solutions. Using a range of recording methods is likely to improve the quality and usefulness of records and this is an area which could be covered in more detail both during the course and in guidance on the web site.



## Changes in participants' confidence

Overall, 73% of participants said they felt more confident by the end of the course. Participants who self-identified before the course as not feeling confident in the three domains of identifying maintenance issues, taking action on maintenance problems, and seeking professional advice all noted that they were more confident following the course. However, of the 19 people who did not feel confident in assessing health and safety risks before the course, 16 felt more confident after the course but 3 felt about the same.

Chart 1: Identifying maintenance issues

Number of responses	How confident do you feel in identifying maintenance issues or problems in your building?					
	Pre course			Post course		
	Very confident	Quite confident	Not confident	More confident	Less confident	About the same
62	8	46	8	52	0	10
	13%	74%	13%	84%	0%	16%

Chart 2: Taking action on maintenance problems

Number of responses	How confident do you feel in knowing what to do about maintenance problems when you find them?					
	Pre course			Post course		
	Very confident	Quite confident	Not confident	More confident	Less confident	About the same
61	4	40	17	47	0	14
	6%	66%	28%	77%	0%	23%

Chart 3: Seeking professional advice

Number of responses	How confident do you feel in seeking advice from architects or building surveyors?					
	Pre course			Post course		
	Very confident	Quite confident	Not confident	More confident	Less confident	About the same
62	25	28	9	40	1	21
	40%	45%	15%	65%	2%	34%

Chart 4: Assessing health and safety risks

Number of responses	How confident do you feel in assessing health and safety risks?					
	Pre course			Post course		
	Very confident	Quite confident	Not confident	More confident	Less confident	About the same
62	9	34	19	43	0	19
	15%	55%	31%	69%	0%	31%

### Participant intentions after attending the course

Participants were asked to respond to a number of statements about their learning, and likely behaviours following the course. Asked whether they had learned something that they would definitely use in maintaining their place of worship, 43 people (72%) 'strongly agreed', and 17 people (28%) 'tended to agree'. It has to be acknowledged that 68% of course participants already carried out maintenance and other participants may have been attending the course to increase their general understanding of maintenance rather than to put this learning into practical application.

Asked whether they knew where to get more help or guidance about maintenance after the course, 39 people (66%) 'strongly agreed' and 20 people (32%) 'tended to agree'. This topic is not dealt with in detail during the training day but is explained in the course handbook and is an area which will be followed up in telephone interviews.

Asked whether they felt more motivated to maintain their place of worship, 36 people (59%) 'strongly agreed' and 23 people (38%) 'tended to agree' but 3% (2 people) 'strongly disagreed'. Asked whether they would carry out an annual inspection of their place of worship, 41 people (68%) 'strongly agreed' and 14 people (23%) 'tended to agree' but 5 people (8%) 'strongly disagreed'. Both these two areas need further investigation to tease out the reasons for these responses and this will be followed up in the telephone interviews.

Participants were asked to identify two things they had learned on the course that they would put into practice immediately. These were:

Activities to be implemented	Number of times mentioned	% of mentions
Carry out regular close inspection	26	26%
Use log book to record maintenance	19	19%
Take action to keep the building breathing, including clearing ground from base of wall	11	11%
Clear out drains and rainwater systems	10	10%
Use the course handbook and checklist	3	3%
Communicate better with architect	3	3%
Get professional advice when needed	3	3%
Use binoculars, torch and mirrors to identify hidden problems	3	3%
Get others to attend the course	3	3%
Use lime when carrying out repairs	2	2%
Ensure they worked safely	2	2%
Cut back ivy and other vegetation	2	2%
Use a camera to record tasks	2	2%
Take immediate action after inspection	2	2%
Take quick action on minor issues	2	2%
Remove moss on roof	2	2%
Do a fire risk assessment	2	2%
Check bell tower and bell mechanism	1	1%
Put a maintenance scheme in place	1	1%
Get others to use log book	1	1%
Buy and use a metal ladder	1	1%

This list of actions suggests that participants understood the key tenets of good practice in maintaining historic buildings and were willing to put these into effect. Follow up telephone interviews will explore how far these intentions were carried out.

## Summary

For year one, evaluation has focused on course content. Subsequent evaluations will be mapped against project aims.

The high satisfaction rate suggests that the course is doing well in meeting the needs of volunteers who care for historic buildings used as places of worship in England and Wales. All the courses were fully booked and a waiting list was in place for most. Participants were complementary about the delivery of the courses, the professionalism and knowledge of course presenters and particularly enjoyed the practical site-based activities.

Course feedback suggests that course content was generally appropriate, although more time exploring the cultural and social significance of places of worship and how such significance should be part of making decisions about maintenance could be helpful.

The courses are doing well in helping participants' understand the importance of regular and basic routine maintenance, in developing their skills in identifying maintenance problems, and increasing their confidence. Participants were concerned about health and safety issues and there is some evidence that more focus on confidence-building in this area would be welcomed.

Participants defined maintenance very broadly, ranging from minor repairs and replacing light bulbs, to day to day cleaning and grounds upkeep. Individuals were responsible for carrying out many different tasks themselves. Course content may need to better reflect this wide definition. For example, given the identification of cleaning as a maintenance task, course content could give more attention to exploring the impact of inappropriate cleaning methods and materials.

In general, there was evidence that participants were diligent at keeping records of maintenance that they carried out and the majority were committed to doing so after the course. Where records were kept, these were predominantly written either in log books or through reports to meetings. Using a range of recording methods including photographs, diagrams, drawings as well as lists of materials used is likely to improve the quality and usefulness of records.

To supplement the training course, a series of support materials to assist volunteers in the care of the fabric of places of worship and their contents have been put into place. The course handbook, calendar and checklist were all rated highly by participants and the use of these materials together with the telephone help-line and web site will be the subject of further evaluation during 2008/09.

There was evidence that participants enjoyed and took pride in their volunteering role. Attendance at the course was taken seriously and seen as an opportunity to develop understanding, skills and confidence in carrying out tasks. Feedback suggests that the course was successful in increasing volunteer enjoyment of their roles and may encourage them to seek further personal development opportunities.

## Recommendations

Since church buildings mean many things to many people, course content may need to better reflect potentially conflicting views of the significance of sacred buildings to the wider community and how these views should be taken into consideration when making maintenance decisions. A session on decision

making or impact assessment could be useful. Developing 'before and after' case studies which demonstrate the decision-making process and factors which impact on it would be a useful addition to the web site.

Course planners might usefully explore how they can continue to build confidence amongst volunteers in health and safety issues.

Course planners should review course content against the list of maintenance tasks carried out by volunteers to ensure that these are adequately covered during the training day. For example, it may be helpful to explore in more detail the methods and types of materials to be used or avoided in general cleaning.

Helping volunteers to keep high quality records by using diagrams, plans, photographs, listing materials used and so on is something to build into the course content and on going support materials. Exemplars of good practice could be usefully included in course content and added to the web site.

Course planners should explore how they can reinforce volunteer interest and enthusiasm after the course. The web-site and email bulletins could be used to signpost further development opportunities.