

FAITH IN MAINTENANCE

**PROJECT
EVALUATION**

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

WHAT WAS FAITH IN MAINTENANCE?

“It was brilliant. The most effective piece of training offered to those who care for church buildings.”

Interview with Archdeacon

The Faith in Maintenance project was an initiative created by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) to provide training and resources for volunteers responsible for maintaining historic places of worship. The project ran from September 2006 to February 2012 with a budget of £863,900 funded primarily by the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage together with small grants from a variety of other sources. Longitudinal evaluation was carried out by Oakmere Solutions Ltd and a full summative report is available on the Faith in Maintenance website¹:

The project aimed to:

- 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;
- devise a support system in order to provide information across a range of media to help volunteers care for the fabric and contents of places of worship;
- reach as many and as diverse a range of volunteers as possible;
- raise awareness of the need for places of worship to receive regular, routine maintenance;
- encourage greater understanding of the history of historic places of worship and their significance to their local and wider communities;
- enhance the skills, expertise and personal development of volunteers, increasing their enjoyment and improving their volunteering experience;
- promote the philosophy of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings i.e. daily care, conservative repair and the use of traditional materials.

The project delivered a number of activities, products and services to address its aims:

- a standard one-day training course delivered in settings across England and Wales to volunteers from a variety of places of worship;
- printed resources including a Faith in Maintenance handbook (the *Good Maintenance Guide*), a maintenance calendar, and maintenance checklists;
- online resources including the project website and monthly email bulletin;
- a 60-minute Faith in Maintenance DVD;
- one-to-one professional advice via a telephone help-line.

WHAT WERE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF FAITH IN MAINTENANCE?

"I feel more confident to do my job."

Interview with Slimbridge participant

Faith in Maintenance succeeded in all its aims and delivered high quality training which was highly valued by participants. In total 150 training days were held throughout England and Wales attracting 4,585 participants, with an additional 1,160 individuals attending other events linked to the Faith in Maintenance project including 12 workshops attracting 230 young people. The project earned an excellent reputation for the quality of its training and support materials amongst participants and sector organisations.

Through their involvement in the project, participants have:

- increased understanding and confidence in inspecting and carrying out the routine maintenance of places of worship with due regard to safe working practices;
- increased motivation and skills to carry out inspection and maintain their place of worship;
- increased skills and confidence in assessing the significance of places of worship;
- enjoyed opportunities for networking with other volunteers;
- built productive relationships with decision makers in their faith organisations;
- increased the enjoyment of their volunteering.

The project has achieved positive benefits for the heritage and is exerting a long-term impact on the maintenance of places of worship. Benefits to the heritage include:

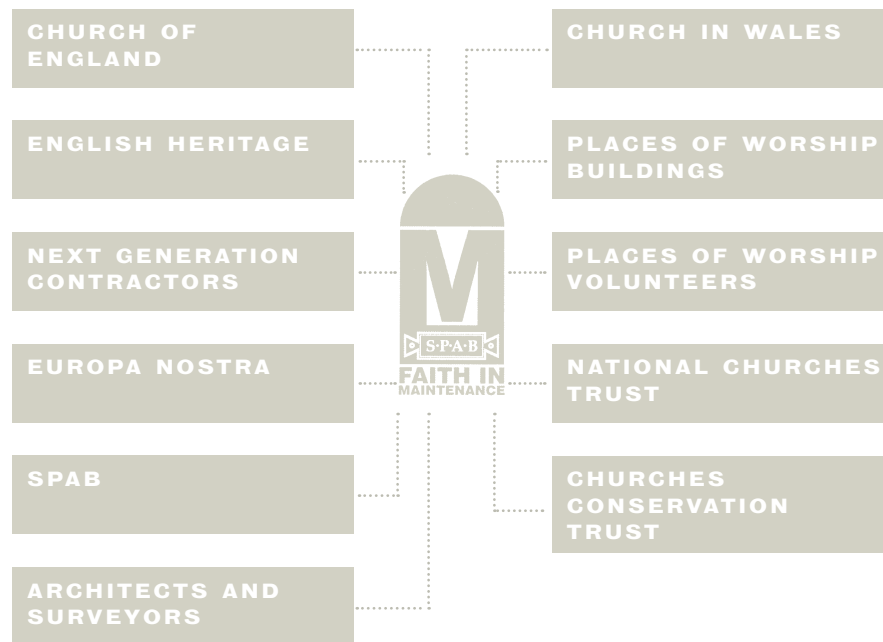
- increased awareness among faith organisations of the maintenance needs of historic buildings;
- better skilled and motivated heritage volunteers;
- increased understanding in faith organisations of how to undertake their building stewardship responsibilities;
- more systematic informal inspections and routine maintenance of places of worship;
- faith communities now have access to increased resources to support building maintenance.

“...the handbook and DVD are excellent, and the website, with its information and links to other sites is a reference point for the sector.”

Interview with English Heritage staff member

The project generated additional benefits by exerting its influence on other organisations, promoting greater awareness of good practice in maintenance.

The extent of the project's influence is illustrated below:



WHY WAS FAITH IN MAINTENANCE SUCCESSFUL?

Robust external evaluation has identified the following key success factors:

- a Steering Group made up of members from a variety of backgrounds in faith and heritage organisations. This provided guidance but also challenged the project team and ensured there was support for the project in a wide range of organisations;
- a training model that engaged and enthused participants. The day consisted of a blend of illustrated expert inputs and opportunities for small group activities enabling participants to put what they had learned into practice by being 'building detectives'. Participants valued having a well-planned educational experience that was expertly delivered as well as having the opportunity to work with and learn from each other. The delivery approach succeeded in being reassuring – demystifying maintenance and engendering a confidence-inspiring 'can do' attitude in participants;

“It was easy to listen to and understand. A very well constructed course.”

Post-course questionnaire from participant

- good leadership and efficient administration which quickly built a good reputation for the project. The Project Director's expertise and background in historic buildings together with excellent facilitation and networking skills built trust and promoted learning. Having the services of a highly skilled full-time Project Administrator enabled the project to develop efficient booking mechanisms, clear and consistent data collection, and excellent working relationships with hosts. The efficiency of the 'behind the scenes' operation enabled the training events to operate smoothly and participants to enjoy the experience. It also facilitated a process of robust project evaluation that contributed both formative and summative outcomes;
- employed an adaptable, consultative, listening approach when working with external organisations and networks. Being able to tailor approaches and materials to suit the particular needs of groups was essential to achieving the ambition to reach a wide range of diverse volunteers. The team were prepared to pilot new ideas and make changes in the light of evaluation, keeping content relevant and topical;

- being open to new initiatives and proactive in identifying additional opportunities has enabled the team to extend the influence of Faith in Maintenance to a much wider audience than planned, including gaining national and international recognition for excellent practice.

WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES FOR FAITH IN MAINTENANCE?

There were three key challenges to the project team:

- reaching volunteers from non-Anglican faith communities. This required the development of new networks, new advocates and new approaches to overcome initial suspicion about the Faith in Maintenance project. Time was spent in additional consultation, content development and piloting of a tailored training day model to meet the needs of specific faith communities and their buildings;
- getting information to volunteers. The team worked closely with local representatives, for example Diocesan Advisory Committee Secretaries, to promote the training events. This was occasionally hampered by local difficulties with out-of-date contact databases and restrictive communications policies;
- reaching young people. Initial attempts linked to 'the Big Draw' and 'Heritage Open Days' were cancelled due to a lack of take-up. A decision was made to focus on young people involved in skills-based vocational training as these young people were likely to pursue a career in the construction industry. Consequently, investing in them at this stage was likely to have a longer-term impact on maintenance practice. The team partnered with consortia of schools and colleges to deliver tailored workshops mapped to the Construction and the Built Environment (CBE) Diploma. These events were very successful with participants being interested and empowered and tutors continuing to use support materials in their teaching:

"... one of the highlights of the year. Some of the students have moved on to Level 3 construction courses and are still talking about it."

Interview with course tutor

WHAT LESSONS CAN FAITH IN MAINTENANCE SHARE WITH OTHERS?

A number of lessons have been learned in the process of designing and delivering this successful project. In summary these are:

- have adequate administrative support to ensure that project events are efficiently organised. This helps to build a good reputation for the project;
- develop robust networks of contacts that you can draw upon to deliver the training and help with other aspects of the project;
- ensure that there is support for the project across a wide range of organisations by bringing key personnel together in the project steering group;
- develop systematic ways of gathering data on participants, ideally on-line, early in the project to support robust formative and summative evaluation;
- develop a systematic process for gathering and reviewing feedback from participants;
- regularly update and review the project materials and website to keep content relevant and topical;
- form collaborative partnerships with schools and colleges when working with young people;
- tailor young peoples' workshops to meet specific curriculum needs;
- make sure training events have a mixture of activities e.g. input from trusted professionals who can provide local examples, hands on activities, time for questions, social and networking time;
- ensure that there is sufficient flexibility in the project structure to allow staff to respond to opportunities that arise in the wider heritage sector;
- developing networks to reach new audiences is time consuming but worthwhile. Identifying a set of key contacts can help. Allow sufficient time to build trust and tailor activities to meet specific needs. Be prepared to be persistent.

Further information about the project is available via the project website at www.spabfm.org.uk.

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