



The Maintenance Co-operative Movement

A Proposal for a Successor to the Faith in Maintenance Project

Background

For the last five years, the SPAB has been running its successful Faith in Maintenance project (www.spabfm.org.uk). The Faith in Maintenance project was a straightforward training initiative that aimed to help the many thousands of volunteers who help to look after our historic places of worship. The main thrust of the project was to provide training to help volunteers understand how their building works and how to deal with day-to-day maintenance issues such as tackling problems caused by leaking gutters and blocked drains. The training courses were provided free of charge thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage and places were made available to all volunteers involved in the care of historic places of worship from all denominations.

In addition to the training courses, the Faith in Maintenance project generated a variety of support materials including the *Good Maintenance Guide* (a maintenance handbook) and calendar, an extensive project website and a 60-minute DVD. The project also produced a monthly e-bulletin and provided a free technical helpline service that continues to operate on Fridays from 11am until 6pm. In 2010 the Faith in Maintenance project was honoured with a *European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Award* in the Education, Training and Awareness-raising Category and in 2011 we were invited to join the *Best in Heritage Excellence Club*.

A Proposal for a New Project

The Maintenance Co-operative Movement project has been developed in conjunction with the National Churches Trust and its aim is to create and support a series of 'local maintenance co-operatives' which will bring together groups of people caring for places of worship and encourage them to work together to tackle the problem of maintenance and repair. The local maintenance co-operatives will allow people to share ideas, resources and good practice as well as benefiting from mutual support. Each local maintenance co-operative will be led by volunteer co-ordinators identified by the project staff.

Over the last six months the SPAB has worked with the National Churches Trust to identify a number of potential target areas in which to set up the local maintenance co-operatives. These are Lincolnshire/Nottinghamshire, Cumbria, Northumberland/County Durham, Staffordshire/Shropshire, Oxfordshire, Yorkshire, Worcestershire/Herefordshire, Cornwall and Dorset/Somerset. During the project's development phase we will decide on which five areas to target after consultation with our partners in the sector including English Heritage, the major denominations and the county churches trusts. We intend to recruit a regional development officer for each of the five areas with a view to setting up a series of local maintenance co-operatives during the main phase of the project.

The regional development officers will be responsible for inviting people from all denominations to take part in the local maintenance co-operatives. The first task of each of the local maintenance co-operatives will be to carry out a training needs assessment and this information will be used to plan a programme of formal and informal training activities and workshops. We expect that most of the formal training will be delivered in collaboration with our partner organisations in the heritage sector including English Heritage, the Methodist Church, the Church Buildings Council (Church of England), the War Memorials Trust, the National Churches Trust, the National Trust, and the Churches Conservation Trust.

Topics for these training sessions might include the care of objects; running building projects; setting up and running 'friends groups'; recruiting volunteers; understanding the building's history; understanding building materials; historic building legislation; how to work with your architect; how to use the quinquennial inspection report; writing maintenance plans; sustainability/energy efficiency; security/prevention of metal theft; war memorial care; and health and safety. Where formal training events are arranged we will make sure that they are open to anyone in the area who wants to come along not just members of the local maintenance co-operatives.

Once the maintenance co-operatives have been established the regional development officers will be tasked with recruiting a number of volunteer co-ordinators to help manage the groups. The role of the volunteer co-ordinators will be to help arrange local training events and to encourage good maintenance practices in their area. To facilitate this, project staff will provide training and teaching materials so that volunteer co-ordinators can give talks on maintenance-related topics to their local maintenance co-operative.

During the course of the project the regional development officers will also be expected to prioritise investigating and implementing solutions to ensure the long term sustainability of the local maintenance co-operatives in their areas. We fully expect that the maintenance co-operatives will develop differently in different parts of the country according to local needs and resources. This is likely to mean that there may be a large number of solutions to the issue of how the maintenance co-operatives continue to operate once the project ends. At this stage we hope that the maintenance co-operatives will continue to operate under the leadership of our volunteer co-ordinators but these volunteers may require support from local heritage organisations and also from denominational bodies.

At a national level, the Maintenance Co-operative Movement project will build on the success of the SPAB's annual National Maintenance Week campaign (www.maintainyourbuilding.org.uk/index.php) and use it as a focus for a national networking event that will bring together the project's regional development officers, volunteer co-ordinators, building professionals and other interested individuals and organisations from the heritage sector to share good practice on topics relating to the maintenance of old buildings. As new local maintenance co-operatives form outside the project's five target areas they will also be welcomed into the national maintenance network.

Timetable

The round one application to the Heritage Lottery Fund has been submitted and we expect to receive a decision from the Board at the end of January 2012. If we secure a round one pass we will begin the development phase of the project in March 2012 with the intention of submitting a round two application at the end of 2012. If the round two application is successful we will begin the main phase of the project in 2013. As part of the development phase we will appoint a project development officer to work up the details of the project. The project development officer will also be responsible for setting up pilot maintenance co-operatives in two areas, Stoke on Trent (Staffordshire) and the Trent Vale (Nottinghamshire/ Lincolnshire), and for liaising with colleagues from other organisations in the sector to ensure that the project has widespread support.

Budget

We have calculated that the main three-year phase of the project will cost £998,620 and we have asked the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant of £818,700 (81%). We have estimated that we will be able to secure £14,850 in non-cash contributions and a further £90,000 in volunteer time. In addition, the SPAB intends to contribute £15,000 from its own funds. This currently leaves a shortfall of £60,000 which we expect to raise through applications to a variety of grant-making organisations and trusts.

If you are interested in being involved in this project in some way or have any comments that you would like to share with us please contact Sara Crofts at sara@spab.org.uk.