

Faith in Maintenance

Second year Evaluation Report April 2008 – March 2009

Prepared for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings by

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Introduction

This is the second of four annual external evaluation reports which contribute to the overall review and evaluation of the Faith in Maintenance (FiM) Project and covers the period April 2008-March 2009. The project is managed by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) and runs from September 2006 to December 2011.

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 external evaluation reports are produced by Oakmere Solutions Ltd and complement the annual reports produced by the project team.

The report is structured as follows:

- ❖ Faith in Maintenance Project aims
- ❖ Project activities
- ❖ Evaluation Methodology
- ❖ Data
- ❖ Key Findings
- ❖ 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, 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:

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

In addition special events to introduce young people to the maintenance of historic buildings are planned.

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.

- ❖ A small number of follow up telephone interviewed undertaken by the external evaluator for illustrative purposes between January – March 2009 with a sample of course participants. These interviews explored the longer term impact of the training day on participants and on their maintenance of places of worship.

In future years, site visits will be conducted to inform case studies of practice which will be included in future evaluation reports.

Data

Between April 2008 – March 2009, 27 training courses, involving 872 participants were delivered in England and Wales. Pre course and post course feedback forms were received from 713 people – a response rate of 82%. The data which informs this report is drawn from these 713 responses, from follow up telephone interviews, website visit analysis and records of use of the technical support line. Quotations in the report are taken from the questionnaires and telephone interviews and are used with permission to illustrate participants' views.

Key Findings:

Evaluation has been carried out against what the project aims to achieve. To avoid unnecessary duplication, project aims 4 and 7 are evaluated together.

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.

Participant expectations

Before the course, participants were asked what they wanted to get out of the course and many gave more than one response. These responses fall into nine broad categories as follows:

Chart 1: Participant expectations

Topic	Number of responses	% of total responses (rounded)
Advice and tips on maintenance	348	55%
General access to information	91	14%
Getting help from and how to work with Specialists	46	7%
Increased understanding of legal, health and safety or other requirements for example from English Heritage/the DAC	40	6%
Increased confidence	37	6%
Advice on grants and funding	23	4%
To learn from others	19	3%
Find out about general architectural features of historic places of worship and how to preserve them	17	3%
How to be an advocate for the building and its upkeep	12	2%
Total	638	100%

Getting advice and information on how to carry out maintenance was cited in 69% of responses as the main expectation for the course. A minority of participants had very specific motivations for attending (for example to get advice on how to deal with bats or how to put together a plan for greater community use of the building) however for the majority more general advice was sought. All nine areas of expectation were covered by either the course content or in its delivery approach.

As the evaluation report for 2007/08 reported, participants in general view their place of worship as more than simply a building, recognising its role within a particular faith and also its place in the history and culture of a community.

Many participants identified diverse reasons for attending:

“Advice on practical repairs; identifying a skilled craftsman for lime mortar work; further advice on funding e.g. VAT and grants”. *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Bracon Ash*

Some volunteers saw themselves as having a role as advocate for building maintenance – this is a typical response:

“I want to be able to convince local church leaders of importance of maintenance of buildings and need to spend money to do it correctly”. *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Tamerton Foliot.*

Being an advocate requires confidence that can come through greater understanding – a key motivator for many participants:

“Inspiration and courage to take maintenance to the PCC and congregation” *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Barton le Clay*

Many participants valued the opportunity to network with their peers and learn from their experience:

“The opportunity to meet with others who have similar or very different maintenance problems”. *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Lostwithiel*

“To learn from other churches. Motivation...” *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Coychurch*

This was particularly the case when volunteers were new to the task. These typically had identified a need to gain confidence in making informed decisions in their new role:

“I am a brand new female churchwarden with zero practical skills. I would like to gain confidence by understanding what I should be looking for; what is potentially serious and what may be only an aesthetic issue, so that I can nip issues in the bud and not waste money on small things.” *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Barnwell*

Motivation for experienced volunteers was often linked to seeking advice on specific and sometimes fairly technical issues:

“I have a key role with maintenance and although I feel I am experienced, there is always something new to learn. I was particularly interested in learning from the speaker on lime mortar as I knew that we had some work to do in repointing outside flint wall which are fixed with lime mortar I felt I needed to know more about how to approach this” *Telephone interview with participant, Bradfield Combust*

Participants take their volunteering role seriously and see it as a job of work:

“I want to have the knowledge to do the job better”. *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Chitterne*

For some there was a sense of desperation:

“Most things! Anything would be useful” *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Guildford*

Perceptions of the course

After attending the course, all except one of 713 participants found the course either 'very useful' or 'useful', and some 96% of participants said they got what they wanted from the course:

"Everything – very useful overview. Good mix of advice and practical exercise and opportunity to discuss with others" *Post-course questionnaire from participant, Barnwell*

Some participants identified a wish to learn about specific maintenance solutions in more depth and for follow up courses to be available. These tended to be more experienced volunteers. It may be that some adjustment to course marketing which clarifies the intended audience would help. The team may also consider providing a number of follow up courses which are aimed at more experienced volunteers.

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:

Chart 2: Most useful aspects of the course

Most useful aspect of the course	Number of times mentioned	% of mentions (rounded)
Visit to the church and practical fault spotting	136	17%
Learning about specific potential problems and remedies and how to prioritise	128	16%
Everything	106	13%
Advice on how to carry out systematic inspection and close observation	88	11%
Presentations	80	10%
Guidance from experts	60	7%
Finding out how to get further advice	46	6%
Learning from each others' problems and solutions	38	5%
Health and safety tips	28	3%
The combination of theory and practice	26	3%
Checklist, calendar, website and handbook	22	3%
Guidance on how to create records using log book and photos	16	2%
Information on grants, funding and VAT	14	2%
How to work with architects/surveyors	8	1%
Session on use of lime	4	.5%
Cleaning tips	2	.5%
TOTAL	802	100%

As in last year's report, participants valued the opportunity to work with and learn from each other and many wanted to continue to network after the course. Participants also valued the opportunity to learn from experts:

"I valued having the expertise and experience of the architects present – and their showing us how to look at and assess church buildings 'through their eyes'". *Post-course questionnaire from participant, Bracon Ash*

The quality of the presentations and the clarity and engaging style of the presenters, particularly Sara Crofts was mentioned many times:

"The encouragement and enthusiasm of Sara was palpable and inspiring, her expertise undoubted. What might have been a 'dry as dust' excursion into lurking decay was a revelation and a most enjoyable day". *Post-course questionnaire from participant, Crediton*

Participants welcomed the course handbook, checklists and calendar and introduction to the web site and participants anticipated using them in the future.

The mix of teaching and learning activities on the course appears to meet the needs and interests of this audience. Many mentioned how much they had enjoyed the high quality presentations and the opportunity to put what they had learned into action in the practical session. The balance of theory and practice is judged to be right by participants. The emphasis on practical, common sense, advice which is easy to put into practice works well with this audience and leads to a reassuring, motivating and confidence building experience:

"I am motivated to be more proactive in addressing the good housekeeping aspect of church maintenance". *Post-course questionnaire from participant, Leicester*

"It has helped me understand potential problems. Look more, make more time for maintenance. Worry less". *Post-course questionnaire from participant, Barton le Clay*

Participants' confidence

The course is designed to build confidence and develop the awareness of maintenance amongst 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 suggests that participants joined the course with high levels of general confidence: 17% of participants were very confident; 59% quite

confident with only 22% not feeling confident. These proportions mirror those reported by last year's participants.

While general confidence was high, there was some small variability across the four domains with participants feeling least confident in knowing what to do about maintenance problems when they encountered them and most confident in seeking professional advice (Charts 3 – 6 below). Last year, health and safety was the area of least confidence pre course, this year knowing how to tackle maintenance problems was the area of least confidence.

Even though participants were generally confident at the beginning of the course, 80% said they felt even more confident by the end of the course compared to 73% last year.

Chart 3: Confidence in identifying maintenance issues

		How confident do you feel in identifying maintenance issues or problems in your building?					
Year	Number of responses	Pre course			Post course		
		Very confident	Quite confident	Not confident	More confident	Less confident	About the same
2007	62	8	46	8	52	0	10
		13%	74%	13%	84%	0%	16%
2008	713*	103	447	158	646	2	54
		15%	63%	22%	92%	<0%	8%

Chart 4: Confidence in taking action on maintenance problems

		How confident do you feel in knowing what to do about maintenance problems when you find them?					
Year	Number of responses	Pre course			Post course		
		Very confident	Quite confident	Not confident	More confident	Less confident	About the same
2007	61	4	40	17	47	0	14
		6%	66%	28%	77%	0%	23%
208	713*	75	418	213	600	3	97
		11%	59%	30%	86%	<0%	14%

Chart 5: Confidence in seeking professional advice

		How confident do you feel in seeking advice from architects or building surveyors?					
Year	Number of responses	Pre course			Post course		
		Very confident	Quite confident	Not confident	More confident	Less confident	About the same
2007	62	25	28	9	40	1	21
		40%	45%	15%	65%	2%	34%
2008	713*	218	377	111	514	5	181
		31%	53%	16%	73%	<0%	26%

Chart 6: Confidence in assessing health and safety risks

		How confident do you feel in assessing health and safety risks?					
Year	Number of responses	Pre course			Post course		
		Very confident	Quite confident	Not confident	More confident	Less confident	About the same
2007	62	9	34	19	43	0	19
		15%	55%	31%	69%	0%	31%
2008	713*	101	442	162	464	6	221
		14%	63%	23%	67%	<1%	32%

*Numbers do not add to 713 as not all participants answered each question

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.

9% of participants specifically mentioned being able to find out how to get further advice and having the provision of the handbook, website and calendar as the most useful parts of the course. Asked whether they knew where to get more help or guidance about maintenance after the course, 528 people (75%) 'strongly agreed' and 174 people (20%) 'tended to agree'. This is an improvement on last year's outcomes where 66% strongly agreed and 23% tended to agree. Indeed improved confidence in seeking further advice and

guidance was often reported in the qualitative feedback in post course questionnaires and interviews.

The website, www.spabfim.org.uk provides comprehensive advice and guidance in an accessible and attractive format. It has been developed further during 2008 and includes an online discussion forum and the opportunity to sign up for a monthly email bulletin. Year on year statistics are gathered on its use which show that the number of visits has more than doubled from to end December 2007:

Chart 7: Web site visits

	May-Dec 2007	Jan-Dec 2008
Number of visits	3,778	9,721
Average pages per visit	4.3	3.9
Direct traffic to www.spafim.org.uk	17%	17%
Re-directed traffic from referring sites	61	39
Re-directed traffic from search engines	22	44

The summer is the most popular period for visits to the website. The most visits made on individual days were 118 on 27 July 2008; 102 on 18 August 2008 compared to 59 made on 24 September 2007.

Most re-directed traffic came from www.maintainyourbuilding.org which is also a SPAB website. The proportion of re-directed traffic from referring sites has fallen from 61% in 2007 to 39% in 2008 whereas the proportion of hits from search engines has increased. The percentage of direct traffic to the site has remained steady.

The website has an online forum but the course team report that this is at present under-used although it may have value for publicising events. It is being regularly updated by the team.

Records have been kept about enquiries to the SPAB technical support line. Of 15 enquiries made during 2008, 7 came from participants in Faith in Maintenance courses. All enquiries were about conservation repair. This seems to be an under-used resource which may benefit from enhanced signposting to participants during the course.

A DVD was launched at the end of 2008. The DVD is professionally made and is an accessible introduction to maintenance. How such a resource is introduced to participants and how they are guided on its use is at this stage unclear. Exploring with participants how they have used it will be integrated into telephone interviews during 2009 and reported in the third annual evaluation.

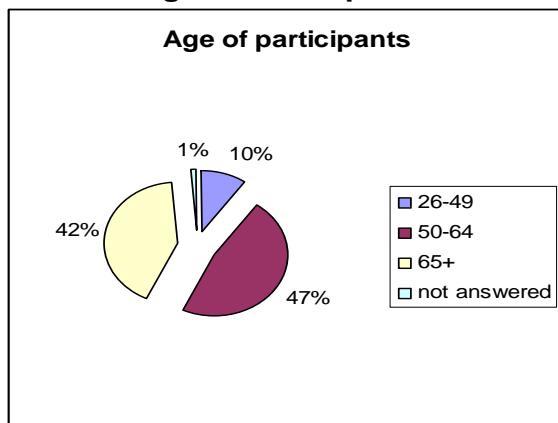
The provision of support material and tools has developed considerably over the year to good effect. Materials are of a high quality and are being well used and appreciated by volunteers. In follow up interviews, all participants reported that they had continued to use the course handbook but none had used the website or technical support line.

Project aim 3: Reach as many and as diverse a range of volunteers as possible

The scale of operation has been significantly increased during 2008 with 27 courses with 857 participants compared with 18 courses and 670 participants in 2007. Expectations at the beginning of the project were to offer 30 courses per year with 40-50 participants per course. In practice this number of participants proved to be too large to deliver a rich learning experience. The target now is for an average of 35 participants per course, which is proving to work well. 30 courses were planned for 2008 but 3 had to be cancelled by the host organisations for various reasons. The project aims are to reach 6,000 volunteers over its 5 year span giving an average annual total of 1,050 volunteers. If project targets are to be achieved by 2012, the scale of operation will need to be further increased and annual volunteer targets of around 1,200 achieved.

Courses are held on weekdays and Saturdays to provide access to a wider range of volunteers. 86% of participants were in the 50-65+ age range; 3% were disabled and 94% were of white background. Of the 713 who returned the monitoring form, 239 (34%) were women and 474 (66%) men.

Chart 8: Age of Participants



Whilst this may be largely representative of the volunteers in this sector, steps should be considered to increase the diversity of participants to meet project aims. Plans to offer courses specifically for young people are in place for 2009/10 delivery.

The project team have worked hard to make links with faith communities outside the Church of England. Courses have been held in non-conformist and other faith community buildings and been welcomed by volunteers in these faiths. The team have found that publicising courses in these communities is time consuming and does not result in the same level of take up as those for Anglican dioceses. Nevertheless, they have succeeded in making progress and have plans to run a multifaith event, and events specifically for non conformist volunteers and for the Jewish faith, during 2009.

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 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.

When joining the course, all 713 participants felt that maintenance of places of worship was either 'very' or 'quite important'. This mirrors the response of last year's participants.

Types of maintenance tasks carried out by participants

494 of the 731 participants currently carried out maintenance at their place of worship. Participants who did not undertake maintenance themselves were responsible for its organisation or provided administrative support to the place of worship.

Participants carried out or organised a wide range of tasks as listed below:

Chart 9: Maintenance tasks carried out by volunteers

Maintenance tasks carried out by volunteers	Number of times mentioned	% of mentions (rounded)
Cleaning gutters, gulleys and down pipes	168	15%
Grounds maintenance including weeding, grass cutting, clearing ivy from walls and checking gravestones.	121	11%
Monitoring and inspection of the building and grounds including gas and electric safety checks and lightening conductor checks	113	10%
Painting and decorating (including fences, interior and exterior windows and walls)	84	8%
Minor repairs	79	8%
Cleaning including window cleaning, removing graffiti	65	6%
Changing light bulbs	56	5%
Clearing drains	54	5%
General clearing and tidying up including sweeping, weeding and cleaning paths	41	4%

All aspects of maintenance	35	3%
Organising repair and maintenance	35	3%
Minor electric work	29	3%
Heating maintenance including annual boiler check	28	3%
Repairing roofs	28	3%
Carpentry and woodwork including windows, pews memorial plaques and notice boards	23	2%
Plasterwork repair	22	2%
Plumbing including changing washers, maintenance of toilets and kitchens	22	2%
Oiling door and window locks	21	2%
Maintaining bell tower, bells, bell stays and flagpole	21	2%
Window repair	16	1%
Maintaining fire extinguishers	14	1%
Carrying out routine dry rot/woodworm treatment	14	1%
Pest control including removing bird and bat droppings	8	1%
Maintaining sound system	6	<1%
Clock maintenance	4	<1%
TOTAL	1107	100%

Many participants provided comprehensive and impressive lists of the tasks they carried out:

“Cleaning gutters and gullies. Cleaning roof voids. Touching up paintwork. Cleaning lighting fittings. Replacing light bulbs. Leading twice yearly maintenance days. Annual report and inspection and report to PCC. Securing tombstones. Replacing failed reed switches in electronic organ. Cleaning generally”. *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Barnwell*

The settings in which volunteers worked varied widely and would seem to impact on the specific tasks they carried out:

“My role is buildings manager – we employ a maintenance worker for 5 hours per week who is already carrying out a list of tasks”. *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Harrow on the Hill*

This level of resource was unusual, more typical were the following responses:

“I am a member of a small volunteer maintenance team”. *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Berkswell*

“The churchwarden looks after the fabric of the 6 churches in our parish”. *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Crediton*

Some described very efficient ways of organising maintenance as part of a forward planning process. However, even in the most well regulated settings tasks were not always carried out:

“ We have a five year maintenance plan broken down to yearly, 6 monthly, monthly and weekly plans: although especially the weekly tasks aren’t always done” *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Brockley*

Perhaps more typical was an ad hoc but regular stewardship of the building and its grounds:

“Wandering round with a screwdriver, fixing things back on that have dropped off, replacing light bulbs, clearing debris etc” *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Berkswell*

The way maintenance is organised varied widely from some single person operations that carried out inspection and dealt with any issues they found to settings where groups of volunteers worked together in regular work parties:

“Working parties and members of the congregation tackle decorating, general repairs and relaying of paths” *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Brockley*

Volunteer roles are varied, some carrying out maintenance, some carrying out regular inspections and then specifying maintenance plans; some organising others to carry out work:

“I don’t physically carry out repairs but assist the property steward in detecting faults. We have a list of specialists to carry out the work required”. *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Tunley*

“I have recently rebuilt and re-erected the church notice board”
Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Tamerton Foliot

Some participants used expertise gained through their full time or previous employment, for example as electricians or builders, but many had no training in this area and were keen to learn how to spot issues and organise contractors to deal with them.

Keeping Records

18% of respondents kept no records of maintenance. 35% kept records of their activities in the Parochial Church Council (PCC) minutes or monthly reports to the Diocesan Church Council and 29% kept records in a log book, diary or spreadsheet. Generally it was only significant pieces of maintenance – usually those that had had to be contracted out or carried significant cost, that were recorded in PCC minutes. Log books on the other hand were used as a record of general maintenance, repair and other routine tasks such as cleaning.

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. 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. Good advice on record keeping is available on the web site. Intentions to record activities were tested in the telephone interviews and it's interesting to note that whilst respondents confirmed that they had set up a log book system it was not necessarily being used regularly.

Participant intentions after attending the course

In the post-course questionnaires, 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, 535 people (80%) 'Strongly agreed' and 134 people (20%) 'Tended to agree'. Asked whether they felt more motivated to maintain their place of worship, 470 people (68%) 'Strongly agreed' and 213 people (31%) 'Tended to agree' with 5 people strongly disagreeing. Asked whether they would carry out an annual inspection of their place of worship, 543 people (79%) 'Strongly agreed' and 135 people (20%) 'Tended to agree' but 5 people (1%) 'Strongly disagreed'.

These are very positive intentions and provide evidence that the course is having a positive impact on participants. In follow up interviews participants reported they were using the knowledge and skills they had developed during the training day to carry out specific intended actions. They also reported changes in their general behaviours including being more maintenance aware. Several participants were keen to attend follow up courses where they could probe in more depth particular issues.

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

Chart 10: Actions to be carried out post-course

Actions	Number of times mentioned	% of mentions (rounded)
Carry out regular close inspection, particularly in wet weather	214	19%
Clear out drains and rainwater systems	210	19%
Use log book to record maintenance	198	18%
Take action to keep the building breathing, including clearing ground from base of wall	92	8%
Build close working relationship with architect/surveyor	46	4%
Make checks on specific areas eg lightning conductor, roof, electrics, walls	46	4%

Use a camera to record tasks	38	3%
Do a fire risk assessment and safety check	24	2%
Take quick action on minor issues	22	2%
Get professional advice when needed	22	2%
Use binoculars, torch and mirrors to identify hidden problems	22	2%
Be systematic in maintenance	20	2%
Cascade course information to others	18	2%
Take immediate action after inspection	18	2%
Use the course handbook and checklist	18	2%
Cut back ivy and other vegetation and remove moss	14	1%
Repaint specific items	14	1%
Ensure they worked safely	12	1%
Put a maintenance schedule in place	12	1%
Reuse instead of replacing	12	1%
Buy and use appropriate clothing and equipment, eg metal ladder	12	1%
Prepare policy documents – health and safety, statement of significance	8	1%
Set up working parties	6	<1%
Apply for a grant	4	<1%
Use lime when carrying out repairs	4	<1%
Clear rubbish	2	<1%
TOTAL	1108	100%

The four most mentioned actions – regular inspections; keeping buildings dry, keeping records, and ensuring buildings can ‘breathe’ - suggest that key messages about good maintenance have been understood. The comprehensive list of actions suggests that participants were thinking broadly about maintenance issues and applying what they had learned to their own contexts. Most of the actions identified were practical and specific and likely to have a significant and immediate positive impact on faith buildings. For example, one participant aimed to “remove tree growing in tower” (*Post-course questionnaire from participant, Berkswell*); while another participant was going to “cancel repainting of internal brickwork” (*Post-course questionnaire from participant, Richmond*).

The conservation message seems to have come through more clearly during 2008/09. Several participants mentioned the need to choose the right materials, to be gentle and not do damage, to use minimal cleaning, and “repair rather than replace a rotten door” (*Post-course questionnaire from participant, Chitterne*) and “not to paint the old doors – let them age naturally” (*Post-course questionnaire from participant, Lostwithiel*).

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.

Chart 1 on page 5 indicates that 3 % (17 people) wanted to find out about general architectural features of historic places of worship and how to preserve them during their attendance on the course. Changes were made to course content resulting from recommendations in last year's evaluation report to include emphasis on the importance of establishing the significance of the building as a precursor to making decisions on a maintenance programme. This message is coming through and although small numbers explicitly mentioned they would be writing statements of significance, other comments were made about finding out more about the history of the church and taking a holistic approach. This area will be explored further in next year's evaluation through site visits.

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.

All interviewees reported that attending the course had made them a better volunteer.

"I am more organised and better at getting other people involved by agreeing particular tasks with them. We have a great group on the Friends - many of whom are not church goes but interested in helping keep the church going. It's good to get a wide range of people involved and giving them particular tasks helps." *Interview with Bradfield Combust participant*

As Chart 9, page 13, suggests, volunteers in places of worship carry out a wide variety of tasks and perceive themselves as having significant responsibility for their buildings. While this generated feelings of pride, there were many on the courses who had been encourage to take on the church warden role on the retirement of the previous incumbent because no other was available. For these the course was proving very helpful in providing reassurance and confidence as well as sources of further help and support. It may be that in the future the course can be used as a support to succession planning within faith communities in ways similar to these participants:

"I attended a previous course and immediately started a men's club that cleared all growth, moved earth and piles of rubble. I came today to

introduce a new warden who may well take over from me” *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Richmond*

“I am shadowing the Churchwarden” *Pre-course questionnaire from participant, Crediton*

Participants demonstrated a good awareness of the importance of historic places of worship to the broader community and the importance of looking after them. Confidence in their ability to carry out their stewardship tasks were enhanced by attending the course as shown in Charts 3-6. Sometimes this was achieved by learning something new but in other instances it was by reinforcement of existing knowledge and skills resulting in a reaffirmation of competence:

“Attending the course was a good thing to do. It reinforced what I thought I knew” *Interview with participant from Bradfield Combust*

The course seems to be particularly effective in building confidence in new volunteers, for example in improving their understanding of specialist vocabulary:

“I can talk about my rainwater goods”. *Interview with participant, Grimsby*

For several participants the course encouraged a sense of empowerment to act as an advocate for their faith building with the church hierarchy or building professionals, including challenging professional opinion. One participant’s action was to:

“Not replace our plastic guttering with aluminium as recommended by our architect” *Post-course questionnaire from participant at Barton le Clay*

As well as confidence building, there is evidence that the course is enhancing the skills of individuals to maintain their faith buildings. Chart 10, page 16, shows the impressive list of actions that participants said they would carry out after the course. Whether or not people had followed up on their intended actions was pursued during the telephone interviews. In all cases, participants had acted on their intentions, for example:

“I have cleared ivy from walls. I cut the ivy at the base and left it to die - not pulling it off - so as not to loosen the mortar”. *Interview with participant from Bradfield Combust*

As well as specific actions, many participants reported being generally more ‘maintenance aware’:

“I am more aware of problems. I now automatically look upwards to see if any problems with gutters etc”. *Interview with participant from Chitterne*

The course is helping to build local support networks, and 5% (38 people) identified being able to talk to and learn from others was the most useful part of the course (Chart 1 page 5):

“I went on the FiM day with other people from the benefice and this was helpful in that we can discuss problems to gather and support each other.” *Interview with Chitterne participant*

There is also evidence that participants took on new ideas to work in new ways with existing volunteers:

“I am going to arrange a team to do an annual clean up and have a fish and chip lunch”. *Post-course questionnaire from participant, Leicester*

Others had identified ways of fostering broader community activity and building stronger volunteering networks leading to actions, for example:

“I will encourage greater community participation”. *Post-course questionnaire from participant, Barton le Clay*

One had this example of how her learning was being cascaded to others:

“Yes. I am working with two girls on a Duke of Edinburgh course and I'm setting them maintenance tasks. They are going to clear the gutter and clear soil way from the base of outside walls and clean some of the churchyard memorial stones. They have already cleaned tiles in the church and we searched the internet together to find advice on the right method and materials to use. I would not have been aware of the importance of finding out before the course.” *Interview with Grimsby participant*

Summary

The Faith in Maintenance project is meeting its project aims. Participants enjoy the training days and report lasting benefits from what they have learned. Participants were uniformly complementary about the content and delivery of the course, the professionalism and knowledge of course presenters and particularly enjoyed the presentations and practical site-based activities.

Faith in Maintenance is enhancing individual volunteer's ability to maintain faith buildings. It is doing this across a number of domains including enhanced knowledge, increased confidence and skills, facilitating access to further support and building a strong community of practice.

There is evidence that volunteers are putting the skills and knowledge developed on the course into use in maintaining faith buildings. The types of activities they are carrying out include regular inspection of their buildings, carrying out routine repairs and maintenance, keeping records and building enhanced community networks to care for places of worship.

Volunteers carry out a very wide range of activities and there was evidence that they enjoy these responsibilities. Attendance on the course is reinforcing the sense of pride and purpose that participants have in their volunteering.

Participants appreciated the course materials, in particular the checklist and course handbook which they continue to use after the course. These materials are being used to assist volunteers put into practice what they have learned on the course.

Individual participants on the courses have widely different experience levels, from retired architects and builders to people who have no experience of building maintenance. The course appears to be better meeting the needs of the complete novice. It is of course very difficult to meet such a wide range of needs and the primary purpose of the Faith in Maintenance project is to enhance the skills of volunteers so that they can better look after faith buildings. Therefore building up the general level of skills of these volunteers to a base line should be the primary focus of the project. However, there may be opportunities to focus marketing material to make it clear who the primary market is and to offer higher level courses for more experienced volunteers.

Recommendations

The 2007/08 evaluation report made a number of recommendations all of which the team has acted upon:

- ❖ The significance of faith buildings. The course team have reviewed course content and increased the focus on significance and impact assessment, including discussion of architectural design, features and objects and the fabric itself. They have included group discussion to promote the importance of understanding buildings before taking any action;
- ❖ Health and safety. The practical advice given by the team has been further enhanced both in the course content and in the monthly email bulletin. Course feedback shows that 2008 participants had more confidence in addressing health and safety concerns than those attending the course the previous year;
- ❖ Course content to cover the range of tasks that volunteers carry out. The team have included additional information on painting and decorating and cleaning;
- ❖ Keeping records. Record keeping is stressed during the course and examples given showing how to do this. Practical advice is included on the website as well as in the course handbook. Course feedback suggests that participants recognise the importance of keeping records.
- ❖ Maintaining volunteer interest post-course. The email bulletin and website are being used to develop and enhance a community of practice for these volunteers. The team are considering bringing groups of volunteers together in a local maintenance forum to discuss issues of concern. This will be explored during 2009. The

DVD is intended to be used by small groups as a teaching and learning tool.

The development of the website goes from strength to strength and has produced a useful, dynamic and potentially sustainable way of securing a legacy from this project. The team should explore how it can further promote its use, particularly the interactive forum by, for example integrating a 'live' hands-on demonstration during the course – perhaps during the course 'social times' such as the lunch break.

The DVD is likely to be a useful addition to course materials. The team should identify how this would best be marketed to ensure it is used effectively. The team might explore whether the local diocese or other leadership groups would be best to focus on so that the DVD can be integrated into any local development sessions that they offer to volunteers.

The technical help line appears to be an under-used resource. The team should consider whether it is possible to use the website to email queries to the technical support line or use the onsite discussion forum for this purpose.

Course planners might usefully revisit marketing material to check that it makes clear the experience level of the intended audience.

The team should continue to explore how they can widen the range and diversity of participants on the course through their work with other faith communities and specific provision for young people.

The scale of operation has been scaled up during 2008. However, on current projections, the project is unlikely to achieve its over all targets by 2012. The team should put in place a forward plan which documents how they will achieve the overall targets for the Faith in Maintenance project. The plan should include target numbers of participants. This will be a focus of evaluation in 2009.

As part of forward planning, the team should consider offering a number of follow on and in depth courses for previous participants. Such courses could include the opportunity to recap and extend learning and establish a local community of practice.