



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Places of Worship Forum

Open Minutes of the 6th meeting held at 10.30am on 30 January 2007 at 3 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8YZ

Members present: Dr Christopher Wakeling – Chair
Ms Sophie Andreae (Catholic Church Patrimony Committee)
Ms Judy Cligman (Heritage Lottery Fund)
Mr Andrew Edwards (Historic Churches Preservation Trust)
Ms Paula Griffiths (Church of England's Archbishops' Council)
Ms Jane Kennedy (EH Commissioner for Places of Worship)
Mr Hartley Oldham (United Reformed Church)
Mr Ian Serjeant (Methodist Church Property Committee)

Staff present: Mr Peter Beacham (Heritage Protection Director – item 4)
Mr Roger Bowdler (Head of Territory Designation – item 4)
Mr Guy Braithwaite (Advice and Grants Manager)
Ms Sarah Brown (Head of Research for Places of Worship)
Mr Nick Chapple (Policy Officer for Places of Worship)
Mr Richard Halsey (Head of Places of Worship Strategy)
Mr David Heath (Chief Conservation Architect)
Ms Anya Matthews (Corporate Communications Manager)
Mr Russell Walters (Head of Operations)
Ms Tania Weston (Grant Programmes Manager – item 5)
Ms Helen Jones – Secretariat

In attendance: Ms Catherine Cullis (items 5 and 6)

Item 1 – Apologies, Announcements and Declarations of Interest

Apologies

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Dr Ian Dungavell, Mr Crispin Truman, Mr Derek Taylor-Thomson and Mr Peter Just. Mr Hartley Oldham was also representing Mr Derek Taylor-Thomson.

Declarations of Interest

1.2 There were no declarations of interest.

Item 2 – Open Minutes of the 5th Meeting: 10 October 2006 (POWF 2007/1) and Matters Arising

- 2.1 The open minutes of the 5th meeting held on 10 October 2006 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

Inspired! Campaign for Places of Worship (paragraph 3.6)

- 2.2 Debates in the House of Lords and in the House of Commons on the subject of Places of Worship had been interesting and valuable. The parliamentary group had been active, and was scheduled to visit a number of London churches on 7 March 2007. [Post-meeting note; postponed to June]
- 2.3 It is hoped that grants to grades I and II* Places of Worship will be announced on 2 March 2007. This will provide a further opportunity to promote the Inspired! campaign before the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Review of POWF after one year (paragraph 4.5)

- 2.4 Members representing the United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union had been formally invited to become members of the Forum, and a wider circulation list was in the process of being compiled. Minutes of POWF meetings were now available from the English Heritage website.

Influencing the behaviour of listed Places of Worship through public money (paragraph 6.3)

- 2.5 It is intended to publish this paper on the Ecclesiological Society website once the draft is finalised.

Item 3 – Members' update

Taking Stock

- 3.1 Sarah Brown reported on the *Taking Stock* project, details of which were available on the Inspired! website. Dioceses were being encouraged to take a strategic, rather than reactive, approach to the management of their buildings, with historical, archaeological and architectural reviews of church buildings integral to this approach. Such assessments would produce individual site reports that would be of use to churches, for example in drawing up a statement of significance, as well as informing more general reports.
- 3.2 Pilot projects had taken place in the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Lancaster and Arundel and Brighton, and discussions were underway with a number of other Roman Catholic and Anglican Dioceses, the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church.

- 3.3 The next steps for the project would be to work with the Regions on developing the reports produced into action plans for capacity building. The Forum would be provided with further updates as the project progressed. Members of the Forum welcomed the project, but noted that there had been difficulties in sourcing consultants capable of the work required and that this lack of capacity was slowing progress. It was suggested that English Heritage consider possible training solutions to address this issue.

The Hoare's Bank Group for Historic Churches and Chapels

- 3.4 Members of the Forum had received a letter from the Hoare's Bank Group for Historic Churches and Chapels regarding the establishment of a Places of Worship grouping within Heritage Link. The idea of the new group was given a cautious welcome by members of the Forum, although it was felt that there were a number of questions regarding the way in which the group would operate that needed to be addressed.

Historic Chapels Trust seminar

- 3.5 A number of members indicated that they were attending a seminar, called by the Historic Chapels Trust on February 1st, to discuss the redundancy of non-Anglican buildings.

A Glimpse of Heaven

- 3.6 Sophie Andreae informed the Forum that this publication had been very successful, especially within the Catholic Church. The first print run had now sold out and a re-print was imminent. It was hoped to have a paperback version available by Christmas. She asked for any amendments to be sent to her.

Pastoral (Amendment) Measure

- 3.7 Paula Griffiths advised that this Measure was now in force, enabling parishes to apply for a faculty to lease part of their building 'primarily in use for worship' to third parties, so avoiding the need to use the full redundancy process. Guidance on its use was now available on the Church of England website at:
www.cofe.anglican.org/about/churchlawlegis/measures/pamguide.rtf

The Churches Tourism Association

- 3.8 Paula Griffiths reported that the Churches Tourism Association, a charitable body comprising a number of organisations, was working to develop projects exemplifying good practice in church tourism.

Archbishops' Council Service Review

- 3.9 Paula Griffiths reported that the Archbishops' Council Service Review had positively endorsed the work of the Church Buildings division. A research

assistant had been recently appointed, and would be working on updating the *Church Care* website.

Item 4 – Heritage Protection Review; Taunton pilot progress report and new designations (POWF 2007/2)

- 4.1 Peter Beacham and Roger Bowdler presented this item. It was hoped that the White Paper would adopt a positive approach to the existing system of ecclesiastical exemption although until the White Paper was published it was difficult to anticipate precisely how the exemption could be reinforced to align with the revised system as a whole. The issue of how the exemption might apply to a significantly extended designation base would need to be addressed, as this was a possible outcome of the White Paper.
- 4.2 Sincere thanks were expressed to all those involved in the Taunton pilot project. A sample Register Entry and two Historic Asset Records had been circulated to members of the Forum, the aim of these being to provide an integrated look at the sample site in terms of the building itself, its archaeology and its setting. The work of the Heritage Protection Review would be underpinned by the enhanced designation basis exemplified in these documents.
- 4.3 It was felt to be essential to clarify why each church is significant, and this is emphasised in the 'Reason for Designation' section of the Historic Asset Records. Forum members welcomed this emphasis, and it was felt that parishes would find this information particularly useful. The addition of plans and images would further enhance the entries, but the ability to achieve this would depend on the capacity of the technology available. A more complete description of the materials, especially roof coverings, was suggested, as this would aid both owners and statutory agencies in evaluating applications for changes. It was also suggested that entries give some indication of liturgical changes and the use of space in the building. It was hoped that there would in future be greater scope for taking elements beyond architectural interest into account when evaluating significance. The reformed designation system will feature caveats to address the risk of elements not mentioned directly in the entries being considered insignificant.
- 4.4 It was reported that it took 3 days' work, on average, to produce an enhanced designation for a church. Forum members raised the issue of resources and the volume of work that would need to be undertaken in order to implement the results of the Heritage Protection Review, especially given the lack of capacity highlighted by Sarah Brown in her *Taking Stock* update earlier in the meeting. Determining priorities and implementing a strategic programme of designation would be essential. It was felt that in responding to the publication of the White Paper, English Heritage should challenge Government on these issues. Peter Beacham reported that some preparatory work on budgets had been undertaken, although this could not be developed further until the outcome of both the final form of the White Paper and the Comprehensive Spending Review was known.

Item 5 – HLF report on access to grant aided places of worship

- 5.1 Judy Cligman explained that this report on access to grant aided places of worship was commissioned as the HLF approached the end of its current strategic plan period, with a new strategic plan due to be launched in 2008. Repairs for Places of Worship was considered a priority area and it was felt that, rather than broaden the range of projects funded, efforts should instead be made to increase the opportunities for people to enjoy those projects that receive grant aid.
- 5.2 Catherine Cullis, author of the report, presented her methodology, findings and recommendations to members of the Forum, whose feedback was sought. Security, mindset and a lack of volunteers were identified as the three major barriers to providing physical access to places of worship; suggestions for overcoming these barriers included contributions towards appropriate security measures and working in partnership with a range of volunteer organisations. Mindset was acknowledged as being particularly difficult to overcome and it was felt that this would be an issue for denominations to address, although assistance would be required from insurance companies and the police.
- 5.3 The report recommended that places of worship be encouraged to open for a minimum of 40 days per year and it was confirmed that this number could include those days when a building was open while non-worship activities open to the public were taking place. Buildings already meeting the recommended standards for opening would not be penalised for being unable to improve their service any further. In terms of security concerns, the level and nature of threat would vary according to the individual building although the fear of potential risk was in many cases greater than the likelihood of an actual occurrence. It was noted, however, that grant recipients were often those who faced the greatest challenges to opening the building. It was suggested that initiatives might be developed at denomination level as well as at parish level; the United Reformed Church and Methodist Church were already engaging in discussions on this topic.
- 5.4 Promotion of times when churches were open was seen as a key issue and Local Authorities were identified as an important source of information as their Tourist Information offices were often the first point of contact for visitors. It was suggested that providing information sheets for a modest price may be more effective than offering them for free.
- 5.5 Members of the Forum welcomed the report and endorsed the recommendations, which were felt to be simple and achievable. Members also welcomed the joined-up thinking represented by this report, as it was felt to be important for grant giving bodies not to be sending out conflicting messages. The report should be seen as part of a wider development, rather than an initiative of the HLF alone. As denominations have traditionally taken different approaches to the practice of opening church buildings, it was felt that interdenominational groups and organisations could

help to establish good practice without any particular denomination being seen to be taking the lead.

- 5.6 Members interested in reading the full report could contact Judy Cligman for a copy.
- 5.7 Guy Braithwaite reported that the very first round of buildings to undertake the Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme from 2002 had recently completed the full process. English Heritage was preparing to write to these buildings to ask for confirmation that they were continuing to implement their access proposals, and to encourage those who were open for fewer than 28 days per year to reach the 28 day required minimum standard. Responses to this would provide very useful information on how the current condition has worked in practice, and once returns have been received a full list of these earliest cases would be published. It was suggested that the results of this exercise be discussed at a future meeting of the Places of Worship Forum.

Item 6 – Slide show of redundant places of worship in new uses

- 6.1 As an introduction to the discussion of the paper on proposed research and publication on the conversion of places of worship no longer in religious use, Nick Chapple presented a series of images of redundant places of worship in new uses.
- 6.2 The examples were categorised according to use: café, restaurant, educational, museum, music and theatre, office, residential (single and multiple occupation), social and community and sports and leisure as well as extended use of buildings still used for worship, preservation as a monument and re-use for worship by a different religious group. Preliminary findings of a desk-based survey of 170 converted places of worship indicated that residential use was most common (at 24% of examples).

Item 7 – Discussion of paper on proposed research and publication on conversion of places of worship no longer in religious use

- 7.1 Members of the Forum were asked to comment on the proposed research brief and synopsis of the English Heritage publication on conversion of places of worship no longer in religious use. The specific messages for each target audience, the most important areas for research and the approach to be taken in presenting examples of conversion were identified as key points for discussion.
- 7.2 The publication would focus on buildings that were completely redundant, as it was felt that alternative material was available for congregations on the adaptation of religious buildings still primarily used for worship. Issues such as considering complementary uses for religious buildings needed to be addressed, but this was not felt to be the publication in which it would be

appropriate to do so. Local Authorities would be a key audience for the publication, as they were required to make decisions affecting redundant places of worship but often did not have sufficient background knowledge of the subject. It was acknowledged that, as an English Heritage publication, it would be read by a wider audience regardless of the intended target audience.

- 7.3 The great diversity of religious building types and the range of potential uses meant that it would be impossible to produce a usable 'design guide', and that the publication should instead focus on the general principles underlying the conversion of places of worship, illustrated by examples. The technical ability to juxtapose a number of photographic details on one page meant that, using visual examples, a thematic approach could be taken as had been done in *The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings: A guide to good practice*. In this way, positive and negative aspects of projects could be highlighted and compared, without necessarily looking at whole schemes. Members of the Forum noted, however, that places of worship were often highly complex buildings that needed to be considered in context and in light of the particular constraints upon them; it was suggested that the publication make use of a combination of full case-studies and thematic selections of images in order to be most useful.
- 7.4 Concerns were expressed about redundant places of worship being sold for other purposes, in particular the practice of buildings being put on the market with planning consents in place in order to maximise their value. In accordance with charity law, a religious group seeking to dispose of an asset such as a building would be required to obtain 'best terms' in doing so, usually interpreted narrowly as the highest price. It was felt that, in interpretation of the law, issues such as functionality and the specific objectives of the organisation wishing to dispose of the building should be taken into consideration in addition to monetary concerns. It was felt that it might be useful to include brief information on the regulatory framework, looking at the issues of regular re-use by new owners and the reasons behind certain uses not being viable in converted places of worship.
- 7.5 It was felt that there was a need to highlight the existence of denominational controls, and indicate where guidance was available. It was felt that the publication should, however, give an outline of the statutory procedures applicable when dealing with a redundant Church of England building in order that people were fully aware of these.
- 7.6 The importance of early consultation and of commissioning a survey to understand the precise nature and significance of what is being disposed of would be strongly emphasised in the publication. It was felt that a list of questions that should be taken into account before embarking on a conversion project would form useful guidance.
- 7.7 It was suggested that, as part of the research, issues relating to resource needs and running costs be looked at. Energy efficiency would also be an important issue to consider, especially in light of current and future building

regulations. Research should be carried out into whether there were any existing models for setting aside funding to deal with essential maintenance for the exterior of a converted building, such as the method outlined for the church in Harrogate featured in *Churches: a question of conversion*. Resource issues would be added to the topics for research.

- 7.8 The methodology of the draft research brief was generally endorsed. It was confirmed that the Church Commissioners and Advisory Board for Redundant Churches had been consulted and were willing to be involved. In terms of the structure of the publication, it was felt that caution should be taken in categorising buildings according to types of use and members suggested instead that buildings be looked at in terms of spatial qualities, for example whether space is divided or undivided, and the effect that conversion has had on the building itself. Subjects such as the level of alteration to fittings, design principles and sustainability could then follow on from looking at the treatment of space. Advice on seeking authorisation of works should appear towards the beginning of the publication. It was also suggested that the document might work well if based around a series of questions. Members would forward any further comments to Richard Halsey by e-mail.

Item 8 – Any other business

- 8.1 Following a recent proposal at Newcastle Cathedral for a modern style of war memorial, Jane Kennedy raised the issue of rethinking traditional memorials and the possibilities offered by new technology. It was suggested that she speak to Dr Pedro Gaspar at the War Memorials Trust regarding the possibility of forming a group to look at these issues in greater depth. It was felt that this issue would be beyond the remit of POWF.
- 8.2 Members were provided with details of the Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust Annual Conference, to be held on Saturday 28 April in Cambridge.
- 8.3 Future meeting topics

The following topics were suggested for discussion at future meetings:

- The Heritage White Paper (April 2007)
- The Churches Tourism Association project
- Feedback on the practical implementation of the Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme (April 2007)
- Heritage Link
- Skills shortages in the Historic Environment sector
- Quinquennial inspections (July 2007)
- Churches as Community Assets

8.4 Hartley Oldham would talk to Richard Halsey regarding the new notification and consultation arrangements for listing. Members welcomed the fact that notifications were now sent to central office addresses.

8.6 Next meeting

The next POWF meeting would be held at 10.30am on Tuesday 24 April 2007 in De Vere venues, Waterhouse Square, London EC1N 2ST.

Helen Jones
Secretariat
February 2007

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