



ENGLISH HERITAGE

# Places of Worship Forum

Open Minutes of the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting held at 10.30am on Tuesday 3 July 2007 at 1 Waterhouse Square, 138-142 Holborn, London EC1

**Members present:** Dr Christopher Wakeling (Chairman)  
Ms Sophie Andreae (Catholic Church Patrimony Committee)  
Ms Judy Cligman (Heritage Lottery Fund)  
Mr Trevor Cooper (Ecclesiological Society)  
Mr Frank Cranmer (Churches Main Committee – items 1-4)  
Dr Ian Dungavell (Joint Committee National Amenity Societies)  
Ms Jane Kennedy (EH Commissioner for Places of Worship)  
Mr Hartley Oldham (United Reformed Church)  
Mr Crispin Truman (Churches Conservation Trust)

**Staff present:** Mr Guy Braithwaite (Advice and Grants Manager)  
Mr Nick Chapple (Places of Worship Policy Adviser)  
Ms Charlotte Tamvakis (Corporate Communications Manager – item 5)  
Mr Richard Halsey (Places of Worship Strategy Manager)  
Ms Hannah Parham (Assistant Heritage Protection Adviser – item 6)  
Mr Russell Walters (Head of Operations, Planning and Development)  
Ms Tania Weston (Grant Programmes Manager – items 1-4)  
Mr Reider Payne (Forum Secretary)

## **Item 1 – Apologies, Announcements and Declarations of Interest**

### Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr Andrew Edwards, Ms Paula Griffiths, Ms Linda Holder, Mr Ian Serjeant, Ms Sarah Brown and Mr Peter Just.

### Announcements

- 1.2 The Forum welcomed Mr Frank Cranmer, who is replacing Mr Derek Taylor Thompson as the representative for the Churches Main Committee and Mr Reider Payne, the new Forum Secretary.

- 1.3 The Forum was informed that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and English Heritage (EH) had announced repair grants of £6.6m for grade II places of worship. The HLF/EH press release had drawn attention to a number of grants, notably the £450k awarded to the Archangel Michael and St Bishoy Coptic Church in Kent.

#### Declarations of Interest

- 1.4 There were no declarations of interest.

#### Item 2 – Open Minutes of the 6th Meeting: 30 January 2007 (POWF 2007/5) and Matters Arising

- 2.1 The open minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 30 January 2007 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.
- 2.2 The Forum was advised of the success of the Parliamentary Group tour which took place on 26 June. Parliamentarians were shown three contrasting places of worship which exemplified some of the challenges and ways of dealing with them. It has been suggested that a similar tour, possibly to non-Anglican places of worship might be arranged next year.
- 2.3 Members were also informed of the *Inspired!* Campaign exhibition that was staged in the Upper Waiting Hall of the Palace of Westminster from 25 to 29 June, sponsored by the Labour MP for the City of Durham, Roberta Blackman-Woods. About a hundred copies of the *Inspired!* booklet had been picked up from the exhibition stand, which indicates a good level of interest.

#### Taking Stock project (paragraph 3.2)

- 2.4 The Forum was updated on the progress of the various studies. Further projects involving Catholic dioceses are progressing steadily, while a United Reformed Church pilot project in Leeds is envisaged.

#### The Hoare's Bank Group (paragraph 3.4)

- 2.5 Crispin Truman reported that the Churches Conservation Trust was hoping to arrange for a volunteer to pursue the Places of Worship Link project.

#### A Glimpse of Heaven (paragraph 3.6)

- 2.6 Members were advised that the second edition was selling well and discussions were on-going for a paperback edition. Forum members were encouraged to support proposals for the publication of a paperback edition in time for Christmas as it was expected to be a successful commercial proposition.

The Churches Tourism Association (paragraph 3.8)

- 2.7 Tania Weston reported that a shortlist of nine 'pathfinder' projects had been drawn up and work was being undertaken to identify three or four that could be taken forward.

Discussion of paper on proposed research and publication on conversion of places of worship no longer in religious use (item 7)

- 2.8.1 Progress has been made on the research and it is hoped to give an outline of the results at the next POWF meeting in October.
- 2.8.2 Forum members voiced their continuing concern about the apparent requirement under charity law for churches to dispose of redundant places of worship for the highest price, regardless of wider considerations of public benefit. Amongst other effects, this made it impossible for some denominations to sell buildings to the Historic Chapels Trust for less than the highest price. Such a strict interpretation would apply to most of the free churches. The Forum was informed that recent advice from the Charity Commission to the United Reformed Church had confirmed that 'best terms' would mean highest price unless the denomination's charitable objectives were being met in another way by the sale.
- 2.8.3 A member of the Forum requested that EH seek legal advice on the question, since the implications for the future re-use of redundant places of worship were so significant. The possibility was also discussed of a sympathetic MP raising the issue in a Private Member's Bill to bring it to the attention of government. The Forum agreed that this issue was of such importance that it should be kept on the agenda for the next POWF meeting in October.

**Item 3 – Members' Updates**

- 3.1 The Forum was informed of the appointment of Loyd Grossman to the Chair of the Churches Conservation Trust.
- 3.2 Members were advised of the launch of the new National Churches Trust which took place at the Historic Churches Preservation Trust (HCPT) AGM. The Trust will incorporate the roles of HCPT and the Incorporated Church Building Society (ICBS) which will remain restricted funds. It was hoped that the Trust could be the catalyst for improving the way that places of worship across the country are looked after. Copies of the press release for the Trust would be made available to Forum members on request.

Places of Worship Fabric Needs Survey: Yorkshire 2006

- 3.3 The Forum was presented with a draft of Michael Wingate's March 2007 report, which was commissioned to establish the cost of the major repairs needed to bring all listed non-Anglican places of worship in England into good repair and to explore the issues of maintaining the buildings in a good state of repair. Members were also advised that the four appendices listed on page 11 of the report were now

available on request. Staff apologised for the omission of David Figures (URC) from the list of acknowledgements.

- 3.4 A Forum member expressed concern over the small sample used in the report and believed that this caveat should be reflected before presenting the report publicly.
- 3.5 Reference was also made by a Forum member to the importance of Sunday School buildings to non-Anglican places of worship. An 1851 census had illustrated that only a third of Anglican places of worship had such buildings attached to them, while two thirds of non-conformist places of worship had such buildings attached to them. The Forum member felt that the report did not give adequate attention to these buildings.
- 3.6 Another Forum member expressed concern that paragraph 5.1 of the report seemed to suggest that few of the buildings studied had quinquennial reports. It was, however, pointed out that what the report was saying was that while some buildings had one or other document, no building had *both* an appropriately dated quinquennial and a fair record of the work carried out between 2000 and 2005.

#### Bats in Churches

- 3.7 The Forum was presented with an update on the issue of bats in churches. EH, together with English Nature, had previously produced a leaflet *Bats in Churches*. There were still many instances of bats causing considerable damage to, and mess within, places of worship with congregations feeling unable to resolve the conflicting demands of wildlife conservation and regular use.
- 3.8 As a result, the Bishop of Sodor and Man had written to the Minister of State at the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). In consequence, a meeting had been arranged between the Bishop and the Minister on 24 July. Richard Halsey would also be attending the meeting.
- 3.9 One of the issues to be raised concerned the issue of bats causing increased costs for grant aid projects as the presence of bats meant that any works could not be executed during their hibernation and breeding seasons.
- 3.10 Attention was drawn to the new National Trust leaflet (produced in consultation with EH and Natural England) which had been produced to provide advice for owners of historic buildings with bats. This leaflet may be of benefit to congregations.

#### Item 4 – Repair Grants for Places of Worship in England (RGPOW) 2008-2011 (POWF 2007/6)

- 4.1 The Forum was provided with a report on the Repair Grants for Places of Worship in England for 2008-2011. HLF and EH have agreed to continue operating a jointly-funded repair grant scheme for places of worship from April 2008. This scheme represents a continuation of the current *Repair Grants for Places of Worship in England* scheme launched in 2002, with minor changes. The

Forum was asked to consider the proposed improvements and to guide the RGPOW Project Board in finalising the new scheme. In particular, the Forum was invited to:

- Comment on the proposals for the new RGPOW Scheme
- Consider the implications of the main conclusions for their own denomination or interests, in particular the access requirements
- Consider the scope for encouraging applications from non-Church of England denominations and other faiths

- 4.2 The Forum was informed that feedback received (a form is enclosed with all the grant packs sent out) had been consistently positive about the application process. While it was conceded that the form itself could look daunting, it was hard to see how it could be practically shortened to get all the information needed at one time.
- 4.3 The last Forum meeting had expressed considerable support for the scheme's aims of promoting more access and a greater emphasis on interpretation. In response, Forum members were advised that the HLF Board of Trustees has agreed to continue to fund the Scheme as in the past, but with the target of a 40-day per-year public access contractual agreement. The commitment to the continued funding of the scheme was widely welcomed as a major achievement in its own right.
- 4.4 Some time was given to discussing the policy towards funds raised by Friends groups. It was felt by some Forum members that the current policy could discourage Friends groups raising money for repairs because every pound they raised could effectively be a pound taken off any EH/HLF grant. Staff acknowledged this point, but also drew attention to the potential criticism of EH for giving substantial amounts of taxpayers' money to churches with Friends groups who chose not to contribute to repairs. Concern was also raised that if such funds were discounted as part of financial needs assessment, it might encourage parishes to move funds into a Friends account in order to avoid putting their own money into repair projects. Nevertheless staff acknowledged that it is not desirable to discourage local Friends groups from fundraising activities. As all funding is looked at on a case-by-case basis, the prevalence of Friends groups and their role would be investigated further.
- 4.5 A Forum member also raised concerns over the 40-day public access contractual agreement as outlined in paragraph 4.6 of the paper. Staff advised members that in the process of monitoring the opening arrangements of completed RGPOW cases, some difficulties had been reported in complying even with the current 28-day requirement. This had been reported mostly from non-Anglican denominations and from those located in urban areas. Congregations were willing to comply, but many responses indicated that access of only 15-20 days was currently achievable. Concerns had been expressed over their ability to provide volunteers to open the building and over security.

- 4.6 Staff felt that it remained appropriate to insist on a 28-day minimum requirement as standard practice across the board. However, 40 days represented a significantly greater level of access. Staff believed that it was preferable for congregations to come forward of their own volition to suggest this greater level of access, as they would then feel confident about implementing a 40-day access policy. This would also avoid the necessity for regional staff to negotiate bespoke access arrangements with a potentially large number of congregations that felt they could not realistically manage 40 days. Staff further voiced concern that such an increased access requirement had the potential to deter some congregations, particularly outside the Church of England, from applying for the scheme and had the potential to demoralise volunteers should few visitors take advantage of the increased access arrangements.
- 4.7 Staff advised the Forum that one approach would be to encourage congregations to increase the number of access days to 40, but to maintain the figure of 28-day access as the contractual agreement. This would have the benefit of keeping 40-day access as an aspiration while remaining flexible enough to recognise that a number of congregations would not be able to comply. The HLF representative confirmed that they would be seeking 40-day access to Places of Worship funded by the scheme in each of the four countries. Several forum members also expressed their support for the 40 days access. It was suggested that greater help and advice might be given to congregations who were anxious about the implications of public access agreements. That insurance companies often favoured such public access was not always understood.
- 4.8 Members questioned the figures given in the report for non-Anglican congregations. However, the main thrust of the Forum's view was to welcome the scheme, and to look forward to receiving updates on its progress.

**Item 5 – Prioritising the Inspired! Solutions (POWF 2007/7/E)**

- 5.1 *This item is potentially exempt from public access under the Freedom of Information Act, section 41: in confidence*

**Item 6 – Heritage Protection Review (oral)**

- 6.1 The Forum was given an oral presentation on the ecclesiastical pilot projects that have been established to examine how ecclesiastical exemption will operate in line with the Heritage Protection Review. The projects are well-timed as there is a desire within the Church of England (CofE) to see a reform of the faculty system and the White Paper has stated that exempt systems should provide similar levels of consultation and accountability. As a result, the principle of Heritage Partnership Agreements (HPAs) has been supported by the Chancellor of the Diocese of Bath and Wells and by the Dean of the Court of Arches.
- 6.2 Members were updated on HPAs in Rochester Cathedral and Precinct and in the Diocese of Bath and Wells. The aims for the Rochester HPA are:

- To minimise dual control, where the Dean and Chapter have to apply for consent under the secular and ecclesiastical systems for minor works in the Precinct
  - To encourage pre-application discussion
  - To promote medium long-term strategies for managing cathedral sites
- 6.3 Members were advised that the Rochester HPA had benefited from the expertise of Peter Kendall who has experience of a similar project at Chatham Dockyards, the Cathedral Archaeologist Graham Keevill and Cathedral Surveyor Ian Stewart. Indeed, the benefits of operating a Rochester HPA are its position as a single site, under the management of the Dean and Chapter, with a single local authority.
- 6.4 The Forum was also updated on the HPA for the Diocese of Bath and Wells which is being piloted in a diocese which assesses potential Church architects very carefully and has effective procedures in place for consultation. It is hoped that this will set the benchmark for future HPAs.
- 6.5 The Forum was advised on the future progress of both HPAs. The HPA for Rochester is nearing completion and will be discussed by the Fabric Advisory Committee (FAC) and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England (CFCE) this month (July). Consultation with local and national amenities and the Forum will be sought. The HPA for Bath and Wells is being drafted by a steering group.

#### **Item 7 – Grade II Statutory Work (POWF 2007/8)**

- 7.1 Currently, consultations on alterations to grade II listed places of worship and exterior works to places of worship in conservation areas are dealt with differently by EH, according to denomination. It is now proposed to align procedures with current practice for listed building consent. This paper was submitted to the Forum to gauge opinion among representatives of the exempt denominations about changes to current practice. Specifically, the Forum was asked to:
- Agree to changes to EH procedure for dealing with consultations on alterations to grade II listed places of worship in order to bring them into line with current secular practice
  - Agree to use the same wording of section 2.1 (ii) of the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2000 to give guidance on the ‘principal elements of the interior’ requiring consultation
- 7.2 Attention was drawn to Appendix 2, paragraph 2.1 and the use of the phrase ‘such as fixed pews, a rood screen or an organ’ in describing elements of the interior of a place of worship. It was agreed that draft wording would be circulated to the Forum – a decision warmly welcomed by members.

**Item 8 – Any other business**

8.1 There was no other business.

**Item 9 – Future topics**

9.1 The following topics were suggested for discussion at future meetings:

- Trevor Cooper’s study of places of worship in Salisbury
- Climate change and places of worship
- New uses for historic places of worship
- Cornish Methodist Chapels Study

9.2 This is Richard Halsey’s last POWF meeting. He was thanked warmly by the Forum for all of his hard work.

9.3 Next meeting

The next POWF meeting would be held at 10.30am on Tuesday 9 October 2007, venue tbc.

9.4 The meeting closed at 12.55pm.

**Reider Payne  
Forum Secretary  
July 2007**

**Signed.....**

**Date.....**