

**MAINTENANCE  
CO-OPERATIVES  
S·P·A·B PROJECT**



MAINTENANCE  
CO-OPERATIVES  
PROJECT

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CO-OP  
SPAB

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MAINTENANCE



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**32**

CO-OPERATIVES

**4**

CO-OP MINIS WITH THE  
NATIONAL CHURCHES TRUST

**4**

CO-OP MINIS

**173**

EVENTS AND  
TRAINING DAYS

**78**

MCP KIT BOXES

**200**

PLACES OF WORSHIP

**550**

VOLUNTEERS

**2600**

REGISTERED PLACES AT EVENTS

**30K**

CUPS OF TEA

**1200**

PEOPLE ATTENDING  
ONE OR MORE TRAINING DAYS

## FOREWORD

Maintenance lies at the heart of the SPAB Approach. Founder Philip Webb was a celebrated designer but also a 'drains man' and William Morris wrote in the Society's Manifesto of 1877 that we should 'stave off decay by daily care'. In this, Morris was simply echoing the inspiring thoughts of SPAB member John Ruskin who, in his Lamp of Memory, had urged us to "watch an old building with an anxious care; guard it as best you may, and at any cost, from every influence of dilapidation."

Maintenance involves simple things that are essential to a building's health. Clearing gutters, checking lead flashings or re-puttying windows are not glamorous activities but are sensible and prudent. Timely maintenance helps avoid expenditure on more costly repairs; even more importantly it allows an old building to survive with its 'oldness' intact.

As Morris said, "we are only trustees for those that come after us" and maintenance helps us fulfil our duty to present and future generations as good building custodians.

The Maintenance Co-operatives Project (MCP) has done a tremendous job putting these ideals into practice. Through the work of a dedicated team, the project has helped groups of enthusiastic volunteers to care for their places of worship and contribute to the well being of the communities in which they live. We hope that the knowledge gained during the project and information shared in this guide will allow the co-operatives to grow and flourish, so that maintenance skills are shared by an ever-expanding group of volunteers nationwide.

Matthew Slocombe  
MA FSA IHBC, SPAB Director

THE MCP TEAM  
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

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## FUNDERS

**Heritage Lottery Fund**  
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**The Garfield Weston Foundation**  
**York Consortium for Conservation and Craftsmanship**  
**The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings**

## PARTNERS

Our project partners have provided invaluable support and advice, and have acted as powerful advocates for the Maintenance Co-operatives Project. We are extremely grateful for their input.

**Caring for God's Acre**  
**Churches Conservation Trust**  
**Churches Trust for Cumbria**  
**Heritage Lincolnshire**  
**Historic England**  
**Inspired North East**  
**National Churches Trust**  
**The Arthur Rank Centre**

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The Maintenance Co-operatives Project has benefited from the help and support of external evaluators, Oakmere Solutions. They have worked closely with the SPAB on a number of projects and understand the work of the Society well. They have been following the development of the Maintenance Co-operatives from the start, being closely involved at the project planning stage and assisting with the HLF bid, before being appointed to evaluate the project once it was up and running. You can view their full reports on the SPAB website.

## LOTTERY PLAYERS

With thanks to the National Lottery players who make projects like these possible.

## INTRODUCTION

As the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) founder William Morris put it, ‘stave off decay by daily care’ or, thinking of it another way, ‘a stitch in time saves nine’.

However you look at it, it is a good thing if costly major works to places of worship can be avoided by means of cheap and cheerful regular maintenance. The Maintenance Cooperatives Project (MCP) has provided free-of-charge, practical support to the dedicated staff and volunteers who take care of some of Britain’s most treasured heritage.

The SPAB has long taken a keen interest in places of worship. Approximately 5% of all listed buildings are places of worship – and that jumps to 45% if we look just at Grade I listed buildings. The SPAB is a statutory consultee on alterations to older listed buildings in both the planning process and the Church of England’s Faculty process and its equivalents in other denominations. Places of worship form a significant proportion of the SPAB’s casework. The SPAB sees first-hand the importance of places of worship in the landscape of British heritage and their role in society.

The SPAB is also keenly aware of the challenges faced by those looking after faith buildings. Balancing income, faith use, wider community use and the general public’s expectations with often complex maintenance needs can feel like an impossible juggling act for those responsible for their care. This is particularly true where congregations may be small, geographically dispersed or physically unable to carry out maintenance. This is where the SPAB can help. With a wealth of knowledge and expertise freely available, we aim to help people to enjoy their places of worship and see them as assets, rather than a constant worry or even a burden. We recognise that the concerns of those taking care of places of worship differ from private owners of listed buildings, and so we have been working hard to provide programmes tailored to their needs.

Back in 2007 with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the SPAB launched the Faith in Maintenance programme (FiM), a one-day training event covering all aspects of caring for historic places of worship taking the then Deputy Director, Sara Crofts, all over the country. By 2012, she had delivered 150 training days to over 5000 volunteers, who also received a maintenance calendar, book and DVD. The course was a huge success, winning a Europa Nostra award for Education, Training and Awareness Raising, and when demand remained high in 2012, English Heritage stepped in with further funding, covering 60% of the running costs.

Feedback from FiM was universally positive, but there was a problem. Maintaining buildings is not just about knowing what

needs to be done and how, why and when to do it, but also about having the capacity to carry out those tasks. That means having small issues long before they became big, expensive problems. Often this is as simple as matching a green patch inside with a cracked gutter outside. Finding it early could mean the difference between a quick gutter repair and an expensive roof timber replacement, or worse. The Team assisted volunteers with carrying out a baseline survey of their buildings and then with feeding the findings into annual Maintenance Plans. Then they began to look at what was needed to carry the plans out, whether volunteer recruitment, equipment sharing or tailored training days.

The idea is to distil what could be a never-ending and daunting task into a simple and planned set of activities that participants will have the confidence to carry out. It is not to encourage non-specialists to carry out invasive or corrective work to buildings. In fact, quite the opposite. Volunteers do their best to prevent the big jobs, but they inevitably crop up or already exist.

When needed, the MCP team was there to help participants understand what needed to be done, how to employ an appropriately qualified and priced contractor who understood the needs of their building and, if necessary, look at funding options.

It was quite a learning curve. What a Co-operative looked like, how many buildings took part, how it was run and the type of activities it carried out varied enormously from place to place. This gave a wonderfully local flavour to each group and meant that the project evolved to respond to local needs, but it also required the team to develop a fresh approach to each new Co-operative. But one thing featured in every Co-operative we worked with: good cake!

**This guide takes a detailed look at a selection of Co-operatives and the regions in which they work. Each case study brings out successes and challenges, and provides useful hints and tips for other co-operatives. Wherever possible we have taken the opportunity to include thoughts from the volunteers taking part. MCP guidance will continue to be freely available on the SPAB website and technical building advice can be sought on the SPAB helpline. We hope that these resources together with this guide will inspire future Co-operatives to take up their trowels, ladles and rubber gloves.**

# REGIONS



Maintenance  
Co-operative Minis



Maintenance  
Co-operative Minis  
delivered in  
conjunction  
with the  
National Churches  
Trust



## CUMBRIA

**West Coast Co-op**  
Heart of Eden Co-op  
Reivers Country Co-op  
Kent Estuary Co-op  
Binsey Group Co-op

## THE SOUTH WEST

Bournemouth Co-op  
**Melbury Gutter Gang**  
North Wiltshire  
SPAB Co-op



## HEREFORDSHIRE & WORCESTERSHIRE

Bartestree Cross Co-op  
Blue Lias Co-op  
Drain Devils  
Ledbury Deanery  
Droitwich Co-op  
**Teme Valley Co-op**  
Golden Valley Co-op  
Kidderminster  
& Bewdley Co-op  
Leominster Link Co-op





**THE NORTH EAST**

- Alston
- Barnard Castle
- Hartlepool Area Co-op
- Hurtburn
- Newcastle
- Rothbury
- Seaton Co-op
- Stanhope Co-op**
- Whittonstall Co-op



**LINCOLNSHIRE**

- Holland Coastal Co-op
- Lincoln City Co-op**
- North Manlake Co-op
- Saxon Shore Co-op
- South Lincolnshire Co-op
- South Wolds Co-op

Maintenance  
Co-operatives

West Coast  
Co-op

Heart of Eden  
Co-op

Reivers Country  
Co-op

Kent Estuary  
Co-op

Binsey Group  
Co-op

Cumbria is a county of remarkable landscapes, containing both the Lake District and part of the Yorkshire Dales National Parks. It has many rural villages, small and large towns and the city of Carlisle. Although affluent in many areas, there are areas of deprivation mainly in the historic industrial areas along the west coast of Cumbria such as Barrow, Whitehaven, Workington and Maryport.

Cumbria has approximately 500,000 people and 650 places of worship, of which around 260 are listed. Churches make up the largest proportion of Grade I listed buildings in the county, which has a rich history of non-conformist churches, chapels and meeting houses with strong communities of Quakers, Methodists, URC and Baptists. The Church of England Diocese of Carlisle covers the whole of Cumbria, as does the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lancaster.

## SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

During the Maintenance Co-operatives Project there was no Places of Worship Support Officer in Cumbria and awareness of SPAB was low. A significant part of the first year's work was raising awareness of what the project had to offer and getting the information to those who might be interested in participating.

After five months there was little take-up of the project offer so a more pro-active approach was taken, with the regional project officer organising a series of Co-operative start-up and training activities; the aim being to create Co-ops in the North, South, East and West of the county, based around one or more enthusiastic places of worship which others could then join when they saw the benefits. Participation was helped through contacts made at a series of talks given at churchwarden training events and the Methodist Synod, plus extensive publicity and emailing of the project information through various faith, heritage and community organisations.

Successes were the overwhelmingly positive feedback about the value of the training and support which the project provided; great participation by Methodist churches; very well attended regional training days including Grants and Funding run in partnership with the National Churches Trust (NCT), the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Department of Culture and Sport (DCMS), a Quinquennial Inspection Report best practice day with Carlisle Diocese and Engaging with Your Local Community with the NCT; the involvement of Historic England volunteer surveyors, building conservation students and Community Payback offenders.

Recruiting volunteers was successful but finding willing takers for the role of volunteer coordinator proved more of a challenge, and co-ordinators are essential for the Cooperative's long-term survival. The aim was to link the Maintenance Co-operative activities with existing groups, though there was limited success with this. However, a new opportunity has presented itself in the 40 new ecumenical Mission Communities developing across Cumbria. We are optimistic that they will incorporate the existing Maintenance Co-operatives into their activities.



**“ This is such a worthwhile initiative; all churches should be encouraged to get involved ”**

NIGEL CARR,  
REIVERS COUNTY CO-OP

# CUMBRIA

## Case Study

### West Coast Co-op, Workington

## Established

19 January 2015

## Places of worship

St John's Workington, Egremont Methodist Church, St Michael's Workington, St Mary's Westfield, Christ Central Workington, Whitehaven Methodist Circuit, St Mary's Gilcrux, Seascale Methodist Church, Hensingham Methodist Church, St Bridget's Brigham, St Oswald's Dean, Our Lady Star of the Sea and St Michael's, Workington, St Philip's & St Michael's Mosser & Eagles-field, Gosforth Methodist Church, St James Whitehaven, Allonby, Crosscanonby & Dearham Team Vicar, Maryport Team, Christ Church Silloth, Millom Baptist Church, St James Lamplugh.

## Volunteers

18

## Location

Workington and surrounding towns and villages on Cumbria's west coast

## Denominations

Church of England, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Evangelical, URC and Baptist.

This was the first Co-op set up in Cumbria. It involved both very urban and very rural places of worship and a wide variety of different denominations, including occasionally one Baptist church. The faith buildings ranged from Grade I listed mediaeval and Victorian churches to 15-year-old buildings already with gutter issues.

## WORKING CO-OPERATIVELY

The Co-op was started by convening a 'Co-op Information and Start-up Session' following a Faith in Maintenance training day in November 2014. This was prompted by an introductory MCP talk given to a regional churchwarden training event run by Carlisle CofE Diocese.

It developed primarily as a training, information and experience sharing group with no collective undertaking of maintenance activities to date apart from baseline surveying. There was a core group of volunteers who regularly attended the Cooperative sessions, plus a significant number who dipped into the training and Co-op sessions which were of particular interest to them.

The format agreed for the Co-operative sessions was quarterly half day meetings based around a training session, followed by either a skills or knowledge share from a member of the group. The Egremont Methodist Church representative gave her talk on managing a major re-ordering project at the 2015 MCP Conference in Birmingham.

Three regional training sessions were also held in Workington — a Faith in Maintenance day and two HLF Grants and Funding sessions which attracted people from all corners of Cumbria. Numbers ranged from five to thirty people at each training/Co-op session. Churches

took up baseline surveys days, another adapted the survey template and undertook their own. Attendees included churchwardens, fabric committee members, a small number of ministers, architects, conservation and building control officers, volunteer English Heritage surveyors and the Methodist Circuit Family and Youth liaison officer. Training topics included Faith in Maintenance; Baseline Surveying; Care and Conservation of Sandstone Buildings; Running a Major Re-ordering Project; Preventing Theft and Vandalism; HLF Funding; Utilities and Maintenance Costs info share; Care, Cleaning, Conservation of Artefacts and Interiors.

“ We are so grateful for all the support that the MCP has given us”

JILL SHAW, KENT ESTUARY CO-OP

“ These training sessions have been so invaluable and informative”

BINSEY GROUP CO-OP MEMBERS

“ We were given sound advice regarding sandstone care management and repair.”

ERIC BELL, WEST COAST CO-OP



#### TIPS

☛ Engage volunteers from other groups. A Cumbria Historic England survey of volunteer group boosted numbers and made links with the wider community

☛ Devise fun practical exercises to get people working together

☛ Survey in pairs: people are more likely to contact each other for information or advice if they have met

☛ Agree a year's meetings in advance and meet at different places of worship for each session to engage different people and keep things fresh

☛ Share information about good local contractors

TOP  
Baseline Survey training, Appleby St

MIDDLE  
Heart of Eden, Kirkby Thore

BOTTOM  
Cleaning the baptistry at Our Lady Workington

# HEREFORDSHIRE & WORCESTERSHIRE

Maintenance  
Co-operatives

**Bartestree Cross  
Co-op**

**Blue Lias Co-op**

**Drain Devils**

**Ledbury Deanery**

**Droitwich Co-op**

**Teme Valley Co-op**

**Golden Valley Co-op**

**Kidderminster  
& Bewdley Co-op**

**Leominster Link  
Co-op**

The counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire are located in the West Midlands region of England, with Herefordshire bordering Wales. Between 1974 and 1998, the area was the single administrative county of Herefordshire and Worcestershire, but with local government re-organisation in 1998 the two counties were re-established with Herefordshire becoming a unitary authority. Worcestershire retained a two tier structure although Wychavon and Malvern Hills District Councils are starting to share many services including those concerned with planning and conservation. This area has the most diverse geology of any area of an equivalent size in the UK; for this reason, the landscape and building styles across the two counties vary hugely. The M5 motorway and the River Severn both run roughly north-south through the area creating important transport routes as well as physical barriers.

The borders of the Church of England Dioceses of Worcester and Hereford extend far beyond the local government county boundaries. Hereford Diocese covers southern Shropshire and several parishes in Wales; Worcester Diocese covers the parts of the Black Country that formed the pre-1974 county of Worcestershire. The major towns are the cathedral cities of Hereford and Worcester with traditional market towns in the hinterland. Closer to the Black Country and Birmingham conurbation are the manufacturing towns of Kidderminster, Bromsgrove and the New Town of Redditch, and the canal and river ports that provided the means to transport raw materials and manufactured goods in and out of the cradle of the Industrial Revolution. Elsewhere, the area is predominantly rural and, outside the market towns, sparsely populated, with many people working in agriculture. The River Severn has limited crossing points; for this reason the area to the east of the river is more populous as it provides easier access into Birmingham, the major centre of industry and employment.

## SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

The Church of England Dioceses of Hereford and Worcester both employ Places of Worship Support Officers (POWSOs) and their support on the local advisory panel has been key to success. Contact was made with the Society of Friends, United Reformed, Methodist and Baptist churches, but success has largely been as a result of personal contracts with individuals. A Roman Catholic chapel managed by the Historic Chapels Trust, a non-denominational Christian Chapel at Lugwardine, a redundant church used as a Scout and Guide HQ and one United Reformed Church building have all joined Co-ops, but the majority of Co-op members are Church of England places of worship.

Volunteers cleaning  
out parapet gutters  
at Great Witley



**“ People are starting to see that contributing can be enjoyable, can engage the broader community and is a valid and valuable part of our ministry.”**

**RICHARD ROSE  
TEME VALLEY CO-OP**

# HEREFORDSHIRE & WORCESTERSHIRE

Case Study  
Teme Valley Co-op

Established  
Summer 2015

Places of Worship  
Great Witley, Little Witley,  
Shrawley, Abberley, and a  
redundant church, now  
the Scout and Guide HQ

Volunteers  
23

Location  
The rural Teme Valley

Denominations  
Church of England and one  
redundant church

The Teme Valley Co-op, west of the county town of Worcester, was the first Worcestershire Co-op to get going in the early summer of 2015. Great Witley Scout and Guide HQ, the first non CofE organisation to join any of the Co-ops, was initially included as a venue for the baseline training exercise. It quickly became apparent that a voluntary group operating from a redundant church in an active burial ground faced the same maintenance problems as a place of worship but had even less support structure than a functioning church. No other denomination of place of worship exists in the current Co-op area although family services and café church are run in village halls.

## WORKING CO-OPERATIVELY

Great Witley, Little Witley and Shrawley Parish Churches have operated as a team ministry under a single Parochial Church Council for at least 25 years and have also in this period had two lengthy periods without a priest in charge. The churchwardens and lay team therefore already knew each other well and are used to a certain degree of co-operation. Only Great Witley retains a school, shop and post office, and Shrawley boasts the only pub, so the community is used to accessing services in other villages, although it can be a challenge encouraging volunteers who already do so much to work on each others' buildings.

In a rural area where so many community facilities rely on the support of volunteers, the people coming forward to help in the Co-op are approximately 80% composed of the same people that are involved in many other community projects; the co-operation has tended to be as a result of people being involved in

more than one capacity (e.g. a bell ringer at one church and a parent of a Scout). Training and working parties have meant that maintenance and building surveying skills learnt through the MCP project are now being applied to other community facilities which has increased the impact of the project. The other 20% or so of volunteers are a very welcome boost.

Co-op members here are a mixture of retired people and people in work, as well as members of the Scout and Guide movement and their parents, so activity in this has tended to be organised on Saturday mornings or school holidays. Parents and members of the Scout and Guide groups have joined in with working parties with the inducement of bacon sandwiches.

Recent re-organisation of the Teme Valley ministry means that six other churches in the more rural northern end of the Teme Valley are now covered by the same priest in charge. All of these buildings have maintenance issues, some severe, and the MCP team is hopeful that in time the maintenance message will spread here too.

TOP  
Loading up yew  
pollardings, Great Witley  
Scouts and Guides

MIDDLE  
Lime pointing training  
at Grafton Flyford

BOTTOM  
Baseline survey at  
Grosmont

“ The Maintenance Co-operative is helping us to exercise a more pro-active ownership of our church buildings, to identify and prioritise needs and to take regular practical steps to prevent problems developing.”

RICHARD ROSE



#### TIPS

- ☛ Make it social. Tea, cake and socialising is an important part of getting the work done.
- ☛ Bring together buildings working on grant bids. Two project churches have shared ideas and training activities on their grant-aided projects
- ☛ Tap into the bell ringers' network. Putting bell ringers from Shrawley and Droitwich in touch boosted numbers at survey days and working parties

# LINCOLNSHIRE

Maintenance  
Co-operatives

Holland Coastal  
Co-op

Lincoln City Co-op

North Manlake  
Co-op

Saxon Shore Co-op

South Lincolnshire  
Co-op

South Wolds Co-op

The ceremonial county of Lincolnshire which forms the basis of this region is the second largest in England and is predominantly agricultural, with the only urban areas being Scunthorpe, Lincoln, Boston and Grantham. Because of its flat geography and low population density, Lincolnshire is an ideal place for airfields, with RAF bases being a prominent landscape feature. Aviation heritage is therefore a celebrated feature of this area. The Lincolnshire coastline is also a huge draw for tourists, many of whom own holiday homes along the coast. In addition, there is an increasing Eastern European population, especially in Boston and Lincoln, and growing immigration of retired people from other parts of the United Kingdom.

Despite its low population density, Lincolnshire has a high number of places of worship. The Church of England Diocese of Lincoln alone has 647 church buildings, to which can be added 160 Methodist churches, with Epworth in North Lincolnshire being the birthplace of John Wesley and the Methodist Church. About a quarter of the 126 churches within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Nottingham are also in Lincolnshire, and there are many other places of worship, such as those of the Baptist Union, United Reformed Church, Society of Friends and non-Christian faiths. This means that almost every village has at least one place of worship, the majority of which are listed.

## SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

In this region, the project evolved largely from early discussions with the Church Buildings team at the Anglican Diocese of Lincoln. Regional partners were also quickly identified, with the Lincoln Heritage Skills Centre and Heritage Lincolnshire, in particular, providing advice and guidance. Each of the five Co-ops, however, developed and evolved in response to a diverse range of needs, issues and people, with no two groups being the same. While this could have been seen as a challenge, it ensured that each group worked in a way which met both their needs and the particular needs of their buildings. All groups report that they now feel much more confident about looking after their places of worship.

RIGHT  
Volunteers at  
housekeeping and  
collections care training,  
Lincoln City Co-op



**“ The Co-op has been such  
a good way of getting local  
churches to work together.**

ROBIN SHAWYER  
NORTH MANLAKE CO-OP

# LINCOLNSHIRE

Case Study  
**Lincoln City Co-op**

Established  
**June 2015**

Places of Worship  
**St Mary-le-Wigford; St Peter-at-Gowts; St Botolph-by-Bargate; the Cathedral Church of St Katherine; St Benedict's; St Giles; St Peter in Eastgate; St Mary Magdalene**

Volunteers  
**20**

Location  
**Urban**

Denominations  
**All Church of England except the Cathedral Church of St Katherine, which is Traditional Anglican, and St Benedict's which is currently closed but used as a café by the Mother's Union.**

The Lincoln City Co-op is made up of a number of city-centre churches, some of which have small congregations and an uncertain future. They do, however, have a lot of younger volunteers keen to learn new skills.

## WORKING CO-OPERATIVELY

This Co-op began with the BeAttitude Project held at St Mary-le-Wigford from 2008 to 2015. This provided food, support and a place to sleep for homeless and vulnerable people, many of whom still volunteer at the church. Reverend Jeremy Cullimore was keen to have as many opportunities as possible for the volunteers, and saw the Co-ops project as a good way of bringing everyone together, getting more people involved in looking after their local heritage and, crucially, providing training to help volunteers get back into work.

After initial talks with Jeremy and other Lincoln churches, a Co-op start-up meeting was held in June 2015 and, from that, members began to think about skills training and how this could be translated into a Co-op. A number of training 'modules' for Co-op members were developed from this, which began with a baseline survey training day at St Peter-at-Gowts. Everyone was given a Certificate of Personal Development (CPD) at the end of the day which they can add to their CV.

Other training courses and events have included: housekeeping and object conservation; introductory courses run via the Heritage Skills Centre at Lincoln Castle on stone-carving, looking after stained glass and looking after historic paint finishes; welcoming visitors; preparing a maintenance plan; and further baseline surveys, including one held as

part of a family drop-in day for which volunteers prepared a treasure hunt and other activities for children.

The Co-op idea came about as a way of bringing isolated church-wardens together to help them look after their places of worship. In Lincoln city centre, however, wardens don't feel quite so isolated, and there are a lot of volunteers who want to get involved including vulnerable young adults looking for new skills and opportunities. Here it's not just about maintenance and conservation skills, therefore, it's about developing a whole range of other, less tangible, skills which may help them in future.

TOP  
Volunteers repairing the boundary wall to St John the Baptist, Whitton, with earth-lime mortar mixed on site

MIDDLE  
Caring for Churchyards training at St Mary's, Old Hunstanton, Saxon Shore Co-op

BOTTOM  
Holland Coastal Co-op members enjoying lunch at St Botolph's, Boston



“ After the work at St Peter-at-Gowts we now include regular checks on the building as part of our PCC meeting.”

SUE FRECK



#### TIPS

☛ There is no right or wrong co-op format. If volunteers are working together and learning how to take care of historic buildings, it's a success!

☛ Take into account the needs of the group as well as the buildings — not everyone will be able to come to every event so don't worry if they don't.

☛ Go to the pub for lunch! We often have lunch at a nearby pub during survey days, which is great for team bonding and sharing ideas



# THE NORTH EAST

Maintenance  
Co-operatives

**Alston**

**Barnard Castle**

**Hartlepool Area  
Co-op**

**Hartburn**

**Newcastle**

**Rothbury**

**Seaton  
Co-op**

**Stanhope  
Co-op**

**Whittonstall  
Co-op**

The area covered by the North East consists of Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Tyneside and the Tees Valley. The largest cities in the region are Newcastle, Sunderland and Durham. The geography of the region is varied and includes both coastline as well as part of the Pennines. Employment is in industry, maritime occupations or farming. In some of the more rural areas, the church is often the centre of the community, hosting village social events. Religious affiliation in the North East is overwhelmingly Christian, with the 2011 census reporting that 67.5% of the population identified as Christian, 23.4% as non-religious, 1.8% as Muslim and the remainder as not stated. Churches involved in the MCP Co-operatives were all Christian, although outreach was made to other faith groups whenever possible. The uptake for Co-operatives in the NE was nearly entirely made up of Church of England churches, with a significantly smaller number of Catholic and Methodist churches participating. The work of the Maintenance Co-operative Officer was diverse: one event might be held in a mediaeval stone church with an active congregation of ten, with the next in an urban area in a building constructed in the 1980s.

## SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

The North East Maintenance Co-operatives Project evolved through partnership with other organisations already working in the area, such as Inspired North East, an organisation dedicated to securing sustainable futures for church buildings. Early support from the Church of England Diocese of Newcastle and Durham was also essential. Overcoming the geography of the region was one of the first challenges, as it proved quite difficult to secure attendance at events held outside the major motorway corridors. The weather in the autumn and winter months can also be challenging, leaving fewer months of the year in which volunteers were able to spend significant amounts of time outside (though this did not stop hardy souls at Barnard Castle and Seaton!). It was more difficult to involve members of the North East Co-ops in the national conference as travelling from the region is more difficult due to lack of train stations outside major metropolitan areas, but members were quite happy to travel between regions within the North East to attend broader training days.

Co-operatives in the North East greatly expanded over the last year of the project and are now running successfully in four areas, with another five in development. Co-operative members from all of the Co-operatives reported being much more comfortable with carrying out the duties associated with building maintenance and conservation.

RIGHT  
Training day at St.  
Michael's, New Hartley,  
Seaton Co-op

**“ I’m very glad this project is helping to value and maintain historic churches.”**

DOROTHY HAMILTON  
STANHOPE-CO-OP

# THE NORTH EAST

Case Study  
**Stanhope Maintenance  
Co-operative**

Established  
**April 2016**

Places of Worship  
**St. Thomas's Stanhope,  
Escomb Saxon Church,  
St. James Hamsterley,  
Holy Trinity Darlington,  
St. Cuthbert's Etherley**

Volunteers  
**22**

Location  
**Stanhope, County Durham**

Denominations  
**Church of England  
and Methodist**

The Stanhope Maintenance Co-operative is the newest Co-operative group in the North East region but also one of the largest, both in number of involved churches and geographic remit. The first training day was held in April 2016 and the group is now undertaking baseline surveys at a number of the involved churches. Another, smaller group also started nearby at Witton-le-Wear (hosted by the Methodist Chapel) and it is possible that these two new Co-ops will combine into a larger organisation. Future training days will be shared by both groups.

## **WORKING CO-OPERATIVELY**

The Stanhope Co-operative consists of members of five area churches and interested members of a further four churches who have attended events but not yet expressed a desire to join the Co-operative. The group is potentially the largest of the North East Co-operatives and, although quite new, members have expressed their eagerness for further training events and to begin working together in a cohesive way. The first survey day was held at St. Thomas's church and was well attended. A second survey day was held two weeks later in Witton-le-Wear and was attended by one of the Stanhope attendees as well, which enabled a sense of continuity and connection between the two groups. Parochial Church Council (PCC) secretary Sarah Haynes (of St. Thomas's Church, Stanhope) heard about the project via a MCP NE training day for churchwardens on Asbestos Awareness that took place in February 2016. The regional project officer had visited the church in the summer of 2015 to meet the churchwardens and to invite the church to consider undertaking a baseline

survey. After hearing more about the project at the asbestos training day, Sarah arranged a firm date of April 2016 for the first survey. The survey day kicked off with an excellent talk on the history of the church building by June Crosby, a local historian who is also a member of the congregation at St. Thomas's. The day was also punctuated by a quick archaeological tour of the church yard after lunch. St. Thomas's Stanhope is also now more determined to set up a Friends Group to support the ongoing maintenance work around the church, and Friends Group training was provided by partner organisation the NCT.

TOP  
Survey at St Paul's,  
Seaton Sluice

MIDDLE AND BOTTOM  
Looking for archaeology  
at St Thomas, Stanhope



TIPS

☛ Learn the history of the church. It helps volunteers to engage with the living history of the building.

☛ Be flexible. A Co-op over a broad geographic area will need sub-groups for physical work but can come together for joint training days.

☛ Just because it's January doesn't mean you can't examine maintenance issues, but don't underestimate the weather. Be flexible on whether to survey the inside of the church before lunch or after lunch if a storm is on the horizon

☛ It doesn't have to be traditional. Surveying principles apply to all buildings. If your church is a converted village hall it will share many maintenance issues. It helps to understand how to spot problems if you can see them in a variety of contexts



“ The training day was really helpful, practical and demystifying. I’m quite looking forward to completing the survey now, whereas it was a bit of a dread item before. It made us even more determined to get the Friends group set up and going, we’ve havered long enough.”

SARAH HAYNES, STANHOPE CO-OP



# THE SOUTH WEST

Maintenance  
Co-operatives

Bournemouth  
Co-op

Melbury Gutter  
Gang

North Wiltshire  
SPAB Co-op

The project area – originally limited to the counties of Dorset and Somerset – extended beyond county boundaries to include buildings churches in Wiltshire (to the east) and Devon (to the west) where denomination boundaries made this more logical.

The ‘patch’ is mainly rural. Dorset has many small villages and though it has some towns – Bournemouth being the largest and the county town of Dorchester being more typical – the county has no cities at all. It is a major holiday and retirement destination and has a higher than average proportion of older people and fewer young people. The concentration of people of white ethnicity is also higher than average for England (though both of those observations are less marked in the urban area). Tourism is now the main industry.

Historically Somerset had two cathedral cities, Bristol and Wells, while Bath also had city status with an abbey rather than a cathedral. Successive local government re-organisations divided Bristol and Bath from the largely rural county. The city of Bristol is densely populated and economically and demographically diverse. Elsewhere in Somerset, tourism is an important employer. The changed boundaries of the project region brought in the area of north Wiltshire either side of the M4 Corridor. Swindon’s growth and economic diversification have brought new residents to this area, many attracted by the rural landscape of the Cotswolds and the Wiltshire Downs.

## SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

Encouragement from the Diocese of Salisbury at an early stage led to the creation of a large Co-op in Dorset, the Melbury Gutter Gang. The members of the Gutter Gang in turn have recruited supporters from outside their immediate area and have held demonstration events further afield.

In North Wiltshire, two Anglican benefices grouped together to form a Co-op built on existing ways of working together. In an arc from Malmesbury to Chippenham, these well organised and energetic volunteers have attended training in large numbers.

After a slow start, the Bournemouth Co-op took off, though without the hoped-for participation of other denominations than Anglican churches. In urban Bristol, there was interest from some churches though not enough to create a Co-op; well attended training events meant that the ‘maintenance matters’ message was heard in other ways with well attended training sessions on dealing with damp, conservation of stone tombs and applying for grants.

RIGHT  
Gutter Gang at St  
Francis, Frome  
Vauchurch, Dorset

A photograph showing a man in a green jacket and grey trousers standing on a tall wooden ladder, working on the roof of a stone building. The building has a gabled roof with wooden shingles. In the foreground, two other men are standing on a grassy area, possibly a cemetery, with several stone grave markers visible. One man is wearing a dark blue jacket and the other is wearing a grey vest over a blue long-sleeved shirt. The background features a large, leafy tree and a view of a valley with rolling hills under a clear sky.

**“ We love the buildings for what they are: a link to the continuity of our villages and landscape over time”**

SEAN LAVAN  
GUTTER GANG

# THE SOUTH WEST

Case Study  
**The Melbury Gutter Gang**

Established  
**November 2014**

Places of Worship  
**16**

Volunteers  
**13**

Location  
**A large benefice  
(multi-parish community)  
in rural Dorset**

Denominations  
**Church of England**

This was the first Co-op to be set up in the South West and includes the most buildings of any MCP co-operative. It benefited from the early enthusiasm of the Archdeacon of Sherborne, Paul Taylor, who championed the idea and encouraged the Team Rector Graham Perryman and subsequently a wide variety of volunteers to join, including, crucially, a volunteer co-ordinator, Sean Lavan.

## WORKING CO-OPERATIVELY

The Gutter Gang goes out on one Saturday morning per month. Ten days or so before an outing, the co-ordinator sends round an email reminder so everyone arrives at the appointed time and place and knows what refreshments and facilities will be on offer. There are 16 places of worship in the area they cover, so they generally reckon to fit in two buildings per Saturday visit, always checking first, of course, that there isn't a wedding or other event that day. As soon as they arrive the Gutter Gang launches into its well-practised routine: a run through the Pevsner or Historic England description of the building with any special features or notable connections, then out with the kit box, up with the ladders and down the drains with the ladles. Any problems or defects are noted on the survey sheet kept as a record to be shared with the parish or with the inspecting architect. Gang members exercise their speciality: intensive (and knowledgeable) weeding, drain- and downpipe-clearing, checking the slope on gutters to be sure that rainwater runs into the down-pipe, or just carting away debris.

The Gang has more than a dozen members so not everyone needs to turn out for any given working party:

there are enough people to keep up the momentum, the frequency of visits and the fellowship among the team. So successful have they been in their corner of Dorset that they now export their skills and experience to new areas and share the MCP model with others.

TOP  
Site visit, Holy Trinity,  
Westbury-on-Trym,  
Bristol

MIDDLE & BOTTOM RIGHT  
Gutter Gang at St Mary's,  
Maiden Newton, Dorset

BOTTOM LEFT  
Melbury Gutter Gang with  
Kit Boxes. Caring for box  
tombs, a feature of West  
Country churchyards

“ There was a real feeling of family and it was great to witness the to-and-fro of experience and expertise between the Gang and SPAB members.”

SPAB MEMBER



#### TIPS

☛ An enthusiastic volunteer co-ordinator makes all the difference. The Gutter Gang's operation is relaxed but efficient

☛ The Gutter Gang working party schedule is crucial to success. It lists church visits a year ahead and gives contact details for churchwardens as well as postcodes and grid references - vital in a rural area

☛ Refreshments are important: the value of a home-made tray-bake cannot be overstated

☛ Two-for-one. Visiting two buildings per outing makes the most of the day and means that if one church does not have a toilet, relief awaits at the next one.

# MCP MINIS



Maintenance  
Co-operatives  
Minis

Coventry

Manchester

Nottingham

Rhondda Fawr



Maintenance  
Co-operatives  
Minis delivered in  
conjunction with  
the National  
Churches Trust

York

Doncaster

Leeds

Sheffield

Two years into the project, and with over twenty Co-operatives up and running in our core project regions, word about the initiative had begun to spread. It was the ambition of the project to inspire volunteers across the country to pick up on the model and develop their own versions of Maintenance Co-operatives, creating a National Maintenance Network. The challenge was how to help them to get off the ground.

Whilst anyone can access the project's online resources, the role of the Regional Project Officers in bringing people together, structuring their activities and providing essential training cannot be overstated – nor can the expertise of our in-house Technical Officer.

Somehow the gap between the support provided in the project regions and that elsewhere needed to be bridged. Providing a Regional Officer in every county was clearly unrealistic, and ran counter to the idea of the Co-operatives ultimately becoming self-sufficient. With examples of successful Co-operatives run by dedicated volunteers now in place, it was decided that it was possible to experiment with delivering short intense versions of the project to kick-start activities, and so the Co-op Minis were born.

The idea was to deliver 1–2 days' worth of training covering all aspects of putting together a Maintenance Co-op, the activities that need to be carried out and technical training on maintaining buildings. Delegates would be invited from several places of worship in a local area and would use the host building to learn how to carry out baseline surveys and develop maintenance plans. They would return to their own buildings as ambassadors, where they would continue the work under their own steam. To help them, they would be provided with an MCP Kit Box full of essential equipment and, crucially, buddied-up with a volunteer from an existing Co-op to provide mentoring alongside phone support from the MCP team. Applicants were invited to apply from across the country, with only the basic requirements that they had a volunteer co-ordinator already in place and that at least two places of worship would be involved. The project had funding to run five of these experimental programmes. When over double that number applied the team were delighted, and had a challenging decision to make, but in the end there were five stand-out applications from the Rhondda Valley (our first project in Wales), Derby, Manchester, Nottingham and Coventry. Shortly afterwards the National Churches Trust commissioned the MCP team to deliver four further minis as part of their HLF funded church maintenance project in the Yorkshire Region. At the time of writing, the Minis were still in the preparation stages of their projects, but we hope that you will follow their progress on the website.

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

Surveying with binoculars

Opening a Kit Box

Clearing gutters and  
drainpipes



JOHN TEALE



## DEVELOPING RESOURCES

The project recruited SPAB scholar and conservation architect James Innerdale to design the training and technical guidance. The challenge was to speak to volunteers with limited time and resources, often with little background in traditional buildings, in a way that was engaging and accessible. We were keen to avoid overloading Co-operatives with unachievable tasks and technical details or encouraging them to carry out work that should be appointed to a professional contractor. The aim was for volunteers to feel confident to take ownership of their buildings maintenance.

### **The baseline survey and maintenance plan**

The Activity Plan for the project required a baseline condition survey to be carried out at all participating places of worship. As well as being the starting point for developing a maintenance plan, it also looked to build on the existing requirement for Church of England churchwardens and property stewards in the Methodist's system and other denominations, to carry out annual fabric inspections.

The form needed to be a document that could be used by volunteers with limited technical knowledge of building construction, but would provide findings that could then be transferred across to the maintenance plan. The checklist questions were separated into different building elements and graded according to importance using a traffic light system that also linked to the Quinquennial Inspection report where relevant. A pro-forma for the maintenance plan was also developed and linked to the format of the baseline survey.

Various format options were explored, including digital versions with drop-down tick boxes, however with unreliable WiFi and varying degrees of IT confidence, paper versions on site turned out to be the preferred option, although this did require considerable data inputting later on.

The form was continually updated throughout the course of the Project in response to feedback on the ground, often by volunteers themselves, who improved it to suit their needs and introduced greater automation.

Creating bespoke versions of the form for each place of worship, including the preparation of roof and floor plans took more time than expected, but worked well as a way to encourage the place of worship to undertake a survey and become a more active member of the Co-op. Editable versions of the form are posted on the website, together with guidance notes and notes on how to create roof and floor plans.

Concerns were initially raised that the form was too complex for some Co-operatives. Once explained, it was overwhelmingly positively received and in most cases the principle of a systematic method of observation, assessment and record keeping was successfully introduced.

### **Advice sheets**

Individual downloadable quick reference advice sheets were produced covering a range of building topics. The sheets are available through the website and included in paper form in the 'kit box folder' offered with the physical toolkit to all existing Co-operatives.

As the project developed further sheets were added in response to co-op volunteers asking about particular subject areas including sources of funding, cleaning (in particular leaded lights and floors), heating and use of ladders.

### **Training**

A maintenance and baseline survey training day was offered to all potential Co-operative members. This was initially introduced as part of the launch event, but later developed as a full day, with the aim of completing the survey of an example place of worship on the day. It was hoped that the same core group who attended the event would then come together to help complete surveys of other places of worship within the Co-operative. This day was run together with the local Project Officer, with further surveys co-ordinated by them. This initial training day included a presentation on 'what is maintenance and why is it important'. Working through the way the form should be used on site was useful in helping volunteers to look at and understand their place of worship.

A range of other training events were organised around the regions, using the in-house team, project partners and external trainers. These included dealing with damp, an introduction to lime, cleaning of artefacts, windows and glazing, tombs, grants and funding, engaging with local communities and opening and welcoming.



James Innerdale takes volunteers through the baseline survey

## MAINTENANCE KIT BOX

The MCP project distributed practical kit boxes: sturdy wheeled tool boxes packed with the basic tools needed to observe a building, clear debris and stay safe. It also included a folder featuring copies of all the MCP technical advice sheets and templates to help with managing co-operatives, as well as a copy of *The Good Maintenance Guide* and *Maintenance Calendar*. This check list is designed to help you to create a kit box of your own.

### Inspection Equipment

Binoculars  
Clip board  
Head Torch  
Telescopic Mirror

### Maintenance Tools

Plastic scraping tools  
Drain unblocker  
Scrubbing brush  
Trowel  
Dustpan and brush  
Secateurs  
Ladles  
Litter pickers  
Microfibre cloths

### Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

High-visibility vests  
Disposable facemasks  
Latex gloves  
Kneeler  
Heavy duty rubber gloves

### Guidance

Technical advice sheets  
Templates for managing Co-operatives  
*Good Maintenance Guide*  
Maintenance calendar  
Guidance sheets

*These can all be downloaded  
from [www.SPAB.org.uk](http://www.SPAB.org.uk)*

“ The tool box arrived today. A magnificent box and plenty of goodies inside to start a useful maintenance store.”

MIKE HIGGINBOTTOM,  
HEART OF EDEN, CUMBRIA

# MAINTENANCE CO-OPERATIVES

## SPAB PROJECT

As SPAB founder William Morris put it, "save off decay by daily care". If major, costly works to places of worship can be avoided in favour of cheap and cheerful regular maintenance, then we think that is a very good thing.

From 2013-2017 the Maintenance Co-operatives Project has been providing free-of-charge, practical support to the dedicated staff and volunteers who take care of some of Britain's most treasured heritage, so that they can do just that.

The £1.2 million project has been primarily supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, who recognised the value of pooling volunteer resources that the project presented.

The idea was simple: bring together a number of places of worship in an area, and assist them to put together a trained group of volunteers who can carry out preventative, non-invasive, maintenance, while sharing equipment and expertise to save time and money.

And what a journey it's been! Three years of hard and rewarding work, with Co-operatives springing up across most of the country, a whole lot of lessons learned and, of course, much cake eaten!

As for what's next, we are delighted that many of the Co-operatives plan to keep going. We look forward to seeing how they do in the future, and how they can inspire other places of worship to use our model.

"This is such a worthwhile initiative; all churches should get involved"



CUMBRIA



Seaton Co-op  
Whittonstall Co-op  
Hartlepool Area Co-op  
Stanhope Co-op

FURTHER CO-OPS ESTABLISHED IN THE AREAS OF LANCASTER, BARNARD CASTLE AND WITTON & WEAR

"... a fantastic, innovative programme. Quite the best learning experience for some time"

### LINCOLNSHIRE

Holland Coastal Co-op  
SOUTH/EAST OF BOSTON

Lincoln City Co-op  
CITY OF LINCOLN

North Mantlake Co-op  
NORTH/EAST OF SOUTHORPE

Saxon Shore Co-op  
NORTH/NORTH/EAST COAST

South Lincolnshire Co-op  
WEST OF BOSTON

South Wolds Co-op  
AREA

CO-OPS	23
CO-OP MINIS (five with National Churches Trust)	2
PLACES OF WORSHIP	136
TRAINING EVENTS	136
TICKETS TO EVENTS TAKEN UP	2,000
VOLUNTEERS	200
NATIONAL CONFERENCES	200
CUPS OF TEA	200

This is a live project so numbers will vary.

Other areas project has been in Greater Gdn North Brs of Shrewsbury

www.SPABMCoops.org



## WHERE NEXT?

What a journey it's been! Three years of incredibly hard and rewarding work, with Co-operatives springing up across most of the country, a whole lot of lessons learned and, of course, much cake eaten.

The Co-operatives worked on a wide range of places of worship from different faiths and encountered different issues and problems along the way, from how to make the project work for them to the building issues themselves. They built close relationships and made friends, coming out of it all with overwhelmingly positive feedback and some excellent tips and suggestions for the groups that follow on after them.

As for what's next, although the project itself has come to a close, we are delighted that many of the Co-operatives want to keep going and we look forward to seeing how they do in the future and where they can go from here.

We'd also very much encourage other places of worship to look at the Co-operatives model and take part.

If you have been inspired by this booklet here is where to find more help on getting your own co-operative started:

- **SPAB website**  
Go to the Maintenance Co-operatives section of the SPAB website. You'll find all our resources freely available to download, including everything from maintenance plan templates and example risk assessments to advice on maintaining lightning conductors and churchyards.
- **Create your own kit box.**  
Use the list on page 38 of this booklet to help you to start your own co-operative kit box.
- **Speak to someone who has done it before.**  
If you would like to be put in touch with an active co-operative email the SPAB.
- **Book an MCP course**  
SPAB Education will continue to offer MCP training as a bespoke day course. Fees apply.
- **SPAB Helpline**  
If you have a technical question about your building call the SPAB technical helpline on weekday mornings 020 7456 0916.

### **Join the SPAB**

If you'd like to really get the most out of the SPAB and support our work, why not sign up as a member? The SPAB is an independent registered charity; we rely on the support of our members to continue our work. Find out more and join at [www.SPAB.org.uk](http://www.SPAB.org.uk).





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