

PLACES OF WORSHIP@HERITAGE LINK

STEERING GROUP

MEETING HELD ON 11th DECEMBER 2008 AT THE OFFICES OF THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

Present

Crispin Truman (in the Chair)

Jenny Freeman

Kate Pugh

Graham Jones

Nigel Robb

Diana Evans (observer)

Deborah Jarman

Pedro Gaspar (on behalf of Janet Gough & Rebecca Payne)

Absent

Trevor Cooper

Paul Lewis

Apologies

Caroline Egerton

Rebecca Payne

Neil Sumner

Andrew Edwards

Alex Glanville

Gerry Prosser

Ian Serjeant

Janet Gough

Sharman Kadish

Matthew Saunders

1. Introduction and apologies

1.1 Crispin welcomed members to the Steering Group's fourth meeting. Apologies had been received from those listed above.

2. Minutes of second meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes were approved, as amended in the light of members' comments on the draft and circulated for the present meeting.

2.2 The following points were noted as matters arising:

- Jenny noted that the Historic Environment Advisory Committee for Scotland (HEACS) (para 9.2) had taken evidence from the HCT, in addition to the meeting mentioned in the minutes. **Action:** Kate to ask HEACS if they are producing a final report.] (The final report will be sent to Ministers in April with a copy to those who took part.)
- Places of Worship contact details, principally those for the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, now provided. **Action** –Deborah should establish a contact in Ireland ASAP.
- John Sell had not yet updated his earlier report on fiscal incentives.

- The date for the next All Party Parliamentary Group *must* be fixed ASAP. **Action** – Deborah should find a date that Jenny Abramsky can definitely manage, and then *tell* the members that that date is when the meeting will take place.
- In view of the loss of the Heritage Protection Bill, Heritage Link will not after all be appointing a Parliamentary Officer.

3. Update Report from Deborah Jarman and 4. Action Plan 2008-9

3.1 These two items were taken together, as Deborah had drawn up an Action Plan in tabular form, and noted down the progress she had made so far in the right hand column of the table.

3.2 Deborah took the Steering Group members through the Action Plan, discussing each heading in turn. The headings were as follows

- Steering Group Meetings
- Annual Meeting
- Website
- Outreach
- Accountability
- Communication
- Fundraising
- Parliamentary

After discussion, the Steering Group concluded that a further heading should be added to the Action Plan – Policy Development – to include matters such as Planning Policy Statement 15, the next Comprehensive Spending Review, and the issue of VAT and listed places of worship. Actions here would be advised by the Steering Group.

3.3. The progress made was described as follows

- **Steering Group Meetings** The draft Agenda for the 11th December Steering Group meeting had been sent to Crispin for approval on the 13th of September, and sent out to members on the 20th of November.
- **Website** Kate Jones had placed a 'holding' page on the Places of Worship page on the Heritage Link website; Deborah met with Kate J on the 20th of November to discuss the internal structure of the website and the best way of loading further text and images onto it.
- **Website** Deborah had spent a considerable amount of time researching the presentation of case studies of good practice on other websites. She had then written a summary of where the best case studies were to be found, and why the particular places of worship had been featured. She had had email discussions with several members of the Steering Group as to how the case studies should be presented on the Places of Worship pages on the Heritage Link website. Jenny Freeman said that all case studies featured on the website must be completed schemes. Diana Evans said that all evaluation should include the question 'What have you learnt? What would you do differently next time?' It was suggested that a questionnaire might be sent out to potential case study churches, to ask about their experience, and it was agreed that the most successful were the ones most likely to respond. Some case study churches have their own excellent websites; others do not. It was suggested that the best strategy would be first to put links to the good websites on the POWlink pages, and then later write descriptions of the less well known churches.
- **Website** Jenny Freeman also said that the website should contain a copy of POWlink's 'original manifesto'

- **Accountability** Deborah had drawn up a draft Action Plan and recorded her progress on it as a first step towards keeping stakeholders informed of what she had done.
- **Communication** Deborah had prepared a draft Chairman's Report for Crispin's approval on November the 13th, and sent it out to the POWlink members on 20th November.
- **Parliamentary** Deborah had attended a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Historic Churches on the 17th of November, had written minutes of the meeting, and circulated them to all members of the Group. She had arranged for the Group to be re-registered for the next year.

5. – Innovation Centre – Report Back and Next Steps

5.1 It was agreed that a number of the targets that emerged from the Policy Day at the Innovation Centre in Reading are already being dealt with – in particular, Planning Policy Statement 15, the issue of VAT and listed places of worship, the Places of Worship website and collaboration.

5.2 However, there are still outstanding targets, in particular the importance of engaging local MPs with the places of worship situation in their own constituencies (especially if there is a general election in 2009). POWlink should team up with the County Trusts, and arrange for MPs to visit buildings at risk and success stories. POWlink can only have a brokerage role, but could perhaps work with the Historic Churches Liaison Group to produce some support material for local churches on how to get their MP involved.
Action: Deborah to contact the HCLG soon.

6 – Fundraising for Future

6.1 The Steering Group asked Deborah to contact the National Churches Trust for a meeting on how the fundraising drive should be taken forward. Action Deborah.

7 – Working with Heritage Link

7.1 The connections between Places of Worship and Heritage Link are currently working well. Heritage Link is planning to move offices in the spring, and space could be made available for Deborah in the office two days a week if she wished

8 – Heritage Protection Reform

8.1 After the demise of the Heritage Protection Bill, it appears that the money already allocated under the Comprehensive Spending Review would be used for listing and others measures but that Simon Thurley had warned there will be less money in the next CSR. POWlink would want to comments on the forthcoming Strategic Designation Programme Consultation. Jenny Freeman said that the Historic Chapels Trust has already pointed out to English Heritage that non-Anglican places of worship are already under listed and under graded. Diana Evans said that the new Planning Policy Statement 15 will be issued for public consultation once it has been drafted. PPGs 15 & 16 will go into the supporting guidance, and should prove useful at public enquiries. POWlink would expect to make a contribution to this within the Heritage Link response.

9. – Communicating with MPs

9.1 Deborah reported on the attempts she had made to set up dates for the next four APPG meetings. At Crispin's request, she had suggested the following dates: 3rd

February, 28th April, 14th July, and 20th October to the secretaries of Sir Alan Beith, Sir Patrick Cormack & Frank Dobson. This produced a mixed response; she will keep on trying to at least fix a date for the January/February meeting

10. - Location, Format and Date of the 2009 Annual Meeting

10.1 Deborah said that she would like to change the format of the POWlink Annual Meeting. Instead of having a meeting which consisted entirely of speeches, she said that she would like to follow the example of the Group for Education in Museums annual conferences, which consisted of formal proceedings in the morning and visits to places of interest to the delegates in the afternoon, which allowed for informal networking, inspiration, exchange of ideas and enjoyment.

10.2 The members of the Steering Group discussed what the purposes of the Annual Meeting were – networking, information exchange and policy making. They emphasised that it was a meeting, not a conference, and should start in the late morning and finish by 4pm to allow people to get home. Deborah suggested that it might be possible to have the formal meeting and a visit to an interesting place of worship in the same place, not necessarily in London. The members emphasised the importance of early booking and said that it might now be too late to book an Annual Meeting for March. They liked the idea of a change in format, however, and asked Deborah to set up a Meeting on the provisional date of **May 7th**. Jenny Abramsky, and Lord Andrew Mawson were suggested as potential speakers, and the Healthy Living Centre in Bromley by Bow as a possible venue.

11. – Target Groups for POWlink membership drive

11.1 There was not a lot of time left to discuss this matter, but it was agreed that sadly, many non-Christian organisations are nervous about ‘cold’ invitations to join organisations like POWlink, and that approaching them via the inter-faith forums was a good idea. Once the date for the Annual Meeting is firmly fixed, then invitations should be sent out.

12. - AOB

- Deborah passed round a mock up of a page she had drafted in the form of a Newsletter, to replace the Chairman’s Reports. It got a positive reaction from the members. This was strongly welcomed. There was some discussion about the layout and draft title of the Newsletter; it was agreed that whilst ‘Sacred Places’ was not suitable, ‘Pow Wow’ would make an excellent title. It was agreed that the letter should be sent to members in pdf format for them to print themselves, also possibly in HTML format as well. It should also be loaded directly onto the website. It should have a feature about a non-Christian building or festival in each issue.
- Deborah informed the group about the request for help Heritage Link had had from the group formed to save the Guards Garrison Church in Chelsea.
- Deborah also drew their attention to the press release from English Heritage about the Minister for Culture’s speech on the morning of the 12th December in Manchester, to mark the launch of their team of diocesan support officers.

13. Future meetings

The Steering Group's next meeting, will be at 2pm on Tuesday March 17th 2009, at Saint George's German Lutheran Church, 55 Alie Street, London E1 8EB

Deborah Jarman
Places of Worship Development Officer