



Welcome to **July's** email bulletin. This month our topic is **towers and steeples**. You can also view an illustrated version of this bulletin [online](#). If you have a subject that you would like us to cover in a future bulletin let us know by emailing the team at info@spabfim.org.uk.

Things to think about...

The external faces of towers and steeples are rarely accessible to those without specialist skills and equipment but still need to be inspected and maintained. Although physical access may be limited, you can get some idea of the condition of the tower or steeple if you use a set of binoculars to examine the fabric from ground level. Nearby tall buildings can also provide a useful vantage point. Take note of any areas of loose masonry, plant growth or problems related to roof coverings (timber shingles, sheet metals, slates or tiles). Any defects should be reported to your professional adviser who will be able to advise if any remedial action is required.

You should also check the condition of any lightning protection systems. Remember that the provision of a lightning protection system will not prevent the occurrence of a lightning strike but it will direct the current discharged from the strike to earth safely, protecting the structure and its occupants. However, lightning conductors are currently vulnerable to theft as they are often made of copper. If lightning conductors are disturbed or stolen, they should be repaired immediately - places of worship with a faulty lightning protection system are at more risk than those without lightning conductors.

Things to do...

If it is possible to gain safe access to the roof of your tower or the walkway at the base of your spire here are some things to check:

- Roof coverings: Missing or slipped slates or tiles should be replaced and cracks or splits in sheet metal roofing materials should be made watertight using a mastic tape until a proper repair can be carried out.
- Rainwater outlets including gutters, downpipes, hoppers and chutes: These should be cleared of leaves and other debris so that rainwater can discharge easily.
- Protective lead flashings over joints: Flashings help to 'weather' the junction and keep the rain out. If flashings are split, cracked or missing they should be repaired or replaced as soon as possible.
- Parapet walls: Look out for areas where the pointing is missing or eroded. If there are open joints moisture will be able to penetrate into the wall structure. Coping stones and pinnacles can be particularly vulnerable as they are very exposed to the wind and rain.

- Flagpole fixings: Check that the flagpole is securely fixed. If the flagpole penetrates the roof covering make sure that the junction is watertight.
- Lightning protection systems: Carry out a visual check of the lightning protection system regularly to ensure that it has not been removed or tampered with. Consider having your lightning protection system independently tested on a regular basis.

If your tower or steeple is inaccessible, talk to your professional adviser about the possibility of having it inspected by a steeplejack once every five years or so. A good steeplejack can carry out a thorough inspection and will be able to identify any areas that may need further attention. Ensure that the steeplejack uses a digital camera to record the condition of the steeple and any problem areas. A copy of their report should be kept with your logbook.

European Procurement Rules - New Advice

The Cathedral and Church Buildings Division of the Archbishops' Council has produced a short guidance note for parishes and cathedrals on the new interpretation of EU Procurement rules. The PDF document containing this information is available at [Procurement Guidelines \(June 2011\)](#). The guidance has been agreed with English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund, following legal advice received by all three bodies.

Seminar - Love It, Fund It, Keep It

Finding money to make repairs can be a real challenge, but getting the stewardship and maintenance of your building right can significantly reduce costs in the longer term. This [free event](#) will show you:

- How to be confident stewards of your building
- How to write a maintenance plan
- How to take the mystery out of funding for repairs to places of worship
- How to engage with English Heritage and other funders in creative and positive ways

This event takes place at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham, B4 7SX on Wednesday 12 October 2011 from 10am until 3.30pm. It is free of charge and refreshments will be provided.

Need more help?

If you have any questions about maintenance or repair issues contact our [Technical Helpline](#) for advice and guidance. This service is normally available on **Fridays** between **9.30am and 3.30pm** on **0207 456 0916**. Alternatively you can email your questions to advice@spabfim.org.uk. Copies of the SPAB's range of Technical Pamphlets and Information Sheets are available to purchase from our [online bookshop](#).

Sara Crofts Faith in Maintenance Project Director

Stave off decay by daily care ~ William Morris 1877

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