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**THE CATHEDRALS' PERSPECTIVE
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Peter Edds, the Head of Buildings and Estates at Salisbury Cathedral was due to have given this talk on the Cathedrals Perspective but he is unable to attend and asked me to stand in for him. I am delighted to do so and acknowledge that much of what I want to say has been taken from his original script. After a full career in the Army I spent 10 years as the Chapter Steward (Chief Executive) at York Minster. I retired in 2006 and last year I agreed to become the unpaid Administrator of the Cathedrals Workshop Fellowship. The Fellowship is a federation of 8 English Anglican Cathedrals comprising – Durham, York, Lincoln, Canterbury, Winchester, Salisbury, Gloucester and Worcester. At the moment we have 14 apprentices undergoing training. This short presentation will tell you about the Fellowship and what we are hoping to achieve.

'For almost a thousand years Cathedrals have acted as the nation's spiritual treasure houses, soaring above our towns and cities, these magnificent buildings remain loved and cherished landmarks and encapsulate the very best of human endeavour. In short, they are our most precious architectural heritage.' This is a quote from Sir Jocelyn Stevens.

The skills of our craftsmen and women are part of this county's hidden heritage. Our historic landscapes and buildings were created, and are maintained, by skilled craftspeople who combine technical experience with an appreciation of beauty, and a love for the buildings in their care.

Nowhere is this epitomized more than in the onsite workshops of our great Cathedrals. These long established units are situated adjacent to their Cathedral. The Dean and Chapters have long recognised that the maintenance and repair of the fabric of these ancient buildings is better served by having the continuity of a direct workforce. I am well aware from my time at York that not everyone would agree with this.

Of the 42 English Anglican Cathedrals only 8 have onsite workshops employing skilled artisans. A few Cathedrals employ outside contractors who are able to carry out this specialised work. These are commercial enterprises that often do not encourage the training of apprentices. It is only in onsite workshops, with a continuing programme of work, that comprehensive training can take place. However, there is increasing concern about the long term future of these workshops, and that is why representatives from the 8 Cathedrals met in Gloucester in October 2005 to see how they could reverse this trend, gain a better understanding of the needs of these workshops and finally, and perhaps most importantly, see if these centres of excellence could focus attention on the shortage of skills training offered by the present NVQ system, and seek to raise the national training standards for the future.

It soon became clear during the course of the meeting in 2005 that a Fellowship of Cathedral Workshops might be able to offer additional benefits, not only to participating Cathedrals, but also perhaps help with the long term maintenance of those Cathedrals without works departments, as well as the many thousands of churches and heritage sites throughout the country which are in a state of disrepair.

It did not take long to establish a system of self help and cooperation, to arrange exchange schemes between our workshops, and to agree that a 4 year stonemason apprenticeship should be the standard for all of us.

The objectives of the Fellowship are to:

- Agree a syllabus and programme for apprentice masons which must be based on the craft skills that cathedrals require.
- Seek national recognition and accreditation of the new scheme with the assistance of existing training colleges and government agencies.
- Actively promote the Fellowship in order to improve much needed funding.

At this point I want to stress that we want to work with the all the agencies involved in the heritage sector. I am well aware that we could be seen as an aloof body that is not prepared to tow the party line. *If this is the case please pause for thought and realise that the standards required to conserve and maintain our cathedrals are necessarily very high.*

We want to work within the heritage sector to:

- Bring a greater understanding of the problems we encounter in the conservation, repair and maintenance of cathedrals and,
- Develop strategies that will recognise the need to raise the standards of training required in this specialist field, thereby -

Hopefully influencing the training provided by the educational and examining boards to meet our needs and, I suspect, the needs of others. At the same time we can encourage and offer our specialist facilities to outside educational establishments, so that they can make heritage come alive for new audiences, both at an academic and practical level. We are already promoting the work of the workshops by holding symposiums and festivals where people can view, understand and appreciate the contribution that Cathedral workshops are making to maintaining a small but very important part of this country's heritage.

In July 2006 we started the detailed work on the 4 year apprentice mason syllabus. We began with a clean sheet of paper (a rare treat these days!). What did we need in order to attain the standard we require? This work is still ongoing but I am happy to share with you the headings of the identified sections in the proposed 4 year syllabus. These are:

- 2 and 3D geometry, measurements and survey.
- Archaeology and a knowledge of historic buildings.
- Selection of stones, geology and quarrying.
- Architectural history and styles.
- Principles and methods of conservation of historic buildings.
- An insight into structural engineering.
- An understanding of Project Management.
- Fixing stonework in historic buildings and,

- Ornamental carving.

Each of the 8 cathedrals is responsible for the production of one of these elements of the syllabus. We meet in Worcester in May to further this important work. If all goes well we will launch a pilot syllabus in September. We hope the result of this enhanced training will be craftsmen and women who fully appreciate what is expected of them and what they are working with.

During the early part of our deliberations we became aware of the new Heritage NVQ. However, we wanted to continue our work without being influenced by this overdue initiative. As an aside I find it odd that this Heritage NVQ could have been produced without the involvement of cathedrals. You will realise that the general craft skills and knowledge needed for the training of cathedral masons does represent a considerable syllabus of education which at the moment is not satisfactorily provided by the present NVQ system. I am currently having useful conversations with Simon Holmes of the National Heritage Training Group in order to find out the detail contained in the Heritage NVQ. I hope that our needs will overlap with those contained in that syllabus. As I said earlier, we want to work with English Heritage and the other government agencies in order to maintain and hopefully raise training standards. In due course we will be seeking help with the accreditation of our new 4 year training programme for apprentice masons.

Any initial training must be validated by a coherent programme of further education following the apprenticeship. It is only with further education that we can truly maximise the benefits of early training. If we do this we stand a better chance of retaining our trained craftsmen. I am only

too well aware that there will always be a temptation of more money being offered for short term commercial work which removes skilled people from our workplace. However, in the ten years I worked at York we only lost one mason in this way.

So far I have managed to avoid the F word ie Funding! *In our experience there is never a shortage of craftsmen, only a shortage of people prepared to pay for craftsmanship.* This responsibility is a long term commitment, not a short term means to an incomplete end. All of us who work in cathedrals have to live with the uncomfortable irony that cathedrals are visited by thousands of people every year, contributing millions of pounds to both the local and the national economy. The allocation of even more of this revenue would go a long way to ensuring the maintenance of these precious buildings and the cost of the workshops that provide the required expertise. However, I do want to acknowledge the generosity of English Heritage over recent years through the Cathedrals Grants Scheme, and of course the HLF. The inclusion of money from the HLF for routine maintenance is to be welcomed. The Fellowship has also received a generous grant from the Worshipful Company of Masons.

The Cathedrals Workshop Fellowship is still in its infancy, but it has come a long way in a short space of time. We hope that the Fellowship will help to raise the profile of our workshops as centres of excellence. There is still much to do: accreditation, budget formation and the possible

need to secure charitable status to name but a few important areas of work. We also need to agree on a logo! Hopefully the results of our labours will be better trained craftspeople coming into the heritage sector, who have an understanding of conservation and who fully appreciate what is expected of them. Only then will the future of this country's heritage be safe in their hands.

In this uncertain world when cathedrals need to be as cost efficient as possible, whilst still providing a central point of worship and welcoming visitors with an interest in our heritage, the conservation and maintenance of these great buildings becomes increasingly important. We that are charged with this task need to be content that we have provided the best apprentice and development training that we can muster. We also need additional funding.

In summary, the Cathedrals Workshop Fellowship wants to work with all interested parties to raise the profile and status of skills training and education, recognising the essential role they play in sustaining the historic environment. *But all of us must not forget the overriding need to invest in the required skills training of individual craftspeople. They are the future, and they are the reason why we have all been here for the last two days.*