

SHROPSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST (Charity Number 101690)

Trustees' Report for the Year ended 31st December 2023

Objectives

The charitable objective of the charity is to apply the income and capital of the Trust to the repair, preservation and improvement of the buildings and contents of Shropshire churches and chapels of all christian denominations. This includes churches that are outside Shropshire but controlled by either of the Archdeacons of Salop and Ludlow. Many are 'listed' as being of architectural or historical importance.

Structure

The board of Trustees administer the charity under the terms of a Trust Deed. They meet quarterly to review the financial position and the value of the investments that support the reserves, and to consider grant applications. There must be a minimum of four and a maximum of twenty-five Trustees and the Archdeacons of Salop and Ludlow are 'ex-officio'. Trustees appointed are expected to have some knowledge of the structure of the Church of England and of other denominations and to support our ideals, and we seek as Trustees people whose experience complements that of the existing members of the board. The Charity's address during 2023 was Parkfields, Pontesbury Hill, Pontesbury, Shrewsbury SY5 0YH.

Trustees

The people holding office during 2023 were:

Mr Tim Bridges
Mr John Clark (appointed 20th July)
Mr John Cole
Revd Preb David Crowhurst
Mrs Caroline Dudley (resigned 18th April)
Mrs Anne Edge
Archdeacon Fiona Gibson
Mr David Hardham
Mrs Angel Hughes
Mr Roger Hughes
Mr Harvey James (died 8th May)
Mrs Rachel Pittaway (appointed 20th July)
Revd Canon William Price
Archdeacon Paul Thomas (resigned 24th March)
Mr Stephen Winwood

Activities

There was an Annual Members' Meeting providing an opportunity to hear about the Trust's work.

There were tours for members and their friends to tell them about the history and architecture of churches and chapels in Shropshire and adjoining counties. This year there were coach trips to Cheshire and Worcestershire in addition to two tours in Shropshire.

A lecture in Church Stretton on medieval stained glass in churches along the Welsh border was very well received.

We organised the annual Ride+Stride day in September (the Shropshire part of a national cycling and walking event) to raise sponsorship money from participants to support the Trust and to benefit the participants' nominated churches. We are grateful to the National Churches Trust for help with publicity for this event.

As in previous years we ran the Open Gardens scheme whereby throughout the summer single gardens or groups of gardens in a village or town forming a trail were opened to the public for the benefit of the Trust and local parishes.

Public benefit

The Trust benefits many churches and chapels, both large and small, with its grant aid. It helps ease the burden falling on those responsible for the repair and maintenance of many of Shropshire's fine churches and chapels. The county has a comparatively small population with many churches in remote areas, and the grants offered encourage these communities to embark on projects that may appear daunting.

The Trust is increasingly called upon to make buildings more welcoming and comfortable for both congregations and visitors by grant aiding, for example, projects for lighting, heating and access and for community facilities such as kitchens and toilets.

By arranging talks and visits the Trust encourages appreciation of our lovely churches and of their architecture, local history, stories and place in the landscape. These events help to promote a wider interest in heritage and the countryside.

Visitors to the gardens that are open as part of our programme enjoy their wide variety, the availability and sharing of readily given horticultural advice and knowledge, the sociability and the surroundings. All these factors contribute to the visitors' relaxation and wellbeing and to a happy atmosphere, and we were delighted to offer free entry to a number of Ukrainian refugees.

Ride+Stride encourages cyclists and walkers to visit churches other than their own and to enjoy going to different parts of the county. Many churches provide generous hospitality to participants.

Many volunteers help distribute the thousands of Gardens Open leaflets, assist in different ways at the gardens when they are open and many churches to welcome participants in Ride+Stride. They give their time willingly and enthusiastically for which we are extremely grateful.

The Trustees have given regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

Financial highlights

During 2023 the Trust has, through its fundraising efforts, been able to consolidate its financial situation and also to maintain previous levels of grant aid to churches.

Having a recruitment campaign through a mailing and a presence at Diocesan events produced a significant increase in church membership with 30 churches joining for the first time or renewing their lapsed membership and taking the total to 209. Plans were laid to in 2024 canvas more individuals to become members.

These membership subscriptions have contributed over £14,100 to Trust funds and we value the Gift Aid we can claim on individuals' subscriptions.

Our Gardens Open scheme raised a record amount of just over £39,000 which was shared between the Trust and the local churches. This beat the previous best figure by £13,300.

Ride+Stride also had its best ever year raising £37,000 and it was heartening to see twenty-two churches participating who raised money for the first time ever or had not done so for a long time, and as with membership subscriptions we appreciate the generosity of individuals who agree to the Trust claiming Gift Aid on their sponsorship.

The Millichope Foundation maintained its support for the Trust with a further donation of £5,000 and we were fortunate to receive another £700 from Savills towards the printing of the Gardens Open leaflets.

Our investments continue to perform satisfactorily.

Reserves

The policy of the Trust is, subject to market conditions, to reduce the level of reserves by up to £70,000 annually for the foreseeable future. This gives us additional funds with which to provide grants. Our reserves are geared to cover, at any given time, at least the total of outstanding grants payments and incurred overheads.

Grants

Grants paid in 2023 (related to awards made that year and in previous ones) amounted to £120,221. This figure varies each year according to when churches complete projects and submit invoices for payment. Grants outstanding (awarded but as yet unpaid) at the end of the year totalled £151,375.

For 2023 the Trustees reduced the maximum grant amount for any one church to £10,000 whilst retaining the right to exceed this figure in exceptional circumstances. This will enable us to help more churches than hitherto.

The twenty-two grants awarded in 2023 totalled £97,920, the highest being £10,000 (one only) and the lowest £500. They take into account the nature of the work (from both the architectural and historical viewpoints) and the viability of the church or chapel in the local community.

Besides the 'traditional' applications to remedy leaking roofs, rotten timbers and defective stonework we have considered requests for organ repairs, electrical improvements, repairs to bells, installation of kitchen and toilet facilities, clock repairs, conservation of family memorials and rebuilding of churchyard walls.

Without this help projects stretch the churches' financial resources and the grants support the Dioceses of Lichfield Hereford in the work they do to bring people into their churches.

As part of its policy of supporting churches the Trust increased from £2,500 to £4,000 its annual contribution to the funding of the Church Buildings Support Officer for Hereford Diocese. This is an English Heritage appointment and we are committed to it for a three year term.

Conclusion

The Trustees consider that the charity is in a sound financial position and well equipped to support this very important part of our heritage.



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John Clark
Chairman

Date: 9th October 2024



Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	1st January 2023	To	31st December 2023
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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Membership incl Gift Aid	14,333	-	-	14,333	18,509
Donations and Legacies	5,864	-	-	5,864	8,433
Garden scheme	19,254	-	-	19,254	13,938
Tours	3,327	-	-	3,327	1,800
Ride and Stride incl Gift Aid	30,955	-	-	30,955	26,836
Sponsorship	1,400	-	-	1,400	-
Interest on investments	16,310	-	-	16,310	17,856
Other	129	-	-	129	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	91,572	-	-	91,572	87,372
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
Withdrawal from Investment Fund	-	-	-	-	70,000
Sub total	-	-	-	-	70,000
Total receipts	91,572	-	-	91,572	157,372
A3 Payments					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Garden scheme	3,883	-	-	3,883	2,782
Tours	2,782	-	-	2,782	-
Ride and Stride - PCC share	14,356	-	-	14,356	10,819
Grants to churches	109,221	-	-	109,221	185,150
Trust expenses	8,091	-	-	8,091	9,880
Fund raising costs	106	-	-	106	-
Sub total	138,438	-	-	138,438	208,631
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	138,438	-	-	138,438	208,631

<i>Net of receipts/(payments)</i>	- 46,867	-	-	- 46,867	- 51,259
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	53,844	-	-	53,844	105,103
<i>Cash funds this year end</i>	6,977	-	-	6,977	53,844

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank Accounts	6,977	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	6,977	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
	Investment Funds	Unrestricted	-	581,699
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
	Accountancy fees 2022	Unrestricted	1,713	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
J.R. Clark	J. R. CLARK	11/10/2024
Lance Pittaway	LANCE PITTAWAY	11/10/2024

Independent Examiner's Report to the trustees of the Shropshire Historic Churches Trust (Charity registration number 101690)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Shropshire Historic Churches Trust for the year ended 31 December 2023 which are set out on pages 4 and 5.

Respective responsibilities of the trustees and examiner

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Charities Act'). The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently, no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair" view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which give me cause to believe that, in any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept as required by section 130 of the Charities Act, or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed



Malcolm Crawford CPFA
20 Rycroft Avenue
St Neots
Cambridgeshire
PE19 1DT

Date 8th September 2024