

BRIDGES

(Charity No. 1029169)

**Trustees Report & Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 December 2024**

BRIDGES

(Charity No. 1029169)

Trustees and Officers who served during 2024

TRUSTEES

Richard Dyson - Chair
David CW Stafford
Barbara Abel
Michael Musgrove - Secretary
Susan E Oldfield
Debbie Garden (from 22nd May 2024)

TREASURER

John Southworth

CENTRE MANAGER

Mary Perrett

DEPUTY MANAGER

Rachel Hobson (from 7th November 2024)

CENTRE COMMITTEE

Mary Perrett – Chair
Stella Bundred
Dot Francis
Jan Lewis
Marylynne Lolley
Chrissie Stephens
Dorothy Sutton
Judy Webb

CONSULTANTS

Ronald V Sutton
Dorothy Sutton

ADDRESS

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BRIDGES

(Charity No. 1029169)

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 December 2024

Objectives

BRIDGES was established as a registered charity in 1993. It purchased and refurbished a former chapel in the centre of the High Street, Edenbridge, Kent in order to fulfil its core purpose of running an ecumenical Centre for the benefit of the whole community.

Staffed by volunteers under the supervision of a paid manager, the BRIDGES Centre offers a familiar and accessible place for people to meet, a listening ear, friendship, rest and refreshment, with particular regard for the needs of parents with young children, the aged, the unemployed and those who are lonely or distressed. Its aim is to bring together all sections of the community to their mutual benefit as visitors or volunteers, without discrimination, and to 'bridge the gaps' in local provision that are not being addressed by existing statutory or voluntary agencies. To that end BRIDGES provides specialist advice clinics, which give local people access to information and services without needing to travel to larger towns.

BRIDGES aims to demonstrate Christian faith in action through creating a welcoming community where anyone can find, or be, a 'good neighbour'. It maintains a Christian ethos of inclusivity and service, and encourages people to develop their creative and practical abilities.

BRIDGES priorities are:

- to overcome social isolation and strengthen communities
- to co-operate with other local organisations
- to build a sense of worth in volunteers and visitors alike
- to help find solutions to pressing personal needs
- to encourage Christians in the practice of their faith
- to create sustainable communities both locally and globally
- to encourage understanding and tolerance between people of different faiths and backgrounds

BRIDGES is committed to implementing high standards of care to volunteers and visitors who are children or vulnerable adults and, additionally, to ensuring that its policies and procedures meet current legislative requirements. There have been no breaches of BRIDGES safeguarding standards reported to the trustees in 2024.

Organisational Structure

The Trustees met six times in 2024, to review strategy, policies and finance, and to receive reports from committees and working groups chaired by Trustees.

The BRIDGES Centre Committee (BCC), chaired jointly by the manager and a trustee, oversees the day-to-day running of the Centre on a daily basis. Volunteers become members of BRIDGES after a period of three months' service and, at the Annual Review, elect up to seven of their number to serve on the BCC.

Activities During 2024

During 2024-5, the combined efforts of BRIDGES' Trustees, Staff and Volunteers achieved significant expansion of the services BRIDGES provides in response to the needs of our visitors and the loss of facilities in our town. The cost-of-living crisis, cuts in public transport and the fact that much information is now only available online caused difficulties for many BRIDGES' visitors, especially those who are retired or care for young children. As its 30th anniversary approached, Trustees reviewed the management and structure of the charity, to update it for the digital age, and to delegate responsibilities among a larger staff team.

It was pleasing that Saturday morning opening had resumed by 19th April 2025, enabling BRIDGES' Manager to welcome many local residents to celebrate 30 years of providing hospitality, supportive friendship, and access to specialist services that otherwise would require journeys to larger towns. Saturday morning opening ceased in 2020 with Covid, which also

decimated BRIDGES' volunteer force. This year the persistent efforts of BRIDGES' Manager bore fruit as the number of volunteers topped 50 once more.

BRIDGES' mission continues to build up community networks, bring in professional sources of help, and encourage social activity, so that feelings of isolation and lack of resources are addressed locally, making life altogether more manageable for many.

The Trustees' strategy review in March 2023 identified that BRIDGES would need more paid staff to sustain the level of service which, pre-Covid, had been achieved with volunteers. After three unfruitful advertisements, BRIDGES eventually appointed a Deputy Manager in Nov 2024, and by March 2025 a Communications Officer and a Kitchen Supervisor had joined the Centre's leadership team. These new posts assist the Manager in providing stability and continuity of service to the public. BRIDGES now opens Mon-Sat throughout the year, while online publicity has improved local engagement with the Charity.

BRIDGES' core strength lies in the dedicated team work of staff and 50-60 volunteers, whose friendship provides a social life for regular visitors and newcomers to our growing town. Trustees have sought to expand their number to fill skills gaps. They have reviewed and updated BRIDGES' policies, and sought advice on the long-term maintenance of the listed 1805 building with a view to improving its resilience to climate change.

Notable additions to BRIDGES' services this year include

- Compaid's weekly provision of free personal tuition in digital skills, teaching people how to book appointments online, make a food order on a mobile phone, or email relatives on a tablet. This voluntary service has been a great boon to those who had previously struggled to master their mobile phone.
- Crosslight's Debt Advice volunteer increased his sessions from 1 to 2 days per week – a sad reflection on our times.
- BRIDGES' Lego Club received funds for a second year of free sessions for children aged 8-12. It is especially rewarding for some who struggle at school to see their creations on display.
- "Edenbridge Crafters" enjoy various types of handwork on Tuesdays 2-3pm,
- BRIDGES Bookshelf added a novel interactive dimension with residents who donate books to be read over coffee, or borrowed, or bought!
- Three young people doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award joined the volunteers on Saturdays and in school holidays.
- The Saturday Markets provide outlets for selling craft work, jams, cakes and bric-a-brac. May's Plant Sale was particularly popular with newcomers to gardening.

Several longstanding volunteers retired from active service this year, but return as visitors!

Dandelion Café, supporting those living with dementia, was interrupted by the organiser's ill health, and the closure of a local residential home, but resumed early in 2025.

Narcotics Anonymous moved its sessions temporarily to Hurst Green, but hopes to return to BRIDGES in 2025.

The local churches piloted a Bereavement Café in Marsh Green, which expects to move to BRIDGES' more central location.

Friday's Place of Welcome attracts about 20 regular visitors for an informative talk, tea and chat. A Music session for pre-school children is in the pipeline for 2025.

Trustees are deeply grateful to Kent Community Foundation, the Great Stone Bridge Trust, Sevenoaks District Council, Edenbridge Town Council, local churches, Drake Oil Syndicate, Edenbridge Bonfire Society and many local organisations and individuals for their financial and practical assistance to BRIDGES. The Annual Quiz Night, Plant Sale, Pre-loved Clothing sale, donations from regular supporters, and unanticipated legacies to BRIDGES, have contributed significantly to BRIDGES' financial sustainability. The Trustees also take this opportunity to thank everyone whose financial donations have helped BRIDGES meet the huge increase in Utility prices this year.

Financial Results

The 2024 accounts saw the finances of the Trust remain stable, with income from the Centre, donations and fundraising broadly unchanged in total, while successful grant applications were slightly down. The Trust saw net income after expenditure down, reflecting in part higher staffing costs, with the recruitment of a new Deputy Manager. Overall, the Trust generated a surplus of £5,753 (2024: £12,293). The detailed 2024 financial statements are set out on pages 7 to 8 that follow.

Reserves Policy

It is an objective of the Trustees to set a financial plan each year and to ensure that operating costs are covered annually by the receipt of income from the Centre, together with donations, grants and fundraising activities.

The Trustees believe that the charity should hold in unrestricted reserves a sufficient cushion of funds to enable it to:

- a) meet the cost of exceptional expenditure that may be incurred from time to time on major maintenance or improvements to the BRIDGES Centre and/or
- b) continue to exist in a period of reduced income and, should it be necessary, to cease to operate and wind up in an orderly fashion.

The Trustees consider the desirable level of reserves for this purpose to be one year's operating costs and £30,000 for the building repairs and plan to generate annual operating surpluses in order to build reserves to this level, without impairing the quality of services provided. At 31 December 2024, the Trustees' unrestricted reserves of £73,844 less £30,000, i.e. a net £43,844 represented 81% of the operating costs.

Investment of funds surplus to immediate requirements

The Trust Deed allows the Trustees to invest surplus funds in securities of whatsoever nature as the Trustees shall in their absolute discretion think fit. Interest rates have continued to be historically low and it has been challenging to find deposit rates that yield reasonable returns, whilst at the same time maintaining an acceptable risk profile.

Statement of Trustees Responsibilities

Under the Trust Deed of the charity and charity law, the Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' annual report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations. The financial statements are required by law to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the excess of income over expenditure for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, generally accepted accounting practice entails that the Trustees:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and the Statement of Recommended Practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- state whether the financial statements comply with the trust deed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are required by law to act in accordance with the trust deed of the charity, within the framework of trust law. They are responsible for keeping proper accounting records, sufficient to disclose at any time with reasonable accuracy, the financial position of the charity at that time, and to enable the Trustees to ensure that, where any statements of account are prepared by them

under section 132(1) of the Charities Act 2011, those statements of accounts comply with the requirements of regulations under that provision. They have general responsibility for taking such steps as are reasonably open to them to safeguard the assets of the charity and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the BRIDGES Trust (Charity No. 1029169)

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31 December 2024, which are set out on pages 1 to 6

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (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;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act) and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with 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 the 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

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act;
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

D Bellwood

The Bridges Centre
Financial Activities Comparison
January - December 2024

	Centre	Restricted	Total	
			Jan - Dec 2024	Jan - Dec 2023 (PY)
Income				
1 Bridges Cafe				
10 Sales	30,126		30,126	27,496
11 Purchases	- 8,926		- 8,926	5,424
Total 1 Bridges Cafe	21,200		21,200	22,072
2 Centre Hiring Charges	3,586		3,586	3,579
3 Donations	9,182		9,182	6,095
4 Tax recovered				909
5 Fundraising and Events	3,029		3,029	5,164
6 Grants	13,368		13,368	13,773
7 Grants - Dandelion		3,729	3,729	8,814
8 Grants - Place of welcome				2,802
9 Grants Creative cafe		3,005	3,005	3,071
90 Grants - Kent Community	10,500		10,500	6,000
91 Bank Interest	566		566	745
Total Income	61,431	6,734	68,165	73,025
Expenditures				
12 Utilities	10,262		10,262	12,102
14 Repairs and Maintenance	1,542		1,542	1,187
15 Insurance	2,506		2,506	2,399
16 Cleaning costs	1,557		1,557	1,197
21 Staff Costs	31,777		31,777	28,999
22 Office/General Admin	349		349	236
24 Marketing	546		546	1,349
25 Stationery				35
26 Sundries	323		323	82
27 Training				349
28 Cafe equipment	5,208		5,208	280
30 Dandelion		7,259	7,259	8,814
31 Creative Art Workshops		1,008	1,008	3,071
32 Crosslight				500
33 Creative kids				20
40 Bank charges	75		75	112
Total Expenditures	54,145	8,267	62,412	60,732
Net Income/(Expenditure)	7,286	-1,533	5,753	12,293

The Bridges Centre

Balance Sheet

As of December 31, 2024

	TOTAL	
	AS OF DEC 31, 2024	AS OF DEC 31, 2023 (PY)
Fixed Asset		
Tangible assets		
Freehold Property	215,000	215,000
Furniture and Fittings	6,094	6,094
Total Tangible assets	£221,094	£221,094
Total Fixed Asset	£221,094	£221,094
Cash at bank and in hand		
CAF 60 day deposit account	10,130	10,130
CAF 60 days notice GOLD ACC	16,328	18,897
CAF current account	3,706	451
CAF deposit	0	0
Cash on hand	30	30
Journal bank account	0	-200
Lloyds	39,447	36,974
Total Cash at bank and in hand	£69,641	£66,282
Current Assets		
Investments	8,143	8,174
Prepayments	1,800	1,800
Total Current Assets	£9,944	£9,975
NET CURRENT ASSETS	£79,585	£76,256
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year		
Current Liabilities		
Unspent grants	0	2,424
Total Current Liabilities	£0	£2,424
Total Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	£0	£2,424
NET CURRENT ASSETS (LIABILITIES)	£79,585	£73,832
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	£300,679	£294,927
TOTAL NET ASSETS (LIABILITIES)	£300,679	£294,927
Charity funds		
Fixed Asset Fund	221,082	221,082
Restricted Funds	0	0
Retained Earnings	0	0
Unrestricted Funds	73,844	61,551
Surplus/(Deficit)	5,753	12,293
Total Charity funds	£300,679	£294,927

