

Charity number: 511905

Church Stretton and South Shropshire Arts Festival

Report of the Trustees and Accounts

31 August 2024

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Church Stretton and South Shropshire Arts Festival

Report of the trustees for the year ended 31 August 2024

The Trustees present the annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2024. The Trustees are satisfied with the performance of the charity during the year, consider that the charity is able to continue its activities during the coming year and that the charity's assets are adequate to fulfil its obligations.

Objects and activities of the charity

Extract from the Constitution of the Arts Festival

"The objects of the festival shall be to promote, improve, develop and maintain public education in the furtherance of the following objects: appreciation of the arts and sciences of music, opera, ballet, drama, film, literature, painting, drawing, photography and sculpture in all their aspects by the presentation of public concerts, performances, arts exhibitions and in such other ways as the festival Committee shall from time to time determine."

Strategic aims of the Arts Festival

1. To hold a festival in and around Church Stretton run by volunteers with a core of major high-quality events to include concerts, drama, talks, poetry, art, crafts, photography, workshops and other creative and artistic endeavours.
2. To retain a core offer while annually having some experimentation such as new types of art, event or performer so that the Festival –
 - remains vibrant and interesting;
 - adapts to changing tastes; and
 - provides a continuing attractive offering for regular and first-time attendees.

Activities – 2023-24

The Trustees are satisfied with the planning and delivery of the 2024 Festival which took place between 26 July and 10 August inclusive. The Festival, as in earlier years comprised three elements:

- An art, crafts and photography exhibition running for almost the entire two weeks
- A series of nine free concerts - six "coffee concerts" in the first week and three organ recitals in the second
- Eleven ticketed events spread over the two weeks. This was deliberately a smaller number than in 2023. In reviewing the 2023 Festival, the Committee decided that offering 15 ticketed events in that year, while successful in terms of ticket sales and audience feedback, had brought undue pressures on some Committee members and others involved. The Committee agreed that offering 10 or 11 ticketed events is more feasible.

During the year, the Committee benefited from new members. This introduced new skills experience and ideas. The Committee also commenced the steps to convert the current, unincorporated charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

Achievements and performance

The Committee was very pleased with the reception given to the Festival:

- The exhibition had over 1300 visitors over the two-week period who viewed over 1000 entries, with sell out workshops and a very well-attended portrait painting demonstration
- Six of the 11 ticketed performances were sold out or almost sold out
- Attendance at the free concerts was particularly good

As in 2023, the main venues used were St Laurence's Parish Church, the Parish Centre, St Lawrence Primary School, the Silvester Horne Institute (SHI), and Concord College. The Committee is very pleased to continue its long-term relationship with the Primary School and is always grateful for being able to use the excellent theatre at Concord College. In 2024, the Committee was delighted to work with the owners of Acton Scott Hall to host a family outdoor theatre event. This was blessed with fine weather, sold out and very well received. Another departure was a success: offering two popular music events with dancing to a live band. The talk was moved to the evening; it is clear that talks work better when held during the afternoon as in earlier years.

With the benefit of a critical learning review of the 2023 Festival, significant changes were made to how volunteers were recruited and deployed to plan and deliver the ticketed events and free concerts. This introduced many changes (differently structured roles and responsibilities) which the Committee knew would import risk. The new arrangements largely worked well; there are learning points to refine how these roles work together and are planned for future years.

Structure, governance and management

Governance

The Festival is governed and managed by a Committee who are volunteers. The Committee draws on the huge experience, enthusiasm and commitment of more than 60 volunteers who come together to demonstrate that the Festival is an event run by the community for the community.

The Charity has no employees or any contractors. No payments other than reimbursement of travel and incidental costs incurred by trustees were made to the trustees.

Trustees/Committee

The trustees of the charity during the year ended 31 August 2024 were:

Shanthi Flynn
Andrew Hall (Chair)
Sue Mitchell (Secretary)
Andrew Robinson (Treasurer)
Rosamund Seal
Kath Stephenson
Claire Tocknell
Adam Matthews

The Committee recruits trustees by means of advertising in the local "Stretton Focus", developing interest among volunteers and members and seeking expressions of interest at Festival events.

In addition to the trustees, the Committee also benefited hugely from the presence and contribution made by three invitees: Graham Cossins who brings invaluable advice, guidance and input on a wide range of "technical" matters; Catherine Thomas who led on popular music events and Gloria Partridge who led on marketing until she had to stand down in April 2024 for personal reasons.

Charity structure

During the year, the Committee decided to move the charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) structure to reduce the financial and legal exposure of the trustees which is associated with the current, unincorporated charity structure. This decision will be enacted through formal processes to start in autumn 2024. A CIO should reduce these risks, help attract future trustees and enable the charity to continue on a more resilient basis.

Risk

The Committee wishes to record its very warm thanks to all those who have contributed to the Festival in any way including the members of the Festival – without such support and commitment, the Festival simply would not happen. The Committee is very well aware that it relies on the huge input, enthusiasm and skill of a few key people. This remains a continuing risk and the Committee continues to address this in various ways.

Following the review of the 2023 Festival, the risks to which the charity is exposed were addressed. It was clear that some volunteers were being asked to carry unnecessary responsibilities as regards first aid and fire evacuation: the Festival had previously decided to provide “cover” beyond what was specified by venues. The new arrangements are fully compliant with terms and conditions of hire and have worked well. Furthermore, in 2023, one lead role at events was hugely overloaded and brought undue pressures on an individual. This year, those responsibilities have been spread among several volunteers and again have generally worked well.

The fragility of the Festival team this year was well demonstrated; two people occupying lead roles were either unwell or suffered a family issue causing them to withdraw temporarily during the Festival. One other volunteer suffered an accident. All these absences were covered by others who willingly and generously gave extra time or were immensely flexible. These examples illustrate this key risk but also show the amazing commitment of everyone who gives their time to the Festival.

Reference and administrative details

The full name of the charity is: Church Stretton and South Shropshire Arts Festival
Registered Charity number: 511905

Financial review

The Charities Acts require the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity as at the end of the financial year and of the surplus or deficit of the charity. In preparing those financial statements the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent: and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business;
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material change.

The Trustees are also responsible for maintaining adequate accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and which are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Acts. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. The Committee has agreed a reserves policy and aims to maintain reserves at the agreed level of £40,000.

The Festival does not have any grant income from either local or national sources.

The charity achieved a net surplus on the year of £11,300. A small working surplus is essential as the Festival has to meet some costs upfront each year ahead of generating any income. The charity's reserves stand at £56,200 compared to £44,900 at the end of 2022-23 financial year.

These results are very rewarding –

- there were fewer ticketed events than 2023 but the uptake of tickets was generally strong
- donations from the free concert series were very high at almost £3,000
- sponsorship exceeded the target at £5,600
- the exhibition produced a net surplus of £5,800, the best result for over the last decade especially bearing in mind that in 2019 and earlier years, the exhibition did not bear premises hire costs as they were accounted for the whole Festival which then was largely based at the Secondary School

The Committee wishes to thank warmly the following Festival sponsors: Acton Scott Hall and Estate, Meryl Austin, Berry's Coffee House, Burway Books, Continental Fireplaces, Mike and Jennie Cooper, Entertaining Elephants, Howard Franklin, Albert Gallon, Jemima's Kitchen/Victoria House, Matthew Mills Graphic Design, Netley Jall, PCB Solicitors, Peppers, Peter Jennison Memorial Trust, Saxtons Deli, September Books, Alan and Elaine Stockbridge, Roger and Margaret Stokes, Stonemasons of Church Stretton, Stretton Business Network, Stretton Print and Supplies, Tanners Wines, The Central Garage, The Green Dragon, John R Thomas Florist, Vine & Co, Wenlock Water, Wrights Estate Agents. A sponsor who wishes to remain anonymous made a substantial contribution.

The Committee is very grateful to all those who gave a donation at the end of the free concerts. The generosity of the audiences was amazing.

This report was approved by the Trustees on 10th April 2025.

The financial accounts and the Independent Examiner's report follow.

Independent Examiner's report on the accounts

Report to the trustees of Church Stretton and South Shropshire Arts Festival

On accounts for the year ended 31st August 2024

Charity Number 511905

Set out on pages 2 to 3

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31st August 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

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 gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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

Ruth Whiting

Ruth Whiting of RLW Accountants
Chartered Accountant
Castle Green, Ludlow Road, Little Stretton, Church Stretton, Shropshire SY6 6RB
10th April 2025

**Church Stretton and South Shropshire Arts Festival
Receipts and Payments Accounts
for the year ended 31 August 2024**

	2024	2023		2024	2023
	£	£		£	£
Receipts			Payments		
Festival			Festival		
Ticket sales	27,914.41	30,125.19	Artists fees and expenses	20,603.58	21,558.24
Free concerts	2,837.02	2,252.00	Free concerts	412.89	232.77
Refreshments	2,700.00	2,780.50	Refreshments	3,458.88	2,425.30
CD's and books	400.00	270.00	PRS	1,369.12	1,719.11
			Piano	1,318.00	1,630.00
			Hire of premises	1,855.80	2,465.00
Exhibition			Exhibition		
Exhibition Entry	1,778.00	1,660.00	Payments to exhibitors	17,034.52	15,881.12
Exhibition fees	1,115.00	1,071.00	Hire of premises	1,440.00	1,440.00
Exhibit sales	21,293.15	19,844.40	Other exhibition expenses	1,699.14	1,373.68
Workshop fees	2,100.00	2,555.00	Workshop expenses	900.00	1,660.00
Refreshments	305.10	371.10	Refreshments	259.19	183.13
Donations	-	83.00			
General			General		
Donations	206.00	245.00	Publicity	4,396.22	8,135.12
Sponsorship	5,685.00	4,455.00	Programmes	367.45	164.18
Grant	-	-	Administration	761.93	590.74
Gift Aid	804.18	659.79	Insurance	879.70	681.32
Bank interest	239.45	92.04	Ticket source fees	-	2,387.22
Membership	777.50	660.00	Free transport	30.00	30.00
Sundry	-	-	First Aid	-	417.71
			Equipment	-	3,465.60
	<u>68,154.81</u>	<u>67,124.02</u>		<u>56,786.42</u>	<u>66,440.24</u>
Surplus for the year	<u>11,368.39</u>	<u>683.78</u>			

**Church Stretton and South Shropshire Arts Festival
Statement of assets and liabilities
as at 31 August 2024**

	2024	2023
	£	£
Cash funds		
Festival current account	23,339.52	16,482.31
Art exhibition current account	9,869.27	4,731.18
Paypal	1.83	1.83
Virgin Account	23,066.67	23,010.00
	<u>56,277.29</u>	<u>44,225.32</u>

The assets of £56,277.29 (2023 £44,909.10) includes an amount of £30,000 (2023 £30,000) deemed to be an emergency fund.

Signed on behalf of the trustees on 10th April 2025

A Hall
Chairman

A Robinson
Treasurer