

# **The New Mechanics Institution Preservation Trust Limited**

## **Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 May 2021**



The Trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with a financial overview of the charity for the year ended 31 May 2021.

The Trust is a Registered Charity No. 1048961. Its activities are governed by and set out in the Memorandum and Articles, which are available to members on request.

The Trust is also a Company, Registered Company No. 3059960 (England and Wales)

### **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

The Trust's Primary objectives remain:

- The preservation of the built heritage (of particular historical, architectural or constructional interest)
- The development and operation of facilities for the education, recreation or other leisure time occupation in the interests of social welfare
- The promotion and provision of activities supportive of community development, and of regeneration and renewal

### **Charitable activities**

The immediate working projects of the Trust are:

- Progressing the ownership, restoration and management of the derelict Mechanics' Institution building for the benefit of the townspeople of Swindon
- Managing the Central Community Centre
- Neighbourhood renewal initiatives in the interest of Swindon residents within the Railway Village and surrounding neighbourhoods
- Opening the Bakers Arms (a former public house) as a community space
- To develop the Railway Village Museum as a visitor attraction for local people and visitors

- To progress plans for the restoration and reuse of the Cricketers (a former public house) as a community resource
- To promote the Heritage Action Zone status awarded to the Railway Village

## Achievements

The main achievements during the 2020-21 Financial year can be summarised as follows

### *1 The Mechanics Institution*

In summer 2018, Forefront Estates Limited reclaimed ownership of the Mechanics building. Since then, it has remained unclear what the owner's intentions, if any, are for the building. In order to find a solution for the Mechanics' Institution, a working party was established which includes representatives from the Trust, the Theatre's Trust, Historic England (HE) and key council officers.

Working alongside Swindon Borough Council, the Trust commissioned consultants, Fourth Street, to carry out a Viability study on potential future uses for the building. This was possible thanks to grant funding by grants from the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) and the Theatres Trust. The final viability study and the results of the conditions survey were published in March 2020.

The viability study showed that the best option for the future use of the building was as a multi-purpose space with a mixed programme of community and cultural programming (including the restoration of the theatre), underpinned by commercial hires. Following the publication of the report, at the Swindon Borough Council Cabinet meeting in April 2020 approval was granted to the council's offers to prepare paperwork for a Compulsory Purchase Order for the building.

During the financial year, progress was slow due to national lockdowns and furlough of key team members. However, thanks to grant funding from Historic England, the Council completed a hazardous materials survey on the building in autumn 2020. This will be followed up with a full structural survey. The Mechanics remains a priority project for Historic England and is a key feature of the Swindon Heritage Action Zone

### *2 Central Community Centre*

The Trust continues to manage the Community Centre which serves a broad range of community groups and local companies, as well as a pre-school (based at the centre). During 2020 and 2021 the government introduced a series of national and local lockdowns due to the global Coronavirus pandemic. The Community Centre was closed periodically in accordance with government advice. When the centre was allowed to safely reopen, the larger meeting space was well used. The Board were extremely grateful to the hard work and flexibility of staff during this period, including additional cleaning responsibilities and making the centre safe and welcoming. In summer 2020 the Trust's registered office was moved from the Health Hydro to the Community Centre.

### *3 The Bakers*

The flat has been continually occupied during the entirety of this financial year.

In March 2020 the café closed due to the global pandemic. Volunteers continued to tend the café's community allotment and maintained an online blog with gardening tips to continue to engage customers while the café was closed.

In May 2021 the Board reviewed plans for the operation of the Bakers. In the uncertain climate of a global pandemic, the Board recognised the challenges including financial risk of reopening as a café. In the short term, it was agreed to operate the building as a community space for hire, to ensure community use and access to the building was retained. This decision did not prevent a return to operation of the building as a café in future. The Board agreed to a regular and systematic review of the business operation and to wider consultation with members and the public.

#### *4 Heritage Action Zone*

In 2019 Swindon became the second town in the South West to achieve Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) status from Historic England. The Trust is a partner in the Swindon HAZ and continues to work with the appointed Project Manager on the scheme's projects, including the Mechanics Institute building and The Cricketers.

#### *5 The Cricketers*

In March 2020, the Trust commissioned a due diligence exercise from Fourth Street, which reviewed early proposals for the Cricketers. These included a part residential use, with community space on the ground floor.

Fourth Street was subsequently commissioned to develop the proposals and outline business plan with Donald Insall Associates Architects and Ian Walker Associates Quantity Surveyor. This work was delayed by the global pandemic, as staff were placed on furlough. The Trust continued to work with Swindon Borough Council, architects and surveyors to review the plans, as part of the pre-application process for Planning and Listed Building Consent, and to work towards the development of a major grant application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

#### *6 Railway Village Museum*

Due to national lockdowns and the small size of the building, the Museum remained closed during the 2020 season. In summer 2020 the Museum and volunteers featured in a new programme *The Architecture the Railway Built* broadcast on national television.

The Trust continued during this financial year to plan for safe reopening, with the aim of reopening at the latest by Heritage Open Days weekend in September 2021. During the closure period, maintenance needs were reviewed, and the Trust continued to work towards an application for Museum Accreditation.

#### *7 Community Engagement*

Thanks to funding from Nationwide Building Society and the High Sheriff Award via Wiltshire Community Foundation, the Trust was able to run a creative summer youth project in August 2020. Places were funded for up to 48 young people aged 12-17 to attend and try activities from

podcasting, film-making and circus skills. Following national lockdowns, this offered young people a socially distanced but welcoming space to relax, socialise, develop new skills and get creative.

The grant also funded a Creative Christmas Party, run digitally via Zoom with young people in December 2020. Christmas activity packs were sent to the young people in advance of the Zoom call and the response was positive. Online youth work is new for the Trust and advice was sought from the Wiltshire Community Foundation to support this.

## **TRUSTEES**

Trustees are elected by the members at each Annual General Meeting, as detailed in our Memorandum and Articles. Additional Trustees may be co-opted during the year by a majority vote by the existing members of the Board.

The Trustees of the Charity as of 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021 were:

Chair: David Thackray

Secretary: Katie Knowles

Treasurer: Sally Cole

Donald Brunwin

John Stooke

Helen George

## **Recruitment and appointment of new trustees**

During the financial year, the Board appointed Helen George as a Trustee. The Board also co-opted Bob Wright as a Trustee.

The Trustees would like to thank Christopher Carlton and Martha Parry, who stood down as trustees during this period. Particularly thanks is recorded to Martha for long service and hard work as a founding trustee and member of the Board for over 25 years.

Recruiting new Trustees remains a priority for the 2021-22 Financial Year.

## **Membership**

Membership remained consistent during the financial year. The Trust also registered as a recipient of the Swindon Community Lottery, which raises funds for local causes.

## **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

### **Reserves Policy**

It remains the Trust's Policy to achieve a situation where we can maintain a monthly cash balance to cover our core operating costs for the following three months.

Since March 2020, a global pandemic and subsequent national and regional lockdowns have forced the Trust to periodically close its buildings in line with government advice. The Board agreed to maintain reserves where possible but accepted that the unprecedented lockdown situation and closure of buildings might require the Trust to draw on these reserves.

The Board was extremely grateful to receive Business Support Grant Funding (Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund) for the Community Centre, Baker's Café and Museum during 2020. The Trust also made use of the government furlough scheme for staff.

### **Staff**

The Trust had two part-time members of staff, employed on a temporary basis; Facilities Officer and Bookings Officer at the Central Community Centre.

We also have project funded roles and consultancy contracts.

## Statement of Financial Activities

The Board was very grateful for the generous support of grant funders in what has been an immensely challenging and uncertain financial year due to the pandemic. This included grants from the Wiltshire Community Fund, National Lottery and Business Support Grant Funding (Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund) administered through Swindon Borough Council.

## Financial Statement

### Income

Income from Charitable Activities	£25,874
Grant Income*	£110,647
<b>Total</b>	<b>£136,521</b>

*\*this includes £8,413 in government grants (Covid Grants & Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme)*

### Expenditure

General Charitable Activities	£33,292
Special Projects in this Financial Year*	£24,863
<b>Total</b>	<b>£58,155</b>

*\*this includes work on The Cricketers and community engagement work (Youth Project)*

### Net Income / Expenditure

The Trust made a net income of £78,366 in this period.


### Comparison to previous Years

	2021	2020	2019
Income	<b>£136,521</b>	£146,981	£109,069
Expenditure	<b>£58,155</b>	£98,975	£112,678

## DECLARATION

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees

Signature		
Full name	Dr David Thackray	Sally Cole
Position	Chair of Trustees	Treasurer
Date	14 February 2022	14 February 2022

**REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 3059960 (England and Wales)**

**REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1048961**

**Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of  
The New Mechanics Institution Preservation Trust Limited**

**Independent examiner's report to the trustees of The New Mechanics Institution Preservation Trust Limited ('the Company')**

This report is for the charity trustees which explains my examination of the accounts of the Company for the year ended 31 May 2021.

**Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity's trustees of the Company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

The accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission.

**Independent examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination and can confirm that no matters have come to my attention in giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act 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; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities [applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 105)].

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