

The New Mechanics Institution Preservation Trust Limited

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 May 2022



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 2022.

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
- Developing the Railway Village Museum as a visitor attraction for local people and visitors
- Progressing plans for the restoration and reuse of the Cricketers (a former public house) as a community resource
- Promoting the Heritage Action Zone status awarded to the Railway Village

Achievements

The main achievements during the 2021-22 Financial year (1 June 2021 – 31 May 2022) 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 Theatre's 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, the Council completed a Condition Survey on the building, to assess the current condition of the exterior and interior. The report, which is expected in autumn 2022, will include updated estimates for the potential costs of refurbishment. 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 2021 the government introduced a series of national and local lockdowns due to the global Coronavirus pandemic. In this financial year, when the Community Centre was permitted to safely reopen, the meeting spaces were 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.

3 The Bakers

The flat has been continually occupied during the entirety of this financial year. Maintenance and improvement works were also carried out.

In May 2021 the Board reviewed plans for the operation of the Bakers, following the café closure in May 2020 due to the pandemic. 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.

During the financial year the Bakers was well-used as a community space by a variety of groups, from lunch clubs and toddler groups to social events and private hirers. The Trust also opened the Bakers periodically as a pop-up café to support wider events and community engagement activities. The Board continued to seek community feedback on the future of the building and liaise with potential partners.

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

This remains a high priority project for the Trust. 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 but the Trust continued to work with Swindon Borough Council, architects and surveyors to review the plans and to work towards the development of a major grant application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

In spring 2022 planning and listed building consents were granted. The Trust has adopted a phased approach to the refurbishment, starting with exterior works to the roof, guttering and stonework to make the building watertight. The Trust began tendering for a contractor in summer 2022 and the work is expected to start in autumn 2022.

In April 2022 the Trust met with a community regeneration charity which had expressed interest in leasing the ground floor. Their activities would involve running community events, workshops and craft activities, subject to lease negotiations.

6 Railway Village Museum

The Museum reopened for Heritage Open Days in September 2021, following 18 months closure due to national lockdowns. During the closure period, the Trust did some necessary maintenance work and continued to work towards eligibility for Museum Accreditation. Over 400 visitors attended the reopening in September 2021, with volunteers also running free heritage tours of the Railway Village area. The Trust resumed regular monthly openings of the museum, as well as organising several visits with local school and heritage groups during the financial year. The Trust recruited and trained new museum volunteers and continued to build relationships with other Swindon museums.

7 Community Engagement

Despite challenges with lockdowns, the Trust continued to provide safe and welcoming spaces for community groups, including young people, to relax, socialise, develop new skills and get creative. The reopening of the Bakers as a community space and grant funding from the Mid-Shires Coop enabled the Trust to provide access to lunch clubs and other activities. Growing community engagement activities remains a priority for the Trust in 2022, with plans to recruit a new member of staff to enable this.

TRUSTEES

Trustees are elected by the members at each Annual General Meeting, as detailed in the 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 May 2022 were:

Chair: David Thackray

Secretary: Katie Knowles

Treasurer: Sally Cole

Robert Barrett

Donald Brunwin

Helen George

Robert Wright

Recruitment and appointment of new trustees

During the financial year, the Board appointed Robert Wright and Robert Barrett as Trustees. The Board also co-opted Abigail Rockett as a Trustee.

The Trustees would like to thank John Stooke, who stood down as a trustee during this period. The Board particularly recognised his contribution as lead trustee for the Bakers and his excellent publication on the Mechanics building.

Recruiting new Trustees remains a priority for the 2022-23 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, which among other things resulted in the loss of room hire income as well as impacting community engagement activities. 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.

Staff

The Trust had two part-time members of staff during this period, employed on a temporary basis; Facilities Officer and Bookings Officer at the Central Community Centre. In May 2022 the Trust advertised for a Grants & Project Manager role.

Statement of Financial Activities

The Board was very grateful for the support of grant funders in what has been another challenging and uncertain financial year due to the pandemic. This included grants from the School for Social Entrepreneurs (Heritage Trade Up Programme) and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (Covid Recovery).

Financial Statement

Income

Income from Charitable Activities	£41,831
Grant Income	£15,784
Total	£57,615

Expenditure

General Charitable Activities	£61,496
Total	£61,496

Net Income / Expenditure

The Trust made a net loss of £3,881 in this period.

Comparison to previous Years

	2022	2021	2020
Income	£57,615	£136,521	£146,981
Expenditure	£61,496	£58,155	£98,975

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	2 May 2023	2 May 2023

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 2022.

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)].

Emma Goodwin FMAAT
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