



THE FRIENDS OF ABINGDON CIVIC SOCIETY

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REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2019

The Trustees present their Report and Accounts for the period from the Society's registration as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 14th May 2019 to the 31st December 2019

- 1) The Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with the United Kingdom Charity Commission under registration number 1183397. Its governing document is a Constitution dated 8th May 2019
- 2) The Society's registered address is 18 Thames Street, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 3HZ
- 3) The Society was registered as a charity on May 14th 2019
- 4) The objects of the Society are:
For the benefit of the people of Abingdon-on-Thames
 - To promote high standards of planning and architecture
 - To educate the public in the geography, history, natural history, culture and architecture of the area
 - To secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features or areas of historic or public interest

Examples of the ways we seek to achieve these objects are:

- Organising events and publishing articles to foster civic pride and promote the civic life, heritage and environment of the town
- Monitoring and commenting on planning applications and lobbying the relevant authorities to encourage high standards of historic conservation, planning and development worthy of the town's civic tradition and character
- Contributing in whatever way we can to help make Abingdon a great place to live, work and visit

- 5) The Trustees who served during the period were:

Hester Hand (Chair)	Appointed May 8 th 2019
Caroline Bullock	Appointed May 8 th 2019
Keith Butler (Secretary)	Appointed May 21 st 2019
Bobbie Nichols	Appointed May 8 th 2019
Olga Senior (Treasurer)	Appointed June 11 th 2019

6 Summary of the Period's Activities

The Society was set up in autumn 2019 as one of two organisations which would take over the activities and assets of the Friends of Abingdon, a charity which had existed since 1954 but which had decided to wind up. It was agreed that it would register as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and that registration was approved on 14 May 2019.

- i. **Governance** - The initial three Trustees met to create the governance structure, appoint a Chair, determine what other Trustees were required and allocate responsibilities. Volunteers were invited from the membership and two additional Trustees were appointed to the roles of Secretary and Treasurer; a Committee comprising the Trustees and 4 others was set up to manage the general activities of the Society. During the period the Trustees met 5 times to deal with governance matters and there were 4 meetings of the full Committee.

It was agreed that, following the initial set-up period, the Committee would meet bi-monthly and routine governance matters would be dealt with in those. Separate Trustee meetings would be set up as and when required. The AGM would be held in May: as required under the Constitution all Trustees would stand down but could make themselves available for re-election. (Note: the AGM was postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions.)

A bank account and financial approval arrangements were put in place, insurance was set up and a Privacy policy set up and publicised to members.

- ii. **Finance** - The Society's share of the assets of the former charity was £10,000 and this was transferred to our account in November-December 2019. A grant of £9,400 was received from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Heritage Festival. The bank balance at the end of the period was £9,455: full details are in the accounts.
- iii. **Membership** – the Society has c.300 members who had been members of the former Friends of Abingdon charity. Just over half of these are life members. The Committee has considered how to engage and inform the membership of the Society's activities, and it was agreed that having quarterly members meetings with a speaker or speakers would be tried and allow time at these for members' questions. The first of these was held in November 2019 and was well attended. Communication with members is also maintained through a regular newsletter.

The Society is a member of the national organisation for Civic Societies which gives access to the experience of other similar groups and to information about national developments in the areas of planning and development.

iv. Public Benefit

- **Planning** – the Committee is fortunate to have several members with extensive experience of planning issues and the Society has thus monitored planning applications in the area and made submissions and comments where appropriate, with the aim of preventing developments which we believe would be detrimental to the town’s character or vibrancy or to the wellbeing of residents in general.
- **Conservation** – Society members have made a major contribution to an appraisal of one of the Town’s Conservation Areas. This work is ongoing.
- **Community Freespace** – the Society has obtained a licence to operate a “freespace” for the use of community groups in a vacant shop unit. The unit is well-used by a wide variety of community groups.
- **Heritage Festival** – as part of the national Heritage Open Days, the Society organised Abingdon’s commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the return of the town’s service personnel in 1919, including an exhibition and screenings of a film from the period and a 1919-themed family day on the Saturday; there were also open properties and guided walks . The exhibition ran over the course of a week and attracted over 1300 visitors and the family day about 800.

- v. **Relations with Town and District Councils** - the Committee agreed that the Society should be a “critical friend” of the Councils. In September 2019 the Society was one of several groups who gave a presentation on its work and purpose at the Town Council meeting and offered to work in partnership on certain projects or activities.

Hester Hand

On behalf of the Trustees of Friends of Abingdon Civic Society

September 2020