



THE FRIENDS OF ABINGDON CIVIC SOCIETY

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023

The Trustees present their Report and Accounts for the period from 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023

- 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, re-appointed 24 May 2023
Caroline Bullock	Appointed May 8 th 2019, re-appointed 16 June 2021

Keith Butler (Secretary) Appointed May 21st 2019, re-appointed 24 May 2023
Sue Killoran Appointed March 18th 2022
Bobbie Nichols Appointed May 8th 2019, re-appointed 9 June 2022
Olga Senior (Treasurer) Appointed June 11th 2019, re-appointed 9 June 2022

The Trustees are supported by a wider Committee with members working on our various activities and projects.

6) Summary of the year's activities

- i. **Governance** – The Committee (including Trustees) met on five occasions during the year; the Trustees held one additional meeting to discuss strategic issues.
- ii. **Finance** - The bank balance at the end of the period was £11,133: full details are in the accounts.
- iii. **Membership** – the Society has c.244 members, with over half being life members. The Committee has continued to try to engage and inform the membership of the Society's activities via regular e-newsletters

iv. **Public Benefit**

Planning – the Committee is fortunate to have members with extensive experience of planning issues and the Society has 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. Members have also attended meetings with developers and councillors about the large-scale developments to the North of the town.

Conservation – Society members have continued to contribute to the Conservation Area Appraisal for the Albert Park area.

Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan – Society members have continued to contribute to the preparation of this.

Heritage Open Days – as part of the national scheme, the society led the organisation of the town's Heritage Weekend. The theme was "Creativity unwrapped" and there was a wide range of events in the Market Place, St Nicolas Church, the Abbey Buildings and elsewhere. There were the usual guided walks and a special exhibition featuring the Abingdon Missal, a book written and

illustrated by monks in the 15th Century. Particularly pleasing this year was the involvement of Abingdon School and other local groups such as Abingdon Artists and Flower Club

Photographic archive – following discussions with the Historical Society it was agreed to set up a project to create a publicly accessible digital archive of historical photos of the town. This project is now well advanced and the first batch of images will shortly be available to view online.

Upper Reaches – there is great disquiet in the town about the state of the derelict Upper Reaches Hotel site, both in relation to the very unfortunate impression it gives to those arriving in the town and to the serious problems of anti-social behaviour taking place there, causing distress and danger to local residents. Also, one of the buildings is listed and the site is in the Conservation Area and adjacent to the Abbey Buildings Scheduled Monument. The Society meets regularly with senior officers from the District Council which has resulted in some improvements to the site, but there has been little progress on the underlying issue of its future use.

Walks – the collection of nine self-guided leaflets illustrating walks around the town based on a variety of themes has been enormously popular and two more leaflets are currently being created, one a Poppy Walk and the other based on pubs in the town, some of which are no longer in existence. We also ran two successful programmes of guided walks, one at the May Bank Holiday and one at Heritage Weekend.

Unit 24 – during the year the Society was granted a short-term licence to occupy on a rent-free basis the former H Samuels shop in the Bury Street precinct, which had been empty for some time. This high-profile site has since been used as a focal point for numerous community uses including Heritage weekend, by the Carbon Cutters for apple pressing and repair workshops, the Woodcarvers, the local PCSOs for drop in sessions and the VWHDC for exercise classes. Following the success of the site the Society requested a licence to occupy the site for a further two years again on a rent-free basis, and this has been granted.

Hester Hand

On behalf of the Trustees of The Friends of Abingdon Civic Society

June 2024