



## REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2021

The Trustees present their Report and Accounts for the period from 1st January 2021 to 31st December 2021

- 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 8th 2019, re-appointed 7 October 2020
Caroline Bullock	Appointed May 8th 2019, re-appointed 16 June 2021
Keith Butler (Secretary)	Appointed May 21st 2019, re-appointed 16 June 2021
Bobbie Nichols	Appointed May 8th 2019, re-appointed 7 October 2020
Olga Senior (Treasurer)	Appointed June 11th 2019, re-appointed 7 October 2020

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

## 6 Summary of the year's activities

- i) **Governance** – The Committee met on seven occasions during the year, with all but the last two meetings of the year being held via videoconferencing owing to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ii) **Finance** - The bank balance at the end of the period was £10,770: full details are in the accounts.
- iii) **Membership and members' meetings** – the Society has c.251 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, but owing to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, no in-person members' meetings could take place.
- iv) **Strategy Review** – following the 2020 membership survey the Committee met in February and March to discuss how we should focus our activities in future. We concluded that, in addition to our ongoing work on Planning and Conservation, we should identify a number of projects – some of which would be in collaboration with other like-minded groups. We should publicise these well in order to raise our profile and hopefully attract new members by giving people the opportunity to contribute to activities they are interested in. Subsequently we met with the Historical Society to discuss ways of working together. There is more information about projects below.

### v) 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.
- *Conservation* – Society members have continued to make a major contribution to the Conservation Area Appraisal for the Albert Park area.
- *Neighbourhood Plan* – the Society was represented on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and many members contributed to consultations

### vi) Projects

- *Heritage Open Days* – as part of the national scheme, the Society took a leading role in organising the town's Heritage Weekend. The theme was "Edible England" 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 two new self-guided trails one called "History on a Plate" and one around the site of the former Workhouse. Feedback on the event was excellent and around 1,000 people took part.
- *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. Work on this is now under way and it is hoped in due course to extend it to include photos from many organisations and individuals.
- *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 raised these concerns with the District Council and although little progress was made during 2021, discussions are now under way and some action is being taken.

- *Community Freespace* - the licence for the former premises ended in September 2020. The Trustees felt that the project had made a significant contribution to community life in the town and were keen to find an alternative once the pandemic was over: this did not prove practicable during the year, but we continue to keep the situation under review.

vii) **National Organisations**

The Society is a member of Civic Voice, 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. It is also a member of the Historic Towns and Villages Forum. Both bodies arranged a number of low-cost streamed events during the year which proved very useful and informative.

**Hester Hand**

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

**1 June 2022**