

53. Managing Trustees of John Wesley's New Room and Charles Wesley's House, Bristol

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John Wesley's New Room is facing significant pressures on its financial sustainability.

Increasing our levels of income generation and our targets for fundraising will be vital to secure its future as an accessible heritage site. The rise in cost of living and overall economic climate, particularly for the arts and heritage sector has seen a struggle in maintaining healthy profit margins and reaching necessary levels of visitation within the past year. We appreciate the support of the Bristol District, Methodist Heritage, and other partners in recognising the ongoing challenges we face, and we continue to address the deficit through maximising income generation opportunities drawn from our vision and mission:

Our Mission is to be a heritage site where people come in, and go out renewed.

Our Vision is to use our historic collection and other resources to bring to life the story and legacy of the Wesleys, offering space for curiosity, reflection, and enjoyment to all.

Since the appointment of Louise Wratten and Kate Rogers as Co-Directors in April 2022 necessary steps have been taken to improve organisational resilience through ensuring the new vision and mission are adopted in every aspect of the operation, as well as creating a five year forward plan and implementing a seasonal approach to programming. We are currently in the process of reviewing our governance policies. We intend to review the approach to our trustees' length of service and adopt a skills register.

Louise and Kate remain responsible for their roles as Operations Manager and Collections Manager respectively. Kate and Louise continue to engage with trusted networks, including Visit West, Broadmead BID and Heritage Services in Bath. Kate continues on the Bristol Museums group steering committee.

In August 2022 following his sabbatical, David Worthington took up the position of Director of Global Relationships in order to develop and strengthen our relationships with international audiences, particularly those across the United States. In April 2023 David undertook a series of speaking engagements in Florida to raise our profile and generate income through donations. We consider David's role in this area to have the potential to be profitable to our wider UK Methodist Heritage partners.

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Staff Appointments

In July 2022 we appointed Fiona Blades in the new role of Visitor Experience Officer. We recognise it is vital for any visitor attraction to provide a good welcome and experience for visitors. This position enables us to ensure the smooth running of our day-to-day activity. In November 2022 we appointed Sereena Knapp as our Marketing and Communications Officer following the resignation of Cyril Babeev. Sereena comes with a wealth of experience in marketing strategy and has a passion for engaging with the local community.

Heritage Site and Property Development

Within the last year we have seen the successful move of our admission desk to the ground floor atrium, and the adoption of a new visitor route, which has increased the value of an admission ticket through the inclusion of access to the pulpit and gallery. New signage reflecting our refreshed branding has improved wayfinding for visitors. Further changes have included: the development of a new temporary exhibition space supported by funding from South West Museum Development; developing creative volunteering opportunities for young people through a funded community project entitled 'Reaching In, Reaching Out'; and launching a seasonal programme of 'experience' events has helped us engage with a new audience. Our education programme continues to reach new schools across the Bristol District and beyond, with the offer of subsidised places available for disadvantaged students through the Tippett Fund. It is our understanding that John Wesley's New Room is now offering the largest education programme of any Methodist Heritage site in the country. We continue to provide a regular space for worship at our Friday Communion services organised by our Chaplains. In addition, we hold special events, such as carol services, and a special service for Wesley Day. After 43 years of service as our Director of Music, Philip Carter has resigned. We would like to extend our thanks for his dedication and commitment to the role.

John Wesley's New Room remains a space open to all and often engages in providing pastoral care for those seeking comfort or spiritual direction. In addition, we increasingly provide a resource for churches to hire us as a venue to inspire their congregations for worship and evangelism.

Building maintenance issues, the need for additional volunteers and the interpretation of our heritage offer are the primary challenges we currently face in sustaining a publicly accessible operation. We are working towards addressing these challenges within our forward plan through increased marketing, volunteer recruitment drives and ongoing fundraising efforts.

With the expansion of our commercial operation we see a number of challenges, including our capacity for hospitality, staff resource and the restrictive nature of the

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chapel pews. We are sensitively addressing the issue of pews and their potential barrier to our development with ongoing conversations with the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee (LBAC) following their concerns regarding our Conservation Management Plan.

In terms of property development we have seen the completion of our plans to redevelop and expand rental capacity at 5 Charles Street (neighbouring Charles Wesley's House), thereby increasing the valuation of the connexional property. The significant sum of £120,000 has been drawn from reserves in this financial year to fund the one-off refurbishment costs of 5 Charles Street. Our investment in the building has enabled us to offer rooms to seven tenants who moved into the refurbished building over Christmas 2022. We continually assess the implications of utility bills and impact of energy prices. Ongoing building maintenance issues remain which often incur high expenditure.

Changes to Policy

In March 2023 the trustees agreed to delegate consent for the provision of alcohol at New Room events to the Co-Directors, with an annual review. The sale of alcohol is restricted to the Visitor Centre and Courtyard. No alcohol is to be consumed in the Chapel. The current procedure for events is to apply for a Temporary Event Notice (TEN) to allow for the sale of alcohol on the premises. The Co-Directors will seek guidance from the Methodist Church before applying for a permanent alcohol licence, in accordance with CPD Standing Order 922 (3A).

Following the Methodist Conference decision to enable same-sex marriages, the trustees have approved and completed the registration of John Wesley's New Room for same-sex marriages. Our first same-sex marriage ceremony took place in the Chapel on Monday 1 May 2023.

The trustees board in 2022-23 at John Wesley's New Room consisted of the following members:

John Savage CBE	Chair of Trustees
Linda Jones	Secretary
Geoffrey Gollop	Treasurer
The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler	Secretary of the Methodist Conference
The Revd Dr Jonathan Pye	Chair of the Bristol District
The Revd Prof Teddy Kalongo	Superintendent of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit
The Revd Josette Crane	Chaplain to John Wesley's New Room
The Revd David Weeks	Chaplain to John Wesley's New Room
Gary Best	Trustee and Historical Consultant
Wendy Allen	

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Jane Allin
The Revd A Ward Jones
Niall Philips
Michael Rose
Aroona Smith

The staff team at John Wesley's New Room consists of the following members:

Kate Rogers	Co-Director – Collections (FT)
Louise Wratten	Co-Directors – Operations (FT)
David Worthington	Director of Global Relationships (0.4 FTE)
Mandy Briggs	Education Officer (FT)
Graham Wilson	Finance Officer (0.4 FTE)
Julia Smith	Fundraising Officer (0.4 FTE)
Sereena Knapp	Marketing & Communications Officer (0.4 FTE)
Fiona Blades	Visitor Experience Officer (FT)
Ewa Littlefield	Catering Manager (FT)
Zdenek Bidsovsky	Assistant Café Manager (FT)
Gelila Ephrem	Catering Assistant (0.5 FTE)
Michael Borrow	Charles Wesley's House Cleaner (0.15 FTE)

Financial Summary

The financial summary for the year to 31 August 2022 is shown below. This reflects a deficit for the year of £178,845 which is a significant sum relative to our reserves.

It reflects firstly a decision by the trustees to invest in the fabric of Charles Wesley's House and the neighbouring property to enable us to generate higher rental income in the future.

Secondly it reflects an anomaly of the financial circumstances we find ourselves in. Because all freehold property has to be owned by the Connexion, all the £90,000 plus money spent on the improvements have to be written off in the year they are spent, rather than treated in our accounts as a valuable improvement which probably increased the value of the property by more than the spend.

It is important to note that the investment was a deliberate policy by trustees, and that further similar investment in staff and property is the only way for John Wesley's New Room to become financially sustainable. Being forced to write off these improvements annually will restrict our ability to develop.

The Statement of Financial Activities is here presented to the Conference in summary.

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The full statement, including the notes, is available from the Conference Office if any member of the Conference wishes to see it.

The New Room/John Wesley's Chapel		Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2022						
	Notes to the accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted)	Designated Funds (unrestricted)	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2021-22		
		£	£	£	£	£	£	
Income								
1	Donations, Legacies and Grants	123,612	-	3,000	-	126,612		
2	Charitable Activities	51,053	-	-	-	51,053		
3	Other Trading Activities	132,497	-	-	-	132,497		
4	Interest and investment income	5,349	-	-	-	5,349		
5	Other	1,337	-	-	-	1,337		
6	Total income	313,848	-	3,000	-	316,848		
Expenditure								
7	Raising Funds	146,271	-	-	-	146,271		
8	Charitable Activities	324,033	-	-	-	324,033		
9	Other	-	-	-	-	-		
10	Total charitable expenditure	470,304	-	-	-	470,304		
11	Gains/(losses) on monetary investments	(1,398)	-	(5,735)	(18,256)	(25,389)		
12	Net income/(expenditure)	(157,854)	-	(2,735)	(18,256)	(178,845)		
13	Transfers between funds	150,051	(30,000)	(120,051)	-	-		
14	Other gains/(losses)	-	-	-	-	-		
15	Net movement in funds	(7,803)	(30,000)	(122,786)	(18,256)	(178,845)		
16	Total funds brought forward	299,161	65,823	166,052	170,288	701,324		
17	Total funds carried forward	291,358	35,823	43,266	152,032	522,479		

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***RESOLUTIONS

53/1. The Conference receives the Report.

53/2. The Conference appoints the following as the Managing Trustees for the New Room for 2023/2024:

- (i) The Secretary of the Conference or a nominated substitute: the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler
- (ii) The Chair of the Bristol District: the Revd Dr Jonathan H Pye
- (iii) The Superintendent of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit: the Revd Teddy Kalongo
- (iv) Mr John Savage CBE (Chair), Mrs Linda Jones (Secretary), Mr Geoffrey Gollop (Treasurer), the Revd Josette Crane (Chaplain), the Revd David Weeks (Chaplain), Wendy Allen, Mrs Jane Allin, the Revd A Ward Jones, Mr Niall Philips, Mr Michael Rose, Mrs Aroona Smith.
- (v) The Revd Ivan Fowler, retired United Reformed Church minister (subject to full management trustee board approval in July 2023).

Reasoned Statement

The Revd Ivan Fowler is a retired United Reformed Minister living locally who brings a wealth of skills and experience beneficial to John Wesley's New Room. As a landlord he has experience in tenanted property management. As an organist and historical organ enthusiast he has a passion for music. He also volunteers at St George's, Bristol, for musical events and is enthusiastic about the schools programme.