

10. John Wesley's New Room

Contact Name and Details	Kate Rogers collections@newroombristol.org.uk
Resolution	10/1. The Conference receives the Report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 John Wesley's New Room has taken necessary steps to reduce its financial deficit. The security of our future sustainability continues to be precarious and close monitoring of all aspects of our operation ensures we remain responsive.
- 1.2 In August 2023, the Trustees made the difficult decision to make the following roles redundant; Visitor Experience Officer, Fundraising Officer, Director of Global Relationships, and Finance Officer. The management of finances has been outsourced to an external company. Elements of the other roles have been disseminated amongst the existing staff team.
- 1.3 In December 2023, Mr John Savage resigned as Chair of Trustees having served John Wesley's New Room for five years. We express our thanks and gratitude to John for his loyal service and the wealth of business acumen which he brought to the role. Vice Chair, the Revd Dr Jonathan Pye, is currently acting as Chair of Trustees whilst we enter into a period of recruitment for a new Chair of Trustees. Trustees remain committed to supporting the organisation through this period of change and a sub-committee has been formed to assist in the recruitment process.
- 1.4 Increasing our levels of income generation is vital in our aim of becoming a thriving heritage site in the centre of Bristol. Whilst it is encouraging to see visitation steadily increasing, visitor spend is not as high as previously hoped. Profit margins are good, however, we remain confined by a limited maximum capacity and low staffing resource.
- 1.5 Co-directors Louise Wratten and Kate Rogers have led the organisation through a period of significant adjustment seeking to address the balance between prioritising commercial activity and remaining true to our vision to offer a welcoming space of community. Our vision and mission are fundamental in providing a focus and motivation when navigating through the pressures of financial uncertainty:

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

10. John Wesley's New Room

***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.*

2. Staff Appointments

- 2.1 In January 2024 Ho Huang joined the staff team as a part-time Marketing and Communications Officer, following the departure of Sereena Knapp. Promotion of our offer and ongoing activity is an essential tool in engaging with our existing audience and attracting new audiences.
- 2.2 In July 2023 we appointed Shehani Wijethunga as a part-time Café Assistant, and in October 2023 Donna Light joined the café team as part-time Café Assistant, both 20 hours a week. We are currently recruiting for a Catering Supervisor following the resignation of Zdenek Bidsovsky.
- 2.3 David Worthington finished in his role as Director of Global Relationships at the end of January 2024. A financial agreement is in place to cover expenditure for his March fundraising trip and speaking engagements tour of the United States. Evaluation to determine the viability of subsequent trips will be carried out following his latest trip. David will continue to maintain a relationship with John Wesley's New Room as an Ambassador on an ad-hoc, freelance basis providing group tours when staff and volunteer resource is limited.

3. Heritage Site and Property Development

- 3.1 Within the last year we have seen the refurbishment of our café interior, addressed a number of property maintenance issues and celebrated our engagement with young people through community led workshops culminating in an exhibition.
- 3.2 In the first week of January 2024, the site closed to the public in order to carry out maintenance, digital filing, and refurbishment of our café interior. Work took place to change the lighting, seating and cushions, and to add additional pictures and shelving. Responses to the new interior have been overwhelmingly positive, with visitors commenting that they felt the space was more cosy and inviting.
- 3.3 Our Property Steward, Mike Rose, has been addressing temperature, humidity and ventilation issues within our collections spaces, water ingress, and damp at Charles Street. Additional issues around heating and the visitor centre lift

10. John Wesley's New Room

breaking have impacted trade, but both have been resolved. A quinquennial inspection carried out at the end of 2023 has revealed a number of works needing to be carried out. Only a few items listed have been deemed urgent. The Operations Committee continues to meet monthly to discuss the financial implications brought about through sustaining a publicly accessible operation in grade listed historic buildings. Ongoing building maintenance issues remain which often incur high expenditure, as well as the need to assess the implications of utility bills and impact of energy prices.

- 3.4 The two-year 'Reaching In, Reaching Out' project, which received £20,000 in funding from Arts and Health South West in 2022, came to a close culminating in the delivery of a community led exhibition designed in collaboration with artists and young people. After four workshops and three dedicated days of installation, a launch event was held in January to which young people involved in the project were able to bring their families. Each young person and artist has a piece on display including a written description about an object from the museum which has inspired them. The whole exhibition is called 'Connexions', a reference to the way that John Wesley spelled the word and the 'connections' which have been made throughout the project. There is a number of funding possibilities to be followed up and Julie Matthews from our partner creativeShift is hoping that we can work together on more workshops in the future.
- 3.5 Priorities for 2024 include the recruitment and training of front of house volunteers in time for welcoming international visitors by peak tour season in April/May. As our commercial offer increases and we accommodate more evening events to include the serving of alcoholic drinks, it will be imperative that we register as a licensed premises.
- 3.6 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. Having registered as a place where the marriage of same-sex couples can be celebrated, we have now held two weddings and one blessing of same-sex couples as well as hosting the annual Christians at Pride service supported by the LGBTQI+ community and allies from partner churches across the ecumenical spectrum. 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.

10. John Wesley's New Room

4. Changes to Policy

- 4.1 The trustees approved the updating of a new Safeguarding policy in line with the latest recommendations from the Methodist Church.

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

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| 5.1 | Kate Rogers | Co-Director – Collections (FT) |
| | Louise Wratton | Co-Director – Operations (FT) |
| | Mandy Briggs | Education Officer (FT) |
| | Ho Huang | Marketing & Communications Officer (0.4 FTE) Fixed term contract |
| | Ewa Littlefield | Catering Manager (FT) |
| | <i>Position Vacant</i> | <i>Café Supervisor (FT)</i> |
| | Donna Light | Catering Assistant (0.5 FTE) |
| | Shehani Wijethunga | Catering Assistant (0.5 FTE) |
| | Michael Borrow | Charles Wesley's House Cleaner (0.15 FTE) |

6. Financial Summary

- 6.1 The statement of financial activity for the year to 31st August 2023 is appended below. The Trustees recognised that the expenditure levels reflected in 2021/22 and 22/23 were not sustainable and as noted in the first 2 paragraphs above agreed to reduce expenditure on staffing whilst also looking to develop income streams. This financial statement does not reflect the staff changes which were implemented after the year end, which have significantly reduced running costs and resulted in management accounts now showing a performance much closer to break even.
- 6.2 The deficit for 2022/23 financial year was largely attributable to a decision by the trustees to invest in improving the rental property at 5 Charles Street with the intention of significantly increasing the rental income generated. This involved a loss of rental income as well as a significant financial outlay. As the property is owned by the Conference, all the expenditure must be written off in the year it is incurred, rather than over the useful life of the asset. This inevitably results in an immediate reduction of the General Reserves.

10. John Wesley's New Room

- 6.3 The Trustees continue to believe that careful management of our activities and targeted expenditure to help generate income is the way we have to proceed but we will be constrained by the limited amount of available reserves and the pressures of maintaining historic listed buildings.

The New Room/John Wesley's Chapel

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2023

	Notes to the accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted) £	Designated Funds (unrestricted) £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Total 2022-23 £
Income						
1	Donations, legacies and grants	2	119,641	-	-	119,641
2	Charitable activities	3	36,396	-	10,500	46,896
3	Raising funds	4	201,135	-	-	201,135
4	Interest and investment income	5	7,193	-	1,263	12,409
5	Other	6	1,797	-	-	1,797
6	Total income		366,162	-	11,763	395,378
Expenditure						
7	Raising funds	7	338,951	-	115	339,500
8	Charitable activities	8	174,195	35,823	1,414	211,432
9	Other		-	-	-	-
10	Total charitable expenditure		513,146	35,823	1,529	550,932
11	Gains/(losses) on monetary investments		(557)	-	3,346	2,789
12	Net income/(expenditure)		(147,541)	35,823	10,234	6,865
13	Transfers between funds		5,017	-	(1,498)	(3,519)
14	Other gains/(losses)		-	-	-	-
15	Net movement in funds		(142,524)	(35,823)	8,736	3,346
16	Total funds brought forward		292,191	35,823	43,266	152,032
17	Total funds carried forward		149,667	-	52,002	155,378

***RESOLUTION

- 10/1. The Conference receives the Report.