

RETREAT HOUSE CHESTER

England & Wales - Charity number 1163330

Details

Status Registered

Legal form CIO

Registered 2015-08-27

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address Mission House
Cornwall Street
Chester
CH1 3JD

Phone 07745 624323

Email admin@retreathousechester.co.uk

Website www.retreathousechester.co.uk

Activities

Objects: THE OBJECT OF THE CIO IS TO ADVANCE THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC MAINLY, BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY, THROUGH THE PROVISION OF FACILITIES, EDUCATION, TRAINING AND PERSONAL SUPPORT TO ENABLE THE EXPLORATION AND EXPERIENCE OF SPIRITUALITY.

Activities: Retreat House Chester offers 'retreat in the city'. We run non-residential retreat and retreat-related activities, to make the many benefits of retreat available and accessible to as many people as possible: retreat time, workshops, talks & courses rooted in Christian spiritual tradition; personal support; & resources.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services
- **What:** Religious Activities
- **Who:** The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Cheshire West & Chester

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£6,290	£2,861	-	-
2024-03-31	£8,283	£20,485	-	-
2023-03-31	£21,619	£27,083	-	-
2022-03-31	£25,802	£20,142	-	-
2021-03-31	£26,558	£19,004	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
REVD PAUL TOWNER		2018-02-15
Rev Colin Edward Mansley		2022-11-01
Rev ROBERT FRANK CROFT		2022-11-01

RETREAT HOUSE CHESTER

England & Wales - Charity number 1163330

Accounts

Retreat House Chester

Trustees' Annual Report & Accounts

for the year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

registered charity number 1163330
(Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

Contents

	page
1. Charity Information	2
2. Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 March 2025	3-5

Charity Information

registered charity name

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Retreat House Chester

Mission House

Cornwall Street

Chester

CH1 3JD

contact information

email: admin@retreathousechester.co.uk

website: www.retreathousechester.co.uk

trustees (at 31 March 2025)

Rev Robert Croft (Chair from 12 October 2023)

appointed Nov 2022 for three years

Rev Preb Paul Towner (Chair to 11 October 2023)

appointed Feb 2018 for two years;

reappointed Feb 2020 for two years;

reappointed Feb 2022 for three years.

Paul also took on the role of treasurer from November 2023.

Rev Colin Mansley

appointed Nov 2022 for three years.

Charity structure, governance and management

We are a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), governed by Constitution. Trustees are appointed by serving trustees. We hold a risk register and comprehensive policies. Our attention to regulatory requirements and good practice is thorough.

Charity objectives and activities

‘The object of the CIO is to advance the Christian religion for the benefit of the public mainly, but not exclusively, through the provision of facilities, education, training and personal support to enable the exploration and experience of spirituality.’

In our planning of events and activities through the year, as trustees we have in mind the Charity Commission’s guidance on public benefit. The main activities of 2024-25 have been retreat days, conversation groups, creative workshops, walks in and around the city of Chester, meditation, book clubs, and church retreats.

Except for events online, our events have been in either public spaces or bookable public facilities. This continues to reflect a more outward looking approach since leaving the offices in Abbey Square in November 2023. We continue to strengthen our connections and partnerships through our own events or shared events, typically with local churches.

At its simplest, we say that Retreat House Chester is a grassroots not-for-profit community venture inspired and driven by local people and working to offer retreat as an essential part of living for everyone. We promote retreat in everyday living for all. This was the need we saw at our foundation in 2015, and it continues to be our motivation today.

Our roots are in Christian spiritual tradition and our ecumenical character in line with that of Churches Together in Britain & Ireland. We are a member organisation of the Retreat Association and of Cheshire West Voluntary Action. We are glad of the networks this provides, enabling us to work with other retreat providers and other local charities. An ongoing connection to – and participation in – both our faith community and wider community is essential to our work.

We work with the general public – as individuals, as faith groups, as marginal groups and at outside events. We believe the work of retreat nurtures resilience in individuals and, importantly, in communities, through improved well-being, improved relationships, engaging conversation, and re-imagining of personal and communal perspectives.

Charity achievements and performance – our year

After the transition of 2023-24, and working with our own Next Steps Group designed to generate a more comprehensive programme from August 2024, we were able to offer monthly WCCM Meditation, conversation groups - including eight 'Still' sessions, walks around the city of Chester, a labyrinth, a meditative river pilgrimage, two 'Soulful Saturdays' with guest speakers, and an Advent church retreat.

Over the period April 2024 to March 2025, we held and administered regular trustee meetings – six in all.

During the year we changed our registered address, from 9 Abbey Square, to Mission House, Cornwall Street, Chester CH1 3JD.

Charity financial review

The steps we took over the course of 2023 and following have moved our income into a healthy balance with expenditure. We have faced the challenges that we continue to explore in learning how to reduce the organisational and financial demands of running our small charity while also concentrating on expanding our work of 'retreat as part of everyday living'.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Income	£26,558	£25,802	£21,619	£8,283	£6,290
Donations +Gift Aid	£10,985	£18,576 *	£11,526	£5,809	£5,390
Grants	£13,095	£5,770	£6,000	£0	£0
Programme	£2,478	£1,456	£4,083 **	£1,852	£889
Room hire	£0	£0	£10	£0	£0
Other	£0	£0	£0	£622	£11

* includes a single donation of £10,000 (2021-22)

**refers to ticket sales only; donations which came via programme events total £1194.70 and are included in donations figure

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Expenditure	£19,004	£20,142	£27,083	£20,485	£2,861
Premises	£ 5,961	£ 6,197	£ 6,470	£3,421	£0
Marketing+Fundraising	£616	£735	£1,774	£736	£581
Programme	£12,427	£13,210	£18,838	£14,877	£1,309
Assets incl. refurb	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other	£0	£0	£0	£1,452	£971

SUMMARY OF FUNDS	31/03/25	31/03/24
unrestricted – general	£10,569	£7,041
restricted	£0	£0
<i>National Lottery Community Fund</i>	<i>£0</i>	<i>£0</i>
<i>Marjory Boddy Trust</i>	<i>£0</i>	<i>£0</i>

Conclusion

We know from our own extensive surveys and from other research that the work we do makes a difference in people’s lives. We want to further develop the ways to reach people so that they deepen their lives in ways that are authentic and rooted.

The challenge of 2025-26 is to re-establish our rhythms in delivering events and to broaden their range of appeal so that we are increasingly inclusive, both within and beyond the church.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees’ Report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity’s trustees

Signature

full name Robert Croft, Chair of Trustees
date 28 January 2026

signature

full name Paul Towner, Treasurer
date 28 January 2026

signed copy held by the Chair of Trustees

To 31/3/2025

income for year		
friends	4520.5	
donations	150	
ticket sales	889.36	
gift aid	720	
other	11	
total		6290.86
outgoings for year		
venue hire	674	
speakers	350	
costs of sk	285.26	
admin	265	
bank charge	60.8	
web site	580.87	
insurance	644.28	
total	2861.21	

Retreat House Chester
Annual summary 01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025

RETREAT HOUSE CHESTER

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Retreat House Chester
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Contents

	page
1. Charity Information	2
2. Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 March 2024	3-6

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9 Abbey Square

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reappointed Feb 2020 for two years;
reappointed Feb 2022 for two years.

Paul also took on the role of treasurer from November 2023.

Mrs Carol Bayliss

appointed May 2019 for three years;
reappointed May 2022 for two years.

Dr Claire Egan

appointed Oct 2020 for three years;
reappointed Oct 2023 for one year.

Rev Colin Mansley

appointed Nov 2022 for three years.

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‘The object of the CIO is to advance the Christian religion for the benefit of the public mainly, but not exclusively, through the provision of facilities, education, training and personal support to enable the exploration and experience of spirituality.’

In our planning of events and activities through the year, as trustees we have in mind the Charity Commission’s guidance on public benefit. The main activities of 2023-24 have been retreat days, conversation groups, creative workshops, walks in and around the city of Chester, one-to-one spiritual accompaniment, meditation, book clubs, and church retreats.

During the course of the year, we have shifted from ‘on-site’ events in our own leased premises to ‘off-site’ events in either public spaces or bookable public facilities. This shift reflects a more outward looking approach to our work, and will likely result in more ‘partnership events’, often with churches or through our Reflective Chester community project.

At its simplest we say that Retreat House Chester is a grassroots not-for-profit community venture inspired and driven by local people and working to offer retreat as an essential part of living for everyone. We promote retreat in everyday living for all. This was the need we saw at our foundation in 2015, and it continues to be our motivation today.

Our roots are in Christian spiritual tradition and our ecumenical character in line with that of Churches Together in Britain & Ireland. We are a member organisation of the Retreat Association and of Cheshire West Voluntary Action. We are glad of the networks this provides, enabling us to work with other retreat providers and other local charities. An ongoing connection to – and participation in – both our faith community and wider community is essential to our work.

We work with the general public, as individuals, as faith groups, as marginal groups and at outside events. In the main, our work has been with people who come from ‘within’ churches. Increasingly, we have been working with people who come from ‘beyond’ church settings.

We believe the work of retreat nurtures resilience in individuals and, importantly, in communities, through improved well-being, improved relationships, engaging conversation, and re-imagining our leaned perspectives.

Charity achievements and performance – our year

The 2022-23 report noted that, having created a 3-year Plan by the summer of 2022, the start of 2023 brought the challenge of a changing environment for Retreat House Chester (RHC) – as for other charities – with rising costs, rising needs, and reduced resources and funds. It also noted a coming watershed moment, namely the expiring of the lease on our rooms in Abbey Square in November 2023.

As 2023-24 unfolded it became increasingly apparent that our income would not sustain our leasing of rooms and paying of two part-time staff. The 2022-23 'Time to Grow' appeal had been disappointing and continued so in 2023-24.

Unfortunately, the expiry of our rooms' lease coincided with a period of significant change for Chester Cathedral, from whom the rooms were leased. We explored alternative provisions with the cathedral but felt too much uncertainty, not least because of the timing and scale of their own proposed changes in accommodation, running through to 2028.

In July 2023 the trustees decided to give formal notice in August to end the lease agreement for Abbey Square on 16 November 2023. Further, our excellent coordinator announced her decision to give in her notice for November.

So, 2023-24 proved to be a year of very significant transition, from having two rooms in Abbey Square, to having no fixed premises, and from having a highly regarded, experienced coordinator and an administrator, to having no paid staff.

Our coordinator, Clare Black, enabled a well organised, well communicated leave-taking of the rooms in 9 Abbey Square, and a professional hand-over to the trustees of files, resources and responsibilities, for which we are enormously grateful. Clare completed her wonderful work in November 2023. Our administrator was retained for three hours a week until mid-January 2024.

Though we have left 9 Abbey Square, we were able to continue using that as our registered address, with the agreement of Chester Cathedral.

Notwithstanding the transition through which we've had to go, we continued to deliver retreat days, conversation groups, creative workshops, walks in and around the city of Chester, one-to-one spiritual accompaniment, and church retreats through 2023-24.

In January 2024 we started a new initiative with 'Still' – an evening on-line meditation and conversation, with a different theme each month.

Throughout the period April 2023 to March 2024, we held and administered regular trustee meetings – seven in all. By the end of March 2024, we had convened a 'Next Steps' group of volunteers to co-create a new programme of events.

This group served as the beginnings of a more comprehensive programme for 2024-25 which came to fruition from August 2024.

Charity financial review

The steps we have taken over the course of 2023 are enabling us to bring our income into a healthy balance with expenditure. We have faced the challenges that we saw as 2023 unfolded and we continue to explore and learn how to reduce the organisational and financial demands of running our small charity while also concentrating on expanding our work of ‘retreat as part of everyday living’.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Income	£9,026	£26,558	£25,802	£21,619	£8,283
Donations +Gift Aid	£4,365	£10,985	£18,576 *	£11,526	£5,809
Grants	£1,500	£13,095	£5,770	£6,000	£0
Programme	£3,096	£2,478	£1,456	£4,083 **	£1,852
Room hire	£65	£0	£0	£10	£0
Other	£0	£0	£0	£0	£622

* includes a single donation of £10,000 (2021-22)

**refers to ticket sales only; donations which came via programme events total £1194.70 and are included in donations figure

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Expenditure	£20,737	£19,004	£20,142	£27,083	£20,485
Premises	£ 6,594	£ 5,961	£ 6,197	£ 6,470	£3,421
Marketing+Fundraising	£804	£616	£735	£1,774	£736
Programme	£13,133	£12,427	£13,210	£18,838	£14,877
Assets incl. refurb	£206	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other	£0	£0	£0	£0	£1,452

SUMMARY OF FUNDS

unrestricted – general

31/03/24

31/03/23

restricted

£7,041

£13,494

£0

£5,750

National Lottery Community Fund

£0

£3,750

Marjory Boddy Trust

£0

£2,000

Conclusion

We know from our own extensive surveys and from other research that the work we do makes a difference in people's lives. We want to further develop the ways to reach people so that they deepen their lives in ways that are authentic and rooted.

The challenge of 2024-25 is to re-establish our rhythms in delivering events and to broaden their range of appeal so that we are increasingly inclusive, both within and beyond the church.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' Report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature

full name	Robert Croft, Chair of Trustees
date	31 January 2025

signature

full name	Paul Towner, Treasurer
date	31 January 2025

signed copy held by the Chair of Trustees



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Retreat House Chester

1163330

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	Period start date 4/1/2023	To	Period end date 3/31/2024
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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Voluntary donations	4,945	-	-	4,945	7,866
Gift Aid claimed on donations	864	-	-	864	3,660
Programme income	1,852	-	-	1,852	4,083
grant funding	-	-	-	-	6,000
room hire	-	-	-	-	10
other	622	-	-	622	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	8,283	-	-	8,283	21,619
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	8,283	-	-	8,283	21,619
A3 Payments					
Marketing and fundraising	-	-	-	-	372
licenses and subscriptions	235	-	-	235	269
information technology	501	-	-	501	1,133
accommodation / premises	2,722	-	-	2,722	5,314
insurance	644	-	-	644	764
office costs	55	-	-	55	393
programme costs	205	-	-	205	1,341
programme delivery: staff	8,922	5,750	-	14,672	17,497
other	1,452	-	-	1,452	-
Sub total	14,735	5,750	-	20,485	27,083
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	14,735	5,750	-	20,485	27,083
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 6,453	- 5,750	-	- 12,203	- 5,464
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	13,494	5,750	-	19,244	24,708
Cash funds this year end	7,041	-	-	7,041	19,244

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	coop & hsbc	6,667	-	-
	cash	40	-	-
	due in	334	-	-
	Total cash funds	7,041	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

Categories	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

Categories	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

Categories	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval

RETREAT HOUSE CHESTER

England & Wales - Charity number 1163330

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Retreat House Chester Trustees' Annual Report & Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023

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Contents

	page
1. Charity Information	2
2. Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 March 2023	3-13
3. Examiner's Report	14-15
4. Accounts	16-17

Charity Information

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Rev Preb Paul Towner (Chair)

appointed Feb 2018 for two years;
reappointed Feb 2020 for two years;
reappointed Feb 2022 for two years
appointed May 2019 for three years;
reappointed May 2022 for two years
appointed Oct 2020 for three years
appointed Nov 2022 for three years
appointed Nov 2022 for three years

Mrs Carol Bayliss

Dr Claire Egan

Rev Colin Mansley

Rev Robert Croft

Mrs Consilia Black stepped down as a Trustee in May 2022 after her term of office since May 2019

We are a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), governed by Constitution. Trustees are appointed by serving trustees. We hold a strategic plan, a risk register and comprehensive policies. Our attention to regulatory requirements and good practice is thorough.

‘The object of the CIO is to advance the Christian religion for the benefit of the public mainly, but not exclusively, through the provision of facilities, education, training and personal support to enable the exploration and experience of spirituality.’

Our Year



Retreat House Chester offers ways to peace in the city. Rooted gently and deeply in Christian spiritual tradition, we offer a wide range of ways to retreat for all people as a part of living – in the midst of the city and the midst of everyday life.

This time last year, our Report outlined how Retreat House Chester ('RHC' or simply 'Retreat House') was facing the next stage of its growth with enthusiasm and encouragement. A careful discernment process – shared by Trustees, Friends and Volunteers (some 40 people) in 2021-22 - gave the reason and foundation for a Working Party project as Spring turned to Summer in 2022, the start of this reporting year. By the end of Summer, the result was a 3-Year Plan:

The aim of this plan is to move RHC from a period of seven years' foundation to a stable steady state, offering retreat activities that make a difference personally and socially, with a wide outreach and well known. 2025 will mark 100 years since the old retreat house was opened in Chester: inspired by that story but reinvented for our own times, we want to celebrate that year with a sustainable contemporary retreat provision, as a part of living.

from 3-Year Plan

With the decisions to employ a second part-time member of staff, as Administrator, and to maintain our small base in Abbey Square, and following the success of expanding our work with both faith groups and community groups, we set about 'A Time to Grow', branching out still further and sharing the fruits of 'retreat as part of living'.

For any growth, conditions need to be favourable. In the last part of this reporting year – the start of 2023 – we have been challenged by a changing environment. Part of this reflects a national trend of struggling charities: rising costs, rising needs, reduced resources and funds (as outlined, for example, in Charities Aid Foundation *UK Giving Report 2023*). Part of it is more local and particular: especially a watershed moment regarding premises here in Abbey Square when our lease expires or renews in November 2023.

Nonetheless, the key aims of our 3-Year Plan are clear and remain, even as changing seasons demand that that we adapt:

affirm the mission and character of RHC | make RHC known as a go-to provider of retreat activities | develop relationships across the community | inspire and equip others in providing retreat | encourage financial support

from 3-Year Plan

Vision and hard work have always fed our small charity, and have ensured its growth since it first put down roots in 2015. In the year ahead, as eight years turn to nine, we know that vision and hard work will mean that this imaginative version of a retreat house – innovative and worthwhile - will continue to be shared as its branches spread, offering shelter, new growth and fruit to those for whom it becomes part of living.

Who we are



Retreat House Chester is a grassroots not-for-profit community venture inspired and driven by local people and working to offer retreat as an essential part of living for everyone.



5	trustees
1	treasurer
2	part-time staff
20	volunteers
234	direct beneficiaries this year

Peace

To this house;
To those who enter;
To those who dwell here;
To those who depart,

Peace

our well-loved Retreat House blessing

Our Vision and Values centre on 'peace' and the wholeness it brings, inspired by...

- ... **hope**
- ... **human worth**
- ... **relationship**
- ... **the strength of gentleness**
- ... **roots & responsibility**
- ... **and being small in a big picture.**

Our roots are in Christian spiritual tradition and our ecumenical character in line with that of Churches Together in Britain & Ireland. We are a member organisation of the Retreat Association and of Cheshire West Voluntary Action and are glad of the networks this provides, enabling us to work with other retreat providers and other local charities. An ongoing connection to – and participation in – both our faith community and wider community is essential to our work.



“The retreat house is very important to me because it offers something unique in Chester.”

“Thank you for this very special provision.”

“Always a warm welcome for everyone, accepting and respectful, not intrusive.”

What we do



Retreat House Chester offers ‘retreat in the city – as a part of living’, to make the many benefits of retreat available to as wide a range of people as possible and to make it as accessible as possible.

We promote retreat in everyday living for all. This was the need we saw at our foundation in 2015, and it continues to be our motivation today.

We seek to build peace and fullness of life for individuals, within communities, and across the city and region.

We do this through a diverse programme, with a range of ways to be involved, inviting people to...

find a time of silence

experience different ways of being reflective and prayerful

explore spirituality in a Christian setting

connect spirituality & daily living, and **connect** with one another.

This invitation is drawn from the monastic way of silence, prayer, study, labour and community - a way which has inspired retreat across centuries and across cultures, and a way which is written into the history of Chester with the Cathedral’s origins as a Benedictine abbey and numerous monastic houses in the city’s past (including Franciscan, Carmelite and Dominican). Making retreat a part of life for ‘ordinary’ people – especially in the Ignatian tradition - inspired the foundation of Chester’s former retreat house in 1925. We show how the wisdom and spirituality of this monastic and retreat tradition is relevant today – rooted and re-imagined.



“a day of peace, reflection and contemplation in a friendly environment”

“I booked on these sessions because I wanted to discover more about the contemplative life... and I feel that need is being met. So thank you!”

affirm the mission and character of RHC

continue to help people deepen their spiritual life and their experience of Peace, as individuals and in communities

from 3-Year Plan

We make this offer through the following activities, online and in-person:

retreat days | conversation groups | prayer times | creative workshops | walks | Book Club | study courses | Reflective Chester with general public & marginal groups | team training | one-to-one spiritual accompaniment | off-site retreats with church communities | blog



We've noticed that our most popular activities this year have been off-site group bookings (retreats tending to reach people who would not otherwise come to us) and activities over a series of weeks (study courses and conversations tending to appeal to those already familiar with us).

Our own small rooms limit the number we can welcome there. Off-site venues and meeting people in their own places extends our reach. We know the value of combining the stability and identity of a base (currently Abbey Square) with the outreach of off-site activities.



"Lots of variety of things to do. Great to meet like-minded people."

"Just to say that I found both the events I attended last year to be defining moments in my spiritual journey... Thank you."

"I am very thankful for the opportunities provided by Retreat House Chester to step outside of daily life, pause and reflect on God's love and provision. I find the material and the conversation with others both give me new insight and encouragement."

"I got such a lot out of the course I did with you... You are offering a very special ministry."

"Thank you so much for today... I really felt it opened things up."

"The last two weeks have been so good. The time to reflect and the conversations are so helpful."

"This course has given me a desire to pursue what I have learnt."

"This has been a journey to the heart."

Who we work with



Engaging with spirituality is a fundamental human characteristic and need. Spiritual experience is frequently reported across all cultures, whoever we are. Retreat itself is common across cultures and through history; we like to say it is 'as old as the hills', mindful of the draw of the Welsh hills on the city's horizon.

Our work is with the general public

individuals booking onto our activities

faith groups mostly through our off-site retreats

marginal groups mostly through our Reflective Chester community project

groups of workers occasionally hosting or facilitating (a potential growth area)

general public inc NEW this year, '6 Women of Heart' interactive exhibition at Chester Cathedral

So we make the invitation to all to 'come as you are'.



WELL-ESTABLISHED

individuals booking in, anyone inc elderly, isolated, bereaved – mostly, people who book come from 'within' churches



GROWING

local faith communities – marginal groups – groups of workers – apart from the faith communities, mostly people in these activities come from 'beyond' church settings



"I have had people coming up to me to say how peaceful and enjoyable the morning had been... Thank you for all you gave us."

from a group we visited

"Being able to come to events at RHC has been an important part of my spiritual journey. I always come away feeling that I have gained something and with a sense of calm and being refreshed."

from an individual

**develop relationships
across the community**

**focus on groups currently
under-represented**

from 3-Year Plan

Why we do it



Retreat is not just personal. There are also social benefits to providing non-residential retreat in a city context.

Researchers say benefits of retreat include

- ✓ improved wellbeing
- ✓ improved relationships
- ✓ reduced isolation
- ✓ enhanced spiritual experience/depth experience
- ✓ improved community health
- ✓ improved workplaces
- ✓ increased knowledge of Christian spirituality
- ✓ the opportunity for dialogue between Christianity and the public realm

We know from feedback that we deliver on all of these with an emphasis on the personal benefits but not exclusively so.



We know that people need what we offer, because they tell us.

They tell us that RHC offers something distinctive: a neutral faith environment where spirituality, or depth to life, is not taboo and which offers encounter with others. They also value that this is local. We knew this from networking when we were starting out in 2015, and it's good to know that we are providing what people need.

Our discernment process in 2022 revealed the strength of positive experience and need, which underlined the motivation to develop a 3-year plan to establish a stable, steady retreat provision by 2025.



"I look forward to the programme; it is part of the framework which helps me through the inevitable challenges that each of us face in our day-to-day living."

"I feel that I'm being gently helped along in my journey."

"It's difficult when you're on your own – so much better and easier with others."

draw on our Vision & Values, centred on Peace, exploring and demonstrating how Peace is about wholeness

raise awareness of the benefits of contemplative living and retreat

from 3-Year Plan

Our success



We continue to be proud of our innovative way of offering retreat as part of living.

key achievements this year include

- expanding our ecumenical reach (including our first retreat in a Baptist church, and our second year of retreats in a range of local churches)
- expanding our Reflective Chester project and its community reach including marginal groups
- re-establishing our volunteer team after the pandemic
- Working Party and its draft of our 3-Year Plan – as a response to the discernment process
- employment of a 2nd part-time staff member (administrator) improving our resilience as an organisation
- improving our marketing drive
- two new trustees
- securing grant funding for certain activities

64 events across 10 months
(2021-22: 50 events across 10 months)

479 welcomes in 10 months

234 individuals: 86 in programme bookings (inc 35 new) + 73 in group bookings + 75 in pop-ups

increase our use of other locations

consolidate our established and successful programme, continuing activities for individuals and developing further activities for groups

from 3-Year Plan

We count **the quality of our offering** as a key achievement:

for groups: In offering Lent Retreats to churches, 100% of churches we visited last year want a return visit. In organising Reflective Chester for 2023-24, 100% of local charities / organisations we have already visited want a return visit.

for individuals: All of our programme activities have return visitors. Our study courses (online) and conversation groups are series events and very popular. Furthermore, people return now and again over the years, suggesting that RHC is a feature of their lives, and they want to come back, even if we see them only infrequently.



“It was obvious to me that careful preparation both in terms of resources and prayer had been made... food for the soul.”

“All very well organised and presented.”

“You are doing something very important. And in an exemplary manner.”

“A huge thank you for such a wonderful exhibition of prayer stations – very well received and I thought you produced them beautifully and professionally.”

Feedback



Good things happen on retreat – we know because people tell us.



This report is filled with feedback, and our work is shaped by what we learn from what people tell us. It is overwhelmingly positive. Words which appear multiple times in feedback appear above. There are many many other such words appearing just once.

demonstrate the success of RHC, and use feedback and monitoring to support this

from 3-Year Plan

Targets



Our 3-Year Strategic Plan informs our targets.

Targets for 2023-24 include

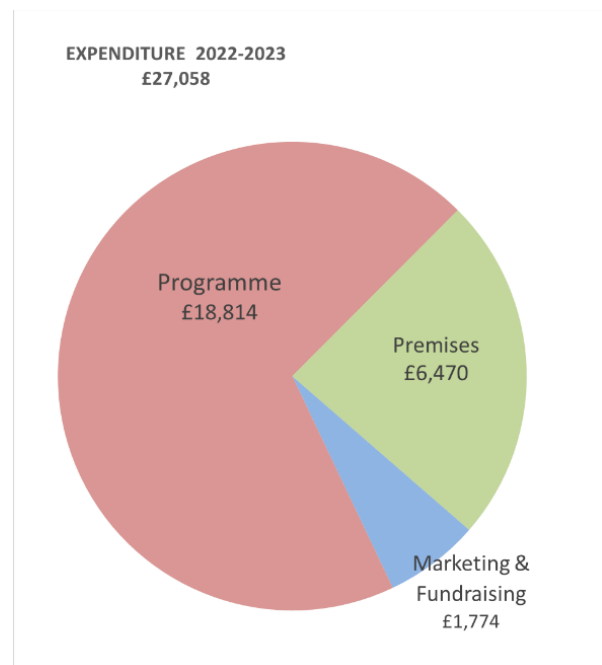
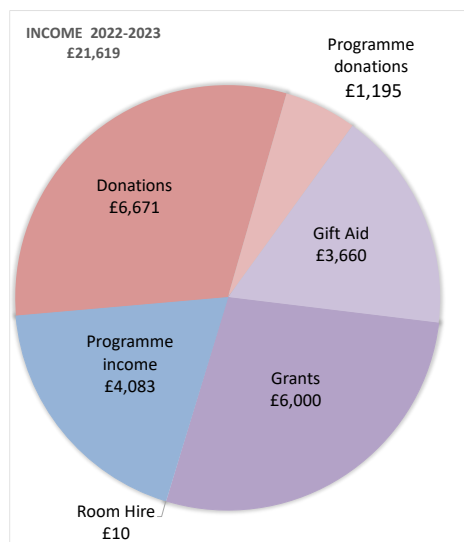
- continue to extend our reach to individuals and groups
- investigate the best premises, recognising the 3-Year Plan to ‘maintain a base, working both here and beyond it’
- ‘create a sustainable organisational structure’ (from 3-Year Plan) – financial, infrastructure and human resources
- ‘demonstrate an imaginative version of retreat house’ (3-Year Plan)

We recognise that achieving these targets may mean significant change for our charity.

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Income	£6,537	£9,026	£26,558	£25,802	£21,619
Donations +Gift Aid	£ 3,158	£ 4,365	£10,985	£18,576 *	£11,526
Grants	£ 250	£1,500	£13,095	£ 5,770	£ 6,000
Programme	£ 3,095	£ 3,096	£ 2,478	£ 1,456	£ 4,083 **
Room hire	£ 34	£ 65	0	0	£ 10

* includes a single donation of £10,000 (2021-22)

**refers to ticket sales only; donations which came via programme events total £1194.70 and are included in donations figure



	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Expenditure: Charitable Activities	£28,340	£20,737	£19,004	£20,142	£27,083
Premises	£ 5,723	£ 6,594	£ 5,961	£ 6,197	£ 6,470
Marketing+Fundraising	£ 1,454	£ 804	£ 616	£ 735	£ 1,174
Programme	£12,828	£13,133	£12,427	£13,210	£18,838
Assets inc refurb	£ 8,335	£ 206	0	0	0

SUMMARY OF FUNDS	31/03/23	31/03/22
unrestricted – general	£13,494	£24,528
restricted	£ 5,750	£180
<i>Society of Retreat Conductors</i>	-	£180
<i>National Lottery Community Fund</i>	£3750	-
<i>Marjory Boddy Trust</i>	£2000	-

Conclusion



Our work continues to be innovative and imaginative, modelling what city-based community-focused Christian retreat can be.

The work we do makes a difference in people's lives and in the part retreat plays in local living. We know that the best future for our work is about further developing the best ways to reach people so that they may deepen their spiritual life in ways that are authentic, rooted and supported.

As a charity, we have spent 8 years developing this and learning from experience as we go. Now, our 3-Year Plan aims to establish what we have begun, growing from the roots that have been put down, and branching out. Funds are crucial; so too are the workers (the vineyard labourers) and the infrastructure to support the work, just as a plant needs the right conditions.

The challenge of 2023-24 will be how to bring together experience, plans, funds, workers and infrastructure in order to best continue the innovative, imaginative and – perhaps most of all – *essential* work that RHC has grown to do so well.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' Report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

signature

full name Paul Towner, Chair of Trustees

date 19 July 2023

signature

full name

date 19 July 2023

signed copy in the office



Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of Retreat House Chester

On accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 Charity no (if any) 1163330

Set out on pages 16-17

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
• the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: [Signature] Date: 20/07/2023

Name: Neville Kite

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any): FCMA

Address: Cheriton, Rowton Lane, Chester CH3 6AT

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

NONE



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Retreat House Chester

1163330

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

01/04/2022

To

31/03/2023

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Voluntary donations	7,866	-	-	7,866	18,258
Gift Aid claimed on donations	3,660	-	-	3,660	318
Programme income	4,083	-	-	4,083	1,456
Grant funding	-	6,000	-	6,000	5,770
Room Hire	10	-	-	10	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	15,619	6,000	-	21,619	25,802
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	15,619	6,000	-	21,619	25,802
A3 Payments					
Marketing + Fundraising	366	6	-	372	141
Licences & Subscriptions	265	4	-	269	254
information Technology	1,115	18	-	1,133	340
Accommodation (premises)	5,229	85	-	5,314	5,332
Insurance	752	12	-	764	691
Office costs	387	6	-	393	173
Programme costs	1,320	21	-	1,341	924
Programme delivery: staff	17,219	278	-	17,497	12,287
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	26,653	430	-	27,083	20,142
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
For programme and refurb	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	26,653	430	-	27,083	20,142
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 11,034	5,570	-	- 5,464	5,660
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	24,528	180	-	24,708	19,048
Cash funds this year end	13,494	5,750	-	19,244	24,708

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Co-op adjusted bank balance	8,803	5,750	-
	Cash float	54	-	-
	HSBC adjusted bank balance	4,637	-	-
	Total cash funds	13,494	5,750	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval

RETREAT HOUSE CHESTER

England & Wales - Charity number 1163330

Accounts

Retreat House Chester Trustees' Annual Report & Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022

registered charity number 1163330
(Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

Contents

	page
1. Charity Information	2
2. Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 March 2022	3 -14
3. Examiner's Report	15 -16
4. Accounts	17 -18

Charity Information

registered charity name

Retreat House Chester

registered address

Retreat House Chester

9 Abbey Square

Chester

CH1 2HU

contact information

email: admin@retreathousechester.co.uk

website : www.retreathousechester.co.uk

registered charity number

1163330

trustees (as on 31 March 2022)

Rev Preb Paul Towner (Chair)

appointed Feb 2018 for two years;
reappointed Feb 2020 for two years;
reappointed Feb 2022 for two years

Mrs Carol Bayliss

appointed May 2019 for three years

Mrs Consilia Black

appointed May 2019 for three years

Dr Claire Egan

appointed Oct 2020 for three years

Rev Prof Peter Gubi stepped down as a Trustee in September 2021

update June 2022: Carol Bayliss is reappointed May 2022 for two years; Consilia Black's term has ended; we expect that further trustees will be sought from Sept

We are a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), governed by Constitution. Trustees are appointed by serving trustees. We hold a strategic plan, a risk register and comprehensive policies. Our attention to regulatory requirements and good practice is thorough.

'The object of the CIO is to advance the Christian religion for the benefit of the public mainly, but not exclusively, through the provision of facilities, education, training and personal support to enable the exploration and experience of spirituality.'

Our Year



Retreat House Chester offers ways to peace in the city. Rooted gently and deeply in Christian spiritual tradition, we offer a wide range of ways to retreat for all people as a part of living – in the midst of the city and the midst of everyday life.

A year ago, we anticipated that we were moving out of pandemic times. In fact, this last year has been a time of moving in and out of restrictions nationally and locally, and managing a way through what could be planned confidently and safely and what people were comfortable with. This was no small challenge, and we are glad to say that we are ending the year with hope.

For Retreat House Chester (or 'Retreat House' or 'RHC'), this year also marks our seventh year since our foundation as a charity in August 2015. So we have been mindful of this as a 'Sabbath Year' – not a year of rest (far from it...), but a year to remember that retreat is a kind of Sabbath, and a year to take stock.

In offering the Sabbath of retreat, we continue to see how restorative this is for people – and as we all emerge from the last two years and find ourselves in a time of war, we know that people need restoration and encouragement: we all need the Peace that underpins the work and purpose of Retreat House. Time and again in feedback this year, people have told of how Retreat House encourages their pilgrimage through life, with its highs and lows, by giving them ways to nourish their spirituality and to do so alongside others.

In taking stock, and in facing this year the real challenge of sustainability, we began a discernment process as 2021 turned to 2022. Asking those most closely involved with Retreat House – some 40 people as Friends and Volunteers – for their thoughts, suggestions and reflections on our work and our future, we were overwhelmed by the heartfelt enthusiasm for what we do and the real difference it makes in lives. Such a response - coupled with a generous financial donation – has been an encouragement to do the best we can to take Retreat House from this seventh year into its next stage.

There is much to build on. This Report shows how we are working in a range of ways with good numbers of people; this year we've been especially pleased to have developed further our community outreach, including at the margins, and to have undertaken new activities such as one-to-one retreats and taking retreats to local groups. We know how essential funding is to this, and to those who give personally and in grants we are deeply thankful.

While we know for ourselves that retreat is a good thing, we need to know from others that retreat with Retreat House Chester is a good thing. This Report includes the words of those who are sharing in our discernment process and those who take part in our activities. This is the heart of what we do.



"The last seven years, I felt I have drawn water of life from this well of wisdom and friendship so many times."

"RHC lights the way."

Who we are



Retreat House Chester is a grassroots not-for-profit community venture inspired and driven by local people and working to offer retreat as an essential part of living for everyone.



4	trustees
1	treasurer
1	co-ordinator
25	volunteers
264	direct beneficiaries this year

Peace

To this house;
To those who enter;
To those who dwell here;
To those who depart,

Peace

our well-loved Retreat House blessing

Our Vision and Values centre on 'peace' and the wholeness it brings, inspired by...

- ... **hope**
- ... **human worth**
- ... **relationship**
- ... **the strength of gentleness**
- ... **roots & responsibility**
- ... **and being small in a big picture.**

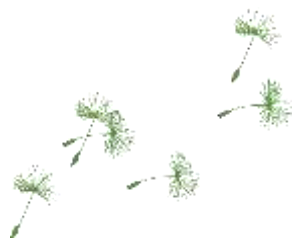
Our roots are in Christian spiritual tradition and our ecumenical character in line with that of Churches Together in Britain & Ireland. We are a member organisation of the Retreat Association and of Cheshire West Voluntary Action and are glad of the networks this provides, enabling us to work with other retreat providers and other local charities.



"I believe, as we all do, that a very valuable vision lies behind the Retreat House and is manifest in the gentle and contemplative ethos of its work."

"RHC makes SPACE (for God & people) and creates an opportunity for people to 'journey' well together in their lives."

What we do



Retreat House Chester offers ‘retreat in the city – as a part of living’, to make the many benefits of retreat available to as wide a range of people as possible and to make it as accessible as possible.

We promote retreat in everyday living for all. This was the need we saw seven years ago, and it continues to be our motivation today.

We seek to build peace and fullness of life for individuals, within communities, and across the city and region.

We do this through a diverse programme, with a range of ways to be involved, inviting people to...

find a time of silence

experience different ways of being reflective and prayerful

explore spirituality in a Christian setting

connect spirituality & daily living, and **connect** with one another.

This invitation is drawn from the monastic way of silence, prayer, study, labour and community - a way which has inspired retreat across centuries and across cultures, and a way which is written into the history of Chester.

This year, we have made this offer through the following activities, online and in-person:



WELL-ESTABLISHED

retreat days - conversations – prayer – craft – writing – walks – Book Club – coffee time



RECENT AND GROWING

study courses – Reflective Chester with general public & marginal groups – team training



NEW this year

one-to-one retreat – retreats with church communities – blog

We've noticed that our most popular activities this year have been group bookings and activities over a series of weeks.



"Thank you for a very special morning of retreat."

"This particular conversation has been quite amazing. Thank you for your guidance, and companionship on the journey."

"I have been able to participate in meditation and practise it myself, only because the Retreat House has offered a whole series of related events."

"Thank you for a lovely morning of Colouring Peace. What a time of peace and friendship. Time for space to reflect and to be. Looking forward to joining again."

"Thank you so very much for the Autumn Amble. It has been one of my highlights of the last few days/weeks."

"Thank you for Book Club, really enjoyable and thought provoking."

"Thank you for all you have done leading the sessions on the Mystics. A great series; I really valued your input and the input of the other participants."

"so well facilitated and organised"

Who we work with



Engaging with spirituality is a fundamental human characteristic and need. Spiritual experience is frequently reported across all cultures, whoever we are. Retreat itself is common across cultures and through history; we like to say it is 'as old as the hills'.

Our work is with the general public

individuals booking onto our activities

faith groups – inc NEW this year: retreats in churches

marginal groups – inc NEW this year: mental health organisation, deprived area

groups of workers – inc NEW this year: national headteachers

general public at Reflective Chester pop-ups

So we make the invitation to all to 'come as you are'.



WELL-ESTABLISHED

individuals booking in, anyone inc elderly, isolated, bereaved – mostly, people who book come from 'within' churches



GROWING

local faith communities – marginal groups – groups of workers – apart from the faith communities, mostly people in these activities come from 'beyond' church settings



"RHC offers lots of variety to lots of different people."

"Many people's spiritual and prayer life have been enriched and deepened (including mine!)."

"feeling more valued and included"

Why we do it



Retreat is not just personal. There are also social benefits to providing non-residential retreat in a city context.

Researchers say benefits of retreat include

- ✓ improved wellbeing
- ✓ improved relationships
- ✓ reduced isolation
- ✓ enhanced spiritual experience/depth experience
- ✓ improved community health
- ✓ improved workplaces
- ✓ increased knowledge of Christian spirituality
- ✓ the opportunity for dialogue between Christianity and the public realm

Feedback this year – shown throughout this report - tells us we deliver on **all these benefits** and highlights

relationships and community – support in faith and spirituality – quality of our activities.

We undertook detailed research into the benefits people find with us, after 5 years, in Spring 2020, and this told us of wellbeing, resilience, spiritual experience and relationship; the benefit to physical health; the value of silence; the enabling of personal growth and development; the joy of ecumenical relationships; and the unique contribution RHC makes in the experience of faith.



“People are welcomed with warmth and positive acceptance. This can act as healing.”

“I believe the work that is done through RHC changes people’s lives, making them richer and better.”

“The spirituality courses have been of enormous value to/for me both in extending my knowledge and influencing my faith and I hope my actions. There is not anywhere else where I could access these within an easy reach of home. They are delivered in a gentle way which is so helpful for those who are feeling apprehensive about the intellectual challenge and so enticing to people who want and need to explore for themselves.”

“I am closer to God as a result of my involvement with RHC.”



We know that people need what we offer, because they tell us.

They tell us that RHC offers something distinctive: a neutral faith environment where spirituality, or depth to life, is not taboo and which offers encounter with others. They also value that this is local. We knew this from networking when we were starting out seven years ago, and it's good to know that we are providing what people need. This year we offered sessions to 10 different local groups from faith and marginal communities – and they all said **YES**.

individuals say...



"The seven years of the retreat house came for me in a turbulent time of my life... I am sure that many other were under similar pressures, and drew energy from the sessions in RHC."

"RHC has given me a spiritual 'home' since moving to Chester."

"Listening to what different people said spoke so much to me. I look forward to tomorrow and that opportunity to come into that sacred space again. I know how much this time has helped me and thank you for this opportunity."

"I feel that RHC has much to offer people who are looking, searching for spiritual meaning and also for respite from being over busy."

"Thank you for your honesty and openness and for being the community of travellers I so desperately needed."

groups say...



"I felt it unlikely that people, unused to retreats, would attend such an event in Chester, so to have the retreat house come out to our community was such a valuable opportunity. I very much hope that RHC retreats could become part of our yearly calendar."

"Thank you so much for your very special contribution to our Conference. You brought a sense of calm, hope and restoration in your beautifully crafted service."

"Facilitating listening to those who have no voice in society and reflecting their experience back to mainstream society is a valuable set of skills that RHC brings to the table."

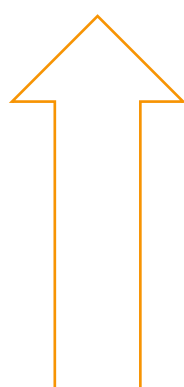
Our success



We are proud of – and thankful for – this year, especially in a time of challenge.

key achievements this year include

- ✓ negotiating a way through pandemic circumstances, and restarting in-person events
- ✓ hosting our first individually-guided retreats ('one-to-one' retreats)
- ✓ taking our Lent Retreats to local churches
- ✓ joining with the community through Reflective Chester
- ✓ expanding our work with marginal groups
- ✓ expanding our use of locations
- ✓ securing grant funding for certain projects
- ✓ beginning our discernment process



50 events across 10 months (+ 7 more Covid-cancelled)
(2020-21: 38 across 7 months)

30 one-to-one sessions

488 welcomes in 10 months
(2020-21: 393 welcomes in 7 months)

264 individuals: 64 in bookings (inc 22 new) + 124 in
group bookings + 76 in pop-ups
(2020-21: 96 individuals)

2019-20: 269 individuals



2021-22: 264 individuals

We have recovered pre-pandemic numbers even in a year that has seen pandemic interruption and cancellation.



"The great success of RHC to date has been achieved starting from nothing, and despite two major setbacks: the change in premises and the pandemic."

Feedback



Good things happen on retreat – we know because people tell us.

This report is filled with feedback, and our work is shaped by what we learn from what people tell us. It is overwhelmingly positive.

“something I cannot measure or repay, thank you seems so small.....”



Targets

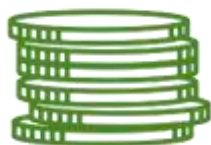


Even with this year’s successes, we face challenge. We want to develop our retreat offering still further and – most of all – we need to build a sustainable future for this charity.

Our ongoing discernment process is bringing positive ways forward. **Targets** for 2022-23 include

- RHC is known as go-to place for retreat activities, for one-to-one, as provider of group retreats inc marginal groups, for study of Christian spirituality, for training
- find ways to sustainability, inc key areas of staffing, premises and funding
- shape new strategic plan from discernment process
- create new marketing drive

Financial review



We are responding to the challenge of finding a sustainable future for our charity.

Our figures appear healthy: total income is consistent with last year, and expenditure is consistent for the last three years.

Nonetheless, this year we have faced the real prospect of funds running down, with respite coming in the final Quarter with two single donations (£10,000 and £1,000) and grant funding (£3,000).

We are facing the challenge of our reliance on grants and donations, and we recognise this as inherent to a small charity, where charges made for our events do not cover their cost.

Our desire for greater sustainability is driving our planning for the times ahead as, with our Friends and Volunteers, we undertake our discernment in our seventh year.

Essential grant funding, for which we are very thankful – for both its financial support and also its support of our work – is as follows. All grants were spent accordingly, with £180 carried forward as detailed below*.

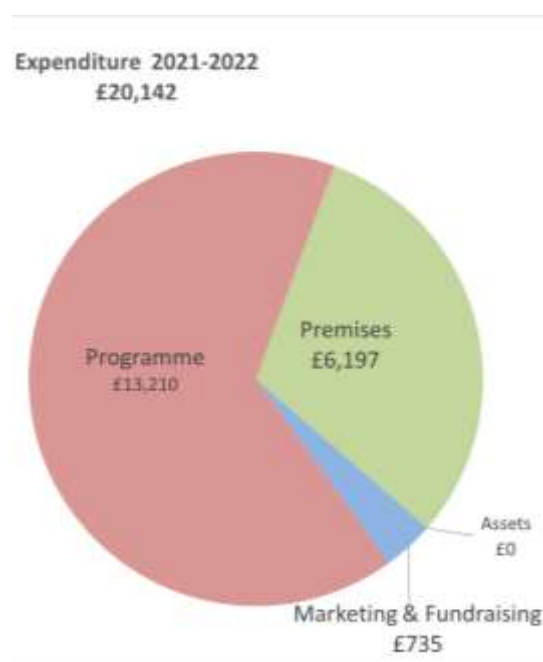
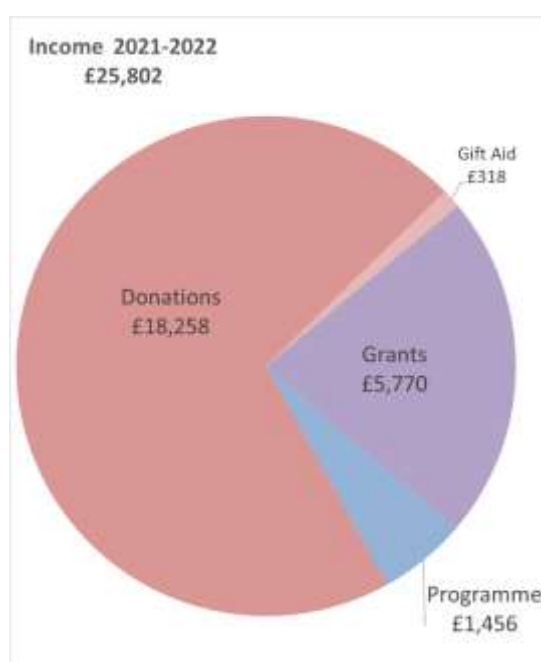
Cheshire West & Chester Council	£1600	from 'Let's Turn This Around' Fund restricted to running costs of events Spring / Summer 2021 as Covid recovery
National Lottery	£1170	from 'Local Connections' Fund restricted to running costs of community events in Reflective Chester Month, Nov 2021
Society of Retreat Conductors	£3000	restricted to Individually Guided Retreat Feb 2022 and Lent Retreats for local groups Spring 2022; *£180 carried forward for Lent Retreat April 2022
carried over from 2020-21	£1,705	from Jesuit Fund for Social Justice restricted to Reflective Chester community activities

overview on next page

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Income	£26,720	£6,537	£9,026	£26,558	£25,802
Founding Benefactors	£15,000	0	0	0	0
Donations +Gift Aid	£ 7,501	£ 3,158	£ 4,365	£10,985	£18,576 *
Grants	£ 400	£ 250	£1,500	£13,095	£ 5,770
Programme	£ 3,819	£ 3,095	£ 3,096	£ 2,478	£ 1,456 **
Room hire	0	£ 34	£ 65	0	0

* includes a single donation of £10,000

**refers to ticket sales only; donations which came via programme events total £1,123 and are included in donations figure



	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Expenditure: Charitable Activities	£10,391	£28,340	£20,737	£19,004	£20,142
Premises	£ 4,920	£ 5,723	£ 6,594	£ 5,961	£ 6,197
Marketing+Fundraising	£ 1,639	£ 1,454	£ 804	£ 616	£ 735
Programme	£ 2,945	£12,828	£13,133	£12,427	£13,210
Assets inc refurb	£ 887	£ 8,335	£ 206	0	0

Conclusion



In our seventh year, the good work of Retreat House Chester continues to grow.

As we make our way into our next year, two things are clear:

Retreat House Chester makes a positive difference in response to need

Retreat House Chester needs a sustainable future

Our best efforts, as a small and collaborative charity, support both of these.

Throughout this Report, we have drawn on what people say – so we leave the closing words to them.



“Retreat House Chester is too good to stop.”

“a foundation built on abiding hope and solid trust, with openness and courage... a source of profound inspiration”

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees’ Report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity’s trustees

signature – signed copy in office

full name Paul Towner

date 12/7/2022

signature – signed copy in office

full name Carol Anne Victoria Bayliss

date 12/7/2022



Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	Retreat House Chester		
On accounts for the year ended	31 March 2022	Charity no (if any)	1163330
	Set out on pages 17 - 18		

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2022.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:  Date: 14/07/2022

Name: Neville Kite

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any): FCMA

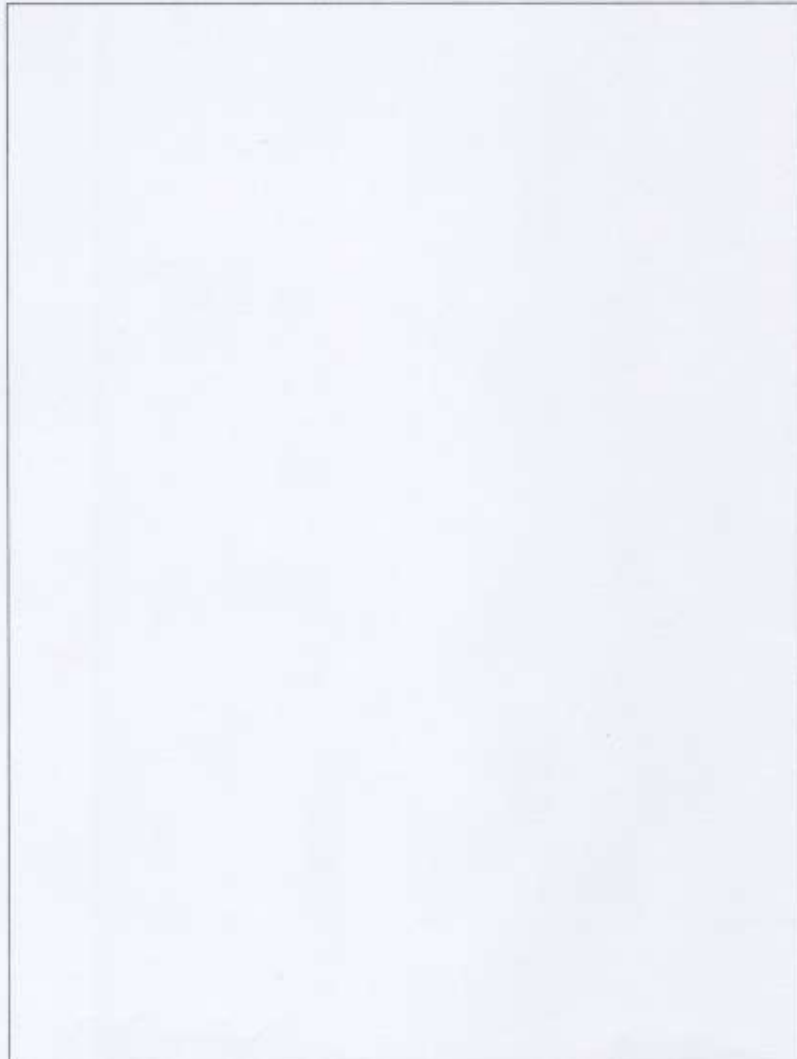
Address: Cheriton, Rowton Lane, Chester CH3 6AT

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.





CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Retreat House Chester

1163330

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	01/04/2021	To	31/03/2022
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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Voluntary donations	18,258	-	-	18,258	9,584
Gift Aid claimed on donations	318	-	-	318	1,401
Programme income	1,456	-	-	1,456	2,478
Grant funding	-	5,770	-	5,770	13,095
Room Hire	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	20,032	5,770	-	25,802	26,558
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	20,032	5,770	-	25,802	26,558
A3 Payments					
Marketing + Fundraising	91	50	-	141	136
Licences & Subscriptions	164	90	-	254	90
Information Technology	221	119	-	340	390
Accommodation (premises)	3,443	1,889	-	5,332	5,236
Insurance	446	245	-	691	677
Office costs	112	61	-	173	48
Programme costs	435	489	-	924	649
Programme delivery: staff	7,935	4,352	-	12,287	11,778
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	12,847	7,295	-	20,142	19,004
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
For programme and refurb	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	12,847	7,295	-	20,142	19,004
Net of receipts/(payments)	7,185	- 1,525	-	5,660	7,554
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	17,343	1,705	-	19,048	11,494
Cash funds this year end	24,528	180	-	24,708	19,048

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Co-op adjusted bank balance	16,971	180	-
	Cash float	49	-	-
	HSBC adjusted bank balance	7,508	-	-
	Total cash funds	24,528	180	-

(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

Categories	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

Categories	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use				-
				-
				-
				-
				-
				-
				-
				-
				-
				-

Categories	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature _____ Print Name _____ Date of approval _____

signed copy in the office – signed by trustees Paul Towner and Carol Bayliss 12/7/2022

RETREAT HOUSE CHESTER

England & Wales - Charity number 1163330

Accounts

Retreat House Chester Trustees' Annual Report & Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021

registered charity number 1163330
(Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

Contents

	page
1. Charity Information	2
2. Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 March 2021	3 -14
3. Examiner's Report	15 - 16
4. Accounts	17 -18

Charity Information

registered charity name

Retreat House Chester

registered address

Retreat House Chester

9 Abbey Square

Chester

CH1 2HU

contact information

email: admin@retreathousechester.co.uk

website : www.retreathousechester.co.uk

registered charity number

1163330

trustees (as of 31 March 2021)

Rev Preb Paul Towner

Mrs Carol Bayliss

Mrs Consilia Black

Dr Claire Egan

Rev Prof Peter Gubi

Retreat House Chester
Trustees' Annual Report
for the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021



registered charity number 1163330 (Charitable Incorporated Organisation)
registered address Retreat House Chester, 9 Abbey Square, Chester CH1 2HU

Retreat House Chester offers ways to peace in the city. Rooted gently and deeply in Christian spiritual tradition, we offer a wide range of ways to retreat for all people as a part of living – in the midst of the city and the midst of everyday life. *This year has seen some changes...*

Introduction

Making retreat widely available and accessible because it's good for people and fundamental to how we live is a founding principle of Retreat House Chester. 2020-21 has seen this purpose and its context develop in remarkable unexpected ways: making retreat available and accessible by moving online; a global encounter with Big Questions and with our humanity in all its greatness and vulnerability; and an awakening of 'spirituality'. Something has been shifting this year.

That shift makes Retreat House Chester all the more necessary. People need Peace; they need 'easy' ways to engage with big questions and spirituality. In setting up six years ago, global pandemic was not a context we envisaged. But, here in Spring 2021, it feels like we were ahead of the curve, and the time for Retreat House Chester has certainly come. This Report will show how the facts bear this out.

"I think that what happens in this hour and a half is rather extraordinary." This comment sent in after one of our events echoes much of what we are told by those who come along to activities with Retreat House Chester – that what we are doing is special and also that it is hard to find elsewhere. We are glad that we have been able to find ways to continue to offer our 'ways to retreat for all people as a part of living', throughout a year which may be described as 'extraordinary' in itself.

In the first lockdown of March 2020, like many charities, we found ourselves working out how we might survive such a change to our work and such uncertainty ahead. From swiftly adapting to online resources and then to online events as the crisis lengthened, and with the essential support of grant funding, Retreat House Chester has both negotiated a way through the year and also discovered and developed ways which will be worth carrying with us into the future.

"Thank you for the wonderful opportunity you are giving us." Time and again, folk have sent in their thanks. We, in turn, thank all those who have been a part of Retreat House Chester this year. This Report describes our work, explores its impact, celebrates endeavour, and plans for the changed and changing times ahead.

Who we are: Structure, Governance & Management

Retreat House Chester is a not-for-profit community venture inspired and driven by local people and working to offer retreat as an essential part of living for everyone.

Trustees

Retreat House Chester is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), governed by Constitution. Trustees are appointed by serving trustees, in accord with the Constitution and good practice set out by the Charity Commission.

Trustees:

Paul Towner (Chair)	appointed February 2018; reappointed February 2020 (to Feb 2022)
Carol Bayliss	appointed May 2019 (to May 2022)
Consilia Black	appointed May 2019 (to May 2022)
Claire Egan	appointed October 2020 (to Oct 2023)
Peter Gubi	appointed October 2020 (to Oct 2023)

Trustees whose term of office ended during the year

<i>Peter Howell-Jones</i>	<i>founding trustee, appointed August 2015; reappointed August 2018 (to Aug 2020)</i>
<i>John (Terry) Green (Chair)</i>	<i>appointed November 2016; reappointed November 2018 (to Nov 2020)</i>

Treasurer (not a trustee):

Don Dickson	appointed March 2017
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Co-ordinator (not a trustee):

Clare Black	appointed for 12 months part-time, March 2018; reappointed for same, Mar2019, Mar2020, Mar2021
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New trustees, by Constitution, are appointed by the Trustee Body, and we actively seek to address the needs of the Body and the Charity in terms of diversity, ethos and skills in making new appointments. We are very glad to have appointed two new trustees in October 2020 with, between them, relevant experience of education, ministry, retreat work and pastoral care, as well as organisational practice. We recognise the importance of good governance. We hold a strategic plan, a risk register and comprehensive policies. Our attention to regulatory requirements and good practice is thorough.

Staff & Volunteers

The work of Retreat House Chester is carried out on a day-to-day basis by our Co-ordinator, who oversees a diverse and successful programme as well as undertaking the administrative work of the charity. This year, because of the pandemic, that work has been carried out at home.

Retreat House Chester is supported in its work by a team of 15 volunteers from across the community involved with our programme, administration, fundraising, and marketing. Their involvement and enthusiasm strengthens our community character, and their skills and experience reinforce our belief that a grassroots venture such as ours draws on talent and enthusiasm and can be very successful. In

addition to this team, we have a volunteer team of 11 retreat guides who are experienced in offering one-to-one spiritual accompaniment.

The activities of this team have had to change this year due to the effects of the pandemic, with the first national lockdown starting just days before our Year 2020-21 began. That said, the success and indeed survival of RHC this year has been a collaborative effort with people supporting our work as trustees, staff, volunteers (as facilitators, resource contributors, and IT help), and guest retreat leaders, as well as donors and indeed by attending our events. Through the involvement and support of many, RHC has negotiated the challenges of the year and is emerging strengthened.

if we volunteer

from *Wellbeing Factors that Matter*
<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/>

While celebrating the work of our team, for some time we have recognised the need for an Assistant Co-ordinator to support the charity as it continues to expand. The funding and recruitment of an Assistant Co-ordinator was put on hold during the uncertain times of the pandemic, but will be a key focus for us this coming year.

What we do and why: Objectives and Activities

The object of the CIO is to advance the Christian religion for the benefit of the public mainly, but not exclusively, through the provision of facilities, education, training and personal support to enable the exploration and experience of spirituality.

(from our Constitution)

Retreat House Chester offers 'retreat in the city – as a part of living', to make the many benefits of retreat available to as wide a range of people as possible and to make it as accessible as possible. Our initiative for an independent charitable non-residential facility is an imaginative response to contemporary needs. Retreat House Chester understands both interior life and the value of community, especially in a city context, and we seek to improve engagement with spirituality, for the benefits it brings both personally and socially. We believe that spiritual thirst is a contemporary form of poverty, and that responding to this is a matter of human dignity and social justice. Pandemic circumstances make this more urgent and necessary than ever. In addition, the fact that we do not have a residential character, and we promote retreat in everyday living, means that much of our programme could be adapted to online events with confidence and success, and our way of 'everyday' retreat became more familiar to people.

Our Vision and Values centre on 'peace' and the wholeness it brings. We seek to build peace and fullness of life for individuals, within communities, and across the city. In doing this, we value: hope; human worth; relationship; the strength of gentleness; roots & responsibility; and being small in a big picture. Our full Vision & Values document is available on our website.

We are careful to make clear that our roots are in Christian spiritual tradition and our ecumenical character in line with that of Churches Together in Britain & Ireland.

Peace

To this house;
To those who enter;
To those who dwell here;
To those who depart,

Peace

our well-loved Retreat House blessing

We are a member organisation of the Retreat Association and of Cheshire West Voluntary Action.

Benefits

Retreat is not just personal. There are social benefits to providing non-residential retreat in a city context. From research and feedback, we are able to demonstrate both personal and social benefits to our activities. Such benefits include amongst others: improved wellbeing; improved relationships; reduced isolation (a well-recognised feature of urban life); enhanced spiritual experience/depth experience; improved community health; improved workplaces; increased knowledge of Christian spirituality; and the opportunity for dialogue between Christianity and the public realm. In Spring 2020 we undertook in-depth research into our impact, through one-to-one conversations with people who know Retreat House Chester well and who represent a range of backgrounds. The results of this are detailed in our Report for 2019 – 20, and outline how we are responding to need and delivering key benefits of wellbeing, resilience, spiritual experience and relationship. Feedback received this year follows in 'Our Success'.

Need in changed times

Results from our feedback exercise in Spring 2020 revealed to us just how much people felt they needed what RHC offers. The sudden changes this year to how we work and live could have meant that we were no longer able to provide for need, or that people found that they needed us less than they had thought. Quite the opposite has been the case, with the success of RHC clear in the ongoing long-term participation of so many, others coming along for a second or third time, and the number of first-timers. One need worth specific mention is the value of 'local' at a time when people can and do access online events anywhere in the world. We have been told repeatedly that people join us online because we are local, giving a sense of local connection and relationship at a time when we have all needed such things. Here are just some examples of the need people tell us about, from Spring 2020 onwards:

our spiritual life,
or belief system

from *Wellbeing Factors that Matter*
<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/>

our sense of belonging to
our neighbourhood

from *Wellbeing Factors that Matter*
<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/>



important to be able to speak to people at depth... there are very few places you can do this... I can be with people where spiritual experience is not taboo... there's a danger for me of not having a communal setting for spirituality sometimes... I have no other way of accessing all I have learned here... without RHC, I would not have the energy to do the other things I do... RHC has a fantastic neutrality about it, a faith environment that is non-threatening, relaxed and comfortable... I find peace and hope in RHC just existing – it's a positive contribution to the diversity of Chester... RHC in many many ways helps me in this wilderness... thank you so much for this invitation, particularly at this time and for us who are mainly alone.... many thanks to you for all the work you have done this year to keep us all connected. It has meant a great deal to me... a lifeline...

People recognise that RHC offers something distinctive: a neutral faith environment where spirituality, or depth to life, is not taboo and which offers encounter with others. It's the kind of thing this self-professed 'faithless' journalist, in the national press, is saying we need now in these changed and changing times:

how satisfied we are with our lives
how worthwhile we feel our lives are
how we rate our mental wellbeing

from *Wellbeing Factors that Matter*
<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/>

... the chance of any shared reflection on the last year's events still seems slim. Secularised societies do not really work like that. And Britain is a perfect example, as proved by a prospect that somehow feels both exciting and absurd: a return to shops, pub gardens and "normality", and people being encouraged to make merry as if nothing has happened.

In the first phase of the pandemic, there were clear signs that a lot of us needed much more. Across 95 countries, Googling the word "prayer" increased by 50%...

For many of us, life without God has turned out to be life without fellowship and shared meaning – and in the midst of the most disorientating, debilitating crisis most of us have ever known, that social tragedy now cries out for action.

from *How do faithless people like me make sense of this past year of Covid?*

John Harris www.theguardian.com March 28 2021

Our Activities: find, experience, explore, connect – in changed times

The four-fold invitation of our programme - to **find, experience, explore and connect** - derives from the monastic way of silence, prayer, study, labour and community - a way which has inspired retreat across centuries and across cultures, and a way which is written into the history of Chester with its monastic heritage. It inspires a diverse programme, with a range of ways to be involved.

This year, all of our programme activities have been online. We responded quickly to lockdown by developing 'Living Differently': three months of resources available on our website, week by week, resulting in 21 lasting resources reflecting our character and 'normal' activities, for people to use at home. These gave a means of not just resourcing people but also of introducing many to what we do, in an easy-to-use way. As Zoom became a more familiar way of being in touch, and as it became clear that there would be no imminent 'return to normal', we began to offer live online programme activities, and we appreciate here the volunteer assistance and commitment we had in the development of this. By the end of March 2021, we had hosted 38 programme Zoom events across seven months.



delivering our programme online in a pandemic

A key event (and our biggest) was in October when we welcomed international speaker Laurence Freeman, Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation, for a day which had been long-planned as an in-person event but instead saw him joining us from France on Zoom. An important initiative has been the successful introduction of a study course (in Christian contemplative spirituality) and a training course (in hosting conversation). For more on these activities see 'Our Success'.

if we are engaged in
formal or informal
learning

from *Wellbeing Factors that Matter*

<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/>

Our ability to offer these resources and activities in such uncertain and swiftly changing times is with thanks to the support of funding from the Steve Morgan Foundation, Cheshire West and Chester Council, the Westminster Foundation (with CWaC), the Jesuit Fund for Social Justice, and the World Community for Christian Meditation. This has been a hugely challenging year for charities – including RHC – and the support of funders who recognise that fact has been crucial to charitable activity and indeed the survival of organisations. More on this follows in the 'Finance' section of this Report.

Our Beneficiaries

We believe that Retreat House Chester addresses a fundamental human need, which is inadequately resourced. Research shows that spiritual experiences relate to a fundamental dimension of human existence and are frequently reported across all cultures, and that any individual regardless of their particular religion or lack thereof may have spiritual experience. Indeed, retreat itself is common across cultures and through history; we like to say it is 'as old as the hills'.

This year there has been widespread attention to the presence and manner of 'religion' as a question in the 10-year National Census, prompting this editorial in the national press:

The majority of us do not belong to any religion. But for most, atheism is not an option either... The largest bloc [in Prof Linda Woodhead's research] was made up of "maybes, doubters, and don't knows", plus a group who did believe in God, a higher power or in "something there". The younger the cohort, the smaller the proportion of atheists.

...Perhaps the atheist Philip Larkin got to the nub of it 70 years ago, when communal Christian worship still flourished. In his poem *Church Going*, Larkin wrote that such places have an aura because they satisfy in us "A hunger ... to be more serious". Congregations may have since thinned out, but spiritual hunger is part of the human condition. It will find other outlets and means of expression in the years to come.

from *The Guardian view on 'post-Christian' Britain: a spiritual enigma* Editorial March 28 2021

We recognise that an absence of 'religious practice' does not mean an absence of spirituality or a lack of desire to engage with this human characteristic. Pandemic times are giving this greater prominence, and there must be ready ways to respond to this personal and social need. In setting up in 2015, RHC has been, it now seems, ahead of the curve.

We make the invitation to 'come as you are'. It has always been a founding priority to make retreat as available and accessible as possible. To this end we have defined four ways in which to reach beneficiaries: our retreat programme; one-to-one; the general public through Reflective Chester

activities, especially pop-up and online; and social groups through groups bookings and Reflective Chester sessions with marginal and vulnerable groups.

Our programme activities have made a successful transition to online this year. It has been less easy to work in the four ways outlined above to reach our full range of beneficiaries. Early on, while we were still offering only the Living Differently resources, and without the ready online infrastructure ourselves, we decided to refer anyone seeking one-to-one to another organisation (St Beuno's / Jesuits) who were already offering this online. Lockdown meant we had to cancel the group bookings we had for Spring 2020. Nonetheless, we have developed an online Reflective Chester session and delivered this successfully to Cheshire & Warrington Carers in January 2021; in March 2021 we ran a training course in offering Reflective Chester sessions and our volunteers will start rolling this out in Spring – Summer 2021, with a particular focus on marginal groups. We have also explored with our volunteers and our network new ways of reaching existing groups as we emerge from and continue to live with the pandemic.

Covid-19 is a collective trauma that has changed all of our lives. But while we are all in it together, we're not all experiencing it the same way. And there is clear and compelling evidence that people experiencing the biggest disadvantages and injustices before the pandemic are being affected more severely by both the virus and its effects on our mental health.

Andy Bell, Deputy Chief Executive - Centre for Mental Health

We continue to offer a varied programme and at different times of day and week. While, regrettably, pop-up in-person activities have been impossible, meaning we had to cancel planned community activities and affecting our work with the wide public, we have designed our programme and Living Differently resources with breadth of access and appeal firmly in mind. A Reflective Chester page was introduced to our website, and Reflective Chester has been our main social media focus.

As in other years, those who come to us include people who live alone, are bereaved, retired, elderly, new to Chester, or caring for a family member. This year we know that isolation and mental health have been major areas of need. For feedback from our participants, see 'Our Success'.



changed ways of reaching beneficiaries in a pandemic

Our provision is non-denominational, and our operations reflect this. This has developed to be a key characteristic and gives a firm basis for work with the interfaith and non-religious communities.



Our success: Achievements and Performance

Key Achievements

Negotiating a way through uncertain times is undoubtedly the key achievement of the year. In further detail, we celebrate the following key achievements:

- ❖ **programme**
 - exceeded **target increase** in bookings, if taken at a monthly average
 - adapted swiftly to pandemic circumstances by creating **online resources**
 - devised a successful programme of **online events**
 - ran first longer-term **study course** – increased places to meet demand
 - ran first **training course** – to deliver Reflective Chester (focus on **marginal groups**)

- ❖ **operations**
 - further developed **collaborative working** on programme delivery
 - initiated confident **online delivery**
 - established **contingency arrangements** for operations
 - appointed two **new trustees**

- ❖ **marketing & fundraising**
 - set up **online giving** with Charities Aid Foundation and Stewardship
 - individual giving** increased
 - successful **funding bids** significantly increased income

Delivery & Output

Always, our primary achievement is the delivery of our charitable objective – ways to explore and experience spirituality. The ways in which RHC has grown in this remarkable year give encouragement and ground for confidence. (Figures in brackets below give the comparison from 2019-20.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| ❖ 38 events across seven months (82 across ten months, inc pop-up, drop-in and group bookings) | ❖ 41% visited at least twice (37%) |
| ❖ 21 resources across three months (0) | ❖ 29% visited at least three times (25%) |
| ❖ 393 bookings in seven months (410 bookings in ten months) | ❖ 43% bookings were new visitors (53%) |
| ❖ 82 individuals booking across seven months (82 individuals booking across ten months) | ❖ 10.5 average number attendees / programme event (5) |
| | ❖ 14 individuals with group booking (60 no pop-up or drop-in events (125 individuals last year) |

In summary – although we offered fewer events, our bookings did not suffer; rather, in terms of averages, they improved by 100% with more than 10 people per event – meaning our ‘capacity’, when measured by the space we have in Abbey Square, exceeded 100% (last year, 84% for events in person). This will inform our thinking next year as we consider our location and use of venues and online activities. There is an increased rate of repeat bookings. In addition to events, our online Living Differently resources were viewed almost 1500 times in the year.

We regret, though, the impossibility of hosting the group bookings, pop-ups and drop-ins of normal times, all of which were set to expand in 2020-21 and which had to be cancelled in the pandemic. These will be key activities in the year ahead, as circumstances allow and probably in new ways.

We are confident in the quality of what we offer, and that this has not suffered in the move online, as in the example feedback here and throughout this Report.



material which is so well produced and helpful... wonderful resources just a fingertip away... I am enormously impressed with the material. So another thank you for initiating it... you have made RHC website very easy for us to use... congratulations on putting together such a good programme, it looks very exciting... thoughtful questions and gentle facilitation were excellent... ever-gracious facilitation... the sessions I have joined so far have been wonderful... the session was informative, participative and most of all enjoyable... Thank you for this morning, it was wonderful... I want to thank you so much for the Advent Retreat... Thank you for the last weeks, it's been wonderfully helpful... Thank you for another very enjoyable and very useful session. They just get better and better and I am going to miss them when they finish... Thanks so much for a wonderful course. It's been brilliant... The series and today have been extraordinarily rich, overflowing with possibilities at every point - such a profound experience.... We remain so grateful for what RHC has provided this year under very difficult circumstances.... Just to say thank you so much for this retreat. It was a really fruitful time... thought-full, thought inspiring, sensitively crafted. Also, in a practical way I thought the format totally worked... When will you be having another session?... Thank you for such a beautifully led retreat this morning... a very thoughtful, inspiring and challenging day... Thank you for making this day happen... Thank you so much for organising the event. I cannot explain how much I enjoyed it and I think/hope received so much... Let's have more of these please...

Feedback & Outcomes

Good things happen on retreat, and there are positive outcomes. In Spring 2020 our in-depth feedback exercise was with people who knew Retreat House Chester well through a full range of our activities over a significant length of time. What emerged was a detailed reinforcement of feedback we had gathered in a variety of ways in past years, and some surprising positive revelations. Reinforcement included: impact on wellbeing, with a bias towards nourishment and resilience; spiritual experience; and relationships. New emerging themes were: the benefit to physical health; the value of silence; the enabling of personal growth and development; the joy of ecumenical relationships; and the unique contribution Retreat House Chester makes in the experience of faith.

Feedback this year has been more informal, sent in by email along the way (approx. 50% of participants), but the comments received still serve to reinforce the pattern of positive impact that we find over the years. Here are just some examples:



I am finding the resources on the Living Differently pages so useful and stimulating and enriching... comforting and calming... I enjoyed looking at the well-being pages... Thank you for a lovely relaxing morning yesterday... I really enjoyed it at the time and have benefitted from it deeply since... calming and productive... I'm receiving so much from these sessions... so helpful, challenging and embracing... wonderfully helpful... I feel nurtured and encouraged... After several months alone in self isolation as a vulnerable person, it meant a great deal... it is a way of supporting people



the slideshow is a contemplative experience in itself... a sanctuary... I feel that RHC has become 'church' for me in the last few months, with all that implies... a chance to share faith and deepen it, which I have never done before on Zoom and feel encouraged by... people are enabled to share what is in their hearts, and I have never experienced anything quite like it, not in many, many years of participating in small groups in a faith setting... I felt we were like desert fathers and mothers today, gone out to the Zoom desert to talk about "what it is to be in relationship with God"... I really valued the personal reflecting time: it was enriching... the graceful space that is Retreat House Chester... It's nice to set aside time and make space for God to push through the soil... Thank you for such a beautifully led retreat this morning. I have taken a lot from it and it will carry me through the rest of Lent and beyond.



relaxing and chatting with people was lovely... enjoyed meeting some new people... authentic listening and connection... what a great idea to have Companions Contacts... It's lovely to see friends again as our screens expand at the start of Zoom!... It was so lovely to see, and hear, people again... The breakout rooms I have been in have been very good, as close to 'being there' as I have experienced on Zoom, through people's willingness to listen to each other... I think I can hardly believe that a group can develop such a trust using Zoom. Clearly I have a lot to learn... many thanks to you for all the work you have done this year to keep us all connected...

We are glad and proud that RHC has been able to make the good things of retreat available through this year.

Targets

In pandemic circumstances we are very pleased to have achieved most of our targets for 20 – 21. Those we missed were related to material circumstances (launching our lending library; improving our premises) or funding (employing an Assistant Co-ordinator; finding significant funding for longer-term operation). In the light of this, and our three-year plan, we have the following targets for 2021 - 22:

❖ programme

- increase engagement & attendance as per 3-year plan adapted to pandemic situation, re-establishing groups and one-to-one, and expanding courses
- launch lending library resource
- increase our use of other locations
- improve our own premises

❖ operations, marketing & fundraising

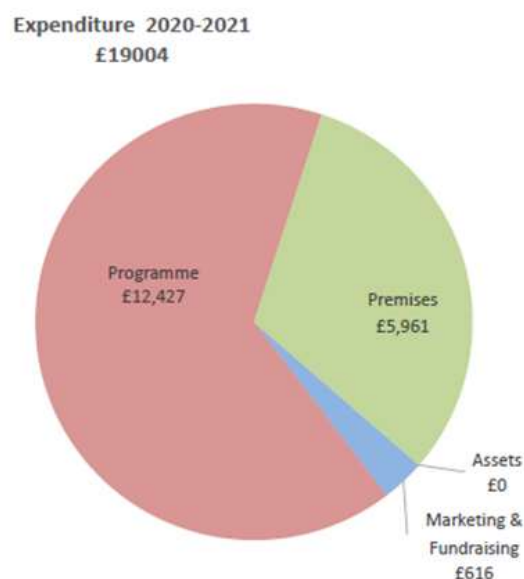
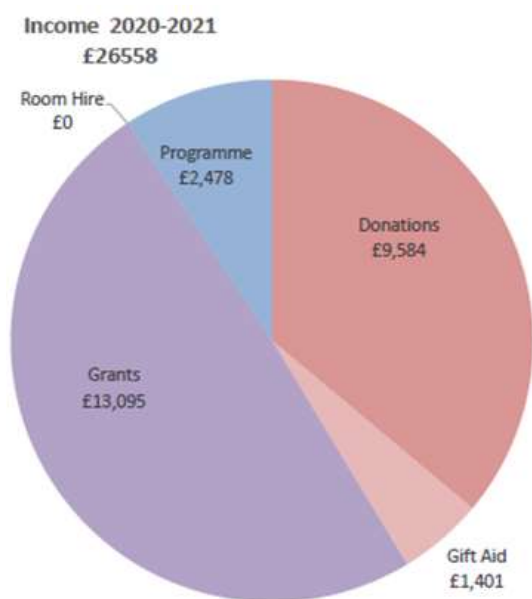
- continue to create collaboration opportunities
- expand Friends scheme
- develop opportunities to provide consultancy
- fund and employ Assistant Co-ordinator, and appoint new treasurer
- find significant funding for longer term operation



Financial review

In 2019-20, income was at 44% of expenditure. This year, income has been 140% of expenditure, thanks to a significant increase in donations and grants. In Spring 2020, we knew that our sustainability would depend on fundraising; the support we received through donations and grants – in no small way as a result of the pandemic – has meant we can close the year with some confidence. Nonetheless, it remains the case that it is donations and grant funding that will ensure our continued work, and a larger grant or donation would provide necessary ongoing security for our work and enable us to focus our energies on expansion and delivery.

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Income	£31,899	£26,720	£6,537	£9,026	£26,558
Founding Benefactors	£20,000	£15,000	0	0	0
Donations +Gift Aid	£ 8,037	£ 7,501	£3,192	£4,365	£10,985
Grants	0	£ 400	£ 250	£1,500	£13,095
Programme	£ 3,862	£ 3,819	£3,095	£3,096	£2,478
Room hire	0	0	£ 34	£ 65	0



	2016-17	2017-18	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Expenditure: Charitable Activities	£7,696	£10,391	£28,340	£20,737	£19,004
Premises	£3,177	£ 4,920	£ 5,723	£ 6,594	£ 5,961
Marketing+Fundraising	£1,860	£ 1,639	£ 1,454	£ 804	£ 616
Programme	£1,501	£ 2,945	£12,828	£13,133	£12,427
Assets inc refurb	£1,158	£ 887	£ 8,335	£ 206	0

Income

The reduction in our programme income can be attributed to two facts: we ran events for seven months rather than ten, and an increased number of those events were free of charge / donations invited. Conversely, the donations received through such events account for part of the increase in donations this year, along with a general increase in giving from our supporters in the pandemic and in a growing Friends Scheme. Grants received this year were essential to us and are as follows:

Steve Morgan Foundation	£1500	emergency funding restricted to support running costs for the production of 'Living Differently' resources for April – June 2020, our work in those months of lockdown
Cheshire West and Chester	£900	emergency funding restricted to support the running costs for the production of 'Living Differently' resources for April – June 2020, our work in those months of lockdown
Jesuit Fund for Social Justice	£1845	emergency funding for retreat in the city, unrestricted to support running costs
Jesuit Fund for Social Justice	£3850	for Reflective Chester, restricted to running costs of activities of this outreach project
Cheshire West and Chester	£5000	discretionary covid funding, unrestricted to support the charity in the pandemic

Restricted funds were spent accordingly and the closing balance at 31 March 2021 of £1,705 represents the amount still to be spent from the Jesuit Fund for Social Justice grant.

We are very thankful for the support of all donors, and are glad of the recognition of the importance of our work.

Expenditure

Expenditure is largely comparable with last year, with some slight reduction due to reduced operations. We spend responsibly and essentially. We know that meeting our costs depends on successful fundraising, and priorities ahead will be expansion of our services, the employment of an Assistant Co-ordinator, additional and improved premises, and the continued ability to offer activities at low or no charge.

Conclusion

As we enter our sixth full year, after a year of great challenge, we celebrate the many successes in the further development of this innovative venture to offer retreat in the city as a part of living, and we look ahead to the future with confidence in our resilience and adaptability, while recognising that we need support in our work so that people can continue to benefit from this deeply worthwhile offer to find, experience, explore and connect. It is certainly true that there has been noticeable public attention during this crisis to the human need and capacity for the things that we call 'retreat' and we believe Retreat House Chester will have much to offer in what emerges from these times, both immediately and into the future.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' Report above.
Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

signature
signed copy in office
full name Paul Towner
date

signature
signed copy in office
full name Consilia Black
date



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Retreat House Chester

1163330

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

01/04/2020

To

31/03/2021

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Voluntary donations	9,584	-	-	9,584	3,861
Gift Aid claimed on donations	1,401	-	-	1,401	504
Founding benefactors	-	-	-	-	-
Programme income	2,478	-	-	2,478	3,096
Grant funding	6,845	6,250	-	13,095	1,500
Room Hire	-	-	-	-	65
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	20,308	6,250	-	26,558	9,026
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	20,308	6,250	-	26,558	9,026
A3 Payments					
Marketing + Fundraising	117	19	-	136	319
Licences & Subscriptions	78	12	-	90	130
information Technology	337	53	-	390	355
Accommodation (premises)	3,840	1,396	-	5,236	5,720
Insurance	496	181	-	677	823
Office costs	35	13	-	48	51
Programme costs	476	173	-	649	1,148
Programme delivery: staff	8,638	3,140	-	11,778	11,985
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	14,017	4,987	-	19,004	20,531
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
For programme and refurb	-	-	-	-	206
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	206
Total payments	14,017	4,987	-	19,004	20,737
Net of receipts/(payments)	6,291	1,263	-	7,554	- 11,711
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	11,052	442	-	11,494	23,205
Cash funds this year end	17,343	1,705	-	19,048	11,494

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Co-op adjusted bank balance	9,226	1,705	-
	Cash float	49	-	-
	HSBC adjusted bank balance	8,068	-	-
	Total cash funds	17,343	1,705	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

Categories	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

Categories	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use				-
				-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

Categories	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities				
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval



**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

**Independent examiner's report
on the accounts**

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

RETREAT HOUSE CHESTER

On accounts for the year
ended

31 MARCH 2021

Charity no
(if any)

1163330

Set out on pages

17-18

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (~~other than that disclosed below~~*) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect,:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

Neville Kite

Date:

21/07/2021

Name:

NEVILLE KITE

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

F.C.M.A (FELLOW OF CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANTS)

Address:

CHEXTON

ROWTON LANE

CHESTER CH3 6AT

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

signed copy in office