

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

registered charity number 1163330
(Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

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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.**

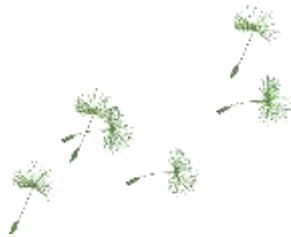
Our roots are in Christian spiritual tradition and our ecumenical character in line with that of Churches Together in Britain & Ireland. We are a member organisation of the Retreat Association and of Cheshire West Voluntary Action and are glad of the networks this provides, enabling us to work with other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

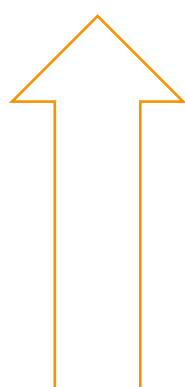
Our success



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

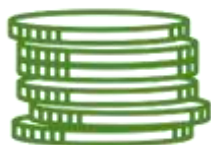


Even with this year’s successes, we face challenge. We want to develop our retreat offering still further and – most of all – we need to build a sustainable future for this charity.

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*.

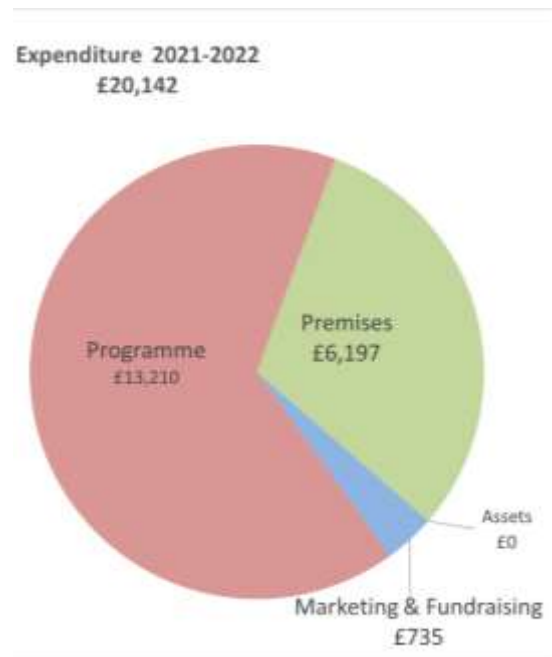
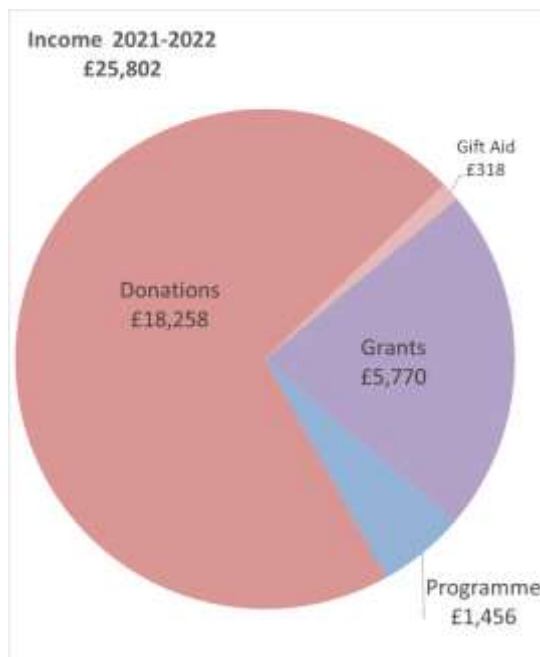
Cheshire West & Chester Council	£1600	from 'Let's Turn This Around' Fund restricted to running costs of events Spring / Summer 2021 as Covid recovery
National Lottery	£1170	from 'Local Connections' Fund restricted to running costs of community events in Reflective Chester Month, Nov 2021
Society of Retreat 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

Responsibilities and
basis of report

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

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))				
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
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 asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

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