

Retreat House Chester

Trustees' Annual Report & Accounts

for the year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

registered charity number 1163330
(Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

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Charity Information

registered charity name

Retreat House Chester

registered charity number

1163330

registered address

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>	£0	£0
<i>Marjory Boddy Trust</i>	£0	£0

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