



AGM 2023



Trustees Report for 2023

Contents

Message from the Chair of Trustees	2
Our Funds	4
Our Membership	5
Our Events	6
Our Sponsorship & Acquisitions	7
Our Programme	8
Our Constitution	8

Message from the Chair of Trustees



Dear Member

The Winter Gardens Trust held its first AGM eight years ago in July 2015 and at that meeting, the Board of Trustees committed to issuing an annual report on activity to members. This is our third year of meeting in the lead up to the festive season and it gives me enormous pleasure to again extend an invitation to join us on the evening of Wednesday 6th December for a glass of wine and a mince pie.

With the pandemic now very much behind us, even though I think it will take a very long time indeed to forget the impact it has had on us all, we are now getting back to our pre-pandemic membership numbers and our events programme is beginning to get back to 'normal'. Whilst I know that some of our members are still very cautious in coming out to attend events, it's encouraging that people still feel that their subscription contributes towards our work in highlighting the importance of this incredible complex.

One of our good news stories from the past year is the growing success of our coffee mornings which we are now holding monthly and for which attendance seems to grow every time with 70 or 80 people in attendance each time. Thanks to our team of regular volunteers, we make a little money on the tickets and our members are always generous when buying raffle tickets, so these are slowly but surely adding to our funds.

Another success was the May coach trip to visit our sister building, Morecambe Winter Gardens, where we were made very welcome by Professor Vanessa Toulmin and the Morecambe Winter Gardens Trust's dedicated team of volunteers. The visit included a splendid afternoon tea and those on the trip got a chance to explore Morecambe's seafront into the bargain!

In our last Trustees Report I also drew your attention to the ongoing work to the Church Street façade, changes which are now largely complete with the exception of one or two specific areas. Whilst it's taken longer than anticipated, I for one believe that the works have made an enormous difference, in particular the exposing and restoration of the beautiful carved stonework to either side of the arch that forms the bulk of the Quilligans frontage.

As I also outlined in the last Trustees Report, this building work is also linked to a programme of creative activity intended to bring new life to the Town centre by providing different reasons to visit and use its facilities. We have been pleased to support the HAZ programme by hosting a number of local craft and art markets as well as summer activities for young people through our partners Aunty Social in their new building at 28 Topping Street. This programme has been a huge success and just about every workshop and event laid on for the community has been oversubscribed. I do hope we can find a way to continue this kind of outreach after the Heritage Action Zone Project finishes next year.

As a reminder, we'll be hosting another of these markets with a more festive flavour on Saturday the 2nd December. The date is again before that of our AGM, but I know you'll be reading this before then, so we hope to see you there on the day!

I would like to close by yet again thanking you all for all your support over the last year, whether it is simply by subscribing and being a friend or by being one of our keen volunteers, helping out at events and with fundraising. I would also like to thank the staff at the Winter Gardens, particularly the remarkable team of managers who work so hard to support us and for whom it seems that nothing is too much trouble.

I look forward to seeing you all on the **6th December**

David Owen
Chair of the Board of Trustees
The Winter Gardens Trust

Our Funds



Our funds and what we do with them is important, and whilst it's not all about the money, we still need to bring money in to deliver and support activities within the Winter Gardens.

Our income and expenditure report for the financial year 2022/2023 is given below and our Secretary will run through this and answer any questions at the AGM. In the interests of transparency, we'll also have a full transaction list available on the evening for anyone who would like to see the accounts in item by item detail!

Winter Gardens Trust Income/Expenditure 2022/23

	In	Out
Carried Forward from 2021/22	£ 17,445.68	
Admin/Website	£ -	-£ 395.50
Stationery	£ -	-£ 403.00
Stamps	£ -	£ -
Events	£ 4,834.50	-£ 1,654.68
Merchandise	£ 612.87	-£ 2,789.90
Equipment	£ -	£ -
Membership	£ 2,734.41	-£ 40.00
Acquisitions	£ -	-£ 366.91
Sponsorship	£ -	-£ 12,049.50
Donations	£ 10,845.00	
Debtors	£ -	£ -

Year Totals

£ 36,472.46	-£17,699.49
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Available Balance

£ 18,772.97

At the **last AGM** we presented proposals for focusing on funding the repairs to the remaining three unrestored chandeliers in the Empress Ballroom and we have now made payments totalling £20,000 towards these works (£12,000 last year and £9,000 so far in the 2023/24 year), although the cost has now risen due to the condition of the remaining chandeliers being worse than anticipated. The final cost will now be £34,000 which represents an increase of £4,000 on the original estimates. The Board has agreed to increase funding to meet the additional costs.

Paying out over £30,000 over two years has stretched the Trust's finances significantly and the Trustees are recommending a break in active funding for the 2024/25 year to try and rebuild our financial reserves before looking at further projects. The idea would be to focus on a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (formerly the Heritage Lottery Fund) to help us build our capacity for fundraising and direct involvement in projects. Initial conversations with the Fund have been positive, so we're encouraged enough to recommend moving forward with this.

This break will also offer an opportunity to implement some of the fundraising projects outlined at last year's AGM and which we haven't had the time to look at in the current year.

Our Membership



Our membership is the most important part of who we are. Without their support our work would be much more difficult and whilst your subscription money is important, the involvement of our members is even more critical.

We now appear to be back to our pre-pandemic levels of membership but we have noticed that whilst many are happy to join and subscribe, many of our members are still uncertain about getting out and participating in group events. This means we need to look at ways in which we can engage with our members who are either unable or reluctant to attend some of our in person events. We hope to do this as part of our capacity building work over the next year or so.

At our last AGM we outlined our plans not to increase our standard membership fee. Instead we agreed to introduce a higher tier membership for £30 with some additional benefit. The response to date has been good, with quite a few of our members opting to move to the enhanced membership scheme. This has added a further £390 to our membership receipts for 2022/23, which was £2734.41.

As they did last year, the Trustees would also like to ask members to help us grow. Do you know someone who was a member but isn't anymore? Do you know others who might be interested and who you could encourage to join? What about a year's subscription as a Christmas present? We'd be only too happy to provide cards in a lovely Christmas card with envelope for you to give friends and family.

Our Events



Our events are important to us because they offer a way to raise money as well as an opportunity to get together as a group to celebrate what's special about the Winter Gardens.

We've seen a significant increase in our income from events across the 2022/23 year with an income after costs of £3179.82. This is a significant increase from last year and shows an upward trend that we hope will continue.

One of the highlights of the 2022/23 year has been the growing success of our coffee mornings which are now monthly. From relying on a very small group of people initially, we've expanded the topics covered by speakers to general local history and entertainment and this has proven very popular.

So far, we've had a range of fascinating talks and tours from both managers within the venue (Michael Williams on the History of the Dance at the Winter Gardens and Lynda Baker on her career at the Winter Gardens and all the remarkable people she's met managing the Opera House) and outside speakers such as Beryl Johnson, who gave a fascinating talk in June about the golden years of variety in Blackpool.

This was followed in August by Norman Barrett who spoke to us about his life as a ringmaster, most notably of course at Blackpool Tower.

This was followed in September by Peter Lindup who talked about his late father, Rowland Lindup, and showed us 100 of the caricatures of famous comedians drawn by him. Our most recent speaker was one of our own members, Shirley Matthews who talked about the many important venues in Blackpool (some now gone) where the Victorians and Edwardians enjoyed their seaside entertainment.

We're immensely grateful to all of those who gave up their time to speak to us and who have made the coffee mornings such a success.

Our Sponsorships & Acquisitions



The way we support others in bringing the past to life is also important to us and we're constantly looking to develop new volunteers and contribute to partnership costs. We also sometimes acquire equipment or items for our collection.

Sponsorship

Our biggest grant in 2022/23 was the first payment of £12,000 for the repair of the Empress Ballroom Chandeliers. We'll be splitting the cost of these between 2022/23 and 2023/24 so the rest of the funding will be spent in the current financial year. We also paid for our core events volunteers for a lunch at the Winter Gardens, which at under £50 was something of a bargain for all the hard work they put in.

We have also co-hosted a number of events at the Winter Gardens such as the Blackpool Civic Trust Awards and the Seaside Heritage Alliance Bucket and Spade Awards as well as a programme of craft markets across the year. Some of these events we support because of partnerships with existing organisations and some we make a small return from, but all of them are well attended by our members and help us bring new audiences into the building to enjoy it in different ways.

Acquisitions

The Trust made a few smaller acquisitions over the year totalling £366.91 including a card reader for events where we offer membership or merchandise as well as some new tablecloths for our stalls and some new sign holders for prices and information.

Our Programme 2023/24



Our programme of events is changing all the time and the listings below don't include the many shows and non – trust events held at the Winter Gardens every year.

We're still working on the programme of events for the coming year but we're hoping to see a comeback for the Film Festival, Annual Dinner, St George's Day afternoon tea and an extensive programme of coffee mornings alongside future open days and hopefully a signature event for 2024.

For updated details on the Winter Gardens Programme, go to our website at <http://www.wintergardenstrust.org.uk>. If you're wondering what to do over the coming months, why not look at the huge range of events programmed for the Winter Gardens this winter online at:

<http://www.wintergardensblackpool.co.uk>

Our Constitution & Board



Our constitution was written and ratified when the Trust became a Charity in 2015, but like all such documents, it requires occasional amendments to keep up with the times!

Constitution – There are no proposed changes to the constitution for consideration at this AGM.

Board – All current elected Trustees have indicated their willingness to re-stand as trustees so unless other nominations are received they will all continue to serve until the next AGM. The loss of Ted Lightbown has created a vacancy for an elected trustee so do consider standing if you have any skills or experience you feel the Trust might benefit from. The forms for nomination with the explanatory rules are all issued to members with the AGM pack of which this is one document of four in total.

Chair – As many of you will know, our current Chair, David Owen, stood down as a Councillor at the last election but indicated he was still willing to serve on the board if the Board wished to have him. As a result, a proposal was received to second David to the Board and he was duly re-elected as Chair. David has indicated he is willing to stand formally at this AGM subject to a vote by the members so the election of David as nominee to the Board (on which there is a vacancy) will form part of the agenda for the AGM to regularise his membership as a Trustee.



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