

CIO 1181126

Didsbury Civic Society Report to The Charity Commission for 2024

The year 2024 started very well with our biggest project ever commencing since the start of the Society in 1966.

The Garden of Contemplation:

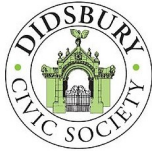
The first spades entered the ground in January 2024. The winning design had been agreed and voted on by the Community during a design exhibition at the library. The funding though not complete was steadily growing along with alternative commitments from business to supply labour and site equipment for the project, for which we are extremely grateful, such as access to the MCC library site for the storage of materials and the use of the toilet facilities. The water needed was delivered via several hose connections from Emmanuel Church and was a constant for stone cutting, the mixing of cement and the perennial plants and bulbs after planting. Some 5 months after the first spade went in the ground the project was completed within budget, and has been widely praised and received by the community.

The Deterioration of Street pavements and driveway entrances:

The DCS remains concerned that Didsbury's pavements continue to disintegrate both by wear and tear, along with poor maintenance. Including the various elements of builder's damage from their heavy vehicles and loaded skips parked in place during the perpetual building extension works which takes place. Relaxed planning regulation fails to stop the large amounts of additional flagging, concreting and tarmacking over gardens and drives which is taking place in the expectation that waste water schemes introduced nearly 100 years ago will continue to cope. Along with the lack of enforceable regulation to use permeable surfaces to ensure the return of rainwater to the ground water system, rather than the waste water system. It is also Important that builders do not use the water drainage system to dispose of surplus plaster and concrete etc which could be evident by the large amounts of grid and gully flooding which currently takes place around our streets.

Membership:

We have introduced our online auto enrol facility as our membership numbers are not as strong as in past years. However, I think we now have a much more realistic mix of Annual payments and Life Membership (where lump sums were received and one- off Gift Aid earned). We will also examine whether Direct Debit would be practical to the society in terms of cost and whether we have the ability within our banking arrangements.



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Our regular Social Trips:

Our social trips remain a strong, ever popular event and a regular feature of the society, usually starting with a visit to a retail outlet, a coffee, followed by a good lunch, usually at a carvery which caters for all tastes. Then followed by a visit to a listed building or private house tour where possible. Significant research is usually carried out into the proposed venue's history, snippets of historical and social interest, its local land marks and regular information updates enroute. Also including the house's building costs, and remodelling costs where known, the number of years in build, it's architect and the build style etc.

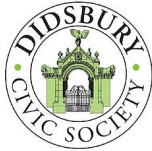
Support of Community Functions:

We continue to support functions in the community such as Didsbury Pride, the Christmas Fayres, Carols and Lights, summer Garden Parties, Didsbury Festival and the Didsbury car show. We also affiliate to and support Didsbury Mosque and Didsbury Synagogue who in turn have strongly supported our garden of Contemplation project. We also attend the regular Didsbury Traders Meetings, Remembrance Sunday and Didsbury East and West Ward Meetings. The DCS monitor and comment on all local Planning and Licencing Applications including licensing hours and their effect on the environment such as noise, glass and bottle waste, and the Didsbury Dozen plastic waste.

Green Issues, Climate and Pollution:

The DCS and the local Community fully support all of the issues contained in the MCC package for Climate, including the DCS Didsbury Plan dated 2017 and 2021. Didsbury has several areas of green spaces in public areas which are not supported by community groups. The Sandhurst Road/Wilmslow Road corner, the area fronting Beaver Road school on Wilmslow Road, and the public footpath area to the Barlow Medical Practice, which is constantly driven over by delivery vehicles area which would benefit from no parking signage. The triangular park at Parrs Wood (known as the Pocket Park) close to Tesco will receive some tender loving care from approximately July 2025 assisted by the DCS and MCC. Work has already started with mural artworks being placed on the public facing sides including "Welcome to Didsbury" on the A34 road side. The artwork has been carried out by a professional artist along with the support of Cadent the gas company hopefully to beautify the area, with a big tidy up and perennial planting ready for Spring 2026. There will be other similar areas to these, across the Didsbury Wards which would benefit from some TLC.

The community currently do not have any real knowledge of whether MCC are achieving reductions in carbon or pollution as they currently look to the community rather than industry and business to make reductions. Litter still remains an issue on the main street areas with the still inadequate and not fit for purpose newly installed litter bins, with overflowing cigarette ends trays exposed to wind and rain etc. We still do not have any on-street can and plastic bottle crushers allowing simpler metal and plastic recoveries and recycling.



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The types and volumes of waste has changed dramatically since the bins were first installed with significant increases in food and drinking taking place on the move, which was not the done-thing in bygone years. There are inconsiderate groups of people who believe it is acceptable to leave their rubbish both kerb and pavement side for someone else to collect and remove. There are also a number of agencies being paid large amounts in funding to manage our rivers and railway bridges and land areas etc, but they do not really want to have to take action or responsibility possibly damaging income streams by spending the monies received. So much of the responsibility is out-sourced that the public no longer know who is responsible, and who to report problems to, and feed-back being usually minimal.

This problem has been further magnified by the devastating flooding of Didsbury and its surrounds, with insurance increases for both households and vehicles. Poorly maintained sluices, a lack of resource planning such as Bank Holidays, along with the continuous damage to the hard work of voluntary groups, delays in replacing paths washed away etc, along with the shifting of debris, which seems to be a case of profit before people.

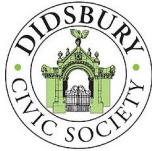
Planning and Licensing:

We still take an active part in debating applications for planning approvals in the Didsbury electoral Ward, though the number of big builds is reducing in Didsbury due to the lack of available land and with larger plots suitable for development decreasing. Though the approved Dandara Living, Blackbird Yard development at Tesco's Parris Wood has yet to see a spade in the ground. The completed McCarthy and Stone development of Jessiefield provoked local responses regarding several green issues.

As already mentioned currently one of the main issues is that in Didsbury building land is in short supply, which in some cases results in the demolition of perfectly good houses to deliver solutions of more bang for the buck from the land footprint. Whilst the new buildings will be greener environmentally and better insulated does this compensate for the damage and pollution caused when the bricks were originally cast, steel produced, timber cut and energy used in production. We do also take responsibility at times in opposing some of the plans that we are asked to comment on, and passing many others especially those that are of the "affordable housing" variety, which can bring younger residents and families to Didsbury.

Heritage Open Days:

The society strongly supports the programme and has a good portfolio of local buildings included. We have done a large amount of video filming which have been posted to our YouTube channel recording heritage and history for posterity. We have recorded all of the historical blue plaques on a walk thru map, along with the names of those who made history or were involved in great writings or discoveries. The Programme regularly starts off with a local historical talk by a local speaker, with all on the on the door charges going to a good-cause.



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During 2024 we were also able to erect the DCS funded plaque to the Spann's business and family at Costa Coffee on School Lane. With plans to include it in the 2025 programme. Details of which can be found on:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpLdglvWS98cmLf0sVBWhUw>

Charities and Bank Charges:

Seeing most of the small charities as an easy revenue stream, banks currently charge a monthly fee of around £5 per month plus transaction charges, based on the number of cheques and cash transactions paid in. As a result most charities pay more in charges than a standard domestic bank user, adding to the already difficult times being encountered by small local charities who would have difficulty moving their account, when domestic accounts can be incentivised to move etc. Charity banking attracts charges which are now usually at a higher cost than those made on individuals by the same banks.

Stop press, the DCS have been advised that our bankers the HSBC will with effect from the 1st July 2025 cease the fixed fee element on our account.

Graffiti and ASB:

Graffiti still remains a big problem in many residential areas. It invariably takes a long time to have the initial offending vandalism removed, only to find it re-graffitied within days probably by the same vandal, spoiling both the environment and the community areas where we live. It is certainly not acceptable to most residents, especially as the perpetrators leave their calling card in the form of tags which can be seen far and wide across our post code areas. Again, it is further complicated by the outsourcing of council maintenance, with the understanding of responsibility for resolution never being clearly detailed and with responsibility sometimes even denied. The DCS believes there should be a central collation point within councils where problems can be submitted within their website, and for it to then be redirected to those responsible. Whether they be railway operators, bus or tram operators etc, for the franchisee companies to resolve and report back to the public via email with an allocated "job ticket number" to allow follow up and achieve resolution. After all they receive the associated fees applicable for their services, knowledge and expertise. The lack of actions to remove this anti-social vandalism can lead to visible social degradation problems, where the action is seen as acceptable, and that it can be added to if so wished. Similar to the U S broken window theory.


Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Corlett", followed by a long horizontal flourish line.

Mike Corlett
DCS July 2025

DIDSBURY CIVIC SOCIETY

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2024

PAYMENTS	2024				2023	RECEIPTS	2024				2023
	Social	General	Restricted	Total	Total		Social	General	Restricted	Total	Total
Social events	2,975			2,975	2,796	Social events	3,098			3,098	3,217
Cenotaph and garden			20,469	20,469	1,547	Cenotaph and garden Donations			10,002	10,002	1,347
Ghost Art		328	2,000	2,328	500	Cenotaph and garden Grants			1,540	1,540	-
Committee expenses				-	144	Subscriptions		940		940	955
DCS Roller Banners				-	133	Gift Aid reclaimed				-	684
Public Health Meeting		119		119	110	Pride Stall				-	84
Office expenses		101		101	106	Donations		597		597	75
Didsbury Pride				-	63	Heritage books		5		5	60
Remembrance Day costs		24		24	22						
General expenses		40		40	-						
Insurance		101		101	-	TOTAL	3,098	1,542	11,542	16,182	6,422
						SUMMARY					
						Balances as at 31 Dec 2023	1,807	6,230	18,259	26,296	25,295
						Income	3,098	1,542	11,542	16,182	6,422
						Expenditure	2,975	713	22,469	26,157	5,421
						Balances as at 31 Dec 2024	1,930	7,059	7,332	16,321	26,296
TOTAL	2,975	713	22,469	26,157	5,421						
						Bank Balance at 31 December 2024				16,321	26,296
RESTRICTED FUNDS											
	2023	Transfer	Receipts	Payments	2024	<i>I certify that the above accounts are in accordance with the Society's books and records</i>					
Gargoyles	2,869	- 2,869			-	Mike Corlett					
Cenotaph and garden	13,390	2,869	11,542	20,469	7,332	Chairman					
Ghost Art	2,000		-	2,000	-						
Heritage filming	-				-	CJ Smail					
	18,259	-	11,542	22,469	7,332	Independent Examiner					