



TRUSTEES' REPORT JANUARY 2021

As the first Save Rodney's Pillar Trustees' Chairman's report, where do we start?

It should start from when the Charity was first set up, however we should go a little further back to understand why it was necessary to go down this route.

Following someone having concerns about the obvious degradation of the pillar, an inspection and report was instigated and funded by the three local Community Councils, Bausley with Criggion, Llandrinio & Arddleen and Llandysilio. Following this report several public meetings took place, firstly to report back on the findings, then to find a way forward.

The report highlighted two main issues, firstly the state of the Pillar and estimated cost of repair and secondly the fact that no actual owner of the Pillar could be found. The ownership was (and still may be) a major issue when large funding is to be sought. The only way that this issue could be overcome was to set up a Charity, with the possibility that it would be able to acquire temporary ownership of the Pillar and apply for the major funding which would be required to get the Pillar repaired.

Therefore on Monday 9th September 2019 the Charitable Incorporated Organisation Save Rodney's Pillar was formed, with eight people volunteering as Trustees: Frances Buckingham, Lesley Burrows, Elizabeth Dawson, Richard Hambleton, Heather Hobman, William Lee, David Roberts and Stephen Williams and with Carol Davies offering to act as Honorary Secretary.

The first steps have included:

1. Creating our constitution.
2. Registering as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation
3. Setting out our aims and objectives
4. Setting up a Bank Account
5. Set up a GDPR policy
6. Allocating an area of focus for each Trustee
7. Fundraising
8. Discussions with Statutory bodies
9. Getting more people involved

The monthly Trustees' meetings were very kindly held at the home of Liz Dawson, the main reason was the fact we had no money to hire a venue.

Constitution

Any organisation such as ours must have a constitution, to give us direction in everything we do, and needed to be agreed with the Charity Commission. Although this sounds very straight forward, there is a multitude of scenarios that it must cover, the work to create the it was down to Carol and Frances, who put in a lot of time and effort to get it right.

Registering as a Charity

A great deal of paperwork to be completed and some editing of our Constitution but on the 7th November 2019, Save Rodney's Pillar was registered with the Charity Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

Aims and Objectives

The Aim has always been to 'repair The Pillar, to ensure it stands for future generations' however the Objective has changed. We initially wanted to carry out the simple objective of repairs alone, however when looking at the requirements of funding bodies such as the Lottery Heritage Fund and following discussions with Cadw, the Welsh Government's historic environment service, in order achieve large funding we would need to have a far more encompassing objective.

This would include allowing people walking to the Pillar to learn more about what else there is, from flora and fauna as it is a designated SSSI, to the Iron Age hill fort it is built in. This has yet not been fully defined; we were in discussions with Cadw at the time Covid 19 made meeting people impossible.

Setting up a Bank Account

Steve and Frances were responsible for achieving this, this again seems very straight forward but was very different and many thanks to them both for showing persistence and getting it set up.

Following this Steve has set up the JustGiving page for online donations and the signage at the routes to the Pillar which include the QR code to allow people to go straight to the JustGiving page.

Setting up our GDPR policy

The fact we have a membership on which we hold data has meant we must comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Having appropriate GDPR policies is a legal requirement and Frances has been very persistent in getting them set up; most are now in place and are due to be completed directly after the AGM.

Areas of focus

It was decided at one of our early meetings to have areas of focus and allocate a Trustee/Trustees to lead each area, these were:

Membership Secretary – Frances
Technical – Richard
Marketing and Social Media – Steve
Fund Raising – Heather
Grant Applications – Bill, David and Richard
Liaison with Statutory bodies – David

This did not exclude any Trustee from being involved in any area but to have designated Trustees to be able to report back to all the Trustees at meetings and to have continuity in each area.

Fundraising

This is difficult at the best of times, then comes along Covid 19 and makes it virtually impossible!

It started off very well, on Boxing Day 2019 and New Year's Day 2020, Heather, Steve and family arranged to stand and 'shake a bucket' at the car park / entrance to the permissive path. The amount of people walking on each day was very surprising and people were very willing to donate which was a great help to our funds.

Heather has also distributed collecting boxes to local businesses which has helped to raise funds during this difficult period.

In February 2020 we held a public meeting in Llandrinio Village Hall, the attendance was very good and the enthusiasm to help and ideas for raising money was excellent. However before any of these ideas could be put in place we entered our first Covid Lockdown, then the following the lockdown, the restrictions on people gathering has made trying to arrange anything impossible.

Heather had made plans to collect again at the car park at Boxing Day 2020 and New Year's Day 2021 but again lockdown restrictions stopped this going ahead.

We have also been very fortunate to have donations from individuals and groups which has helped us have such things as the signs printed, which will hopefully in time further boosts our funds.

Discussions with Statutory bodies

On the 13th March 2020, Bill Lee, David Roberts, Richard Hambleton and County Councillor Lucy Roberts, attended a meeting with Powys County Council (PCC) at County Hall, with Rosemarie Harris, Executive Leader PCC, Jenni Thomas, Regeneration Manager PCC and Will Davies, Regional Inspector of Ancient Monuments and Archaeology (East Wales), Cadw.

The meeting was arranged to firstly confirm where PCC stood on the repairs to the Pillar, other than the owner they are the only body able to carry out the repairs, and secondly to discuss what if any possible funding options Cadw could offer. Rosemarie Harris was very supportive of what we are wanting to achieve. PCC would be as supportive as they possibly could but this would not extend to any financial help, due to their own financial problems.

Will Davies was very positive, the feasibility study was well put together and a very good starting point, he gave us options on how to overcome the ownership issue. Funding was also discussed and again Will was very positive on how Cadw could help with some funding, he did however suggest that to make the project more acceptable to potential funding bodies, we should look at a wider objective, to include better signage to the other historical sites on the Breiddens, supplying more information on what they could see, from the flora and fauna to the Iron Age hill fort, the third largest in Wales. Jenni was also very supportive in the suggested options that Will had put forward.

Overall it was a very encouraging meeting. Since the lifting of the first lockdown, Will suggested we have the feasibility study updated to make it more relevant when looking at taking the project forward and Cadw have stated they will look at the possibility of funding the cost of doing this. We therefore applied for a grant on the 22nd November 2020 but have yet to hear if it has been successful.

Getting More People involved

To be able to raise the money we would need it was identified that we would have to get far more people involved. The main emphasis of the public meeting at Llandrinio Village Hall on the 10th February 2020 was to encourage people to volunteer their time, skills and knowledge to further the aims of SRP. It was without doubt a very good evening, with very positive proposals on how to raise funds and people willing to organise events etc. It was also attended by a representative from The Shropshire Star, who did a write up on the evening.

Even with all the help and positivity that was generated at the meeting we were looking forward to moving forward, however within weeks came the Covid Lockdown and everything had to be halted.

Other Issues

There is still one outstanding issue to resolve, which is the ownership of the Pillar.

There are only two bodies that can carry out work on the Pillar, the owner and PCC. We have established that PCC have no funds to do this kind of work. The initial survey could not find any written evidence to prove who actually owns the Pillar, and if there was that would still not be sufficient to make them pay to repair the pillar.

We have been in discussion with Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the Welsh Government sponsored body which manages the natural resources of Wales, who have a 999 year lease on the part of the Breiddens that the Pillar sits on. What has been suggested, and has been used elsewhere in similar circumstances, is that we have a Management agreement that gives the Trust ownership for the period required to repair the Pillar. NRW are currently going through an internal consultation process and when all the key members have responded, it will then go for final approval of the Senior Management. We are eagerly awaiting that decision.

Although 2020 was not the best year to be starting out on this journey, in some ways though it has not held us back significantly. Most if not all the organisations that we would be applying to for grants stipulate that two years' of accounts are required in order to be considered. Despite not being able to arrange fund raising activities, which will be the same for nearly every other such organisation, the fact we have raised some funds and we are getting to the two years' of accounts means we are keeping on track.

Summary

Setting up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, with a complete new set of Trustees, most of whom have not met before, to raise £200,000, is very difficult at any time. To try and do so in 2020 with the national restrictions of Covid 19 has made it even more difficult, however since reconvening the Trustees' meetings after the national lockdown and meeting online every month, progress has been made.

Inevitably, Covid 19 has slowed down the responses from some of those organisations and individuals we have been dealing with, many of whom have been working from home, and has made it a little frustrating not moving forward as fast as we would have liked.

The other consequence of Covid 19 will be the funding that we will be looking for; in such uncertain times it may make it more difficult or take longer than we hope. Only time will answer that question.

Writing this report, has made me realise how far we have come and how much the Charity has been achieved in such difficult times, there is a great deal more to be done, when Covid restrictions begin to be lifted then we will be able to start to get the membership more involved and the pace of progress will increase.

Finally my thanks to all the Trustees for their help in enabling the Charity to achieve so much in such difficult times; we are fortunate in having a very diverse group of Trustees that has enabled us to cover a wide range of matters. My thanks must also go to Mrs Carol Davies as our Hon Secretary. She has worked very hard to ensure the meetings are arranged, agendas prepared and kept us up to date with everything.

Bill Lee, Chairman
January 2021

CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER 1186259

SAVE RODNEY'S PILLAR

ACCOUNTS

PERIOD ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2020

Robert Davies & Co
Marche Manor
Halfway House
Shrewsbury
SY5 9DE

SAVE RODNEY'S PILLAR
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

Period Ended 30 September 2020

2020

£

£

Income

Donations

777

777

Expenses

0

777

Net Surplus

SAVE RODNEY'S PILLAR

Period Ended 30th September 2020

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHARITY NUMBER:

1186259

ADDRESS OF CHARITY:

The Crest
Llandysilio
Llanymynech
SY22 6QZ

TRUSTEES:

David Roberts

Elizabeth Dawson

William James Lee

Stephen Williams

Lesley Burrowes

Heather Hobman

Colonel Richard Clive Hambleton

Frances Buckingham

BANKERS:

HSBC

Princess House

33 High Street

Shrewsbury

SY1 1SL

Mr Robert Davies

Robert Davies & Co

Marche Manor

Halfway House

Shrewsbury

SY5 9DE

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:

TRUSTEES REPORT:

Save Rodney's Pillar became a registered charity on 11 November 2019 as a Service Provider.

The objectives of the charity are to restore and preserve the monument "Rodney's Pillar"

The charity is controlled by trustees elected at general meetings and is run on a democratic basis.

The charity has undertaken fund raising activities during the period ended 30th September 2020 and raised awareness of the campaign to save Rodney's Pillar.