

Chair's review of the year (Jan – Dec 2022)

This is the first time that we report as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered with the Charity Commission. Our new status has not changed our role, but it has given the society a separate legal personality. That means we can take on more ambitious projects and reassure funding bodies, without introducing a heavy administrative burden.

This report will follow the three elements of our purpose, as laid down in our constitution:

- Promoting high standards of planning and architecture
- Educating the public in various matters (principally the built heritage and natural environment)
- Securing the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest

Planning and architecture

Over the last year we have examined 163 planning applications. We concentrate on major developments that impact the whole community, and on applications that will affect built heritage and the conservation area. We made representations on 19 (as we did in 2021). In two cases we expressed support and we objected to eight. In most cases our comments drew attention to an aspect of the application that we felt needed particularly careful consideration. We are grateful to all who helped us to ensure that we represent views from a cross-section of the society. Some examples from the last year show the importance of their contributions:

- We objected when we felt that there was insufficient information for neighbours to assess the impact of changes to the proposed retirement block in the grounds of the former Duke's School
- We objected to illuminated advertising signs on South Road on the basis of road safety and damage to the character of a major approach to the town
- Decision takers had plenty of expert advice on which windows at the former Duchess's High School in Bailiffgate should be replaced and which could be repaired. We refrained from making our own suggestions. However, a project with such a high-profile, by a prominent developer on a building of national importance should be a model of good practice and we objected when we felt this wasn't the case
- Proposals by Lidl to expand retail space, while reducing car parking seemed inconsistent. We felt that aspect of their plan needed careful consideration and that measures might be needed to encourage a switch from private cars to active travel
- We objected to proposals for a new bypass of the B1340, North West of Denwick because we felt it was important that the community should have an opportunity to assess the wider impact of such a major proposal

If members are interested in getting more involved with this aspect of the society's work then there is an open invitation to join the Planning Advisory Group.

The long-awaited Northumberland Local Plan was finally adopted in March. This is the basis for planning decisions across the county and outlines the policies that are used to determine planning applications. The Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan is the way that the town contributes to planning decisions. The Civic Society was heavily involved in the development of the original Neighbourhood Plan. Now, with a new Local Plan in place that Neighbourhood Plan is to be refreshed and we are gearing up to support that important initiative this year.

We were pleased to participate in the Alnwick Forum event in November along with the Town Council, County council and a number of other stakeholders. This was a welcome opportunity to meet with our members, and with the wider community to discuss a range of views on various proposals for the town.

Informing the public

Through the year there have been a variety of opportunities to engage with our membership and the wider Alnwick community. In January we had a joint meeting with the Charles Close society for a talk on the Ordnance Survey Name Books. In March, Jane Coltman spoke after our AGM on Hidden Alnwick. In May, Mick Grant described the History of Theatre in Alnwick; in July Jessica Turner spoke on St Aidan and in September we heard Paul Henery on his work as a

Wildlife Artist. We took a slightly different approach to Any Questions in November, with an expert panel discussing aspects of economic development and employment opportunity in Alnwick. Our summer outing in August was a fascinating walk over the geology of Howick Bay, guided by Allan Mann.

On Heritage Open Day in September, we brought different heritage groups together again, to raise awareness, and showcase Alnwick's heritage. More than twenty different organisations and around fifty volunteers were involved. We recorded an increase in visitor numbers, and received positive feedback from both visitors and participating organisations. There is some lasting legacy in the form of information panels in shop windows and at the Youth Hostel. We can't name-check everyone, but Lorna Gilroy deserves special mention for pulling an ambitious plan together.

Four times a year, Gill Parker and Mary Carter distribute around 150 copies of our newsletter. Roughly half go to members, around a third to influencers, such as Councillors, Conservation Officers and journalists. The remainder go to various friends of the society. The content has been strengthened this year by a wider range of contributors, including Lorna Gilroy and Allan Mann.

In 2021 our high profile achievement was development of the Historical map of Alnwick and Alnmouth by Ian Hall's team. In 2022 that initiative was taken forward in a number of ways. The Duchess's Community High school installed a wall map in one of their halls as a focus for future map-related activities, and we participated in some heritage-based workshops with primary schools. Throughout the year, a group of enthusiasts has been building on the information collected for the map, to start developing a web site on Alnwick's heritage: www.alnwickheritage.org . We also kicked off a couple of initiatives that we hope will reach a wider public in 2023: with the creation of an information panel and the donation of some reproductions of early Ordnance Survey maps to Bailiffgate.

Conservation

We have long felt the need for a Heritage Advisory Group as part of the Town Council's Alnwick Partnership, so we welcomed the formation in 2021 of such a group with the brief to maintain awareness of regulations regarding heritage and design; share best practice on heritage issues; support work relating to heritage; and raise awareness of Alnwick's heritage. The schedule of Community Action Proposals in the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan was recognized as having been over-ambitious, so the group started to prioritise and then progress a more realistic list.

One outcome of this approach was a joint session with the Environment Advisory Group where officers from Northumberland County Council gave a presentation on the significance of historic windows, in the context of energy conservation. Many owners of our traditional buildings rightly wish to reduce their Carbon Emissions but feel frustrated by current planning policies and this was a useful introduction to how the different pressures are balanced through legislation and policy.

Overall, though, progress with the Heritage Advisory Group has been disappointing, and we are currently reassessing how best to proceed.

Work that we helped to initiate in 2021 on reducing the risks to Bondgate tower has continued behind the scenes during 2022, but so far there is little to show. We are in contact with stakeholders, and hope to be able to report more substantive progress before too long.

Elsewhere, Gill Parker and Trish Jones have continued to support the Friends of Column Field, and the Tree Team coordinated by Brian Lamb has continued their monitoring of tress, and scrutiny of related planning activity. Colin Watson has continued to track a variety of issues through our "Eyes and Ears" initiative. We had hoped that if we took a systematic approach to reporting problems it would help authorities to be more proactive in their response to issues that affect the appearance of the town centre. In that we have been disappointed. However, we have seen some individual successes. Out of more than 50 reports, around two-thirds have now been fixed. We are grateful to county councillors who have helped us to press for action on individual priorities.

Conclusion

Finally, we have welcomed several new committee members in 2022, and I would like to thank all of my colleagues for their support during the year. Gill Parker as Treasurer, Sue Smith

as Secretary, Mary Carter, Allan Mann, Lorna Gilroy, and Tim Smith. Elizabeth Jones has moved away from Alnwick so this is my last opportunity to express appreciation for her many years of support, and thankfully, the advice of our President, Peter Ennor continues to be invaluable.

We are not a large Civic Society. Civic Societies in major cities boast far larger numbers of members. I like to tell them that we will be impressed when their membership exceeds 1% of their population. As ours does. With healthy membership numbers, an active committee, and good relationships with our partner bodies, the society is on a sound footing and we can face the future with confidence.



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name	No (if any)
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Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date 12/21/2021	To	Period end date 12/31/2022
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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 £
A1 Receipts				
Subscriptions	547		-	547
Donations	65	-	-	65
HMRC (Gift Aid)	2,671	-	-	2,671
Transfer from Treasurer's AC	110	-	-	110
Map Sales	-	308	-	308
	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	3,393	308	-	3,701
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).				
	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	3,393	308	-	3,701
A3 Payments				
Charitable donations	68	-	-	68
Subscriptions	128	-	-	128
Insurance	136	-	-	136
Exhibition stands, room hire	373	-	-	373
Printing, Stationery, etc	633	-	-	633
Speakers	60	-	-	60
Map expenses		4,242	-	4,242
Heritage Open Day Expenses		1,343	-	1,343
		-	-	-
Sub total	1,397	5,585	-	6,983
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)				
	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-
Total payments	1,397	5,585	-	6,983
Net of receipts/(payments)	1,995	- 5,277	-	- 3,282
A5 Transfers between funds	1,033	- 1,033	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	2,772	8,848	-	11,620
Cash funds this year end	5,800	2,538	-	8,338

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank balance	5,800	2,538
		-	-
		-	-
	Total cash funds	5,800	2,538
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK

	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-
			-
			-
			-
			-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-
			-
			-
			-
			-
			-
			-
			-
			-
			-

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-
			-
			-
			-
			-

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name
	Peter Reed

CC16a



Last year
to the nearest £

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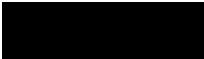
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**Endowment
funds**
to nearest £

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OK

**Endowment
funds**
to nearest £

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**Current value
(optional)**

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**Current value
(optional)**

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**When due
(optional)**

Date of
approval

3/28/2023