

Alnwick Civic Society: Chair's report on 2023

We had a busy year in 2023, and I am grateful to everyone who has supported our efforts to promote high standards of planning; to raise awareness and to protect what is special about our town.

We have seen some significant planning applications during the year including conversion of the former Duchess's High School to a hotel, repairs to the wall in Greenwell Road Car Park, conversion of Northumberland Hall to house Bailiffgate Museum and a long-awaited application for development of shops at the north side of the Market Place. In total we considered 124 applications, expressed support for one, objected to six, and on another four we neither objected, nor supported, but drew attention to matters that we felt needed careful consideration. The Society is also represented on the steering group for the refresh of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, and throughout the year members have debated the issues, helped to collect evidence and engaged with the Public Consultation.

With lockdowns behind us it has been a pleasure to welcome growing numbers of members and supporters back to our programme of talks and events. Special thanks are due to our speakers: Phil Huntley (Fisher Lane), Marjorie Brown (Percy Tenantry Column); John Matthews (Northumberland and Newcastle Society), Sue Wood (A House Through Time); David Smith and colleagues (Northumberland Fusiliers) and a distinguished panel for our Any Questions discussion: Kevin Trickett, the Reverend Mitchell, Ian Brown, Jean Humphrys and Louise Dawson. A variety of different groups have enjoyed our guided walks of Alnwick's built heritage and a growing number of contributors to our newsletter have earned the positive feedback that is received from readers.

English Heritage regards two Grade-1 listed structures in Alnwick as being at risk. Both have complex issues that need individual attention. A risk reduction plan is now in place for Bondgate Tower, but progress on implementation has been frustratingly slow. However, we have also been working with the Town Council to monitor other vulnerable heritage in the town. Over the year some 70 issues have been logged, and around a third of them are on the way to being fixed. For reporting more general issues with the condition of our streets the County Council has introduced a new system and we have used our own "Eyes and Ears" register to monitor the results. It is now significantly easier to submit reports, and some types of issue are getting fixed more quickly than before. However, there is still scope for improvement and we are far from being able to say that every report is addressed promptly.

On a more positive front in 2023 we recognized those who are making a difference in the town by re-launching our Civic Society Awards. The community nominated a wide variety of different initiatives, as well as a variety of restoration and renovation projects. Presentation of the awards in November was followed by a lively discussion on the role of the community in shaping Alnwick's future.

Last year the Boundary Commission toyed for a while with changing the name of our Parliamentary Constituency to "Berwick and Morpeth", but we argued that "North Northumberland" had precedent dating back to the Great Reform Act of 1832 and would be a more appropriate name for a rural constituency where the majority of the electorate live outside two towns. We will never know how much weight was given to our submission, but when we vote in the next General Election we will be reminded that the Boundary Commission made the right choice.

Financially the Society remains in good health. The treasurer's financial statement showed that assets at 31st December 2023 amounted to £8,073.08. Expenses for the year had exceeded revenue by £264.82 but there were no grounds for concern as more recent income, in the form of gift aid and map sales, indicated that the society was operating in the black again. £2,500 of the society's assets were ringfenced for heritage awareness projects as a consequence of past donations. Bank accounts had been rationalised during the year to provide improved online banking facilities.

This year we welcomed 11 new members to the Society and also did some work to ensure our existing membership database was up to date. Overall membership remained stable at 106 individuals in total with members subs providing a significant proportion of our annual income (£702.50 out of a total of £1,164.10).

It would take too long to thank everyone individually who contributed to the work of the society last year. Sadly Richard Allsop is no longer with us, but I should mention Brian Lamb for his work on the Tree Team and others who have helped to scrutinise planning activity, all who helped with the Neighbourhood Plan, but particularly Alan and Jill Waton. Bev Joicey, Lalik and George Naysmith for their work on the Civic Society Awards, Allan Mann, Lorna Gilroy

and a number of photographers for their contributions to the Newsletter. And of course, my fellow trustees and committee members for their support over the last twelve months. Colin Watson for his contributions across a number of different areas, Sue Smith as Secretary, Tim Smith as Treasurer, Gill Parker as Membership and Speaker Finder, and Peter Ennor as President.

In 2024 we are celebrating our 50th anniversary, and there is no shortage of opportunities to get involved in the work of the society. All are welcome to help influence Alnwick's future, raise awareness of Alnwick's past, and help to ensure that Alnwick's heritage is in fit condition to be passed to future generations. Just let one of us know where you would like to start.

P. Reed

Chair

Alnwick Civic Society

Account Summary 31/12/2023

Account Code	Account title	Balance
	Assets	
	Current Assets	
	Cash in Wallet	
	Classic Account	£8.00
	Treasurers Account	£8,065.08
	Liabilities	
	Credit Card	
	Income	
	Donation	£147.60
	Grant	£250.00
	Historic Maps	£56.00
	Subs 2023	£702.50
	Subs 2024	£8.00
	Expenses	
	Bank Service Charge	
	Events	£439.00
	Insurance	£145.48
	Online Services	£79.66
	Printing	£411.47
	Refreshments	£145.81
	Subscriptions	£135.00
	Supplies	£72.50
	Equity	
	Opening Balances	£8,337.90
	Imbalance-GBP	

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Income Statement For Period Covering 01/01/2023 to 31/12/2023

Revenues

Income

Donation	£147.60
Grant	£250.00
Historic Maps	£56.00
Subs 2023	£702.50
Subs 2024	£8.00

Total Revenue **£1,164.10**

Expenses

Expenses

Bank Service Charge	
Events	£439.00
Insurance	£145.48
Online Services	£79.66
Printing	£411.47
Refreshments	£145.81
Subscriptions	£135.00

Supplies	£72.50
Total Expenses	£1,428.92

Net loss for Period	£264.82
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Balance Sheet 31/12/2023

Assets

Assets

Current Assets

Cash in Wallet

Classic Account £8.00

Treasurers Account £8,065.08

Imbalance-GBP

Total Assets	£8,073.08
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Liabilities

Liabilities

Credit Card

Total Liabilities	£0.00
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Equity

Equity

Opening Balances £8,337.90

Retained Losses	£264.82
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Total Equity	£8,073.08
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Total Liabilities & Equity	£8,073.08
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Membership Report 2022–23

No. of 'paid up' members for 2022–23, as follows:

Business Members: 5
 Individual Members: 33
 Family Members: 30
 Student Members: 3
 Honorary Members: 5

Total 'Paid Up' Members: 76
 Total No. Members Est: 106