

Annual Report for The Mere Lecture Hall Trust
For the Year Ending 30th June 2024

(Charity Registration Number 202620)

1 Administrative Details

Registered Office:

Newport House
Salisbury Street
Mere
Wiltshire
BA12 6HE

Correspondence Address:

Chris Wood (Treasurer)
Swainsford Fish Farm
Woodlands Road
Mere
Warminster
Wiltshire
BA12 6BY

Trustees as of 30th June 2023:

Mr A Bristow	Ms S Catley	Mr M Durkee
Mr S Fletcher	Mrs J Hurd	Mr G Jeans
Mr D Lamb	Mr P Manning	Mrs C Morton
Mr A Rees	Mr C Rutter (chairman)	Mr S Rutter
Mr B Watts	Mrs H Watts	Mrs J Wilding
Mrs M White	Mr C Wood (treasurer)	

Number of Active Trustees at Year End: 17

Custodian Trustee:

Legal Trustee Limited
Company registration number 00195819
C/O Rutters Solicitors
2 Bimport
Shaftesbury
Dorset
SP7 8AY

Trust Document:

The Trust was created by Deed dated Saturday 22nd November 1924

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2 Structure, Governance and Management

The Trust is governed by up to 25 Administrative Trustees, with the backing of a Custodian Trustee. Six Trustees are especially representative of the Christian presence in the town and are elected by their own churches each for a period of three years. The rest are self-perpetuating, elected by the remaining trustees for an indefinite term, being gathered from the local community resident within 13 miles' radius.

"The Administrative Trustees shall manage or superintend the management of the trust properties with power to deal therewith as if they were absolute owners thereof." They thus have wide powers.

The Trustees currently meet once or twice a year. They annually elect a management committee to manage the day-to-day business of the trust, consisting of a chairman, secretary, treasurer and four others plus a hall manager. They also appoint a Grants' sub-committee of up to 5 trustees. The management committee meets as required, but usually 4 – 6 times a year. The Trustees approve the annual accounts, set the level of grants for the year, receive and discuss the management committee's report and decide items of policy.

The Trustees employ the services of a Caretaker/Cleaner for the Lecture Hall building. Although they are at liberty to employ any other servant if they wish, all the office holders are also trustees and act in a voluntary capacity. From time to time, they employ professional help as required.

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3 Public Benefit Statement

The Primary Objective of the Trust is to provide a meeting place for the community of Mere and surrounding area for non-commercial use. This enables the various groups that make up the community to meet and develop spiritually, physically and socially.

The Hall is available to all sections and groups within the community although there are restrictions on use based on the requirements as set out by the original Trust Deed and the limitations of the building.

The Grants provided to the local community require the benefit to be used within an 8-mile radius of Mere and the purposes of the grant must be consistent with the objectives of the Trust as set out in the original Trust Deed.

None of the Trustees receive any benefit, direct or indirectly from the Trust.

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4 Objectives and Activities

"The objects of the Trust are the promotion of the spiritual, moral, intellectual or social welfare of the inhabitants of Mere in the County of Wiltshire and elsewhere, along lines not inconsistent with non-conforming Christianity, or the promotion of temperance, or the promotion of similar charitable objects elsewhere."

To this end the "Lecture Hall" building, a main 100-seater hall and stage, two smaller halls and various ancillary spaces, was given to the Trust in 1924. In many ways it serves as a community hall. At the same time various properties were also given to the trust as endowment for the Hall to ensure its spiritual freedom and financial independence.

The Trustees maintain the Hall as an attractive and suitable venue for many local activities as a benefit to the community. One of the halls is now a coffee bar and there are modern toilets and disabled facilities. The rooms are offered for rent at a subsidised rate to the community and at a commercial rate for commercial purposes.

The trustees endeavour to make small grants each year to community organisations and continue to explore opportunities to promote the objects of the Trust.

To maintain a viable level of income, the trustees maintain, manage and let a number of properties, both residential and commercial.

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5 Achievements and Financial Review

The Mere Lecture Hall is now being increasingly well used and the Trust is now able to meet the primary objective of providing a suitable venue for the people of Mere and district.

The Trust continued to do various works to maintain the properties the Trust owns and manages. The Trust endeavours to keep abreast of current legislation to ensure all the properties are within the Health and Safety and building regulations.

As the number on trustees has been falling in recent years it was agreed at the AGM in September 2023 that new Trustees be sought and a number of people were put forward and have agreed to be Trustees, the number now stands at seventeen

A number of property repairs and improvements have been made over the last year particularly to the Gables ground floor and Newport house.

A professional insurance valuation was made of all the Trust's properties and new quotations obtained for overall insurance, including trustee liability, and even though the property insurance values had increased significantly a saving was made on the overall annual premium.

All domestic rents have been reviewed by the agents, the use of the Lecture Hall has increased by 35% over the previous year and gas and electricity price have come down.

£7,500 of grant aid was distributed to the community as per the Trust document guidance and it is hoped that the improvement in the Trust finances will enable the Trustees, at the AGM in September, to increase the grant aid in 2025

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