

BERKSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST
REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
Year ended 31 March 2025

Charity No: 288797

BERKSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

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BERKSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

- Patron** The Rt Hon Lord Benyon of Englefield PC GCVO
- Joint Presidents** The Rt Revd Mary Gregory, Bishop of Reading
Andrew Try Esq., Lord-Lieutenant of Berkshire
- Honorary Vice-Presidents** The Lady Eliza Mays-Smith • Erica Lady Harman
The Most Revd and Rt Hon the Lord Carey of Clifton
The Rt Revd Dom Geoffrey Scott OSB • James Puxley Esq CVO
Jim Barnes-Phillips
- Trustees** Graham Barker MSt DL • Jim Barnes-Phillips (*to June 2025*)
Dr Peter Durrant MBE DL • Catherine Haig (*to June 2025*)
Willie Hartley Russell MVO DL • Graham Mather CBE
Torquil Montague-Johnstone • James Puxley CVO
Eleanor Rice FCA • Jonathan Welfare OBE • Lucy Zeal DL
- Executive Committee** Chairman : Dr Peter Durrant MBE DL
Hon Secretary : John Pritchard • Hon Treasurer : Eleanor Rice FCA
Anne Armitage • The Revd Dr Julia Binney (*to December 2024*)
Marion Elly (*to June 2025*) • Leslie Grout (*to December 2024*)
Catherine Haig (*to June 2025*) • Liz Kitch
Prue Matchwick (*to December 2024*) • Torquil Montague-Johnstone
The Ven Stephen Pullin • Henry Sanders AABC RIAS RIBA
Jonathan Welfare OBE • Primrose Wilson CBE (*from March 2025*)
- Address** The Chairman, 84 Beech Lane, Earley, Reading RG6 5QE
- Bankers** Virgin Money (Yorkshire Bank plc),
35 Regent Street, London SW1Y 4ND
- Independent Examiner** John Cullen ACCA
- Registered Charity number** 288797
- OBJECTIVES** To raise funds to help with the cost of repairs to the fabric of Christian Churches, Chapels and Meeting Houses in Berkshire, and for the repair and preservation of monuments, fittings and fixtures and stained glass. The Trust will also consider applications from Churches, Chapels and Meeting Houses for schemes to achieve a sustainable future as the centre of every community in the County, making use of their buildings for the benefit of the community at large, and may help to fund facilities necessary for this purpose, if this can be achieved without compromising the historic or architectural quality of the buildings and their settings within the local landscape.

BERKSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

for the year ended 31 March 2025

The trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025. The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis and in accordance with the charity's trust deed and applicable law.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Berkshire Historic Churches Trust is an unincorporated association established by a Declaration of Trust dated 6 Feb 1984 under the name "Royal County of Berkshire Churches Trust". The name was changed to "Berkshire Historic Churches Trust" in June 2020. The Trust is a registered charity, no.288797.

The trustees who have served during the year are set out on page 1. The power of appointing new trustees is exercised by the existing trustees. New trustees are provided with information on the Trust activities, Trust Deed and Charity Commission guidance on the role and responsibilities of trustees, and are required to sign a declaration that the appointee accepts the position of trustee and undertakes to act in accordance with the Trust Deed.

The Trustees are authorised by the Trust Deed to delegate any of their functions, and have done this by the formation of an Executive Committee. A number of Trustees are also members of this Committee, which is responsible for considering applications for grants, and making decisions on grants within the policy approved by the Trustees, with the help of documentation and professional advice. Once decisions are made, progress of works is monitored before funds are released.

Public Benefit

The trustees are aware of the requirement placed upon them by the Charities Act 2011 to demonstrate compliance with Section 4 dealing with "public benefit". The trustees consider that the activities of the Trust clearly provide benefit to parishes and congregations responsible for the upkeep of historic church buildings, to the local communities who are enabled to make use of these buildings, and to the general public through preservation of buildings and contents of historic, architectural and artistic value.

BERKSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
for the year ended 31 March 2025

GRANTS

It is seldom that a year goes by without some discussion of church roofs, and the year 2024/25 was no exception. Three of the grants paid and one of the applications received were either entirely or partly for roof repairs. However, several other matters were among those discussed, including drainage, rainwater goods, plastering, heating, lighting, toilets, access and planning, demonstrating both the range of issues faced by churches today and the flexibility of the Trust when it comes to helping.

Of the grants paid last year, the two largest were to **St Andrew, Boxford**, and to **St John, Newbury**. Boxford church is beautifully situated on the bank of the River Lambourn, but because of its low-lying position is vulnerable to damp. The oak beams in the tower roof had also suffered from water penetrating the old lead. The cost of work to repair the tower and to improve drainage around the walls was £150,000; we contributed £10,000.

St John's Church, Newbury, was built between 1955 and 1957 to replace an earlier church destroyed during the war. It is an impressive building, but the main entrance was not designed for access by those with limited mobility, and was perhaps a little forbidding. An imaginative solution includes an external glazed porch and a ramp into the south aisle. The total cost was £100,000, to which we contributed £10,000.

In addition to supporting these larger projects, we have made grants to **St Nicholas, Hurst** for installing wall-mounted infra-red heaters to replace a failed boiler (£3,000), **St John, Stockcross**, for repairs to rainwater goods (£1,200); **Thatcham Methodist Church**, for roof repairs and the installation of an accessible toilet (£1,500); **St Peter, Caversham**, for replastering after water damage (£500); **St Mary, Fawley**, for repairs to the lead covering of the tower (£500); and to **St Nicolas, Newbury**, towards a feasibility study for developing a scheme that would make major improvements to the church (£1,000). This last grant is the latest made in a scheme that allows us to pay towards surveys and feasibility studies. The hope is that by this means, more targeted and well-planned projects will be developed which will help to deliver cost-effective outcomes.

Altogether we paid out £27,700 in grants. This was less than in 2023/24, and less than we might have expected, or indeed could afford. However, we had by the year's end a further £36,900 pledged towards seven projects. Three of these were carried forward from the previous year; the remaining four were new applications.

The church of **St Peter, Cranbourne**, was built in 1849-50. It was restored in 2006-7 after an arson attack had destroyed the organ and badly damaged the pews and other fittings. A recent inspection had revealed that the nave roof urgently required renewal, the tiles having reached the end of their working life, a number having broken and slipped, so that water was penetrating in to the roof structure. The cost of repair was estimated at £149,000. We offered £15,000 – the first occasion on which we have offered a grant at our new maximum level.

Smaller grants were offered to **St Mary, Hampstead Norreys**, **Holy Trinity, Cookham**, and **St Peter, Brimpton**. At Hampstead Norreys the heating system has completely failed and the lighting was inadequate: we offered £5,000 towards improvement estimated at £71,000. At Cookham, where we also offered to help fund a new heating system, the scheme is part of a larger project that includes reseating and the installation of an accessible toilet. The total cost is £773,000, to which we will contribute £5,000. Finally, we made another offer under our scheme to support survey work. At Brimpton the spire needs urgent repair and re-shingling. However, the condition of the timber structure is unknown, so it is difficult to define the work needed, and

a survey by a steeplejack, followed by an assessment by a structural engineer and the preparation of measured drawings is necessary. We offered £1,000 towards an estimated cost of £10,150.

EVENTS

The 2024 **Englefield Lecture**, delivered appropriately in St Mark's Church rather than the Long Gallery, was given by Professor Nicholas Orme. His topic was 'Going to Church in Medieval England', the subject of his recent award-winning book of the same title. His absorbing lecture was very well received by a large and appreciative audience, which also enjoyed a cup of tea and a choice of excellent cakes afterwards. The event raised over £1,000 for the Trust.

We were not able to arrange a garden visit or a study day this year, but a small group of supporters enjoyed a slightly windy tour of the ruins of Reading Abbey, led by our Chairman (who is also the Chairman of the Friends of Reading Abbey). The tour was followed by refreshments in Abbey Baptist Church, which, appropriately, is situated in the Abbey precincts. We are grateful to the church for its hospitality.

The annual **Ride and Stride** event benefitted from a sunny September Saturday, when over 150 participants (considerably more than in 2023) made almost 400 recorded church visits - though the true figure may well be higher. Participation was boosted by a large team from St Matthew, Midgham and an even larger one from St Nicolas, Newbury, the latter taking part for the first time. Both churches made Ride and Stride a parish 'event', generating a lot of interest and community spirit. Perhaps their success will encourage other churches; it is a little disappointing that only a minority of Berkshire's churches take an active part. Ride and Stride remains the most important fund-raising event for the Trust, this year raising almost £28,000, just a fraction less than in 2023: after a proportion was returned to participating churches, the Trust's funds were boosted by nearly £18,000.

The 2024 **Annual Meeting and Church Tour** was on the Berkshire Downs, starting at St James, Leckhampstead, with a brief business meeting and an opportunity to admire the latest stage of the work which we had supported, and which has transformed the church. From there we visited St Mary, Fawley, an impressive and imposing Victorian building designed by GE Street, replacing a small mediaeval building and immortalised by Thomas Hardy in *Jude the Obscure*. We then made our way to All Saints, Farnborough, a small aisleless church of Norman origin, and of particular significance to all who care for historic churches: Sir John Betjeman lived for a time at the Old Rectory and is commemorated by a stained glass window designed by John Piper, and Ivor Bulmer-Thomas, founder of the Friends of Friendless Churches is buried here - as his monument rightly says, he 'dedicated his life to the preservation of ancient churches'. Finally we reached St Barnabas, Peasmore for a splendid tea and a service of evening prayer. All four churches had recently received grants from the Trust.

COMMUNICATIONS

Publication of our occasional Newsletter continued, with two issues during the year.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

We continue to consider ways in which we can improve the Trust's effectiveness, but progress has been hampered by vacancies in key roles. We urgently need to find people to take responsibility for managing contact with our church supporters, organising events, co-ordinating Ride and Stride, and for publicity and promotion generally.

PEOPLE

We were delighted to welcome Lord Benyon as Patron of the Trust. This is a new role, and we look forward to exploring ways in which we can work with him to raise the Trust's profile in Berkshire.

We were also very pleased that the Right Reverend Mary Gregory, Bishop of Reading, and Mr Andrew Try, recently appointed Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire, both accepted invitations to become a Joint President. James Puxley, who stood down as a Joint President following his retirement as Lord Lieutenant, has accepted an invitation to become a Vice-President, and we are delighted that his long association with the Trust will continue.

There have been several changes in the Executive Committee. We accepted with regret the resignations of Leslie Grout, Revd Julia Binney and Prue Matchwick. Leslie's retirement brings to an end a connection with the Trust going back to its very earliest days, whilst Julia and Prue joined more recently. We thank them all for their contributions to our work. Towards the end of the year we welcomed Primrose Wilson as a member of the Committee. She brings with her a wealth of experience from her time with the Ulster Churches Trust, and we look forward to working with her in Berkshire.

Finally, we record with sadness the death of Ian Pilkington, a generous supporter of long standing, who had been one of our Vice-Presidents since 1990.

FINANCIAL REPORT

This year's accounts have again been prepared on an accruals basis. Grants are included in expenditure when actually paid; grants approved but not yet paid are identified in the notes to the accounts. Grant offers are valid for three years, and will lapse (unless otherwise agreed by the Trust) if the work is not completed within that period, or if the recipient notifies the Trust that it has decided not to proceed.

The principal source of income for the Trust is the sponsored Ride+Stride event, held in September each year. Participants may designate a church to receive 50% of the money which they raise, but not all choose to do so. The total raised by the 2024 event was slightly less than the previous year, representing a net income of £17,737 to the Trust.

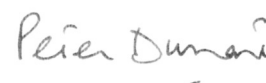
Following the decision last year to cease selling Christmas cards, we disposed of the remaining stock of cards.

Although we are aware of a substantial need for repairs, maintenance and improvement to Berkshire churches, the Trust continues to receive relatively few grant applications. The financial resources would allow more grants to be given if applications are received for eligible work.

Unlike some county churches trusts, the Trust does not have an endowment fund to provide investment income, but funds not needed for current operations are held in interest-bearing accounts to generate some income.

The Trust does not currently have a formal reserves policy; this will be reviewed during the coming year. For many years the expenditure in making grants has been limited by the number of applications received, not by the financial resources of the Trust.

Approved by the Trustees on 2 June 2025 and signed on their behalf



Peter Durrant
Peter Durrant
Chairman & Trustee

Independent Examiner's Report
to the Trustees of Berkshire Historic Churches Trust
Year ended 31 March 2025

I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of Berkshire Historic Churches Trust ('the charity') for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charity you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
3. the financial statements do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

John Cullen ACCA (Retired)
Independent Examiner of Accounts

BERKSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 March 2025

	<i>Note</i>	2025	2024
Income		£	£
Voluntary Sources			
Donations / annual membership		4,895	2,185
Life membership		-	2,000
Legacies / one-off donations		-	5,000
Gift aid for current year		444	944
Church Membership		<u>2,415</u>	<u>2,135</u>
		7,754	12,264
Fundraising Income			
Ride & Stride	1	17,737	18,395
Englefield Lecture	4	1,010	1,530
Other Events / Fund Raising	5	<u>216</u>	<u>989</u>
		18,953	20,914
Trading Income			
Christmas Card Sales	3	193	234
Other Income			
Interest		-	18
United Trust Bank		2,467	1,570
CCLA		<u>1,731</u>	<u>1,620</u>
		4,198	3,208
Total Income		<u>31,108</u>	<u>36,620</u>
Expenditure			
Direct Charitable Expenditure			
Grants to Churches	2	27,700	35,300
Fundraising Expenses			
Ride & Stride	1	-	-
Englefield Lecture	4	-	308
Administration			
Printing, Postage & Administration		105	140
Web hosting		130	130
Insurance		75	75
Heritage Alliance, Local History Assn		66	64
Annual Report & Leaflets		<u>182</u>	<u>218</u>
Total Expenditure		<u>28,258</u>	<u>36,235</u>
BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD		2,850	385

BERKSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST
Balance Sheet as at 31 March

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
	£	£
Assets		
Yorkshire Bank		
Current account	34,702	37,417
Ride & Stride account	2,840	1,915
CCLA COIF Charities Deposit Fund	36,673	34,499
United Trust Bank	59,674	57,208
United Trust Bank 1-year deposit	25,000	25,000
Gift aid on membership received 9 April	444	-
Yorkshire Bank WREN account (Restricted)	1	1
	<u><u>159,334</u></u>	<u><u>156,484</u></u>
General Fund		
Balance at 1 April 2024	156,484	156,099
Surplus for year	2,850	385
Balance at 31 March 2025	<u><u>159,334</u></u>	<u><u>156,484</u></u>

Approved by the Trustees on 2 June 2025 and signed on their behalf



Peter Durrant
Peter Durrant
Chairman & Trustee

BERKSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST
NOTES TO THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

Note 1 - Ride & Stride

The major fundraising event during the year was the sponsored Ride & Stride. This raised:

	2025, £	2024, £
Gross Funds (without Gift Aid)	22,249	23,749
Gift Aid	5,592	4,202
	<u>27,841</u>	<u>27,951</u>
<i>less repayments to Churches</i>	<u>10,105</u>	<u>9,556</u>
	17,737	18,395
<i>less expenses</i>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>17,737</u>	<u>18,395</u>

Note 2 - Grants to Churches

Grants paid during year to 31 March	2025, £	2024, £
St Barnabas, Peasemore		7,000
St Mary, Kintbury		1,800
St James, Leckhampstead		6,000
St Peter, Brimpton		1,400
All Saints, Windsor		5,000
St Lawrence, Hungerford		10,000
St Mary, Thatcham		4,100
St John, Newbury	10,000	
Thatcham Methodist Church	1,500	
St Andrew, Boxford	10,000	
St Mary, Fawley	500	
St Peter, Caversham	500	
St Nicolas, Newbury	1,000	
St John, Stockcross	1,200	
St Nicholas, Hurst	3,000	
	<u>27,700</u>	<u>35,300</u>

Grants offered but not paid at 31 March	2025, £	2024, £
St Mary, Beech Hill	500	500
St Mary, Fawley		500
St Andrew, Boxford		10,000
St Mary, Thatcham (balance of original grant)	900	900
St John, Newbury *		10,000
St Nicolas, Newbury		1,000
St Peter, Cranbourne *	15,000	9,000
St John, Stockcross		1,200
Thatcham Methodist Church		1,500
All Saints, East Garston	9,500	
St Mary, Hampstead Norreys	5,000	
St Peter, Brimpton	1,000	
Holy Trinity, Cookham	5,000	
	<u>36,900</u>	<u>34,600</u>

* These churches had been awarded a grant in principle but the amount had not been finalised: the figure shown for 2024 was the initial estimate

Note 3 - Trading profits from sale of Christmas cards

	2025, £	2024, £
Total Receipts	193	234
	<u>193</u>	<u>234</u>

It was decided in 2024 that it is not economically viable for the Trust to continue to sell Christmas cards. The receipts shown for 2025 are for the disposal of the remaining stock.

Note 4 - Englefield Lecture

	2025, £	2024, £
Total Receipts	1,010	1,530
Less expenses	-	308
	<u>1,010</u>	<u>1,222</u>

Note 5 - Other Events & Fundraising

	2025, £	2024, £
Peter lecture		25
Donation from Wesley Methodist Church		108
Annual Meeting teas (less expenses)	66	86
John Johnson study day		240
Open garden		255
Visit to Kedermister Library		275
Reading Abbey tour	150	
	<u>216</u>	<u>989</u>