

20. Managing Trustees of John Wesley's Chapel, the New Room, Bristol and 4-5 Charles Street, Bristol

1. John Wesley's New Room continually seeks to provide an exceptional visitor experience.
2. As a result of the easing of restrictions following the COVID-19 pandemic, John Wesley's New Room reopened its doors to visitors on 17 May 2021. Following the reopening we initially saw a slow, but upward trend in the return of UK visitors. However, significant challenges in terms of income, capacity and resources remain as we seek to become a financially sustainable operation. International groups have recently expressed more interest especially for bookings in 2023, but we are yet to see group visits return to pre-pandemic levels.
3. The events of the past year following the COVID-19 pandemic have seen our organisation need to respond rapidly and adapt to an ever changing, and often unpredictable, situation. However, the shifting nature of our activity has brought about the opportunity for us to reconfigure our approach. With four full years behind us since the new visitor centre in the Horsefair Courtyard was opened in 2017, it is time for us to look ahead to how we best utilise the multifaceted nature of the site, which, in addition to the chapel and museum, offers a café, shop, library and meeting rooms, as well as a courtyard garden at the pedestrian Broadmead entrance.
4. In recent months our attention has been focussed on developing and maximising the potential of our core visitor offer. Towards the end of 2021 we underwent a rebranding project, which culminated in a change of name from 'The New Room / John Wesley's Chapel' to 'John Wesley's New Room'. This exercise has helped us to define our visual identity and messaging for a more consistent approach to marketing both on site, off-site, and across our digital platforms.
5. In addition to the rebrand, the managing trustees have approved a proposal to move the admission ticket facilities to ground floor level, thereby making our heritage offer more visible and engaging. Our ticket price will remain the same but will now include access to the gallery and pulpit in our paid admission ticket (the gallery prayer station will remain open to all visitors). First stage developments of this trial began in April 2022.
6. Following the decisions of the 2021 Conference, the trustees have approved the registration of John Wesley's New Room for same-sex marriages and the application process has begun. Our weekly Friday Communion services have recommenced with a mixture of regular attendees and visitors, all of whom appreciate the special atmosphere and holiness of the chapel. We have been producing monthly prayers for the website and for use in the chapel and continue to hold special events, such as carol services, a service for Wesley Day and a service for the Asbury 250 celebrations in conjunction with the Methodist Heritage connexional team and the United Methodist Church.
7. John Wesley's New Room continues to organise regular community activity including our weekly Community Choir supported by our freelance music therapist leaders and our Chat and Craft group. Work with schools and educational bodies has resumed, raising awareness of our heritage and focusing on social justice issues such as slavery and abolition in Bristol. We have seen the return of the annual Easter trail, in conjunction with Bristol & South Gloucestershire Circuit pioneer project the Ark Team and Bristol Shopping Quarter, where cardboard animals painted by local schools are hidden around the immediate area and visitors are encouraged to find them, receiving Easter story prize bags when taking part.

8. One of our more challenging financial issues arises from the potential use of the chapel area for concerts and social gatherings. This is key to our financial survival and ability to maintain and develop our outreach work to schools and promotion of Wesley's challenge to today's world on themes such as poverty and the abolition of slavery. In the past year we have resumed a range of events, from online WES talks with the South West Learning Network team to in-person folk music concerts. But our programming options are limited by the challenge of the uncomfortable and fixed pews which fill the centre of the downstairs chapel space and make flexible use virtually impossible. Conversations continue with the Connexional Listed Buildings Advisory Committee about the importance of replacing the pews with suitable replacement seating.
9. Recruiting and sustaining a regular cohort of volunteers remains a challenge, with our volunteer numbers still significantly depleted since the start of the pandemic which has a notable impact on day-to-day site management. Volunteer-led museum tours of both John Wesley's New Room and Charles Wesley's House have resumed. We have also introduced a regular third-person costumed interpreter, in 18th Century costume, at the entrance of our Broadmead courtyard. This voluntary role acts as a first point of contact for welcoming visitors and introducing them to all that we have to offer.
10. We successfully received the last tranche of funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, bringing the official Horsefair Project to a close. The financing of this project by the NLHF and the Methodist Church has allowed us to achieve phenomenal growth since its start in 2015, however we are now faced with the challenge of sustaining and developing our operation without this financial support. We need to diversify our income streams to cover core costs, capitalising on our significant Methodist Heritage offer and increasing our commercial ventures whilst also moving to a project focused model allowing us to access grant funding. Successful project-specific funding applications have been made to government grant schemes, All Churches Trust, Quartet Community Foundation, and a joint bid to the Arts Council in partnership with other volunteer-involving cultural organisations in the South West.
11. In July 2021 we appointed Julia Smith as Fundraising Officer. Julia's background in the museum sector has highlighted our need to develop cross-organisational project-based activity. Julia has secured funding to expand our community offer in a way which succinctly connects people with our history and heritage. Her funding pipeline explores a range of difference avenues for engagement. In December 2021 we appointed Graham Wilson as Finance Officer following the resignation of Jo Oyekoya. In January 2022 Cyril Babeev was appointed as our Marketing and Communications Officer. Cyril has ambitions to raise the profile and visibility of John Wesley's New Room and is keen to expand and develop new and existing audiences. He has most recently introduced more conversational posts on social media which has increased interaction with our various channels.
12. In April 2022 David Worthington began a three-month sabbatical and period of leave. Louise Wratten (Operations Manager) and Kate Rogers (Collections Manager) have been jointly appointed as Co-Directors to manage David's responsibilities.
13. In terms of property development, we have seen additional heating fitted within our café to combat the draft through our atrium during the winter months. Long-standing issues with water ingress are being addressed with works carried out on the chapel roof and guttering. Plans to redevelop and expand rental capacity at 5 Charles Street continue as tenants prepare to move out and work will commence shortly.

14. John Wesley's New Room staff remain in regular communication with Methodist Heritage officers and sites as we seek to develop programming and joint ventures, including exploring the stories found in our collection which explore justice and injustice in support of the Walking with Micah project. We are grateful for the grants that have been given by the Methodist Church for the work delivered by the staff team.
15. The team at John Wesley's New Room consists of the following members and are funded in the following ways:
1. Director (FT) – Connexion; David Worthington
 2. Education Officer (FT) – 50% Bristol District and 50% JWNR; Mandy Briggs
 3. Collections Manager and Community Engagement Officer (FT) = JWNR: Kate Rogers
 4. Operations Manager (FT) – JWNR; Louise Wratten
 5. Finance Officer (0.4 FTE) – JWNR; Graham Wilson
 6. Fundraising Officer (0.4 FTE) – JWNR; Julia Smith
 7. Marketing and Communications Officer (0.4 FTE) – JWNR; Cyril Babeev
 8. Catering Manager (FT) – JWNR; Ewa Littlefield
 9. Assistant Café Manager (FT) – JWNR; Zdenek Bidsovsky

The New Room/John Wesley's Chapel

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2021

	Notes to the accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted)	Designated Funds (unrestricted)	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2020-21
		£	£	£	£	£
Income						
1 Donations, Legacies and Grants	2	121,958		129,946		251,904
2 Charitable Activities	3	36,292				36,292
3 Other Trading Activities	4	35,739				35,739
4 Interest and investment income	5	4,530				4,530
5 Other	6	2,305				2,305
6 Total income		200,824	0	129,946	0	330,770
Expenditure						
7 Raising Funds	7	105,789				105,789
8 Charitable Activities	8	85,632		184,522		270,154
9 Other						
10 Total charitable expenditure		191,421	0	184,522	0	375,943
11 Gains/(losses) on monetary investments		1,501		(1,176)	36,069	36,394
12 Net income/(expenditure)		10,904	0	(55,752)	36,069	(8,779)
13 Transfers between funds		37,126	(30,000)	(7,126)		0
14 Other gains/(losses)						0
15 Net movement in funds		48,030	(30,000)	(62,878)	36,069	(8,779)
16 Total funds brought forward		251,131	95,823	228,930	134,219	710,103
17 Total funds carried forward		299,161	65,823	166,052	170,288	701,324

***RESOLUTIONS

20/1. The Conference received the Report.

20/2. The Conference appointed the following as the Managing Trustees of the New Room for 2022/2023:

- (i) The Secretary of the Conference or a nominated substitute: the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler

- (ii) The Chair of the Bristol District: the Revd Dr Jonathan H Pye
- (iii) The Superintendent of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit: the Revd Teddy Kalongo
- (iv) Mr John Savage CBE (Chair), Mrs Linda Jones (Secretary), Mr Geoffrey Gollop (Treasurer), the Revd Josette Crane (Chaplain), the Revd David Weeks (Chaplain), Wendy Allen, Mrs Jane Allin, Mr Gary Best, the Revd A Ward Jones, Mr Niall Philips, Mr Michael Rose, Mrs Aroona Smith