

## CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2025

2024 / 25 has been a year of celebration for Chester Civic Trust. A 'Blue Sapphire' 65th anniversary of the founding of Chester Civic Trust in 1960 coupled with the 50th anniversary of the European Architectural Heritage Year (EAHY) in 1975. It was very appropriate that one of the highlights of 2025 was the visit to our HQ, Bishop Lloyd's Palace, by HRH Duke of Gloucester as the blue sapphire is traditionally the gemstone of royalty! HRH had previously visited the city in 1975 to see at first hand the restoration work that was being carried out in the Bridgewater Action Area, one of the pilot projects of the EAHY. The key contribution of Chester Civic Trust at the time was the reinstatement of the medieval High Cross outside St Peter's Church. The High Cross had stood at the Cross from 1476 to 1646 when it was demolished after the surrender of Chester to the Parliamentarians in 1646. To celebrate both significant anniversaries, a successful Dinner was held at Chez Joules restaurant in June.

The Trust's finances are in good shape, thanks in part to generous legacies received from Dr Allan Pullin and Keith Truman, a long-standing member of the Events Committee. Membership numbers have remained stable and covered administrative costs. The income from hirers that pays for utility bills and repairs and maintenance has increased. We have started negotiations with Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council to renew the Bishop Lloyd's Palace lease.

Over the last 12 months we have moved into the digital age and increased the use of electronic communications to members. Members have welcomed the introduction of online bookings and payments.

In common with most small charities, Chester Civic Trust is totally dependent on volunteers. We have no paid staff. Whilst it can be invidious to mention individuals we should thank David Colclough for taking on the role of building manager and Rob Ford for the bookkeeping function. Liz Preedy continues to represent the Trust on a number of heritage committees and organisations. Faye Mustill-Daniels is the membership secretary who also has overall responsibility for hirers. We urgently need volunteers who have basic IT skills who can help with admin tasks a couple of hours a week - please get in touch!

The Trust is fortunate to have 5 hard-working Committee Chairs. The indefatigable Karen McKay, the Chair of Events Committee, organises a diverse range of talks and walks and visits. Highlights in the past year have included a 5 day visit to the Surrey Hills focussing on the Watts Village and Gallery and day visits to the World of Glass in St Helens and the Pontcysyllte World Heritage Site at Llangollen. Forthcoming events include a study tour of the Viking influence in North Lincolnshire, a residential visit to Gdańsk and North Poland and a day visit to Bradford, the 2025 City of Culture. Andrew Pannell, the Chair of New Works Committee and John Tweed, the Chair of Strategic Planning, are leading discussions with the local authority and the developers of the 2nd Phase of Northgate and the revision of the

Local Plan. Tony Barton, the Chair of the Heritage Committee is leading the EAHY commemorations and Nick Clarke, the Chair of Communications Committee is the Trust's link with our Corporate Members and individual members. The contribution of the Officers and Trustees should be acknowledged - Peter Cocker for navigating the Trust through the choppy waters of changing from an unincorporated to an incorporated charity, Sarah and Graham Catlin and Jane Harrad Roberts for publicising the work of the Trust to members, local residents and businesses and Peter Hadfield for chairing the Judging Panel of the annual Good, Bad and Ugly Awards.

This year's Annual General Meeting will be held in the Cathedral Refectory on Thursday 2nd October at 7.30pm. The bar will be open from 7.00pm. The President of Chester Civic Trust, Lady Alexis Redmond MBE, the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire will be our guest speaker.

Thank you for your continuing support in 2024 / 25 and I look forward to seeing you at the Cathedral on the 2nd October.

Christine Russell : Chair Chester Civic Trust