



FRIENDS OF ST JAMES'S PARK
& THE GREEN PARK

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th SEPTEMBER 2022

GOVERNANCE

Constitution: The Thorney Island Society is an unincorporated association that was founded in 1985 and registered as a charity in 1990. The Society is governed by a constitution adopted by its members in 1990 and last revised in 2017. It is recognised by HMRC as a charity for Gift Aid.

Aims: The aims of the Society as a conservation and amenity group are to monitor planning applications and protect public spaces and buildings of significant heritage in the 'village' of ancient Westminster (originally known as 'Thorney Island'). In 1994 the Society adopted the activities of the Friends of St James's Park and The Green Park.

Objects: The objects of the Society are:

- (i) To protect and promote the buildings and open spaces of the historic area through high standards of planning and design;
- (ii) To uphold our role as a Westminster City Council official planning consultee;
- (iii) To educate and encourage interest in the architecture, history and natural history through visits, talks and social media;
- (iv) To build and empower the local community and to encourage pride in the area.

Management: The Society is managed by an Executive Committee of four officers and up to eight other members, who are Trustees for the purposes of charity law and are elected at the Society's Annual General Meeting. The Trustees who served during the year ended 30th September 2022 were:

Sue Ball (Chair)	Peter Deakins
Juliet Shellabear (Hon Secretary)	Rosemary Fitch
Robert Timms (Hon Treasurer)	Victor Keegan
Louise Cartledge (Hon Membership Secretary)	Lucy Peck
Graeme Cottam	

The trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

Review of the Year: The Executive Committee met every two months throughout the year. Engagement with a variety of external organisations continued to be a priority in keeping the Society at the forefront of local affairs and planning matters and meeting the Society's objectives (e.g. Local Councillors/Westminster City Council, the local MP, Victoria BID, London Forum of Amenity Societies, the Royal Parks). Our Chair, Sue Ball, advised the Executive Committee of her intention to stand down at the November 2022 AGM and work has begun on recruiting a replacement and also new committee members.

Finance: The Society recorded a surplus of £3,448.37 on our ordinary activities for the 2021–22 financial year. The remaining restricted funds for the Save Victoria Tower Gardens (SVTG) campaign were fully disbursed during the financial year, with the London Gardens Trust having taken over the coordinating and fundraising activities for the campaign, which means our income, expenditure and reserves are back to normal pre-SVTG levels. We have also fully disbursed the restricted funds representing the grant from Integrity Group, using them for community engagement activities such as supporting the St Andrew's Club event. We once again thank Integrity Group/Blue Orchid Hotels for their continued generosity via provision of facilities for events including the AGM, and the implementation of the Optimiser CRM platform, as well as the grant. We have received notice from Peabody, the landlords for the Old Pye Street Archives, of an intention to increase our rent from the 2022–23 financial year onwards, and have agreed details for a new lease. While the increase will be manageable, our objective is to ensure we can continue to cover the costs of

the Archives premises from our day-to-day membership and events income – another reason we are keen to increase membership numbers. Now that the risk of further significant disruption from Covid-19 appears to have subsided, we have reassessed our reserves, which are currently above our policy of 12 months' typical expenditure plus provision for unforeseen expenses, and the Trustees will determine the best approach to the use of reserves in keeping with our charitable objectives.

Membership: We migrated our membership database from the legacy Clubmaster software to the new cloud-based Optimiser CRM system at the beginning of the year and are still getting to grips with the many powerful features that are now available to us. When the new website is also complete it will unlock further functionality and enable a more automated renewals process. We end the year with 344 members, and 2 corporate supporters, and we are grateful for all our Members' support. We have seen a small decline in membership numbers, which reflects the original demographic of the founding of the Society and people moving out of the area. Going forward we recognise the need to attract new members.

The Royal Parks (TRP): The year saw a gradual recovery from the effects of Covid-19 as visitors steadily returned to the parks. Throughout the year the teams at St James's Park have worked tirelessly to keep the park as a showpiece of flowers, trees and wildlife. This was happening within the TRP policy of pursuing sustainability while at the same time establishing an enhanced 'brand' that will create a strong image with the public and ease the necessary task of raising money for the development of the parks. Across TRP the various Friends groups are watching this development with interest to ensure that it does not reduce their ability to pursue their own policies. The Thorney Island Society continued to provide volunteers to work on Duck Island in St James's Park and participate in all consultations and activities. The Society chairs the TRP Safer Parks committee, whose priorities remain rough sleeping, fraud and anti-social behaviour (including cycling offences).

Planning: In the last year we have been consulted by the Council on about 40 planning applications, most of which were minor (for instance, replacement doors and windows, air conditioning units in conservation areas or variations on existing consented schemes). Three were significant developments and there were others that we have discussed with developers prior to applications being made. For our responses to the former see <https://tinyurl.com/TTIS-Planning>. Of course, the largest local project is the interior work to the Houses of Parliament, but we still don't know how this is to be managed. Encouragingly, some public realm interventions are contemplated by the local BIDs (Business Improvement Districts) and we are involved in their consultation process. We facilitated Zoom meetings of the 'Hub', a group of resident and amenity societies in South Westminster set up by the Society in 2020, who meet every 2 months.

Events: This year, thankfully, we saw the return of in-person events and we replaced our cancelled 2021 Christmas Party with a tour and reception at the St Andrew's Club. Other in-person events included an evening walk with the Illuminated Rivers Project, a lunch and tour at the Kingsway College, a book talk and tour of Shepherds Bindery and our Summer Party in St James's Park. We put on four Zoom talks this year, including 'The Sensational history of Petty France' and 'Looking at Commemorative Art on Thorney Island'. All events were well attended. Jules Shellabear has worked on the 2022/23 programme with Hari Kitching, who will be taking over the events co-ordinator role.

Newsletters & Website: Two newsletters were produced during the year and circulated to members and friends. Work continued on the Society's new website and membership database/CRM (customer relationship management) system, supported by our corporate sponsor (Blue Orchid Hotels/Integrity Group). There was a lively interaction through followers of the Society's Twitter and Instagram accounts and YouTube Channel.

Archives: The Committee continue to sort out items and non-relevant paperwork. Going forward volunteers will be sought to help with sorting, cataloguing and digitizing our collection. We have opened the doors several times during the year for talks to members and welcomed individuals wishing to research local history and our past conservation campaigns.

Approved by the Executive Committee on 13th October 2022