



FRIENDS OF ST JAMES'S PARK
& THE GREEN PARK

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th SEPTEMBER 2023

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 of the area 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 Committee meets every two months either online or at the Society's Archives in Old Pye Street. The position of Chair is currently vacant.

The Trustees who served during the year ended 30th September 2023 were:

Robert Timms (Hon Treasurer)	Agapi Fylaktou*	Clare Annamalai*
Juliet Shellabear (Hon Secretary)	Victor Keegan	Graeme Cottam
Louise Cartledge (Hon Membership Secretary)	Hari Kitching*	Lucy Peck

* Appointed to the Committee at the AGM on 8 November 2022

Review of the Year: The Society made a very positive impact during the year, with excellent outcomes in all its main areas of activity, as detailed below. The Society's finances are in good shape, and it has adequate reserves to meet its short- and medium-term costs in the event of unforeseen difficulties. Membership numbers are stable despite adverse economic conditions.

The Trustees plan to continue the main areas of activity over the coming year, while leaving subscription rates unchanged for the sixth successive year. A break-even budget has been approved by the Trustees.

The future success of the Society is dependent on the support of Members in serving as Trustees and in delivering the Society's activities. Members are encouraged to speak to members of the Committee if they have an interest in supporting the Society at any level.

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

Finance: The Society recorded a surplus of £3,249.17 on its ordinary activities for the 2022–23 financial year. Membership and event fees on their own are not currently sufficient to ensure we break even, so the Committee is especially grateful for the various donations generously contributed to the Society. The Society has not raised its membership fees since 2018, and the Committee has decided this year to keep them unchanged again, with a view to being as inclusive as possible. We are always keen to increase membership numbers, for financial stability as well as for involving as wide a community as possible and representing a stronger voice as an amenity society. While there was some unexpected electrical and plumbing work needed in the Archives, the Society's reserves remain above our

policy of 12 months' typical expenditure plus provision for unforeseen expenses. During the year the Committee discussed options for the appropriate use of the reserves (which must be in keeping with our charitable objectives and should not be used for day-to-day operations), but the current lack of a Chair has constrained our ability and time for setting ideas in motion. The Committee expects to put some of these plans into action in the year ahead.

Membership: Our membership numbers remain in line with recent years at 350 including our two corporate supporters, although we note with sadness that we have lost some of our founder Members, many of whom took Life Memberships, inspired by the dynamism of our late co-founder June Stubbs MBE. Our new Members come from various sources, often joining after one of our events or after seeing one of our posters in our Royal Parks or encouraged by fellow Members – do you know anyone who would like to join the Society? We are also pleased to offer a year's honorary membership to our event speakers to thank them for their contribution, and we hope that they will choose to stay with us when that lapses. Our reach extends beyond our membership as we continue to keep local councillors and Westminster City Council planners abreast of our work.

The hoped-for upgrade to our membership software has not happened this year, meaning that some of the automation and website integration we had planned around joining and renewals is not yet in place. We have a new plan which we will implement after the bulk of renewals which still take place in November.

Planning: The Society was consulted on about 60 planning applications during the year, including seven substantial new applications or amendments. Our responses to the more significant applications are published at <https://tinyurl.com/TTIS-Planning>. We continued to support the London Parks & Gardens Trust with the campaign to Save Victoria Tower Gardens.

Events: The Society organised many events for Members during the year, including a tour of the Westminster Abbey Gardens, and visits to the Royal Society, the Royal Horticultural Society Lindley Library and the Government Art Collection, each of which was repeated due to high demand. Single visits included the London Scottish House, the Guards Museum and 55 Broadway. Numerous talks on Thorney Island were given at the Cinnamon Club (for Silver Sunday), the Abbey Centre, and at the Society's Archives.

Blue Orchid Hotels kindly provided the venues for the Society's Annual General Meeting in 2022, the Christmas Party at the Wellington Hotel and the Summer Party on a roof terrace at 55 Broadway, all of which were much appreciated.

Friends of St James's Park and The Green Park: The Society liaises regularly with the management of our two Royal Parks and with the leadership of The Royal Parks. Activities undertaken during the year included chairing TRP's Safer Parks Committee, participating in stakeholder meetings, and supporting the Duck Island Conservation Volunteers.

Archives: During the year we welcomed PhD and master's degree students researching Old Pye Street and the River Tyburn, and many volunteers who have assisted in assessing and cataloguing our collection of ephemera and our general collections (particularly of past planning applications). Improvements were made to the lighting and plumbing in the Archives, and a new set of foldable chairs was purchased.

Communications: Our twice-yearly newsletter covering planning applications, event reports, parks news and historical articles was sent to all Members and to key stakeholders in Westminster. Historical topics covered this year included street names, coal holes and a century of catering in Westminster by the Cattini family. The Committee is grateful to those Members who have contributed articles to the newsletter.

The newsletter is supplemented by e-newsletters and emails to Members, by postings on the Society's website, and regular posts on Instagram and X (formerly Twitter). Recordings of Zoom talks are posted on the Society's YouTube channel. Work continues on refreshing the appearance, content and functionality of the Society's website.

Engagement: In furtherance of our general aims, the Society has engaged regularly during the year with local councillors, Westminster City Council officers, Nickie Aiken MP, the local Business Improvement Districts, the Victoria Neighbourhood Forum, the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies, the Westminster Amenity Societies Forum, The Royal Parks and with local schools and other charities in the Thorney Island area.

The Committee is very grateful for the continuing support of Blue Orchid Hotels, our growing band of volunteers and all Members.

Approved by the Executive Committee on 13th October 2023