THE THORNEY ISLAND SOCIETY

FRIENDS OF ST JAMES'S PARK & THE GREEN PARK

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th SEPTEMBER 2024

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 Trustees who served during the year ended 30th September 2024 were:

Glenn Murphy (Acting Chair)	Juliet Shellabear	Lucy Peck
Robert Timms (Hon Treasurer)	Agapi Fylaktou	Clare Annamalai
Rose Malik (Hon Secretary)	Victor Keegan	Graeme Cottam
Louise Cartledge (Hon Membership Secretary)	Hari Kitching	

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 excellent shape, and it has adequate reserves to meet its short- and medium-term costs in the event of unforeseen difficulties. We are grateful to a number of members that have made sizable donations over the past year. Membership numbers are stable.

The Trustees plan to continue the main areas of activity over the coming year. A review of subscription rates will take place in early 2025. A break-even budget has been reviewed 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. We would particularly like to hear from members that may like to be involved in a project coordination or event support activities.

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

Finance: The Society recorded a surplus of £173.31 on its ordinary activities for the 2023–24 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. However, the Committee will be conducting a review of membership fees in early 2025. 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. 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) and made some purchases towards improving the Archive facilities, including a projector for talks, and new book acquisitions. The Committee expects to review further use of reserves in the year ahead.

Membership: As last year, our membership numbers are stable at around 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.

Planning: The Society was consulted by WCC on about 40 planning applications during the year, and met with developers to discuss a few projects, the most significant being 1 Victoria Street. Our responses to the more significant applications are published at https://tinyurl.com/TTIS-Planning. We continued to support the campaign to Save Victoria Tower Gardens.

Events: We had an active year with over 20 events which were all well attended. The highlight of the year was co-hosting an event with Westminster Abbey for Black History Month where actor/author Paterson Joseph gave a theatrical performance of excerpts from his novel *The Secret Diaries of Charles Ignatius Sancho* in St Margaret's Church. Advertising for this event enabled TTIS to reach a wide audience and helped generate interest in the Society. Some of the popular visits and tours this year included The Royal Chapels at St James's Palace, Benjamin Franklin House, the Cricket Pavilion in Vincent Square, the Royal Parks Nurseries, Greycoat Hospital School and the walking tour of highlights around Petty France. We had several collaborations on Thorney Island including events at The Cinnamon Club, Westminster Archives and taking part in the newly rebranded London Heritage Quarter during the Summer. We participated in our second Open House, since 2020, in September which attracted visitors from London and beyond. A special thanks to Blue Orchid Hotels for their continued support of TTIS, especially for hosting the Summer and Christmas Parties and the AGM.

Friends of St James's Park and The Green Park: The two Parks had a record number of visitors as the effects of Covid faded and overseas visitors returned. We liaised regularly with the leadership of the Royal Parks, the manager of St James's Park and local stakeholders. We chaired the Royal Parks' Safer Parks Committee and supported the work of volunteers on Duck Island.

Archives: We were happy to make available to Victoria BID images from our postcard collection, providing historical background to a number of sites in the area. Several new books/maps were acquired for the collection, including Booth's Poverty Maps and a bound copy of a Cambridge University PhD student's dissertation on Old Pye Street, which earned him a Distinction. Volunteers helped throughout the year in sorting the large number of irrelevant files and unwanted paperwork to progress the ongoing sort-out. The Archives were used for all Committee meetings during the year and a number of talks with slides for which we bought new projection equipment. We also opened our doors for Open House weekend in September, which attracted over 70 visitors.

Communications: We continued to engage with members via a range of channels. During the year we sent out two printed newsletters including features on local history, local amenities and planning. Past newsletters can all be read on the Thorney Island Society website. We are always grateful to Members who contribute articles for the newsletter. We also sent a number of e-newsletters, to highlight upcoming events, and posted regular local updates on Instagram and X. The website was regularly updated with events and the Society's responses to local planning applications.

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, Rachel Blake MP, the Victoria Neighbourhood Forum, the Westminster Amenity Societies Forum and the Royal Parks.

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 1st October 2024