



CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Autumn 2025 Bulletin
and AGM Notice



CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

The Trust was founded in 1942. On 8 April 2021 it became a “Charitable Incorporated Organisation”, remaining registered as charity no. 502132

Founder:

The Very Rev'd Cyril A Alington
Dean of Durham 1933-51

Patrons:

Roberta Blackman-Woods
Member of Parliament 2005-19

Bill Bryson
Chancellor of the University 2005-11

The Very Rev'd Michael Sadgrove
Dean of Durham 2003-15

Trustees:

John Lowe
Chair

Sue Childs
Vice-Chair

Francis Pritchard
Hon. Secretary & Treasurer

John Ashby

Tim Clark

Roger Cornwell

Allan Gemmill

Adrian Green

Chris Hugill

Michael Hurlow

Matthew Phillips

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

Thursday October 16th 5 pm - 7 pm

The Story at Mount Oswald

The Trust's 83rd Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 16th October, 5 pm to 7 pm at *The Story* at Mount Oswald. The detailed agenda and minutes of last year's AGM can be found towards the end of this Review.

Our speaker at the AGM this year will be Carolyn Ball, the County Archivist, who will tell the story of *The Story*.

There will be a guided tour at 4 pm, though numbers are limited. If you wish to come on the tour, please email secretary@durhamcity.org by October 13th to book your place.

Please note that the café closes at 4 pm.

[The cover photograph of *The Story* was supplied by Carolyn Ball.]

NOVEMBER TALK BY ROBERT BANKS

Saturday 22 November at 2.30 pm

The Dining Hall, St Cuthbert's Society, South Bailey

Between Abbey Gate and Water Gate: the fascinating history of St. Cuthbert's Society's South Bailey houses

The streetscape of the Bailey in the heart of the ancient city is surely among the best known in Durham, but how did it develop and who has lived in the Bailey houses over the centuries of its existence? St Cuthbert's Society, one of the oldest collegiate bodies in the University, now occupies several properties in the South Bailey, the most significant being numbers 8, 9, and 12.

The aim of this talk is to trace the history of these three important examples of Bailey properties, their buildings, owners and occupiers, from medieval times until their acquisitions by the University.

BUILD, BUILD, BUILD? or IT'S THE WRONG HOUSES, GROMIT!

How many more houses are needed in County Durham?

Far too many of the wrong sorts of houses are in prospect for County Durham. At present, the official requirement as set out in the Adopted County Durham Plan (2020) is that, to meet the predicted housing need, an average of 1,308 new dwellings should be built each year over the nineteen years 2016 to 2035. But work on a new County Durham Plan has just begun, and is faced with meeting a much higher, nationally-set, target of building 2,011 new dwellings on average each year. This represents a house-building target 54% greater than set in the County Durham Plan.

There are so many difficulties with such a high target for County Durham. There is no doubt about the national need for many more homes; the problem is how the national target is shared out around the regions and local authorities. The Government's method of allocating the national target has produced extraordinary results that fly in the face of reality and of good planning.

Can the target for more be achieved?

First, can the new, much higher target be delivered here? Actual house-building has amounted to 11,978 over the period 2016/17 to 2023/24, an average of 1,497 per year. Allowing for houses lost by demolition or changes to other uses, the average is 1,462 per year. This is happily a bit above the existing target of 1,308 per year but 27% fewer than required to meet the future target being imposed on the new County Durham Plan.

There is more than enough land already approved for house-building to increase across County Durham if the house-builders considered this to be feasible. The question is why have they not been building at a higher rate? The answer includes shortages of skilled labour and of materials, and the cost of mortgages in some years, and even the inadequacy of sewerage infrastructure, but also includes the house-builders' assessments of how many houses the County Durham market can absorb i.e. can be sold.

The house-builders will always go for the locations where they can be reasonably confident of selling what they build. They cannot be directed to build in so-called weak market areas. However, they can be induced, for example by publicly-owned land being gifted to them on condition they construct the kinds of new homes that are really needed - affordable homes to buy or to rent, accessible homes, social rent homes, adaptable homes, multi-generational homes.

Also, house-builders can be steered towards the less profitable areas by refusing planning applications to build in the 'hottest' market areas such as in the green belt around Durham City. But rationing building land in that way is frowned upon under national planning rules. Indeed, green belt land is no longer sacrosanct; builders can apply to build on so-called 'grey belt' parts of the green belt - a contentious relaxation brought in this year. Even without that loosening of protection of the green belt, Durham City had two large areas of the green belt removed in the current County Durham Plan - at Sniperley and at Bent House Lane - for about 2,500 houses to be built. The case for doing this was essentially that Durham City was declared by the County Council at the time to be the best location in County Durham for large quantities of new homes to be built.

The obligation to meet over-estimated housing need also allows developers to put in applications for any land that becomes available. This may be land that is easier to build on than brownfield and possibly contaminated sites. House-builders will then 'cherry-pick' these easy sites and leave the tricky brownfield sites undeveloped.



New housing in Langley Park

Above all, the fact is that the numerical national target set by the previous and present Governments has never ever been anywhere near to being achieved except when Council housing was a major part of the programme. Council housing meets real needs rather than market winners. An additional benefit of Council-house building is that private-sector house-builders look for a 20% profit; council-house builders, i.e. councils, do not.

Reasons to be concerned

This is all why the City of Durham Trust is very concerned about the task facing Durham County Council and what the implications might be for Durham City. The new, 50% higher, house-building rate will inevitably have minds turn again to the green belt around the city. We can speculate where large new housing estates might be considered, and indeed whether the zombie Western and Northern Bypasses will be resurrected.

In order to have a sense of the house-builders' appetites for more sites, the Trust has been keeping track of what and where house-builders are applying for permission to build. From the year the current County Durham Plan was approved - 2020 - until now, planning applications have been made for a total of nearly 9,000 new homes. Only a few applications have been refused whereas 5,200 new dwellings have been approved and 3,700 await a decision at the time of writing.

Durham County Council has one of the highest approval rates in the country for house-building planning applications - 84% as compared with 74% nationally. So the burden to increase the house-building rate is not on the County Council, it is on the house-builders to come forward with more applications in County Durham.

The figures represent an approval rate of about 1,000 new homes a year, with another 700 that might be approved this year or next. These figures suggest that the flow of sites for new homes has probably been sufficient to meet the current County Durham target of 1,308 new dwellings per year. Unfortunately, the applications and approvals rates are woefully inadequate to comply with the new requirement of 2,011 per year. This presents a most undesirable situation - the County Council itself has stated that if it cannot prove that there is a five-year supply of suitable and available land on which the required rate of house-building can be delivered, *"all policies in the current County Durham Plan relating to housing would be considered out of date, which would make it much more difficult to resist schemes of poor quality or that the Council consider are in the wrong place. This will have serious financial implications - where the Council refuse planning permission, the Council will be more open to planning appeals which in recent times have resulted in very costly public inquiries."*

All in all, troubling times lie ahead for planning in Durham.

STUDENT PLACEMENTS UPDATE

Our experiences with student placements on Durham University's MA in International Cultural Heritage Management has been very positive. The article in our Bulletin 100 gives more details about our involvement in the 2024/25 academic year. Recommendations in the students' final reports will help to inform our activities. And has already had an outcome: a map of the Trust, Parish Council and Rotary plaques on our website which is currently under development. In discussions with lecturers on the course, we have come up with three new project ideas for the new academic year.:

- Evaluating the Impact of volunteering within the City of Durham Trust
- Views on Views: an evaluation of the Durham settings study and planning policy relating to views and vistas
- Trajectories of Heritage Protection Priorities of the City of Durham Trust: Retrospect and Prospect

We hope students will be interested in working with us on these projects.

THE CITY TRUST'S ARCHITECTURAL AWARD 2025

The Story was the unanimous choice of Trustees for the Trust's Architectural Award 2024. It combines the historic Mont Oswald House with a modern glass and concrete extension. It houses the County archives and the Registry and is called "The Story" because it aims to chart the history of County Durham and its people. It contains all records of births, deaths and marriages from 1837.

The glass pavilion was designed to blend modern architectural elements with the historic Grade II listed manor house. This minimalist glass structure serves dual purposes: it houses front-of-house functions like the café, exhibition spaces, and reading rooms, while also providing a visually striking contrast to the restored historic building. It contains a back of house area designed to the highest national standards for archives and storage. The archive, storing six miles and 900 years of history, is designed in contrast to the glass pavilion, with heavy set concrete providing the thermal, fire, security and environmental protection needed.

The Story was developed and built by Durham County Council. The council developed the project to bring together several heritage collections, including the DLI, and public registry services, receiving support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, the Wolfson Foundation, and the Banks Group, who gifted the manor house. It was designed by Ryder Architecture in association with Mather & Co.

The archives are readily accessible both in person and on line, while wedding ceremonies are conducted in the refurbished manor house where the Trust will present the award and hold its AGM on 16th October - see page 2.



An attractive room in Mount Oswald House, part of *The Story*, now used for civil wedding ceremonies

SCAFFOLDING PROS AND CONS

It can seem as if Durham City suffers from a scaffolding epidemic. However, scaffolding can be a positive sign, showing that existing buildings are being maintained and renovated, with new buildings coming on stream: economic activity that can be lacking in others parts of the County. But where scaffolding remains in place for many months this is bad news: a sign that developments have stalled, with the risk of land being left abandoned with uncompleted buildings.

Here are current photos of some of these two types of scaffolding. You might have other examples. If so, please do share them with us at trust@durhamcity.org.



RESPONSES TO CONSULTATIONS

In 2025 <https://durhamcity.org/our-work/consultations/>

In 2024 <https://durhamcity.org/our-work/consultations/consultations-2024/>

You can see from the above lists that it has been a very busy year for Trustees responding to local and national consultations. We put a great deal of effort into these responses and also try to engage directly with the County Council in particular to make sure that our views are understood and respected. A recent study by an MA student showed that the Trust's representations to the County Durham Plan, both in writing and in person, did have significant impact.

Two consultations that are not listed are the World Heritage Site (WHS) Management Plan and the associated Setting Study. The Trust did not publish responses to these important consultations, but our Chair, who represents the Trust on the WHS Strategic Partnership Board, did submit detailed personal comments on various drafts of the documents.

In addition, the Trust made a particular contribution to the WHS Setting Study by hosting a talk in May: *Durham Cathedral: an eye-catcher in the landscape*. This was followed by a panel discussion to draw out the links with the study. (A video of the talk is on the Trust's YouTube channel).

Trustees will continue to devote their time and expertise to responding whenever possible to important consultations that have an impact on our precious heritage.



View over the Cathedral's West Towers and South Street

DURHAM NEEDS MORE AGE-FRIENDLY HOUSING

The County Council's Housing Strategy Consultation Document (2019) predicted that between 2016 and 2035 there will be a huge growth in the number of over 65-year-olds. The number of over 75s will also greatly increase, and many people will have health issues and disabilities. A very small proportion of homes in County Durham meet the four basic design features which promote accessibility, (level access, flush thresholds, wider doors, downstairs bathroom). This is particularly the case in the owner-occupied sector. Home owners have limited options in County Durham to move to more suitable housing if needed as they age.

Taking inspiration from the UK Co-housing Network, Lifetime Homes Standard housing and Carbon-neutral designs, it is hoped to get a group of people together who are interested in developing a kind of group self-build scheme, possibly with the help of a housing organisation. The development would need about 1-2 acres of land in a location which is age-friendly. It would consist of about 20 homes, 1-2 bedroom bungalows, with plenty of storage space, each with a small garden area. The development would include a community garden and a community room for regular shared meals and other social activities. The homes need to be well-built, well-insulated, with solar panels, heat pumps and mechanical heat recovery ventilation systems, making them healthy homes with comfortable room temperatures and plenty of fresh air, but low-cost to run.

- All doorways would be slightly wider than normal, allowing wheelchair access should this ever be needed.
- Bathrooms would be designed with suitable drainage to allow flat floor showers to be installed.
- Stronger ceiling timbers would be included to permit ceiling track hoists to be installed if needed.
- The bungalows would look like ordinary homes, but would be more spacious in layout to allow for turning circles for wheelchairs.
- Level access to the property and flush thresholds.

The homes would be age-friendly – great for all age groups who want to live in a small mutually supportive community of good neighbours. The aim would be to create a housing development and environment which would support people to maintain their well-being as they age and their needs change.

If you are interested in the idea, please contact admin@necans.uk or phone 0770 748 1915 and leave a message on the answerphone. More details are available at <https://durhamcity.org/2025/09/11/age-friendly-housing/>

Dorothy Hamilton

DURHAM MUSEUM POP UP

The City of Durham Trust has played an important role in supporting The Bow Trust in finding a solution for the future of Durham Museum. As reported in previous Bulletins, the Durham Museum in St Mary le Bow church closed last year. The City of Durham Trust has entered into a partnership with Beamish Museum, Durham County Council and Durham World Heritage Site, to support a temporary "Durham Museum Pop Up" display. Durham Museum Pop Up opens to the public for free, and includes a brass rubbing activity for children. Displays from St Mary le Bow have been moved to an empty shop unit in Prince Bishops Place, off Durham Market Place, near the Beamish Emporium. Opening for free is dependent on volunteers. If you would like to volunteer - on Thursdays, Fridays or Saturdays, for some or all of the day between 10am and 4pm - please contact helenbarker@beamish.org.uk.

Durham Museum tells the story of the city and the people of Durham, with collections on home life, leisure and sports, historic trades and industries, as well as the development of the town. It is hoped that this temporary home for Durham Museum will lead to a longer term solution for the museum on or near Durham Market Place.

COUNTY DURHAM PLAN REVIEW WORKING GROUP

As reported in Bulletin 100, the Trust has set up a Working Group to develop our input into the Review of the County Durham Plan. The Group meets regularly, about once a fortnight, and the notes of the meetings are discussed at the Trustees meetings and included within the minutes. So far, we have discussed student accommodation and housing. Topics for us to discuss in the future are heritage, green infrastructure and transport.

Our thoughts on student accommodation include: a county-wide, generic HMO (houses in multiple occupancy) policy, including, but not restricted to, students; an HMO SPD (supplementary planning document); a separate policy for PBSAs (purpose built student accommodation); and a separate policy covering other issues related to Durham University.

Housing is a challenging topic, particularly because the government wants to take more national control of policies on this issue. However, we still await government guidance on how local plans are to reviewed. The article in this bulletin on housing need discusses some of these housing challenges. We are also hoping to point to exemplary sustainable housing developments including active travel solutions. We have had a meeting with County Council officers to discuss the housing topic, as an early participation activity.

Looking at the County Plan as a whole, there are a number of policies that cover the principles related to all types of development. An example is Policy 29 Sustainable Design. The Plan would benefit from strengthening such policies, and highlighting that they must be applied to all developments. Then policies relating to specific topics would only need to cover the issues relevant to that topic. This would create a clearer Plan structure, and eliminate duplication.

TRUST RESPONSES TO PLANNING APPLICATIONS

From 17th April 2024 to 19th August 2025 the Trust considered 463 planning applications that affected Durham City. We sent 100 (22%) objection letters, 35 (8%) letters of support and 12 (2%) letters of comments/concerns. The rest of the applications – 316 (68%) – were just noted as no response was considered necessary or appropriate.

Summaries of these decisions can be seen at <https://durhamcity.org/our-work/summaries/> and the responses themselves at <https://durhamcity.org/our-work/planning/>

We also keep track of the outcomes of planning applications, though because of the delay in decisions (and in implementation) this data below does not correspond with the data above, though it was collected within the same time period.

- Applications with Trust objections: Approved 42, refused 16, withdrawn 8.
- Applications with Trust support: Approved 25.
- Applications with Trust comments/concerns: Approved 10. withdrawn 1.

The data above shows that 64% of applications that the Trust objected to were approved, and 36% were refused, or the applicant withdrew their application. It should also be noted that approved applications can have conditions placed on them. When deciding on an application the Council does take into account the concerns raised by objectors and addresses them within the decision report, with suitable conditions to mitigate their concerns where possible.

We also respond to appeals made by a developer after their proposal has been refused by Durham County Council. The Inspector sees all the responses made to the application in question. If necessary, we may make an additional response to the appeal.

Appeal with Trust objections: Dismissed 11, Allowed 7.

Appeal with Trust support: Allowed 1.

If a member of the Trust, or any local resident, has any concern about a new development in the City please do share it with us at trust@durhamcity.org.



Cleaning the weirs in 2024

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD

We are delighted to report that **Martin Hiles** has become the sixth member of the Trust to be awarded the prestigious Citizen of the Year award by the Parish Council. Martin is an expert on rivers and he works extensively in Africa, but when he is in Durham he uses his skills to enhance the quality of the River Wear. We are hoping to include an item about his work in a future Bulletin.

Ptolemy Dean’s Streetscapes – Navigating Historic English Towns (Lund Humphries, 2024)

This book provides a vivid account of twenty-six English towns, including Newcastle upon Tyne and Durham. The book seeks to celebrate and promote the conservation of historic English streetscapes. Dean highlights the introduction of Conservation Areas since the 1960s and laments recent Local Authority austerity, ‘now beginning to morph into serious neglect and civic embarrassment. With planning authorities run down and understaffed, the threat of further weakening of planning controls bodes badly’.

Yet, the resilient sense of place that Dean’s book captures perhaps gives hope that England’s historic towns can weather yet another storm. Durham is fortunate to be undergoing a thorough Conservation Management Plan led by the Local Authority. One might hope that this volume, supported by Historic England, will be eagerly appreciated by those working in planning.

Dean has developed a unique mode of illustration. Ink drawings of buildings made *in situ* apply a wiggly line to architectural detail, finished with a colour wash. These pictures claim to evoke a sense of streetscape that photographs cannot. Yet even intensely familiar sets of buildings were rendered strange to me. Judgements on place and perspective are inevitably subjective. While the approach from Durham railway station to the Cathedral is well described, there are elements along the way that Dean experiences more subjectively. His view from the top of Elvet Bridge on Saddler Street omits the green landscape beyond the town which is arguably this vista’s chief delight.

As a 19th Century specialist, Dean finds visual satisfaction in St Nicholas’ church on Durham Market Place and the gothic former law court buildings at the junction of Owengate. While these Victorian buildings were likely designed with a sense of placing in the streetscape, it is ahistorical to describe St Mary le Bow as intended to be appreciated as it is today from North and South since this scene is the result of very many historic changes to the street.

A survey of so many towns inevitably involves errors, and North and South Bailey are mistakenly referred to as North Bow and South Bow, while Newcastle upon Tyne is oddly described as a former Roman town when the specific streets depicted are built on reclaimed land along the medieval Quayside below the Norman castle and Tyne Bridge. But the book is well researched, citing Douglas Pocock’s *The Story of Durham* and Martin Roberts’ *Durham – A Thousand Years of History*, as well as the architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner and the influential post-war planner Thomas Sharp. Each town is presented with a map from John Speed’s Jacobean atlas alongside a Victorian O.S. map of the same area. The coffee table format of this handsome book is a somewhat awkward fit with the endeavour to promote a walking route through each town. But all efforts to celebrate the character of England’s historic towns, and the conservation efforts that have achieved their preservation to date, are to be welcomed.

Reviewed by Adrian Green

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

AGENDA

- 1. Welcome and apologies for absence.
- 2. Minutes of the 82nd Annual General Meeting (below)
- 3. Matters arising from the Minutes.
- 4. Report of the Trustees and the Presentation of Accounts for the period ended 7th April 2025
- 5. Appointment of Trustees
- 6. Appointment of the Honorary Officers of the Trust
- 7. Secretary’s Report
- 8. Chair’s remarks.
- 9. Any other business

MINUTES OF 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 82nd Annual General Meeting was held in Elvet Riverside ER140, New Elvet on Thursday 6th June 2024 commencing at 19.00.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

John Lowe (Chair) welcomed attendees (in person and via Zoom) to the Trust’s 2024 AGM, confirmed that the meeting is being recorded, and introduced Sue Childs (Vice-Chair) who is standing in for the Honorary Treasurer in his absence. Apologies were received from Dr Anne Allen, Roger Cornwell, Kevin Cummings, Michael Hurlow, Matthew Phillips, Francis Pritchard (Hon. Treasurer & Hon. Secretary), Dr Malcolm Reed and Jim O’Boyle.

2. MINUTES OF THE 81st AGM (31 October 2023)

The Minutes, previously approved by Trustees and printed in the *Annual Review 2023-24*, were noted.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the floor. From item 4, the Chair explained that that the original intention to move the Trust’s Virgin Money savings account funds to the Newcastle Building Society was thwarted as a charity/club account is not currently offered either there or at the Nationwide Building Society. However, as Nationwide are likely to be acquiring Virgin Money, we hope that they will retain the charity accounts. So, although there is some uncertainty at present, our money is safe.

4. PRESENTATION OF THE ACCOUNTS for the period ended 7 April 2024

On behalf of the Honorary Treasurer, Sue Childs (Vice-Chair) presented the Trust’s accounts. She explained that the draft accounts printed in the *Annual Review 2023-24* have since been revised and approved by Trustees. The accounts had been set out in the format required by the Charity Commission but, on reflection, Trustees decided to use the simpler format displayed on the screen (also available on our website). This gives a clear comparison with the previous accounting year and shows a healthy position with a closing balance of around £17.5k. The Trust is just over £1.6k better off than last year, largely due to the receipt of an insurance pay-out (£1,870) for water-damaged publications stored at Alington House. Another notable item is the payment out (“*Subscriptions & Grants*”) of more than £1.1k to support the printing of the Durham City Seven Hills Trail and Heritage Trail leaflets, which have proved to be very popular. There were no questions on the accounts. The Chair thanked Sue.

5. HONORARY SECRETARY’S REPORT

Also, on behalf of the Honorary Treasurer, the Vice-Chair reported that membership numbers are: Honorary 8; Life members 40; Individual/Single 150; and Joint 95 (x2) which gives a total of 388 members. She said the new online subscription system appears to be working well but any comments on it would be welcome. There were no questions on the membership and the Chair asked attendees to try to recruit extra members.

6. APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES

The Chair paid tribute to the magnificent team of Trustees with the skills and dedication that they bring to the Trust. He thanked Jan Hutchinson for her excellent notetaking and monthly summary documents. He explained that the Trust’s Constitution requires one third of Trustees to retire in rotation each year but they are eligible for re-election. The retiring Trustees - Richard Hird, John Lowe, Matthew Phillips and Francis Pritchard - all willing to stand again, were proposed by the Vice-Chair and re-elected by consensus. The Chair introduced Allan Gemmill who has been co-opted as a new Trustee to strengthen the team even more. He has been working, alongside others, in a local sub-group on HMO issues and the Chair said, with his tenacity and eye for detail, he will be an enormous asset to our team. Allan was formally welcomed by attendees. There were no new nominations from the floor. The Chair reminded attendees that the Constitution allows up to 20 Trustees and there are currently 12 so, if anyone is interested, they can get in touch with him via chair@durhamcity.org.

7. APPOINTMENT OF THE HONORARY OFFICERS

Only two officers are appointed at the AGM – Treasurer and Secretary, with Francis Pritchard currently fulfilling both (combined) roles very well and willing to continue. The Chair asked if there were any other nominations or volunteers

to take a deputy role to help with the responsibility and said he can be contacted on chair@durhamcity.org. For now, the Chair proposed Francis to be re-elected to both roles and the motion was carried by acclaim.

8. DURHAM MUSEUM

The Chair introduced Trustee Dr Adrian Green to speak on an important current issue in the city. Adrian explained that the Bow Trust was formed in the 1970s to maintain the redundant St Mary-le-Bow church on North Bailey as a centre for exhibitions, but increasing maintenance costs have led the Trustees to conclude that the museum cannot generate enough money, so it is now closed. They are looking at options for different parts of the museum collections, with Durham Town Hall suggested as a good place for the social history collections to be displayed. Regarding the building, stabilisation work has already been done on the roofs, with some on-going work, but the chancel roof will need replacing in five years’ time (amongst other tasks). Trustees (Bow Trust) are exploring ideas for the building use (performance space, etc). Adrian said the City of Durham Trust has always been involved with the Bow Trust so he is grateful for the time to speak tonight. Following questions from the floor, Adrian said that the existing lease from the diocese is a full repairing lease so the responsibility falls on the Bow Trust and fundraising will be needed. He also confirmed that, once discussions on the lease and proposed plans become clearer, there will be a public consultation meeting. The Chair thanked Adrian.

9. CHAIR’S REMARKS

The Chair said that looking back at last year’s AGM Minutes he felt déjà vu ... plus ça change! One issue which has taken a lot of time and effort was the Sniperley Park public inquiry (see the summary in the *Annual Review 2023-24*, plus a report in the previous *Bulletin No. 98* or posts on our website). He said he and John Ashby spent almost three weeks attending, along with Matthew Phillips (whose expertise on transport issues is unsurpassed) and the Trust were allowed a lot of time by the inspector with the Trust’s inputs being mentioned five times in the barristers’ summing up. The inspector makes a recommendation to the Secretary of State but of course this will no longer be Michael Gove!

As the County Durham Plan will be due a review soon, Trustees have been involved in assessing how CDP Policy 16 can be adjusted to work more effectively, particularly for outer areas of the city where HMOs are spreading out. There are a lot of developments going on in our small city having a major effect (see the article in the *Annual Review 2023-24*) especially at Milburngate where we are being kept in the dark about the situation. Another major proposal is Prince Bishops Place, where the retail centre is not doing well so the new owners want to use the upper storeys for student accommodation and position a hotel above Boots (but vehicle/delivery access is problematic). There are also design issues with the proposal regarding the WHS views.

The Leazes Road footbridge is causing concern and confusion over whether it is repairable, whilst works have already started at the traffic lights for a new pedestrian crossing. A sad loss in the city is the closure of Shakespeare Hall on North Road, so Alington House is the last remaining community facility. DCC is putting Hopper House and Metcalfe House (next to the bus station) up for sale, and the Claypath / Millennium Place development site is another significant vacancy awaiting adoption.

The Chair pointed out the Trust’s success in building partnerships, particularly with the Parish Council on planning responses and the WHS Committee who are currently working on the new WHS Management Plan. In parallel, DCC’s Design & Conservation team are drafting the Conservation Area Management Plan and have sent the first draft of the Crossgate Area Character Appraisal (160 pages) to the Trust for comments. Another major development (opening on 14 June) is The Story at Mount Oswald and the Chair said he has been invited to some events there so hopes to develop further partnerships.

On the Trust’s Architectural Award, he reminded attendees that we gave the 2022 award to 173 Gilesgate for their modern extension and workshop but there are no strong contenders for a 2023 award. Any ideas for a contender for a meritable development completed in 2023 please send to chair@durhamcity.org. Trustees have started a discussion on an Environmental Commendation to highlight activity that responds to the climate crisis and are developing links with the University biodiversity and sustainability champions to work out potential types of candidates. Following a recent legacy from former Trustee Paul Beard’s estate, Trustees would like to use this new award to commemorate Paul’s environmental work.

Responses to DCC and national consultations are an increasing part of the Trustees’ work and over the last year we have responded to 9 Supplementary Planning Documents, DCC’s Housing Strategy, the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RÖWIP) 4 and others (see our website for details). Currently, Trustees are assessing the revised Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for Durham City.

Scrutiny of DCC’s weekly planning lists is still our main activity. Over the last year we have considered 331 applications, submitted 76 objections (a lot of work!), 12 letters of support and 15 letters of comments/concerns. Outcome figures don’t match exactly due to the time lag in decisions being made, but out of 50 applications we objected to in the last year, 20 were approved, 20 were refused and 10 withdrawn – so a good result. We are dealing with a delicate situation at St Leonard’s as there is an urgent need for rebuilding, but we have decided (with reluctance) to object in the hope of improving the design for the future. There is a lot of controversy particularly on the pre-emptive tree felling and transport issues.

The Chair stressed the importance of having a democratic voice in the planning process, especially as the main political parties are considering planning reforms to speed up developments, so it is key for the Trust to continue to promote the public voice as emphasised by Thomas Sharp. He reminded attendees of the quote from the back cover of *Cathedral City* headed “A Note to the Man in the Street” which concludes: “The thing we all have to realise is that planning in a democracy must either be something in the nature of a national pursuit, or nothing at all. For in a democracy, government and local authorities can make the really important moves only under the pressure of public opinion.”

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business. The Chair thanked all attendees for listening. and drew the AGM business to a close at 19.55.

CITY OF DURHAM TRUST		
Income & Expenditure Account 2024/25		
Accounts From 16/4/24 To 2/4/25		
	2024/25	2023/24
Opening Balance	17,469.44	15,865.19
Income		
Subscriptions & Donations	2,154.50	2,385.05
Publication Sales	1,250.00	1,349.55
Savings Account Interest	262.21	124.80
Legacies	500.00	0.00
Insurance Claim	0.00	1,870.38
	4,166.71	5,729.78
Expenditure		
Postage, Stationery and Secretarial	2,815.89	1,725.45
Subscriptions & Grants to Other Organisations	640.00	1,127.35
Meeting Expenses	670.00	510.00
Insurance	104.16	96.00
Annual Review, Bulletins, etc.	502.41	325.98
Governance	695.00	340.75
	5,427.46	4,125.53
Surplus/(Deficit)	-1,260.75	1,604.25
Closing Balance	16,208.69	17,469.44
Francis Pritchard Secretary & Treasurer 18/05/2025		

SEEKING MINUTES SECRETARY

After six years of exemplary service Jan Hutchinson is retiring for personal reasons. She will be greatly missed but it is an opportunity for someone else to experience the interesting monthly meetings of Trustees. We meet on the third Tuesday of each month (except in December when it is the second Tuesday), 7.00 pm to approximately 9.30 pm in Alington House.

The key responsibility is obviously to take the minutes of the meeting, but it is also helpful if you are able to help with the preparation of the agenda, particularly listing the planning applications that form the core of our discussions.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact John Lowe at chair@durhamcity.org or on 0191 386 2595.

SEEKING NEW TRUSTEES

We are fortunate to have a team of hard working and expert Trustees, but like any successful team we are always looking to strengthen that team. If you would like to contribute more directly to the work of the Trust, please contact chair@durhamcity.org or on 0191 386 2595 to discuss the opportunity. You will be made very welcome and enjoy growing into the role.

Similarly, Francis Pritchard is currently doing a great job of combining the roles of Secretary and Treasurer, but it would be reassuring to have someone in the wings to support him as an Assistant Secretary or Treasurer. Please get in touch if you are interested in contributing more directly to the work of the Trust.

BISHOP AUCKLAND

SATURDAY 27TH SEPT | 10:00 - 15:00

**Bishop Auckland Town Hall
& Bishop Auckland Market Place**

**The South West Durham
Heritage Festival heads
to Bishop Auckland
with a free programme
packed with local
history, hands on
activities and eye
catching displays.**



Inside the Town Hall you'll find engaging displays from heritage societies and clubs including the County Durham Forum for History and Heritage, alongside talks from experts delving into distinctive stories from across the area's past.

Families can take part in a free collaborative coat of arms craft activity led by artist Wade Forster, while outside the Northern Bygone Society brings their ever-popular classic car show to the Market Place.

Why not call by the Town Hall Cafe for lunch?

BISHOP AUCKLAND HERITAGE TALKS

Bishop Auckland Town Hall Free, Booking Not Required

10:30 Frances Wilson on The Story of Crimdon Dene

12:00 Harry Harbottle on A Miners Story by Greg McCormack

13:30 Glynn Wales on The Anglo Saxon Church at Escomb