**The Idsworth Church Friends Trust – AGM, 26th April 2023**

**At: St Hubert’s Church**

**Chairman’s Annual Report and Minutes of the Meeting**

**1.Welcome** and thank you to Rev Vickie Morgan & the church wardens, for allowing us to host the AGM here at St Hubert’s today. It is lovely to be in St Hubert’s for our AGM, after which there will be refreshments before our talk from Mr Mark Seaman of the Chichester & District Archaeology Society.

**Apologies:**  John and Jackie Butt

**2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last AGM** (togetherwith the Annual Report &Financial Statement and The Chairman’s Report) **, 27th April, 2022 at St Hubert’s** (which was published on the Friends website)

Proposed by: Mike Driver and seconded by: Simon Hartley

**3. Treasurer’s Review of the year**

* Last year, the Trust had switched to a new and more advanced and efficient system of accounting which has been of great benefit. Preparing the Annual Report & Financial Statement falls heavily on the shoulders of our Treasurer and, once again, I am indebted to Tracy Eggleston for all her tremendous hard work in producing this document and at a time of year when she is especially busy. Thank you, Tracy.

You will be able to access a pdf copy of the Annual Report & Financial Statement for the year ending March 31st 2023 on our website.

**4. Chairman’s review of the past Year**

**So what has been achieved over the past year, April 2022-March 2023?**

* In April of 2022, the **Quinquennial** **report on the state of St Hubert’s church building** was received from Simon Goddard of the Goddard Partnership, Bishops Waltham.

It has to be stated that the Quinquennial Report did not match the trustees’ original expectation for a detailed, in-depth, fully costed survey of the church, however, a number of meetings have taken place between the Friends Trust and the PCC over the past year. A four-phase plan of building repairs and conservation has now been drawn up by John Bannell, the PCC’s Buildings Officer, with the Goddard Partnership. As many of you will be aware, the PCC applied for a Faculty (or Planning Permission from the Diocese) for Phase 1 of the project in January and this was granted at the end of March. This Phase 1 project, the first of four phases, firstly includes important work on the rainwater goods, guttering, drainage etc in order to make the building water-tight and to get the water channelled away from the building. In addition, considerable focus will be given to the structure of the porch and entrance to the church. The Trust will be giving financial support for this work. John Bannell, has been working very hard indeed to resolve all the issues around tendering for the work and grant applications for matched funding. There are a considerable number of hoops through which he has to negotiate and the Friends Trust will stand by in support. At this stage, I am not in a position to say when the work will commence but we wish John Bannell well in his endeavours.

I must place on record my grateful thanks to the Rowlands Castle Association for their grant of £1000 towards the porch project and also to Cllr. Malcolm Johnson for his grant of £1000 from EHDC.

Last autumn it was decided by the PCC that, in line with Church of England guidance, that they would take on the main responsibility for the management of grant applications and the Friends Trust agreed to stand aside from this task. Following this change of emphasis, Mrs Liz Uren who for many years had chaired the Trust’s Grants Committee and had spear-headed the Trust’s successful grant application in acquiring an S106 Developers’ Grant of £50,000 in 2018, decided to stand down as a trustee. Liz had been a trustee for six and a half years and during that time made a highly significant contribution: her eye for detail and professional approach in her dealings with the highly competitive grant application process has been invaluable and I am very, very grateful to her for all her support, hard work and wise counsel.

With the shadow of Covid still hanging over us, the Trust adopted a somewhat cautious and gradual approach to re-developing our programme of events last year:

* ***Teas and Refreshments Afternoon:*** There was plenty to see and enjoy at the Friends’ Teas and Refreshments Afternoon held up at the church on Sat 21st May. On this occasion, we were joined by The Driftwood Troubadours in the person of Gordon Charlesworth and David Mitchell, whilst in the church, John Butt organised a wide range of music making. This included a number of pieces played by Deb Henning-Vears on the recently refurbished 1913 organ.

Tim Norris of the Hampshire Swift Society was in attendance and gave his audience a fascinating talk on the population of swifts which visit the Idsworth valley each summer. The whole event was very well supported and altogether £500 was raised.

* The other major ‘event’ of last year was the ***Musical Picnic*** held on 23 July. Once again, the weather was kind and all went ahead according to plan. Katie and her Crooked Swing Band made a welcome return visit to St Hubert’s and entertained a large and supportive audience of some 240 friends and families who brought picnics which they set up in the field adjacent to the south side of the church. It was a wonderful occasion and the proceeds from the event totalled some £1600.
* Sadly, the **Dark Skies Event** in February this year had to be cancelled: the River Lavant was in flood and there was no possible way to transport heavy telescopes up the hill to the church. A good deal of preparation and planning had been achieved with the Hampshire Astronomical Group and it is hoped to re-schedule this event in due course
* One of the less good events of the last year has continued to be the on-going hassles with Network Rail who have insisted on parking their very heavy mechanical equipment in the roadside lay-by. Not only has this caused great inconvenience to visitors wishing to park cars but this sorry state of affairs has caused further significant damage to the hard-standing area which is now very rutted and full of potholes. We have been assured by Network Rail that their works will soon be completed and that they will then ‘make good’ the lay-by area...rest-assured we will be on the case!
* ***The Margaret Lyle Legacy:*** Many of you will know that the Friends Trust was in receipt of a substantial legacy from the late Maggie Lyle in 2021.

The Legacy was donated in two forms:

1. A ‘Discretionary Gift’ of £100,000 was to be used to support fund raising and would provide the matched funding requirement.
2. £200,000 was to be invested in a ‘restrictive investment package’ to create future capital and income for St Hubert’s, invested with Brewin Dolphin.

The monies within the ‘Discretionary Gift’ have continued to be invested on an annual basis to gain some interest and will be used as ‘matched funding’ in future grant applications. The balance of the legacy has been invested for the longer term; the financial markets have not been kind to us over the last twelve months and the Trust has had to grasp an even greater understanding of patient investment for the long term. The market has been hit with an energy crisis, Ukranian war, interest rate rises, global slowdown and rises in the cost of living all taking their toll on investments. The current valuation of the ‘Restricted Fund’ is £175K which represents a fall of 15%. Following meetings with Brewin Dolphin, the Trustees took the decision to hold tight and to remain with this fund for the long term. Significant costs would be incurred to move to alternative funds. I am grateful to Simon Hartley for his work in liaising with Brewin Dolphin.

* ***Fund-*Raising:** The eventslike the Teas & Refreshments and The Musical Picnic do raise some useful funds but we all know that however many events we put on during the year, we will not be raising any really significant sums sufficient to conserve an ancient church building. (Last year our fund-raising returned a profit of £2,828). We have to ‘look outside the box’ and encourage our supporters of the Friends Trust to be generous towards us in other ways:

*Perhaps this can be achieved through a monthly subscription*

*Perhaps this can be done through a one-off donation...and you will find out more about this by visiting our website and pressing the ‘How You Can Help’ button.*

*In our Programme of Events leaflet you will also find a hard copy paper version of the subscriptions page.*

*Another avenue for raising funds which can be comparatively painless is through something called ‘Easygiving’. And at this stage, I will ask Mike Driver to say a word or two about how this system works...MD*

*Some of you may at some stage be interested in our Legacies scheme (details of which you will also find on our website) – or you may like to speak informally to one of our trustees*

*Another way of giving is with your time and talents: you may like to help and assist us at one of our events, or bake a cake for the teas and refreshments, or man the tea tent at the Art Exhibition, or assist us in putting up the marquee for the Musical Picnic...any offers of practical help and support would be much appreciated. We are a small team of trustees and would value some extra assistance at our events*

* ***Your support*** in all its forms is vital to a small charity such as ours. As I hope I have been able to outline to you this afternoon, exciting and challenging times lie ahead. If you feel that you might like to become more involved with the Trust, perhaps by joining the board of trustees, do please have a chat to me or any of our trustees about this opportunity – we would like to talk to you

***5. Forthcoming Events:*** the Trust has planned three further events for 2023, as follows:

* ***An Open Afternoon with Teas and Refreshments*** on Saturday, 20th May, 2.00-5.00pm. The occasion will also provide an opportunity for some music making in the church co-ordinated by John Butt. Meanwhile, outside The Driftwood Troubadours in the form of Gordon Charlesworth & Dave Mitchell will be giving us a rendition of some of their lovely folk songs. Two staff from the South Downs National Park , Nick Heasman and Anooshka Rawden will be in attendance throughout the afternoon and they will be talking about the significance of St Hubert’s Church, the Idsworth Valley, its History and Heritage in the South Downs National Park.
* ***Another Musical Picnic*** is on Sunday, 23rd July, 5.30pm. We welcome ‘Empty Frets’ a 5-piece Band from the New Forest playing Folk, Country and Blues. Tickets (adults: £10; children free) will go on sale at the Teas & Refreshments Afternoon on Sat 20 May. (There’s even a wet weather programme to ensure the event goes ahead!)
* In September, after a 5-year absence, we see the return of the **Art Exhibition** on Fri 8, Sat 9 and Sun 10 September. This will be co-ordinated by Deborah Richards and she already has some 25 local professional artists to be exhibiting their work
* The good news is that, thanks to a very generous donation, the Trust now has a Marquee which will make these outdoor events all the more manageable bearing in mind the vagaries of the English climate!
* It is important to remind ourselves that such events are very much part of our drive to promote Community Outreach and Engagement ...to encourage visitors to find out and experience more about the church, its history and heritage to as wide and varied a group of people as possible both in the local and wider community. To this end, a working group has been formed of PCC members with Friends Trustees to look at how to broaden and develop this approach
* No review of the year could be complete without mention of my very loyal and hard-working board of trustees. Despite the challenges of this past year, they have continued to give of their time, energies and their talents by contributing advice, guidance and support in so many different ways. Thank you!
* **6. AoB** – no matters were raised

The meeting finished at 2.35pm in time for refreshments before the talk by Mark Seaman of the Chichester and District Archaeology Society, entitled: *‘The History of Idsworth from the Prehistoric to the Medieval’.*