



**NORTHWOOD HOUSE CHARITABLE TRUST
REPORT TO COWES TOWN COUNCIL FROM THE CHAIR OF THE TRUST:
JANUARY 2011**

I thought Councillors might be interested to know that from 1st September 2010 until November 12th 2010 our only income was £5,000 per month from IWC as a licence fee to operate the car park plus £83 rent from a tenant (we are also entitled to housing benefit but we still have not received all of it despite making repeated claims). There were additional small items from the odd event or pre-payment and a small income from the Community Hall.

We had to spend £24,000 on insurance which emptied our capital resources before we started. Euro Car Parks took over the management of car parking in mid November. Naturally there were start-up costs – cleaning the Rotunda and approach road and white and yellow lining, signage etc. Revenue started coming in from the car park in November which after setup and management costs (and local opposition) gave us just over £1,000 for the first two weeks. Net income after all deductions for December 2010 will be about £7000.... (in spite of the very cold mid winter - £2,000 more than the IWC licence). We will have some revenue from renting the office space renovated following the Registrar's departure, but can only achieve low values. As you know, we are not in a position to agree a tenancy longer than 18 months to 2 years. We are discussing an arrangement with Cowes Heritage for them to occupy an office for 18 months.

We have just spent £10,000 on various roof repairs to prevent serious damage. We have prioritised expenditure relating to safety and legal requirements. A huge amount of improvement work on the interior has been carried out by enthusiastic and skilled volunteers who came forward. Materials and equipment to keep up the momentum have been bought from Trust funds. People have worked in the public rooms and in the kitchen area where conditions were unacceptable. Support from the men and women around Cowes has been tremendous.

To get the Events business off the ground we must have a legal kitchen (with relocated gas supply, installation of suitable extractor hoods and fans), provide a disabled loo and upgrade the inadequate toilet facilities. The existing heating in the public rooms does not work satisfactorily and urgently needs replacing to meet acceptable standards – estimated cost is about £7,000. We are testing heating in the Medina Room this evening. We have generated interest in events via marketing, but we need to spend £25,000 in pump-priming monies before the end of April or risk losing potential business and income from events. We have taken bookings for the National Apprenticeship Start-Up Scheme, Chamber of Commerce, antiques fair and several civil ceremonies and

wedding receptions. Enquiries are coming in daily, people are visiting and confirming their bookings. The appointment of All about Catering is having a very beneficial effect.

Meanwhile we have been meeting the litter and dog bin monthly costs of £350, the monthly Play Area costs of £150, grass cutting so far has cost in the region of £1000, leaf collecting has been voluntarily done (5 hours a day – about 750 bags so far, 40 today) and then there is electricity – including heating (estimated at £25,000 in a full year and we conserve it very carefully). The cost of security and caretaking is approximately £1,300 per month. The Knight Frank feasibility study will cost £7,500 (which we are entitled to recoup but it will affect cash flow). Going forward we will need £40,000–50,000 for additional funding to go for full consultation and potential development planning.

Our aim is to protect the integrity of the House, bring events to the public rooms to generate income, maintain and develop the Park as the Pleasure Gardens it was designed to be, and to generate income via the car parks to assist with funding the Trust.

Currently we are operating at a substantial deficit which we anticipate will increase and not start to turn round until later this year as car park revenues go up in the summer (due to increased usage) and as the Events business takes off (hopefully from the middle of the year).

If we were paying an Administrator we would be hopelessly in deficit but all management and services (such as legal) are being provided by trustees, advisers and volunteers at the moment although this cannot continue indefinitely. Any expenditure at all is very carefully prioritised and planned.

Your assistance in funding some aspects of the Park has been requested and discussed on several occasions, with costings. Additionally you have our accounts and an indication of income and expenditure since IWC handed over on 30 September.

I had a second meeting with the Charity Commission to discuss the way forward for the Trust and we will be consulting stakeholders this Spring.

Enquiries for events are followed up and confirmed bookings are being made. The Friends of Northwood House and Park are completely independent of the Charitable Trust, but are supportive. They are organising a Jazz evening on 8 March.

On Saturday night, 15 January, one of the lovely specimen plane trees was damaged when part of an adjacent tree broke away in the strong winds. On Sunday morning it was cordoned off, on Monday it was inspected by a tree consultant and safe disposal is being planned.

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