



an independent force for a **better Bristol**

Bristol Civic Society Annual Report and Financial Statement

For the year to end December 2024

The trustees of the Bristol Civic Society are:

Mike Bates – Secretary, Co-ordinator Events Group

Simon Birch – Stood down at the AGM May 2024.

Alex Dunn

Graham Egarr - Joined the Board May 2024.

Sue Ellis

Sandra Fryer – Chair, joined the Board January 2024.

Geoff Haslam – Joined the Board May 2024.

John Jones – Treasurer.

Alan Morris – Chair, Transport and Place Making Group.

Josh Nesfield – Joined the Board May 2024.

Stephen Wickham

This group of trustees operates as the 'Management Team'.

Our organisation.

The Bristol Civic Society is a membership organisation, which works with members and others interested in the future of Bristol.

The Management Team – this comprises all the trustees and meets every two months to oversee the running of the Civic Society.

The Civic Society is organised around the following groups:

Major Sites Group – meets every month and considers new development that would affect the future of Bristol both at pre-application stage and once the planning application has been submitted. The group members share drafting responses to Bristol City Council.

Members of the group make representations to the City Council and occasionally appear at the City Council's Planning Committee.

Transport and Place-Making Group - meets about every six weeks and campaigns for safer and better designed transport schemes and the creation of better public spaces across the city. It also looks at major masterplans and emerging strategies for areas of the city that are set to change.

Events Group – promotes a series of visits, special events and online meetings that enable members of the Civic Society to find out more about Bristol, including visiting notable projects and places in the city, and enabling members to find out more about key issues in the city

Blue Plaques Group – organises 'blue plaques' across the city that celebrate people who have contributed significantly to society, either in Bristol or nationally.

Design Awards – this group researches and promotes new buildings for a Civic Society Design Award.

Better Bristol - the Civic Society magazine which has a small editorial team

Highlights of activities during 2024 (and including up to June 2025)

The Civic Society has had a productive year with the Management Team and the key groups picking up a range of issues that affect the future of Bristol.

Early in the year the Management Team focused on the Society Business Plan and sought to reset how we do things, areas which might be done differently and what other skills the Management Team needs. As a result, we put a call out for assistance especially with communications...and we are still looking! This year we have considered how best to influence the new administration at the City Council and to ensure our voice is heard on key issues affecting Bristol. We also coordinated a response and contributions to the Bristol Local Plan Inquiry which was led by three government inspectors who were keen to understand the Council's plans for growth to meet the housing and employment needs of the city.

The **Events Group** ran 32 events and summer and winter socials, including the following;

- 16 sell-out visits and walks to special places in Bristol
- 3 well-attended live events/debates, at the Catholic Cathedral
- 11 virtual talks or debates, often with more than 100 people signed up; including great debates on The Galleries redevelopment, Temple Quarter and Western Harbour.

Thanks to everyone who helped make these events so successful.

The **Major Sites Group** met nearly every month to consider development on the city. The group made 32 reports on major sites and planning issues, of which 26 were site development proposals, 1 was national planning policy, 1 was transport, 4 were area plans. The area plans were considered by both TPM and MSG groups.

The group is very concerned about the number of very tall buildings coming forward and the changing character of the city centre and immediate surrounding areas. The rush of sites coming forward for purpose-built student accommodation has been of great concern especially since this has been seen to take precedence over the development of new homes that the city desperately needs.

The Transport and Place Making Group met 8 times and responded to major issues in the city including

- Working with the Major Sites Group, responded to two consultations on Western Harbour
- Made representations at the Bristol Local Plan Inquiry with regard to a lack of a tall buildings policy, too much purpose built student accommodation at the expense of new homes, and loss of employment space in inner central Bristol
- Met the Council's team of consultants who were working on a new Public Realm Strategy for Broadmead.
- Lobbied for changes to the plans for Redcliffe Way
- Lobbied to see improvements to the City Centre Promenade repairs
- Responded to the consultation on city centre transport proposals

Blue Plaques – this panel was formed ten years ago in order to take over the facilitation of blue plaques from the city council.

- Since then, we have dealt with 43 plaques. We unveiled three this year and they could not have been more diverse: they commemorated a brave soldier, an inspirational church leader and a piece of moon rock!
- We are always keen to hear from members about potential candidates and locations for a plaque.

Better Bristol - Better Bristol is published twice a year, is widely circulated and is an important shop window for Bristol Civic Society.

The primary content of the magazine is about the built environment, transport and architecture. But we have widened it to other topics that our members are interested in, including local history, nostalgia and the arts generally. We also review new books on local issues. Informal feedback indicates that Better Bristol hits the spot and is a respected ambassador for Bristol Civic Society. New members frequently state that they were motivated to join Bristol Civic Society having seen the magazine.

We are always looking for contributions. If you have an idea for an article do get in touch with the editor.

Design Awards - The Civic Society has been presenting Design Awards (formerly called Environmental Awards) since at least 1990. Over the past 35 years more than 200 plaques have marked significant new developments in the City. Annual numbers have varied greatly, from a maximum of 9 in 1992 to as few as 3 in recent years. In 2024 there were 4 awards including Bristol Beacon and Easton Jamia Mosque. The Judging Panel will be refreshed for 2026. If you would like to join this panel do please get in touch.

Looking ahead...

During the year, the Management Team considered the case for changing the legal status of the Society from an unincorporated association to a charitable incorporated organisation, which led to the recommendation to be placed before the Annual General Meeting in June 2025

Bristol is a changing city. An increasingly diverse city, Bristol is facing significant pressures in terms of housing, employment, quality of the environment and development. The Events Group has decided to hold a series of events to find out more about the key issues facing Bristol and what the potential solutions are and how we can help.

The Civic Society is concerned about Ashton Court Mansion and its setting in Ashton Park. We deeply regret that the house has been allowed to fall into such disrepair that it is now on the 'building at risk' register. We have opened a conversation with Bristol City Council to understand what plans they have for this wonderful building.

In 2025, the Civic Society was pleased to receive a legacy from the closing funds of the Bristol Visual and Environmental Trust (set up by Dorothy Brown) to be spent on our work around Ashton Court Mansion.

Bristol Civic Society have linked with Sustainable Westbury-on-Trym to build a network of 'Keep it Clean' litter pickers across Bristol whilst also promoting BCS. There are 60 people who keep every street in Westbury clean. BCS have offered financial support and initially SusWoT will move into Southmead and then Henbury. In return SusWoT will promote BCS in the leaflet they deliver to all houses as they recruit litter pickers. SusWoT have found that people are willing to keep their own street clean once it is properly cleaned. The BCS money will pay for the equipment volunteers need. SusWoT have been in touch with Councillors at the City Council who fully support this initiative.

Above all, the Civic Society plans to continue support positive planning and development in Bristol that ensures quality place making and new buildings to create a great City which we can all be proud of.

Accounts Report for 2024

Main Income & Expenditure Account

Income	2024	2023
Members	13,695.35	13,230.29
Donations	4,606.94	189.00
Interest Received	1,636.44	982.76
Design Awards	-	1,080.00
Events	2,141.00	1,992.00
Total	22,079.73	17,474.05
Expenditure		
Better Bristol	5,216.93	5,205.95
Society Organisation	3,169.68	4,019.29
Working Groups	6,071.39	1,408.25
Design Awards	1,647.60	1,110.10
Events	1,070.96	1,446.64
Total	17,176.56	13,190.23
Surplus / (Deficit)	4,903.17	4,283.82

Project Account

	2024	2023
Income	927.00	205.00
Expenditure	927.00	705.00
Surplus / (Deficit)	-	(500.00)

Cash Funds

Balances Brought Forward	54,003.52
Plus Surplus / Less (Deficit)	4,903.17
Balance 31st December 2024	58,906.69
Represented by	
Bank & PayPal Accounts	58,906.69
Balance 31st December 2024	58,906.69
Unrestricted Funds	55,906.69
Restricted Funds	3,000.00
Balance 31st December 2024	58,906.69

Assets Register

Asset	Purchase Date	Price	Estimated Value
Projector	May-23	497.91	250.00

Cash Funds

Balances Brought Forward	0.00
Plus Surplus / Less (Deficit)	0.00
Balance 31st December 2024	0.00
Represented by	
Bank Accounts	0.00
Balance 31st December 2024	0.00

Overall income increased by £4.600, broadly increases in Membership £500, Interest £700 and Donations £4,400 partially offset by Design Awards (£1,100) for which we did not have sponsorship. Within Donations £3,000 came from the winding up of the Dorothy Brown Trust which is to be spent on support for Ashton Court and a legacy of £900 from the Grenfell-Shaw Trust. On the cost side, the big movement was an increase in Working Groups where £4,000 was spent on legal fees regarding a possible Judicial Review on the Premier Inn site and £1,200 on Blue Plaques. With regard to the running costs of the Society Organisation, the cost of the AGM reduced by £1,000. Overall the society had a surplus of £4,900 increasing cash balances to £58,900.

At year end the Project Account balance was nil having received donations and paid for the Fred Room VC plaque.

John Jones, Honorary Treasurer,

Brenda McLennan, Honorary Auditor