

## **Appendix 1 – Draft Annual Report for Keats House Charity 2020/21 [April – September 2020 update]**

### **1 Objectives and Activities**

#### **The Charity's origin**

In 1921, a body called the Keats Memorial House Committee appealed to the public for funds to purchase the property and archive from the then private owners to save it from being destroyed or dissipated, and in order to preserve John Keats' former home in which most of the poet's finest work was written. The public appeal was successful, and the property was acquired and vested in the, then, Corporation of Hampstead "as a permanent trust to be restored and equipped with relics of the poet and to be maintained in perpetuity as a Keats Museum and a live memorial to his genius, a shrine of pilgrimage for his worldwide admirers and a literary meeting place and centre". Camden Borough Council became the successors of the former Corporation of Hampstead on 1 April 1965, pursuant to the London Government Act 1963.

Keats House was registered as a charity in March 1996. The City of London Corporation acquired ownership of the land and buildings and responsibility for the administration and management of Keats House with effect from 1 January 1997.

The object of the Charity is:

'to preserve and maintain and restore for the education and benefit of the public the land with the buildings known as Keats House as a museum and live memorial to John Keats and as a literary meeting place and centre.'

The Charity shall first defray out of the income of the Charity the cost of maintaining the property (including the repair and insurance of any buildings thereon) and all other charges and outgoings payable in respect thereof and all the proper costs, charges and expenses of and incidental to the administration and management of the Charity.

#### **Explanation of Aims and objectives for the year including the changes or differences it seeks to make through its activities**

The activities of the Keats House charity are guided by its Charitable Object as stated above and developed within the framework of the City Corporation's Corporate Plan and the Open Spaces Department's Business Plan. Our activities also support the City Corporations' Cultural Strategy and the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy 2018 – 28, as well as the wider aims of heritage sector organisations such as Arts Council England, the Heritage Lottery Fund and The National Archives.

The City of London Corporation's Corporate Plan 2018 – 23 states that:

Our vision

The City of London Corporation is the governing body of the Square Mile dedicated to a vibrant and thriving City, supporting a diverse and sustainable London with a globally-successful UK.

We aim to...

- Contribute to a flourishing society
- Support a thriving economy
- Shape outstanding environments

The Open Spaces Department's overarching vision is that:

'We enrich people's lives by providing access to ecologically diverse green spaces and outstanding heritage assets.'

The provision of a wide range of services at Keats House helps the Department achieve its three strategic objectives:

- A. Open Spaces and historic sites are thriving and accessible
- B. Spaces enrich people's lives
- C. Business practices are responsible and sustainable.

and nine of the twelve outcomes, in particular:

- Our open spaces, heritage and cultural assets are protected, conserved and enhanced
- Nature, heritage and place are valued and understood
- People feel welcome and included
- People discover, learn and develop
- Our staff and volunteers are motivated, empowered, engaged and supported

The contribution which Keats House makes towards these is detailed below.

## **2 Achievements and Performance**

### **Achievement to date against the key priorities for 2020/21:**

#### **1. Delivering access and building maintenance projects at Keats House**

In 2018/19 plans were progressed to put in place a sustainable cyclical works programme to preserve and maintain Keats House (Grade I listed) and Ten Keats Grove (Grade II listed). These arose from the overall condition survey of Keats House and Ten Keats Grove conducted in 2017/18. As a result a number of projects have been completed and prioritised to ensure Keats House and Ten Keats Grove can continue to be accessed and enjoyed by future generations.

The major project to refurbish the exterior of Keats House, which was led by the City Surveyor's Department had been largely completed prior to the

closure of the site. During the period of closure, a project commenced to make safe the former oil store, which serves as a retainer support to the boundary wall at the rear of the property and was in a dilapidated condition. This has now been completed resulting in a safe and more watertight structure.

LB Camden's Planning Department have determined in favour of the proposals as submitted to improve access to the premises through new pathways, subtle, ground-level lighting to pathways for safety reasons and the refurbishment of the external toilets. These works are funded by LB Camden's Community Infrastructure Levy grants programme and are currently being progressed with the City Surveyor's Department. Planning and listed building consent were also granted for the proposed new gates, the funding for which had been identified from the Charitable Reserves as a Keats200 legacy project. Proposals to replace the aged, wooded boundary fence to the front of the property are currently being scoped with advice from heritage and planning consultants.

The gardens, which form an essential and much-loved aspect of the heritage site, continue to be maintained by Open Spaces Officers from the Golders Hill Park Team and this work was continued throughout the period of lockdown, providing an additional layer of staff visibility and security at the site while it was closed to the public. Officers also supervise the work of a dedicated team of 'Heath Hands' volunteers who, although initially 'locked-down', resumed activities at the site from Wednesday 29 July 2020.

## **2. Implementing the Keats House Activities Plan for 2020/21, including delivering the Keats200 bicentenary programme**

The Keats200 programme, which launched on 1 December 2018, has continued in 2020/21, despite the impact of COVID-19 restrictions. Exhibitions and events celebrating specific events in Keats' life were delivered online through the City Corporation's #OurCityTogether initiative, and projects supporting the wider outcomes of the programme have been prioritised and progressed where possible.

On 5 February 2020, our 'Keats and Consumption' exhibition opened to the public. With the closure of the house and cancellation of the spring / summer events programme as from Wednesday 18 March 2020, this exhibition was only seen by some 1,000 people. As, at that time, the reopening date was not known, it was decided to leave that exhibition in situ and plan for the subsequent events and exhibitions programme to be delivered online where possible.

July 2020, marked the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *Lamia etc* and an exhibition, 'Keats's last book: a virtual journey' was developed and published at [www.ourcitytogether.london](http://www.ourcitytogether.london). The online exhibition, comprising of regularly published articles looking at particular aspects of the work, such as its publication, literary content, themes and critical reception, was accompanied by a virtual events programme featuring expert talks and a

commissioned series of readings and original responses to the poems, performed by the Keats House Poets. Our Artist in Residence, who is drawing inspiration from the garden at Keats House and Hampstead Heath, also responded to the themes present in Keats's last published poems.

The live interpretation events have proved a popular and memorable feature of the Keats200 programme and these have continued to be delivered through recorded, rather than live, events. A sequence of letters between Keats and his circle of friends has been recorded in audio format and a special event, depicting the parting of Keats and Fanny Brawne and his departure from Wentworth Place, was filmed at the house on Sunday 13 September 2020 - the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the day he left – and is now available online.

Following the departure of Keats from Wentworth Place, Keats House are marking Keats's 'Journey to Italy' with an online article featuring readings by the Keats House Poetry Ambassadors, prior to handing over the continuation of the Keats200 bicentenary programme, to The Keats-Shelley Memorial Association, who support the Keats-Shelley House in Rome. We will continue to work with them, the Keats Foundation and other partners to celebrate the life, works and legacy of Keats, during the bicentenary of his time living at Wentworth Place, the period leading up to his death in Rome in 1821 and beyond.

Unfortunately, much of our partnership work has been necessarily curtailed by COVID-19 and it was not possible to hold the Keats Foundation's annual conference in May this year, although we continue to work with the Remembrancers Office to support a Corporate event, with a keynote speech by Professor Nicholas Roe, Chair of the Keats Foundation and Keats's latest biographer, marking the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Keats's death in February 2021.

One of the earliest casualties of the initial lockdown were the planned performances of 'Writ in Water', a theatre performance piece devised by Chickenshed Theatre's Young Company members. Over 20 young people aged 14 – 19 years old, were involved in devising this piece, which it is hoped can still be performed at a future date. The Principal Curator would like to express their grateful thanks to Chickenshed Theatre and Young Company members, for their commitment, creativity and understanding of the situation. We look forward to a time when we can work together again to tell the story of Keats's life to our respective audiences.

Between April and September 2020, it has not been possible to deliver any live events from Keats House, although Officers have facilitated Keats Community Library to deliver their annual garden party on Saturday 29 August 2020, as well as a small number of events and sessions for the local community.

Our social media channels have helped us remain connected to our audiences, engaging them with the Keats200 bicentenary despite the suspension of our live events programme. As at September 2020, Keats

House had over 6,100 followers on Twitter, more than 4,000 on Facebook and over 2,100 on Instagram, our fastest growing social media channel. All Officers contributed to an increase in our online and social media outputs throughout lockdown, and the 'New Museum School' trainee further developed our networks and audience engagement activities, particularly through social media.

While taught sessions for schools at the house are currently suspended, the part time Learning Officer was able to deliver the annual Summer School programme online. Some 33 students and 8 teachers from nine different schools, took part in a programme of creative writing workshops, activities and readings. The programme included virtual sessions led by published poets, with Poet in Residence Dean Atta focusing on modern poetry, and Frances Hardinge looking at prose and story-telling. By the end of the final day's virtual open mic sessions, a total of 110 instances of engagement with the arts for young people and 11 teacher enrichment days were recorded over the four-day period.

Following the success of the virtual Summer School, Keats House continues to work with its CultureMile Learning partners, specifically to develop a virtual 'dual site visits' offer and pilot online taught sessions for school groups during the autumn term with a view to reinstating this small income stream.

Keats House fulfilled their commitment to the 'New Museum School' trainee programme led by Culture&, with the second trainee completing their placement and gaining a Level 3 Diploma in Cultural Heritage by the end of September. It is a testament to the quality of the programme and the trainee cohort, that the placements were completed against the circumstances created by the pandemic, with the trainee hosted by Keats House taking responsibility for engaging audiences through social media and our online outputs throughout lockdown, notably working with our Keats House Poets and, volunteer, Poetry Ambassadors to deliver poetry readings online.

Continuing our support for creating new partnerships and pathways into the cultural sector, Keats House have worked with Roehampton University to recruit a three-year doctoral research student to work with the collections held at Keats House and London Metropolitan Archives. This programme is funded through the Techne Doctoral Training Programme and will commence in October 2020.

Prior to lockdown, Keats House was open to the public Wednesday to Sunday, 11am – 5pm. On Tuesday 17 March 2020, a decision was taken to close the site completely in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. Keats House and garden, including Ten Keats Grove and Keats Community Library, were closed to the public until the lifting of restrictions. During this period, City Corporation Officers visited the site each week to maintain building security and safety and provide essential contractor access, and this was supported by Trustees of Keats Community Library who have a local presence.

With the lifting of restrictions on heritage and community venues under Step 3 of the UK Government's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy, Keats House and

Keats Community Library became eligible to reopen as from 4 July 2020 and the proposal to reopen with specific measures, including a COVID-19 Secure risk assessment and the award of VisitEngland's 'We're Good to Go' quality assurance mark, was approved under urgency by the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee on 26 June 2020.

The key measures put in place to ensure that the entire site at 10 Keats Grove remain COVID-19 Secure are: a separation of services operating at the property, with Keats House and Keats Community Library opening on discrete days; use of the garden and external toilets being restricted to Keats House ticket holders only; installation of social distancing signage and hand sanitiser stations; a requirement to book and pay for tickets to Keats House in advance; strict limits on the numbers visiting; enhanced cleaning regimes; and, in the case of Keats House, the formation of workforce 'bubbles'.

With these measures in place, Keats Community Library (KCL) reopened from Saturday 18 July with Keats House following on Sunday 26 July 2020. Since then, KCL have maintained opening on Tuesdays and Saturdays, 10am – 6pm, which constitutes approximately one third of their pre-COVID, regular opening hours.

Keats House reopened to the public on Sunday 26 July, typically opening two days per week in August, with an additional day per week from mid-September. From early September, a small number of volunteer tour guides resumed activity, by providing introductions to Keats and Keats House for our visitors.

Between Sunday 26 July and Wednesday 30 September 2020, the house was open to the public on 22 days in order to ensure a COVID-19 Secure site, including maintaining workforce 'bubbles'. This resulted in 85, one-hour visitor sessions with potential capacity for 510 visitors, as three sessions were not offered to the public due to staff training and only six people can visit per session in order to maintain social distancing within the house. During that period, 333 individuals actually attended Keats House, which represents 65% of potential capacity. 14% of those who had booked a ticket and were expected to attend on the morning of their session resulted in a 'no show'.

For comparison, the figures for the equivalent period in 2019 were 3,495 visitors, with 7,708 visitors between April and September 2019.

The number of people visiting Keats House in the first and second quarter of 2020/21, was therefore down by 96% on previous year, with a corresponding fall in income from admissions and shop sales. Since reopening, visitors to the house are approximately 10% of previous levels.

The shop has been closed since 18 March 2020, initially due to lockdown then, due to the lack of contactless payment and a failure of the till system. This issue has been raised and escalated with IT Support teams who, to date, have been unable to resolve the issues. The net income target for the shop is -£15,000 which is calculated at year end to allow for stock held. As at September 2020, there were no shop sales for the first six months of the year, compared to £14,200 for the same period in 2019.

The private hire offer is currently restricted by the need to follow UK Government guidelines, maintain COVID-19 Secure conditions at the site and

the uncertain outlook. One regular hirer, which previously accounted for c. 40 sessions with a value of c. £4,000 / year, has suspended activity with no indication of a return, and there is very little demand for ad hoc bookings. Similarly, it has not been possible to achieve any income to date from events or school group sessions as these continue to be suspended. In addition, the licence for Keats Community Library to occupy Ten Keats Grove, which contributes towards our income, expired on 19 April 2020 and is currently in the hands of the City Surveyors Department to renegotiate with the current licensees, who are operating from the site in the meantime.

As a condition of the premises licence for 10 Keats Grove, Keats House Consultative Committee will receive a twice-yearly report of licensable events held at the House, to ensure that the operating schedule and conditions were being upheld. To report that no licensable activities have taken place at the premises in the period April – September 2020. The Premises Licence was renewed for the period to 11 September 2021 at a cost of £180.00.

### **3. Producing and implementing the Keats House Management Plan, 2020-23**

While an Activities Plan for 2020/21 had been produced prior to lockdown (and is attached as Appendix 2 of this report), the development of a three year forward plan for Keats House, which is required as part of the City Corporation's documentation framework and for our Museum Accreditation return, has been severely delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Principal Curator proposes that this should now be consulted on during autumn / winter 2020, with a view to producing a three year forward plan for Member consultation and approval in spring 2021.

As a result of the above activities, the Trustee has had due regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance when setting objectives and planning activities.

### **[Proposed] Plans for Future Periods**

The overarching priorities which will guide all of our objectives and activities from April 2021 are:

- Deliver access improvement projects at Keats House
- Implement Keats House Activities Plan for 2021/22
- Develop a three year Management Plan for Keats House, to ensure the future sustainability of the Keats House Charity and its operating model.

### **KPIs for 2020/21**

1. **To increase visitor numbers to Keats House by 3%.** April – September 2020 outturn: 333. [-96% based on 2019/20 outturn for same period: 7,708.]
2. **Improve Visit England Annual Quality Attraction Assessment Scheme score at Keats House.** Not yet available. [2019/20 score: 82%]

3. **Achieve budgeted income and expenditure targets for Keats House Charity.** Total net expenditure / income for April – September 2020 is £137,645, or 69% of the net budget for the year. The predicted outturn for the year is currently £273,378, representing an overspend of £74,378, which is almost solely attributable to loss of income.