

## **Appendix 1 – [Draft] Annual Report for Keats House Charity 2023/24**

### **Origins and Objectives of the Charity**

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's 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 objective 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.

The Trustee has due regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance when setting objectives and planning activities.

### **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 2018-23 and the Environment Department's Business Plan 2023/24. Our activities also support the City Corporation's Education, Cultural & Creative Learning and Skills Strategies and the Natural Environment Division's strategic framework, 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

Keats House aims to support the Environment Department to Shape Sustainable Future Environments through its Primary and Supporting Aims and Objectives, particularly:

- Provide excellent frontline services
- Deliver key strategies (climate action and volunteering)
- Support sustainable growth, vibrancy, heritage and culture
- Provide thriving, biodiverse, relevant spaces
- Financial, Information and Talent Management, Innovation, Engagement & Collaboration and inclusivity.

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

## **Achievements and Performance**

### **Achievement against the key priorities for 2023/24:**

#### **1. Implement projects and activities identified in the Keats House Divisional Plan and Activities Plan identified for delivery in 2023/24**

Throughout 2023/24, Keats House was open to the public on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays, 11am – 1pm and 2 – 4 (in autumn / winter) or 5pm (in spring / summer).

The focus of our programming throughout the year supported the 'Young Romantics in the City' exhibition, which opened to the public in February 2023. This externally funded partnership project with Cardiff University explored the diversity of writers and writing in the Romantic period through the inter-connected themes of politics, class, gender and race. These were further explored through changing displays featuring: items from the Keats House collections, supported by our colleagues at London Metropolitan Archives; the first display in this country of the British Library's first-edition copy of 'The Woman of Colour'; and a selection of pamphlets featuring popular ballads in Welsh and English from the special collections of Cardiff University. Keats House are extremely grateful for the ongoing support of Dr Anna Mercer,

lecturer in English Literature (Romanticism), for her ongoing contribution to Keats House's public engagement programme, which was substantially supported in 2023/24 by Cardiff University.

As part of the 'Young Romantics in the City' and our regular event programmes, Keats House delivered 36 different events, which were attended by 878 people in 2023/24. Highlights of the programme included: an event for Earth Day as part of 'The Wild Escape' national initiative, which was delivered in partnership with Hampstead School of Art; live interpretation featuring our new Mary Shelley and Fanny Keats characters, as well as repeat events with our Keats and Coleridge characters; two performances by Saudha Bangla music and arts; three creative writing workshops led by City Lit; eight free, themed poetry readings by the Keats House Poetry Ambassadors; and events targeted at specific audiences, including a special afternoon opening of the house for under 5s and their carers.

As well as our own programme, Keats House officers supported the work of partner and stakeholder organisations, through a number of projects and initiatives, including: four events in Keats House garden for Hampstead Summer Festival 2023; the inclusion of Keats's facsimile of Shakespeare's First Folio in the Heritage Gallery display at Guildhall for the Folio400 celebrations; and, again working with colleagues at LMA, to display their 'Unforgotten Lives' outdoor exhibition at Hampstead Heath in August and September.

Our social media following remained relatively constant over the past 12 months, despite reduced capacity to create content and, sometimes negative, changes in the platforms themselves. As at March 2024, Keats House had 6.9k followers on Twitter (0% growth on March 2023), 4.2k on Facebook (2%), and 3.7k on Instagram, which at +9% remains our fastest growing and most engaged virtual audience. Our main campaigns for the year were #YoungRomantics and the ongoing project to publish online the Fanny Brawn to Fanny Keats letters on the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of them being written, with three letters, with supporting research, articles and social media posted in the past 12 months. Regular newsletter to our c. 3,500 subscribers helps promote our offer and drive visits to our Corporate web pages, which are seen by c. 10,000 active users per quarter.

We have continued to increase engagement with schools, offering poetry, drama and creative writing sessions to teachers and students in formal education and also to home-schooled groups. In addition to these subject focussed taught sessions, Keats House was involved in delivering three special learning projects, funded by the City Corporation's Education Strategy Unit through their Cultural & Creative Learning Grants. Working alongside London Metropolitan Archives we continued our work with 'Poetry Versus Colonialism', researching and revealing the colonial histories of our collections. This resulted in the 'Word on the Street' festival – a programme of workshops and events for students, trainee teachers, cultural sector workers and established and emerging young poets, who produced a series of short films. We continued to work with Speakers Trust and four other cultural partner venues to deliver 'Culturally Speaking', which encourages confidence and oracy skills in students in Year 8, and were one of the key partner venues

for the Young City Poets programme, which inspires young people to write and perform poetry through engagement with practising poets.

Through this broader offer, we delivered a total of 48 taught sessions, to 8 primary and 35 secondary groups and 1 HE group, with a total of 949 students and a further 131 accompanying adults being directly engaged with our offer.

In July, the twelfth Keats House Creative Writing summer school took place at the house, with workshops by poet Arji Manuelpillai and novelist Catriona Ward. 30 students from 6 London secondary schools took part, leading to a total of 110 instances of engagement over the four days. The week was very successful, and students' writing from it was collected in an anthology which was distributed to the participating schools.

Keats House volunteers continued to support our work by providing afternoon tours for visitors and free themed poetry readings on the second Sunday of most months, including a reading of 'The Eve of St Agnes' at Guildhall Art Gallery in January. We also benefitted from the time of one post-graduate volunteer who has helped welcome visitors to the house when their studies allowed. As always, we would like to send our grateful thanks to all our volunteers for their continued support for the Charity and its activities.

Unfortunately, our Roehampton University doctoral research student placement has not delivered the expected outputs in 2023/24, but it is hoped that this workstream may resume and conclude by March 2025.

In 2023/24, Keats House opened to the public on 200 days, with a total of 7,338 recorded visits to the house. For comparison, 11,755 people visited Keats House in 2019/20 and 5,149 in 2022/23. The number of people visiting Keats House has therefore increased by 142% on the previous year but remains at only 63% of pre-pandemic levels.

Income from admissions, shop sales and private hires has risen along with the increase in numbers visiting the house. It has not yet been possible to achieve the levels of income previously derived from admissions, shop sales, events hires or events prior to the pandemic, although it is anticipated that a full recovery will be achieved by 2025/26.

As a condition of the premises licence for 10 Keats Grove, Keats House Consultative Committee receive a twice-yearly report of licensable events held at the House, to ensure that the operating schedule and conditions are being upheld. To report that no activities involving the sale of alcohol took place in 2023/24 under Keats House's premises licence. As referred to above, events were delivered from the premises for Hampstead Summer Festival which involved the sale of alcohol and other licensable activities under TENs obtained by the organisers. Complimentary drinks were also served at 13, largely partner funded, events and music was performed at two events. Although these did not involve the sale of alcohol they are reported here for completeness. The Premises Licence for 10 Keats Grove was renewed for the period to 11 September 2023 at a cost of £180.00.

## **2. Deliver maintenance and access improvement projects at Keats House**

Keats House officers have continued to work with City Surveyor's, consultant architects and the London Borough of Camden's Planning Department to progress projects to conserve and enhance Keats House.

While planning and listed building consent have already been granted for the proposed new visitor entrance, the cost and timescale for this to be completed has yet to be agreed with City Surveyors. A connected project, to replace the aged, wooden boundary fence to the front of the property, has yet to achieve the required planning and listed building consents. Possible sources of funding for these projects are City Corporation facilities maintenance budgets, the Keats House charity's reserve and London Borough of Camden's Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy fund, and they are currently being costed by the City Surveyor's Department to inform funding applications and project delivery.

London Borough of Camden's Planning Department have approved the plans for the replacement / new fire and intruder alarm systems for both buildings and an upgraded CCTV system for Keats House, which can now be completed in 2024/25.

In 2023/24, a dedicated team of 'Heath Hands' volunteers working with officers from the Golders Hill Park team contributed their time and expertise to the garden. During weekly sessions, they undertook a combination of routine maintenance, seasonal planting and thoughtful enhancements to the beds and borders and we are grateful for their commitment to the garden, which is enjoyed by visitors, site users and local residents alike.

## **3. Develop a three-year Management Plan for Keats House, to ensure the future sustainability of the Keats House Charity and its operating model**

Following the recent launch of the City Corporation's Corporate Plan 2024-29 and the Natural Environment Division's new strategic framework, a draft Keats House Activities Plan for 2024/25 will be presented to the City Corporation's Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee in summer. The development of a detailed three to five-year forward plan for Keats House, which is required as part of the City Corporation's documentation framework and for our Museum Accreditation return will be developed in 2024/25, to support the new Corporate Plan and Departmental priorities for 2024-29. This will be submitted to Members as our Trustees for consultation and approval, before being presented as part of our Museum Accreditation return, now expected in late 2024 or early 2025.

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.

## **Plans for Future Periods**

The overarching priorities which will guide all of our objectives and activities from April 2024 are:

- Implement projects and activities identified in the Keats House Activities Plan for delivery in 2024/25 onwards
- Deliver maintenance and access improvement projects at Keats House
- Develop a 2024-29 Management Plan for Keats House, to ensure the future sustainability of the Keats House Charity and its operating model.