

Appendix 2 – [Draft] Keats House Achievements and Performance 2024/25

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 2024-29 and the Environment Department's Business Plan 2024/25. Our activities also support the City Corporation's Education Strategy 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 2024-29 states that:

Our mission

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.

This mission is delivered and measured through six outcomes:

- Diverse Engaged Communities
- Dynamic Economic Growth
- Vibrant Thriving Destination
- Providing Excellent Services
- Flourishing Public Spaces
- Leading Sustainable Environment

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 2024/25:

1. Implement projects and activities identified in the Keats House Divisional Plan and Activities Plan identified for delivery in 2024/25

Throughout 2024/25, Keats House was generally open to the public on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays, 11am – 1pm and 2 – 5pm. A total of 7,664 people visited Keats House during the year, and we continue to attract visitors from London, the UK and all over the world who report high levels of visitor satisfaction and enjoyment.

The focus of our programming throughout the year supported the ‘Hidden Histories of Keats House’ exhibition, which opened to the public in May 2024. The exhibition features the stories of those people who lived in the house after Keats left and before it became a museum in the 1920s. Changing displays featuring items from the collections related to those individual’s histories were developed in partnership with The London Archives (formerly London Metropolitan Archives).

To support the exhibition and as part of our year-round programme, 42 different events, attended by over one thousand people, were delivered in

2024/25. Highlights of the programme included: live interpretation events featuring our new Miss Chester and Fanny Keats characters and repeat events with Fanny Brawne; two performances by Saudha Bangla music and arts; three days of creative writing workshops led by City Lit; an inaugural 'Literary Salon' for The Indie Press Network; nine themed poetry readings by the Keats House Poetry Ambassadors; a harp recital in partnership with Guildhall School of Music & Drama; a Regency Dance workshop; and events targeted at specific audiences, including special openings of the house and events for under 5s and their carers.

Keats House hosted two major conferences in 2024. The annual Keats Foundation conference took place in May and the Shelley Conference 2024 in June. These multi-day conferences are attended by delegates from academic institutions around the world, helping promote Keats House and our collections to specialist audiences and researchers. The organisers of the Shelley Conference co-curated a special display of Shelley related items from our collections for the summer programme.

As well as our own programme, Keats House officers supported the Hampstead Summer Festival team to deliver their annual Art Fair, Family Garden Party and outdoor theatre events, which continue to be popular and help maintain and promote Keats House as part of its local community.

Keats House has seen an increased number of school visits this year, with a total of 60 visits from 52 schools and educational groups, including 6 at primary level, 45 at secondary and one FE group. Between April 2024 and March 2025, 1,112 students in total have attended our taught school workshops accompanied by 169 adults.

In addition, 36 students from 5 secondary schools attended our free Creative Writing Summer School week in July 2024, on the theme of 'The Outer Limits', with workshops run by novelist Lauren Beukes and poet and musician Antosh Wojcik. This event led to a total of 133 instances of engagement over the four days and a strong and varied production of individual work by students, some of which has been collected in an online anthology which was sent to participating schools.

Keats House continues to collaborate with other City of London Cultural Partner Venues to devise and deliver special learning projects, supported through the City of London Corporation's Cultural & Creative Learning Fund. This year we have continued our partnership with the National Literacy's Trust's 'Young City Poets' project, running five poetry-planning workshops for primary and secondary groups from high pupil premium schools. Students then worked with poet Laila Sumpton to complete their work for a final performance. One of these sessions was offered to a group from a special school for autistic students and we hope to strengthen our offer for special educational needs and disability (SEND) students and schools in future.

We also continued to work with Speakers Trust and three other cultural venues – including new partner Dr Johnson's House – to deliver 'Culturally Speaking', building the confidence and oracy skills of students in Year 8.

Our new grant funded projects for academic years 2024/25 include 'Green

Changemakers' in partnership with the Natural Environment Learning team and 'Change the Record' working with Poetry Vs Colonialism, which support young people in positive action towards climate resilience and representing diverse histories respectively. These projects have largely been in their planning phase in 2024/25, with the majority of sessions and outputs to be delivered in the summer term of academic year 2024/25.

A small but dedicated team of c. 12 regular volunteers provide afternoon tours for visitors and free themed poetry readings on the second Sunday of most months, including a special reading of 'The Eve of St Agnes' in January. One individual volunteered over 100 hours providing added capacity to our collections care and conservation work at the house. We also benefitted from the time of one under-graduate volunteer who helped welcome visitors to the house in July 2024. In total, Keats House volunteers provided 640 volunteer hours, and we would like to send our grateful thanks to all our volunteers for their continued support for the Charity and its activities.

Major collections research and development projects for the year included work to prepare our collections catalogue records for migration to a new collections management database and the planning and preparation of our 2025/26 exhibition programme: Keats House 100, celebrating the 100th anniversary of opening to the public in May 1925.

Unfortunately, our doctoral research student was unable to deliver the agreed outputs of their programme and this workstream and partnership was reluctantly ended by mutual agreement by 2025.

While the Keats House budget remains sustainable and income from admissions, shop sales, private hires and licences has helped offset the cost to the City Corporation of supporting the Charity, it has still not been possible to achieve the levels of visitor numbers and income received prior to the pandemic. For comparison, the number of people visiting Keats House increased by just 5% on the previous year and remains at 66% of pre-pandemic levels (7,338 visited in 2023/24 and 11,755 people visited in 2019/20). Although this slower than hoped for growth can in part be explained by the house closing for an additional three weeks for maintenance works, the recovery of the Charity's audiences and income streams remains a major priority, especially as the Charity will celebrate the 100th anniversary of its opening to the public in May 2025.

One positive step in 2024/25 was the reaching of a new, five-year licence agreement with Keats Community Library to operate from Ten Keats Grove, which will do much to support the continued ability of both charities to operate alongside each other for the foreseeable future.

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 2024/25 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 served on six

occasions (including the two partner-funded conferences) and music was performed at three events. Although these did not involve the sale of alcohol they are reported here for completeness and reassurance that they were conducted within the agreed terms and conditions of the licence. The Premises Licence for 10 Keats Grove was renewed for the period to 11 September 2025 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.

A conservation architect was engaged to conduct a series of fabric and mechanical and electrical surveys of Keats House and Ten Keats Grove buildings. These reports have now been finalised, along with recommendations for the programme of essential and desirable works to be carried out to preserve the Grade I listed Keats House & Grade II listed Ten Keats Grove buildings.

While planning and listed building consent have already been granted for the proposed new visitor entrance, the cost and schedule for this to be completed has yet to be determined. The connected proposal to replace the aged, wooden boundary fence to the front of the property has been developed but not yet submitted for 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 in future years.

London Borough of Camden's Planning Department approved the plans for replacement / new fire and intruder alarm systems for both buildings and an upgraded CCTV system for Keats House, all of which were completed by January 2025.

During 2024/25, a new agreement was reached directly with Heath Hands charity to maintain the garden at Keats House. A group of their experienced and dedicated volunteers continue to undertake routine maintenance, seasonal planting and thoughtful enhancements to the beds and borders, as well as providing specialist advice to our Green Changemakers project. We are exceptionally grateful for their continued commitment to the garden, ensuring it can be enjoyed by visitors, site users and local residents alike.

3. Develop a longer-term Business Plan for Keats House, to ensure the future sustainability of the Keats House Charity and its operating model

In 2024, the City of London Corporation launched its new Corporate Plan 2024-29. This coincided with the development of the Natural Environment Division's new strategic framework, the launch of the newly consolidated

Education Strategy 2024-29 and, in early 2025, consultation on a new Cultural Strategy.

Due to this changing strategic landscape, Keats House continued to present an annual Activities Plan to the City Corporation's Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee to guide its major workstreams in 2024/25, and subsequently for 2025/26.

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 now be developed in 2025/26, to support the new Corporate Plan, Departmental priorities for 2024-29 and related Strategies. This will be submitted to Members of the City Corporation's Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee, in their role as Trustees of the Keats House charity, for consultation and approval, before being presented as part of our Museum Accreditation return, now expected in late 2025/26.

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 2025 are:

- Implement projects and activities identified in the Keats House Activities Plan for delivery in 2025/26 onwards
- Deliver maintenance and access improvement projects at Keats House
- Develop a longer-term Business Plan for Keats House, to ensure the future sustainability of Keats House Charity and its operating model.