



AGM 2024 CHAIR'S REPORT

ST MADOC OF FERNS COMMUNITY GROUP

REGISTERED CHARITY 1204104

It gives me great pleasure to write the first Chair's report for the St Madoc of Ferns Community Group, covering the year to 5th April 2024. Although the Group formed in 2022, one of our highlights for the year was to agree a constitution and become a registered charity on 26th July 2023. The application process helped us to agree our objective, which is:

The preservation for the public benefit of St Madoc of Ferns Church (St Madoc's), a medieval church and site of local and historic interest, thereby helping to ensure the continued use of the church as a place of worship, and to educate the public in its history and heritage.

Our first year has been very busy with largely positive results. A successful application to the Benefact Trust, through the Plunkett Foundation, not only provided viability funding, but very effective coaching on preparing a business plan, community engagement, funding, and planning.

As well as developing our organisational skills, we have held fund-raising events, met with many other community groups, and asked the community how the church should be used. We have also launched our membership scheme, with our members encouraged to vote on key issues and for the election of trustees. Our membership fee was set at a level to encourage the widest participation in the running of the group rather than a primary source of income.

Our greatest disappointment has been that we did not manage to sign a lease and begin the process to repair and re-open the church. We have held positive discussions with the Property Department of the Representative Body of The Church in Wales but due to their extensive workload, we have not reached a final agreement.

We did manage to briefly re-open the church last September, to participate in the Cadw Open Doors initiative. We were able to tell the history of St Madoc and the church and to showcase its beautiful, natural setting. It was an example of what we could do once we have a lease, and one of my personal highlights of the year.

This event and every other success we have had this year have only been possible through the generosity and hard work of our supporters. We are incredibly grateful to our community, who have attended events, completed surveys, and become members or even sponsors. We would also like to thank The Havens History Group for their amazing research and The Little Haven Fundraising Group for their kindness by running events for our benefit. Lastly, I have to thank my fellow trustees for all their time, energy, and support over the last year. We must also note the huge contribution that Richard Baker has made to the group, firstly as Chair and latterly as trustee, as he stands down at the AGM.

As the Community Group looks forward to our second year, we expect to agree a lease to the church and re-open the building (or parts of the building). We hope to mark the occasion by a series of events, services and local heritage displays. Next year will also bring challenges, such as keeping running costs in line with the business plan, and crucially, winning grants for repair and improvement projects. It is also critical that we continue to engage our community, understand their needs, and gain their support. We have to maintain, or increase, our membership and sponsors, and recruit volunteers for working groups to help with practical activities. We will start with Grant Application, Fund Raising, Maintenance & Repair, and Sewing working groups and then expand to groups linked to the potential uses for the church.

Again, on behalf of the trustees, I would like to thank everyone for their help and support and look forward to another exciting year.

Gareth Morgan

Chair of St Madoc of Ferns Community Group.