

Annual Report of Corn Exchange Wallingford Limited for the year to 31 May 2025

In the year under review the Directors, working with the Trustees of Sinodun Players, have been pleased to announce that Sinodun Players have become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). This means that financial interactions between Corn Exchange Wallingford Limited and the charity can flow more easily and we are able to charge rent from the Sinodun Players without the burden of VAT. This is a practice that formerly always happened and ensures that Sinodun Players help to absorb the cost of electricity, etc., for those weeks when we are unable to run cinema.

Our function remains to deliver the second of the charity's aims to "preserve, restore, maintain and enhance the building known as the Corn Exchange in Wallingford as a venue for the public performance of the arts". To this end we are continually monitoring the building and carrying out repairs and enhancements and fortunately there have been no major items needed this year.

For the year to 31 May 2025, our income has been derived from cinema ticket sales and the bar and we are cautiously optimistic with audience numbers and bar sales improving over the last year. We have, of course, lost the services of two Corn Exchange legends: John Warburton our former Cinema Manager and Pete Orton our former Bar Manager. It has been gratifying to see how people have come forward to fill these roles and the team assisting Tim Ayres (Cinema Manager) is working well at monitoring which films are achieving better sales. Our thanks to Will Lidbetter for taking on the running of the bar and ensuring that it is appropriately stocked.

We continue to be approached for room and venue hire and our association with Lloyds Bank continues, with members of their staff coming in on alternate Thursdays to provide support and advice to members of the public. Over the year we have provided a venue for the annual meeting of a local business and we are now becoming popular as a children's birthday venue where a film of their choice is shown.

During the year one of the most notable changes for ourselves and our customers has been the introduction of QR/digital ticket scanning. Whilst some people were a little nervous about it at first, the transition was relatively smooth and both volunteers and audience members are now getting used to how the system operates. We acknowledge with thanks the grant from SODC to purchase the scanners and all the work put in by Chris Wales our IT Support, Mike Baker our Technical Manager and Graham Gilgrass and Erica Harley who worked so hard to ensure that our front of house staff were trained and confident with the new technology. Thanks to a separate grant from SODC we were also able to install additional LED stage lights. These not only provide much more flexibility to lighting but they are also cheaper to run and don't generate heat in the way that our former lighting system did.

Health & Safety continues to be an important focus for the Board and during the year more First Aid training has taken place and, whilst it is not a requirement that a first aider is present at every performance, we are trying to move to a situation where every Front of House Manager has been trained.

Working together with the Sinodun Players Committee we have continued to seek and support hosted productions, which have provided an additional revenue stream. The theatre was again this year a venue for the town's 'Bunkfest', a major nationally known free festival, the Wallingford Winter Blues and Jazz Festival, and the town's Agatha Christie Weekend. Our workshop team supported the 1155 Charity Bonfire Night event by building the effigy for the bonfire.

As always, all of our activities, from house managing to ushering, attending meetings to carrying out building maintenance – to name just a small proportion of what is needed to run the Corn Exchange – require the time and expertise of our wonderful volunteers. It is gratifying that we have attracted more new volunteers over the last year – many of them wanting to join us after coming in on a Friday or Saturday morning and being shown around the building. As always, once people see the entirety of what it offers, they are amazed. We continue to train our volunteers and encourage them to take on more demanding roles, but unfortunately, we are still reliant on the dedication and time of a small core of people to keep us going.

It would take up the rest of this page if I were to list individuals so I would simply like to take this opportunity to give particular thanks to my fellow Directors, our rota organisers, committee/team members, department heads and volunteers in all departments. Because of you the Corn Exchange Wallingford is a wonderful community asset and none of it would be viable without you. Thank you.

Gloria Wright

Chair, Corn Exchange Wallingford Ltd.