

## **Annual Report of Corn Exchange Wallingford Limited for the year to 31 May 2026**

The year started with a celebration for John Warburton to recognise all the work he has done to make the Corn Exchange Theatre & Cinema what it is today. To ensure that this is not forgotten the former Club Room/Studio was renamed “The Warburton Room” and plaques are now in place both internally and externally announcing this.

For the year to 31 May 2026, our income has been derived from cinema ticket and bar sales and rent from the Sinodun Players. Audience numbers for cinema have unfortunately not shown any real improvement, but the popularity of the live shows has helped to maintain the profitability of the bar. Live streaming and filmed productions from the National Theatre, Royal Ballet and Royal Opera continue to be very popular with local audiences.

Our function remains to deliver the second of our parent 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. One of the most urgent issues to be addressed this year has been repairs to the roof area backstage. To date this appears to have been effective. Moving forward, we are having to address the stonework on the façade which is crumbling and in need of repair. The cost of surveying and specifying the work required has been supported by the Trustees, for which we are most grateful, and hopefully the work will start within the next few months once the quotes have been obtained and approvals received from both Trustees and the Board.

Our building is available 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. During the year we have hosted a visit from St. John’s School, the Annual Southern Region Meeting of the Little Theatre Guild and we continue to host the Blues & Jazz Festival, Bunkfest and our annual One Act Drama Festival. We have also engaged with a local restaurant to facilitate a special meal + cinema experience. This has been very successful, and we hope to continue this association in the future.

The year under review has seen some changes to the Board of Directors: Julie Grimshaw has taken over the role of H&S Director, and we have welcomed two new Directors: Tracy Noble who has taken over the role of H. R. Director and Andy Pearson who became our Building Services Director. Elaine Hornsby retired from her role on the Board with our grateful thanks for her support and input over the years.

Andy Pearson has wasted no time in moving into his new role and to oversee a very important project facilitated by a grant from SODC. Due to some questionable and sometimes alarming behaviour along Mousey Lane and at the back of the theatre, we have now installed a CCTV system to cover our Wood Street frontage and Mousey Lane. Security lighting has also been installed over the Stage Door. Andy has been nominated as our Security Officer.

We acknowledge a further grant from SODC to replace some of the old monitors in the foyer. We now have larger, more readable monitors in the foyer, together with 2 large window screens at the front of the building and a third large screen in the window facing Wood Street. These are all being used to enhance the advertising of the films and live shows within the building. Our grateful thanks to Mike Baker, Technical Manager, for all the work he put into sourcing and installing the various screens. We continue to freely host the bus timetable screen for Thames Travel.

Once again we have been grateful to receive donations from the 1155 Charity for building the effigy for the Kinecroft bonfire night and we also acknowledge with grateful thanks a donation from the Walled Gardens of Wallingford event, given specifically to help with the cost of stonework repairs.

Three “invisible” activities have taken up many hours of work from a small group of people. For some time now we have been giving serious consideration to the possibility of buying 4 Market Place (the former Lloyds Bank). However, having received a valuation and structural survey, the Trustees and Board jointly decided that the financial risk was too great and that we would be taking on too much of a burden for our volunteers.

Secondly, our IT Support has been working closely with our Data Protection Officer and others to plan the eventual installation of Microsoft 365 for the theatre. Technology is a constantly evolving area that we can never forget and the improvements now being planned will not only lead to a better user experience but will also facilitate our continuing insurance for the building and all its activities.

Finally, many hours have been spent behind the scenes on a project to light the front of the building and install banners either side of the front door. We have long been aware that – particularly in the winter – the building can look unused and many of the newer residents to the area probably don’t know that we are a Theatre and Cinema. We have appointed designers, had the plans drawn up and submitted to SODC and now have Planning Permission for the lighting and banners. Costs for all the work are being shared between the Limited Company and the Sinodun Players. We still have some way to go with getting quotes from suppliers, and permission for the necessary scaffolding, etc, but the hope is that everything will be done within the next financial year.

Of course the Corn Exchange cannot run any of its activities without our army of volunteers. From house managing to ushering, attending meetings to carrying out building maintenance, serving a pint to projecting a film (to name just a few of the tasks that have to be performed) we rely on, and are truly grateful for, the time and expertise of our wonderful volunteers. 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.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Directors, our rota organisers, committee/team members, department heads and volunteers in all departments for all your hard work and support for each other. Because of you the Corn Exchange Wallingford continues to offer a wonderful space for volunteers and the community we serve. Thank you.

Gloria Wright

Chair, Corn Exchange Wallingford Ltd.