



## Aims and Objectives for 2021 – 2026

### A Strategic Document

*“At the heart of Reepham, owned by  
Reepham, open to all.”*

# **INTRODUCTION**

This strategic document explains the nature of the activities that the Bircham Centre undertakes, its history, management structure, financial position and the aims and objectives for the period 2021 - 2026. The aim of the document is to state and consolidate Bircham Centre values and to demonstrate the economic management of those values.

The document provides clarity and direction for internal purposes. It is also expected to be useful to selected external parties. For each year of the five-year period, the Trustees will develop and agree a working plan inline with the overall aims and objectives outlined in this document.

## **Mission Statement**

The Bircham Centre was left in trust to the residents of Reepham and the surrounding area by Samuel Bircham in 1919 for reading facilities and meeting room for social, philanthropic, instruction or charitable purposes.

The responsibility of the trustees is to ensure that this original purpose is upheld in line with the constitution. In order to achieve this, trustees are responsible for generating sufficient funding to ensure the preservation of the grade II listed building, so it is available for present and future generations to benefit from the services it provides. The use of the building by the community is seen as the primary purpose of the charity.

## **Legal Status and Constitution**

The name of the charity is 'The Bircham Centre'. It is a charity founded by Trust Deed dated 15 August 1919. It is registered in England by the Charity Commission with the registration number 242536.

The Registered Office is The Market Place, Reepham, Norfolk NR10 4JJ.

## **MANAGEMENT**

The strategic direction of the charity is driven by a committee of trustees. It approves new proposals, monitor the performance of the charity, and determine strategic direction. It has the ultimate responsibility for the management of the building and the well-being of the charity.

The committee members have a wide variety of skills and certain of them are delegated. The committee usually meets monthly for formal meetings, but trustees provide advice and support between meetings.

Trustees receive no remuneration but may claim expenses. Trustees sign a declaration confirming their first and foremost duty is to the charity and not to their nominating body.

The Trust Deed allows for 12 trustees (and there is room for co-options). The 2010 revision changed the trustee base, which now consists of four publicly elected trustees, four nominated by user groups and four nominated by public bodies in Reepham. Trustees can serve a maximum of two consecutive 3-year terms. The quorum is seven Trustees.

Currently the Trustees are:

<b>Nominated / Elected By</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Community (Parish Church)	Les West	Chair Fundraising/Budgets Building Committee Personnel Outside organisations
Public	Stuart Lane	Vice Chair Reepham Archive Building Committee
Public	Ian McGilvray	Building Committee Lead
User Group (Reepham library)	Barry Barker	Book Sales
Community Group (Reepham Bowls Club)	Sam Garnham	Chair of Bowls Club
User Group (Country Market)	Julie Smith	Retail Online Sales
User Group (Self)	Louisa Dreisin	Web Site and Social Media Personnel
User Group (WI)	Gill Long	200 Club
Community Group (Festival of Light)	Bob Boothroyd	Book Sales
Public	Carl Lamb	Health and Safety
Public	Roisin Howard	
Community Group (Reepham Archive)	Vacant	

The Trustees employ the following part time staff:  
Polly Brockis - Centre Manager (16 hours per week)  
Robert Taylor - Caretaker (8 hours per week)  
Three cleaners (total of 15 hours per week)

The charity is dependent also on groups of volunteers, supporters and helpers to assist with the operation of the Centre. The trustees are responsible for their direction, recruitment and training. It is recognised that such assistance and volunteering is absolutely key to the future of the charity.

**The charity's main professional contacts are:**

Audit and Accountancy – Boldero & Co  
Bankers – HSBC & COIF (Charities Investment Fund)  
Insurance – Grout Insurance Brokers

## FINANCIAL POSITION

Sadly, no legacy was left to maintain the building and garden. The trust relies heavily on the hard work of its volunteers and on donations.

It is clear to the trustees that income is the lifeblood of the Bircham Centre. However valuable the capital asset may be, without a constant source of income to finance the maintenance and running costs the building would end up being closed. The building needs to be lively and used by the community. It enjoys a prestigious and central location and it can be exploited to maximise income for its charitable purpose.

During the times when the Centre was closed all the Centre's income streams ceased. The Centre's key function is to provide a place for people to meet and partake in community activities. The Centre lost over £3,000 per month from the charity shop and hiring of rooms whilst the building was closed. Although the grants offered by the government helped to alleviate some of this, trustees had to draw on reserves to cover costs. Although, due to good management in the past, there were reserves to fall back on, it will take several years to replenish them.

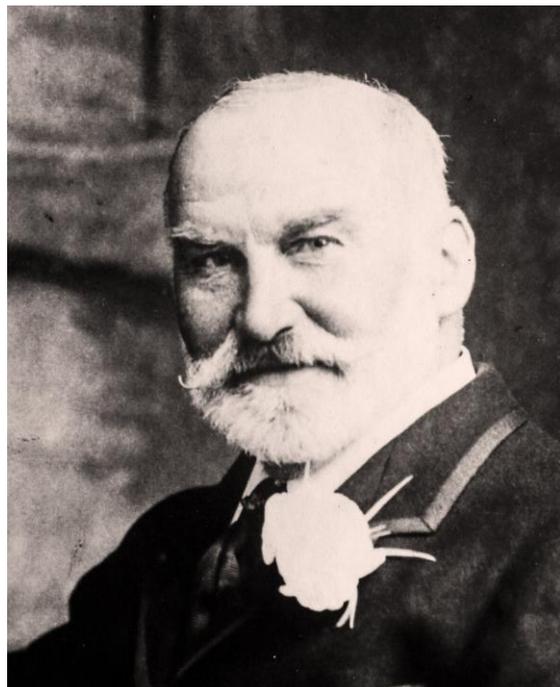
To ensure that the building is kept in good order and to develop the services the Centre offers, there is a need to raise additional funds. More recently a trustee has taken on the responsibility for fundraising and is working closely with a development advisor, Simon O'Leary from firstlocal. Over the past two years there has been some noticeable success from grant applications to trusts and foundations. Two community grants have been received from the National Lottery Community Fund and the Norfolk Community Foundation along with several smaller grants from other grant making bodies including the Reepham Town Council and Broadland District Council. This work will continue.

As part of the budget setting process, three separate building-related budgets are created each year:

Reactive Maintenance Budget – to cover the cost of work that is essential but un-planned.

Planned Maintenance Budget - to undertake agreed work that had been identified in the maintenance programme.

Special Projects Budget – to cover costs of projects agreed by the Board of Trustees.



## BRIEF HISTORY

The Bircham Centre was originally called Hackford House and at one time served as the Rectory for the parish of Hackford and Whitwell. The building is grade II listed and is situated on the eastern side of the Market Place in Reepham. Parts of the building date back to the Jacobean period. During its history the building has been used for a number of purposes. During the First World War Samuel Bircham handed over the main building to be used as a Red Cross rehabilitation hospital, the north wing being retained by his daughter.

In 1919 following the end of the First World War, Samuel Bircham gave the building in trust to the people of Reepham for use as a reading room and community meeting place in memory of all those in Reepham and the surrounding area who lost their lives during the First World War and therefore the building has been registered as a war memorial. The registration has little impact on the day-to-day running or indeed the strategic direction and policy of the charity.

Samuel Bircham became founder of the trust and had several local businessmen and professionals as trustees. Part of the building and about half of the garden was originally conveyed into the trust but after his death in 1923 the remainder of the building and the rest of the garden was handed over to the trust and a live-in caretaker occupied the added north wing, looking after the premises until 1986.

The Bircham reading room was run from the 1920's until 1969. Daily newspapers and magazines were available. By 1969 this activity had declined to the point of insignificance and was superseded by the rooms being leased to the Norfolk County Council Library Service.

## Current use

During its history, the building has been used for a variety of purposes. Currently the building houses community meeting rooms for rent by local groups and societies, the town library rented by Norfolk County Council, the Reepham Archives, the administration office for the benefice of Reepham and Wensum Valley Team group of churches, 'The Birch' which is a co-working space for the community and a charity shop run by volunteers.

During 2019 the Centre celebrated its centenary year with a full programme of events, all of which were made possible by a grant from the Lottery Community Fund.

The main event was the Centenary Garden Party which was held on Saturday 3 August 2019. The weather was just perfect, and the garden looked wonderful. The 150 guests enjoyed an afternoon of music, friendship and tucked into refreshments provided by the Reepham WI and the Country Market.



## THE BUILDING

The Bircham Centre's principal asset is the building itself: a large, three-story structure that fronts onto the Market Place. It has an extensive walled garden that adjoins the Town Hall and is accessible from Back Street and Pudding Pie Alley.

Post-war the building's condition gradually deteriorated. Norfolk County Council helped fund some of the necessary repairs to the fabric of the building when the library was established here, and in the late 1980's a great effort was made to re-roof and make watertight the whole of the structure. After the roof was repaired, most of the rooms were decorated, electrically heated and furnished. The trustees then undertook a rebuild of the wall of the timber framed part of the structure, which had been brick-faced nearly 200 years earlier and which was not satisfactorily tied into the original building. Later the trustees added new toilets and a slope for wheelchair access in line with the 2004 regulations and requirements.

### Recent maintenance work

There is a constant demand upon the resources of the charity to maintain the principal asset and provide charitable services.

The following is a summary of the work that has been completed over the past few years:

2018	Paint front elevation of building and windows	Completed	
2019	Roof repairs over the archive rooms	Completed	£3,180
2020	Repair garden wall adjacent to Pudding Pie Alley	Completed	£9,667
2020	Create new reading room/book shop	Completed	£13,531
2020	Create new beverage area	Completed	£12,702
2020	Resolve water ingress and decorate entrance	Completed	£2,100

The last building maintenance plan was completed by Peter Codling Architects in 2015. The trustees will arrange for a quinquennial inspection to be carried out in 2021. The aim of the inspection is to determine a programme of preventative maintenance, order of priority, time scale and cost estimates.

## **ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES**

The charity is currently involved in several activities to support its key objectives.

### **Renting Space for a Public Library**

Two public rooms are let to the Reepham Library, as well as an office and toilet, run by the County Council through Norfolk Library Services. Trustees feel that the presence of the library contributes to the original purpose of a reading room, gifted by Samuel Bircham to the people of Reepham. The library is currently open on a part-time basis. However, it is recognised that the library can easily be perceived as secondary by Norfolk County Council decision-makers as it is small, easy to withdraw and vulnerable in difficult economic times to a downturn in numbers that might easily transform its fortunes.

Currently the library is paying a rent of £2,731 plus cleaning charges of £1,500 which are paid on an annual basis.

### **Hiring Rooms on a Long-Term Let Basis**

Currently there are two rooms on the first floor that are let on a long-term basis. One to the parish church that is used as the church administration office and the other to 'The Birch', a co-working space for the community.

### **Hiring Rooms on a Short-Term Let Basis**

There are three rooms with different dimensions and capabilities that may be hired to groups or organisations, one on the ground floor and two on the first floor. Groups that currently use the rooms include the weekly Country Market, Reepham WI, and a number of craft clubs.

### **Charity Shop**

One room at the front of the building on the ground floor is devoted to the charity shop and in 2020 the previous kitchen space was converted into a book room where second-hand books are available for sale. The shop has built up a good representation and high profile within the Town. It is known for the quality of items with a good concentration on stock turnover. The shop, along with the sale of second-hand books, is the major sources of income for the charity, raising on average £25,000 per year, however, it depends upon significant volunteer involvement.

## **The Reepham Archives**

The Bircham Centre and the Reepham Society amalgamated their respective archives in 2014 to establish a publicly available collection of documents and artefacts relevant to the history and development of Reepham and the surrounding area. The archives are housed in the Bircham Centre. In 2019 the Reepham Society ceased to exist, and all its assets and funds were passed to the trustees of the Bircham Centre.

The trustees of the Bircham Centre have overall financial and administrative responsibility for the management of the Reepham Archive. The trustees delegate the day-to-day management and operation of the archive to a committee of archive volunteers. There is a signed Memorandum of Understanding which sets out the terms and understanding for the management of the Reepham Archive. The Archive Committee has the right to appoint one member to the Board of Trustees who acts as the link to the archive group. The archives are held in three rooms at the Bircham Centre, for which no rent is paid. The trustees manage the finances of the Reepham Archives which are held in a restricted account.

The purpose of the Reepham Archive is to nurture public and professional interest and understanding of the heritage of Reepham and the local area. The aims of the archive is to:

- Provide an accessible archive for public interest.
- Provide historical and educational experiences for local residents of all ages and visitors to the area.
- Provide a research facility, making local history available for all, now and for future generations.
- Hold exhibitions and other events to promote the archive.
- Raise funds for the continued conservation and expansion of the collection

## **The Reepham Town Bowling Club**

Until 2020, the Reepham town bowling green was owned by the Reepham Society. When the society was disbanded in 2019 the ownership and responsibility for the bowling green was transferred to the Bircham Centre.

The Bircham Centre Charity now owns the freehold of the bowling green along with the associated buildings, the title of which was transferred to the trustees of the Bircham Centre, under title number NK428204 by the Land Registry Office.

The trustees have agreed a twenty-five-year lease to the Reepham Town Bowling Club for the green and associated buildings, including the club house at an agreed annual rent.

The Reepham Town Bowling Club is managed by a committee of members. There is a signed Memorandum of Understanding which sets out the terms and understanding for the management of the Reepham Town Bowling Club.

The committee is responsible for keeping the ground and buildings in a good state of repair and for the security of the site.

The committee has the right to appoint one member of the committee to the Board of Trustees of the Bircham Centre. The committee manage their own finances and provide a copy of the inspected accounts to the Board on an annual basis.

# **RISK ANALYSIS**

## **Strengths**

- The Bircham Centre currently provides a locally based resource and is able to provide a tailored flexible and individualised service for its community
- Stability in possessing secure and adequate accommodation in a central location that provides good facilities and allows for user participation in the local community
- Availability of local parking
- Has recruited and retained a significant base of volunteers who augment and enhance the quality of the service provided
- A wide range of backgrounds and talents at Trustee level
- Financial position is such that it does have some resources to fall back on
- Improved working relationships with the community and community groups
- increased goodwill from the Town and surrounding parishes
- Library is a high-profile tenant and recognised as a valuable community resource

## **Weaknesses**

- Reserves reduced during lockdown from Covid 19 in order to maintain the Centre
- Reserves maybe reduced further until the Centre is fully operational again
- Although there are still some reserves these may be vulnerable given the ongoing maintenance that is required to an historical building
- Huge reliance on volunteers

## **Opportunities**

- Ensuring the garden fulfils its potential
- Obtaining more grants for works and support

## **Threats**

- Lack of grants and alternative funding, especially for capital works
- Competition for hire rooms
- Library service withdrawal
- Decline in public-spiritedness, either for Trustees or volunteers
- Change in the nature of Reepham Town Centre
- Not all volunteers returning following Covid 19

# **SPECIFIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2021 – 2026**

## **Community**

### **1. To attract more volunteers to support the work of the Centre**

The charity is dependent on volunteers to assist with the operation of the Centre. In fact, it could not operate without them. During 2021, the trustees will initiate a recruitment campaign to try and attract more volunteers, especially from the younger generation. This will be important to enable the charity to continue with its work and to develop the services it provides. It is especially important as some of the existing volunteers will find it hard to continue to offer their services post Covid.

### **2. Enhance public profile further**

The Bircham Centre is in a unique position to provide services for the benefit of the local community. Although it has many loyal supporters and users, many people are not aware of all that the Centre provides. The trustees will initiate a PR exercise to inform residents of the services that are available at the Centre.

### **3. Hold regular community events**

The garden party held in 2019, as part of the centenary celebrations, was a great success and the trustees intend to put together a programme of community events in the coming years, in association with other local groups.

### **4. Contribute to the wellbeing of the Town**

The trustees are aware of the prestigious position that the Bircham Centre holds within the town and the opportunities this brings. trustees will work with the Town Council and other businesses and organisations within the town for the benefit and wellbeing of all that live and work in the town and surrounding area.

### **5. Working with the Town Council to develop the weekly market**

A market was first founded in Reepham in 1277 when Sir John de Vaux obtained a charter from King Edward I, making Reepham one of the oldest market towns in Norfolk. Over recent years, the Wednesday morning market has declined and the lockdown due to the Covid pandemic has meant that the market has not been in operation for much of 2020 and without a plan may not recover. The Bircham Centre has always supported the market by opening the charity shop and hosting the Country Market ladies on a Wednesday morning. The trustees will work with the Town Council to try and regenerate the market, as the trustees see it as an important part of the town.

## **The Building**

### **6. To formulate a recovery plan from Covid 19**

In line with government guidelines the Centre closed in the middle of March 2020 for four months due to the pandemic Covid 19 and again during November 2020 and during the early months of 2021. During



these periods, our cleaners and caretaker were furloughed. The trustees will put together a plan to reopen the Centre, once government restrictions are lifted and support the many clubs and community groups to return to the Centre. This is important as many local and vulnerable people have told us how much they missed the activities the Centre offers and how isolated many of them have felt during the lockdown periods. Risk assessments have been completed and the Centre has been awarded the 'We're Good To Go' certificate by Visit England.

## **7. To undertake full property management to maintain and develop the building and garden**

The last building maintenance plan was completed by Peter Codling Architects in 2015. The trustees will arrange for a quinquennial inspection to be carried out in 2021. The building maintenance group will work with N F Coverdale Ltd. to produce a report. The aim of the inspection is to determine a programme of preventative maintenance, order of priority, time scale and cost estimates.

## **Finance**

### **8. Increase sales from the shop**

The money raised from the sale of goods in the charity shop is the main source of income for the charity. Under normal circumstances this equates to around £25k per year. While the Centre was closed, due to Government restrictions, this important income stream ceased. As soon as the restrictions are lifted the trustees will work with the Shop Manager to open the shop again on as many days as possible. This will be dependent on the number of volunteers available.

### **9. To expand the 200 Club**

During the centenary year the trustees set an aim to increase the number of 200 Club members. This was partially successful as the number of supporters increased from 104 to 150. The trustees will work to increase this number further to reach the maximum number possible of 200. Every new member brings an additional £12 each year to the charity's income. A trustee has now volunteered to administer the club and to encourage new members to join.

### **10. To seek grants for specific capital projects from fund raising bodies**

The trustees have been successful over the past few years in obtaining grants from trusts and foundations and will continue to work with Simon O'Leary, a development advisor from firstlocal, to raise additional income to fund the planned preventative maintenance programme and special projects.

### **11. To approach large scale potential benefactors, both corporate and individual**

The Trustees will investigate this possibility to raise further income. This is an area that the Trustees have not yet explored.