



# Durham City Freemen Charitable Trust



*Final Donations*

## Review

*January - October 2025*

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## *Final Report*

It is with sadness that I have to introduce this final report of the Charitable Trust, by announcing its closure.

After a number of unsuccessful attempts to attract new Trustees from the ranks of the Freeman, it was ultimately decided to inform the Charity Commission in June 2025 of its decision to close.

Benevolence has been a cornerstone of the Durham City Freeman for 400 years. Historically to support its members and their families in times of hardship, but during the recent past it has diverted its focus towards charities and worthy causes within the local community.

In 2015 the Wardens and Trustees of the Freeman decided to establish a Charitable Trust to provide a financially efficient model for the distribution of its surplus funds, thereby continuing with its historical tradition, whilst forging a valuable link with a wide range of groups serving the various needs of the community of Durham City.

In the 10 years from its inception, the Charitable Trust has granted 125 awards and distributed £230,609 to local charities and worthy causes.

The current Trustees are indebted to the former Trustees, Alan Ribchester, John Heslop, Roger Norris and Stewart Atkin, who had the foresight to establish the Charitable Trust a decade ago and from which so many the of the citizens of Durham City and its surrounding districts have benefited.

I could not let this opportunity pass without thanking my colleagues, John Booth, Theresa Ford, Kenneth Howe, Geoff Kitson and George Oliver, for their dedication and support, especially during these past difficult months.

This final review charts the progress and work of the Charitable Trust for those 10 years and provides a record for current and future Freeman to reflect upon.

*Eric Bulmer*

Chairman, Durham City Charitable Trust

## *Resolution*

At an extraordinary meeting held on 22nd July 2025, a unanimous decision was reached to close the Charitable Trust. This followed an extended period (18 months), that was fraught with difficulties, during which time the Trustees grappled with a range of issues that had to be addressed which would ultimately determine the future of the Charitable Trust.

It is with regret I have to announce that at a recent Extraordinary meeting of the Durham City Freeman Charitable Trust, the following resolution was agreed unanimously by the Trustees to close the Charitable Trust.

Due to the mounting difficulties of retaining sustainability and maintaining the ethos of the Charitable Trust, it is proposed that the Durham City Freeman Charitable Trust be dissolved and that the assets of the Charity be distributed in accordance with clause 20 of the Declaration of Trust dated the 23rd of January 2015, made by Roger Charles Norris, Stewart Atkin, Alan Ribchester and John Heslop and that the Charity Commission for England and Wales be notified in accordance with the said Declaration of Trust.

*22nd July 2025*

A decision was reached following an extended period (18 months), that was fraught with difficulties, whilst the Trustees grappled with a range of issues that would determine the future of the Charitable Trust.

The following was instrumental in determining the Trustees decision to close.

### **Future of the Charitable Trust**

Sustainability of the Charitable Trust and the ethos in which it was in envisaged when Alan (Ribchester) established the charity in 2015, has increasingly come under mounting pressure.

As issues continued to unfold it became essential that the Trustees addressed the fundamental problems that blighted its ability to sustain its standards and objectives.

The major issue was sustaining the Charitable Trust and to maintain the ethos under which it was established in 2015. During the past 12 months, the composition of the Trust (Trustees) has been depleted by over 50%, and

although we have attempted on a number of occasions to recruit new Trustees from the ranks of the Freeman, we have been unsuccessful.

During this period, the Trust experienced a fundamental change in the funding arrangements from our sole sponsor, the "Trustees and Wardens of the Durham City Freeman " that ran counter to the objectives of the original rationale when the Trust was established in 2015.

The discussion that proceeded the resolution to close, focused on the ability to maintain the standards in accordance to the original ethos under which the Charitable Trust was formed and the way it has developed during the past decade. We considered what was in the best interests of the Trust, as we moved into an unpredictable and uncertain future and decided to take the decision to close.

### **Issues that determined the decision to close the Charitable Trust**

- 1. Ethos of the Charitable Trust**
- 2. Sustainability of the Charitable Trust**

- a. Composition of Trustees.
- b. Financial viability

If the maintenance of standards are jeopardised, then the ethos developed over the recent past would be compromised. This issue needed to be addressed.

The Trust considered the following rationale:

#### ***Ethos of the Charitable Trust***

The ethos that had developed over the decade, has been one of close interaction with charities and worthy causes that the Trustees have supported and one they wished to maintain.

This involved a major commitment from the Trustees in time, energy and empathy with those organisations that were successful in applying for support. The example that had been set was the standard that should continue to be delivered.

### ***Sustainability of the Charitable Trust***

#### ***Composition of the Charitable Trust***

Sustainability of the Trust had become a major concern. During the past 18 months, we lost two Trustees, one resigning due to ill health and sadly the person who established the Trust and a major influence in its development, died in January 2025.

Unfortunately, we lost a further member of the Trust in July 2025 due to relocation.

We have subsequently been informed that another two Trustees are seriously ill, which will undoubtedly impact on the remaining three Trustees.

During the past 12 months, we have attempted to recruit new Trustees from within the ranks of the Freeman on numerous occasions, but have been unable to increase the membership of the Trust.

When you place this issue alongside the current average age (75 years) of the remaining Trustees, it is plain to see the major concern of sustaining the Charitable Trust in its present form.

#### **Financial Position**

Although the Trust has constantly developed and expanded its charitable giving, the funding it receives from its only source of income (the Freeman), is diminishing and it received no funding for 2024/25.

From discussions with our sole funder, "The Trustees and Wardens of the Durham City Freeman", it could be anticipated that future funding will be curtailed for a variety of reasons, causing continual concern for the Trust.

*Eric Bulmer* (Chairman - Charitable Trust)

*27th July 2025*

#### **Trustees of the Charitable Trust**

Eric Bulmer (Chair)  
Kenneth Howe (Trustee)  
John Booth (Secretary)  
Images by Geoff Kitson

Theresa Ford (Treasurer)  
Geoff Kitson (Trustee)  
Copy by George Oliver  
Booklet produced by John Booth



## Grant Recipient Image 06 October 2025



## Grant Awards 2015-2024

### ***Funding Support in 2015***

Durham Cathedral Apprentice

### ***Funding Support in 2016***

Durham University Apprentice  
St Margaret's Centre  
Durham Stroke Club  
Durham Pointers  
LionMouth Rural Centre  
Durham Musical Theatre Company  
The Wood Pile

### ***Funding Support in 2017***

Recycle y' Bike  
Remembrance Parade  
Durham Pointers

### ***Funding Support in 2018***

Mayor's Charity Appeal  
Remembrance Parade  
Durham Hospital Radio  
Redwood Lodge  
St Nicholas Church (recovery group)

### ***Funding Support in 2019***

University Hospital North Durham  
(chemo unit)  
Durham Area Disability Leisure Group  
Durham Pointers  
Hawthorn House  
Age UK  
St Margarets Centre  
Solon Connor Fawcett Trust

### ***Funding Support in 2020***

Durham Elvet Rotary Club  
Rotary Defibrillator Project  
Durham Hospitals Chemotherapy Unit  
Brandon Boxing Club  
Durham Agency Against Crime  
Silver Tree Primary School  
Durham Christian Partnership (foodbanks)  
Laurel Avenue Association  
Durham Action on Single Housing

### ***Funding Support in 2021***

Blind Life in Durham  
Waddington Street Centre  
Brandon Boxing Club  
DALG  
Durham Scouts  
Durham Agency Against Crime

### ***Funding Support in 2022***

County Durham Stroke Club  
St Margaret's Centre  
Solon Connor Fawcett Trust  
TINArts  
County Durham Food Bank  
Salvation Army and Silver Tree Primary  
School  
New Brancepeth Revellers  
Brandon Carrside Youth Centre  
Durham University apprentices  
Hawthorn House  
Durham Community Association  
LionMouth Rural Centre  
Durham Action on Single Housing  
Laurel Avenue Community Centre  
Beacon Project

### ***Funding Support in 2023***

Cheesy Waffles  
ManHealth  
Weavers Spinners and Dyers  
Down's Syndrome North East (DSNE)  
If U Care Share  
Breast Buddies  
Durham Pointers

### ***Funding Support in 2024***

Waddington Street Centre  
Mayor's Charity Appeal  
Festival of Remembrance  
County Durham Stroke Club  
Durham Quilters  
Brandon Boxing Club  
Safe Hub  
Amber Bee  
Coxhoe Village Hall  
LionMouth Rural Centre  
Go The Distance  
Durham Fringe Festival  
St Cuthbert's Baby Memorial  
Solon Connor Fawcett Trust

The pages that follow illustrate recipients of awards made in 2025  
Over the last 10 Years the Charitable Trust has awarded 125 grants totaling £230,609



## Community Donations 2025

01/01/2025

### Butchers Look to Save Their Ancient Craft

Newly apprenticed butcher Rachael Lister is a cut above the rest at the start of her chosen career - thanks to an award from Durham Freemen's Charitable Trustees to help meet the cost of the tools she will need.



And the 22-year-old's benefactors – whose own links to the meat trade stretch back more than 500 years - hope the move will help preserve some of the centuries-old skills which are threatened by progress.

Rachael, from Stanley, was working in the café at Broom House Farm near Witton Gilbert when she was offered a switch to their on-site nationally acclaimed shop and butchery, last year voted the best in the country.

During the last 12 months "her potential and enthusiasm" was recognised by the craftsmen in the shop and she accepted the offer to take up an apprenticeship.

Scrutiny of her on-the-job training will be monitored until 2026 by the industry specialists Meat Ipswich until 2026 through a series of assessments.

Her supervising mentor at Broom House will be one of the shop's own time-served butchers, Vincent Syson. As well as being a Durham City Freeman Vincent is also deputy warden of their Butchers' Company, which welcomed the 500th anniversary of the granting of its charter in 2020.

Rachael will use her £400 award from the Freemen to buy a set of knives, sharpening steel and chain mail apron and glove.

We are tremendously proud of our award-winning status and the home reared lamb, pork, beef and mutton which we sell through the shop. We are also committed to making sure our craft is preserved and ensuring our farm-to-fork skills are passed on to future generations," said Vincent.



"We work with whole carcasses of meat reared on this farm, which come to us in their entirety. It's something of a dying art but provides customers with a better quality and wider choice of cuts of meat. The alternative, known as 'boxed beef,' is a cost-cutting convenience adopted by many butchers – a practice which involves animals being cut up at slaughterhouses before being sent out ready to be put on display," he added.

Eric Bulmer, chairman of the charitable trustees, said: "I am delighted the trust is able to support Rachael on her journey towards developing skills in a craft which has historic connections with the city and we wish her every success."

24/03/2025

### Freemens "Fantastic" Tonic for City Hospice

A crisis-hit hospice, forced into make "heartbreaking" staffing cuts to help solve a series of Government-inflicted financial headaches, has been given a major boost by Durham City Freeman's Charitable Trust.



In January St Cuthbert's Hospice, on the outskirts of the city with 124-strong workforce, had to axe 18 jobs in the wake of crippling National Insurance contributions announced in last year's budget coupled to other key annual ministry support failing to match inflation.

Since opening in 1988 the hospice has been offering free 24-hour pain management and end of life care, as well as dementia and bereavement support to a total of 1,000 people annually. But managers now warn the enforced economies may result in up to 150 people missing out on day care services, with 100 more losing access to bereavement support.

Announcing the charitable trust's immediate decision to gift £15,000, trust chairman, Eric Bulmer said: "We have long been aware of the vital service delivered by the dedicated staff and volunteers at the hospice and have made significant contributions over the years. We felt duty bound to act in the present crisis."

The hospice's annual running costs have latterly topped more than £3.5 million, covering all services, particularly specialist medical and nursing care. The support from commissioning organisations, including the NHS, have been meeting less than half of the yearly bill.

Patricia Boynton, the hospice's trusts and grant manager, offered a "massive thank you" to all the freemen for the donation.

She added: "When I heard the fantastic news I couldn't wait to tell everyone at the hospice. We continue to rely on charitable funding and this gift means so much. We have always believed what we offer should be accessible to all."



Eric also explained the freemen's decision was particularly poignant, following the "wonderful care" received by Alan Ribchester at the hospice in the final days before his death at the end of January.

Alan, a leading chartered accountant in the region, had been the instigator and driving force behind the establishment of the Freeman's Charitable Trust.



31/03/2025

### Freemen Gift Blood Bikers An Infusion Of Cash

A dedicated band of motor bikers, operating a vital night-time service delivering vital blood and medical supplies to the region's hospitals, healthcare sites and the Great North Air Ambulance, have themselves been on the receiving end of an important gift – a donation of £1,000.



The cash, from Durham City's Freeman, will help meet the biggest running costs of the Northumbrian Blood Bikers regional fleet of dozen bikes and eight cars which burn their way through more than £7,500 worth of fuel annually and run up a £26,000 insurance bill.

One of the most frequently used bases is just a few hundred yards from the University of Durham Hospital, with its unpaid riders and drivers drawn from surrounding villages. One of the team is Steven Laws, who lives in the city and qualified for right of entry into the Freeman's ranks on completion an apprenticeship more than 30 years ago.

Over the last decade, the Durham riders have completed nearly 5,000 runs. The volunteers deliver the service free to the NHS, receive no Government funding and rely entirely on donations and fund raising.

Kirsty Lawrence, a trustee of the bikers' charity, said: "We don't make any charge for the service we provide, not least so the money the NHS saves in transportation costs can be put back into their front-line care of patients. We rarely find out who we have helped but one day we might be the ride of your life.

The chairman of the freemen's charitable trust, Eric Bulmer, said: "Once again a group of volunteers, whose work goes unseen and often unacknowledged and yet provide a vital service for our local community. We are delighted to provide the support they surely deserve.



26/04/2025

### Time For Reflection In a Peaceful Woodland Glade

Ambitious volunteer workers have transformed an overgrown woodland into a haven of peace and tranquility - which includes a public tea room in the trees – thanks to a second injection of cash from Durham City's Freeman.



Staff at Lionmouth Rural Centre started work on their £10,000 woodland project, adjacent to their Broadgate Farm site, located between Esh Winning and Ushaw Moor, last spring.

The freemen's charitable trustees initially pledged £1,000 towards the woodland development but last autumn promised a further £3,000 to help underwrite costs of the wooden tea room, destined to meet fresh public demand at the centre's thriving plant nursery.

More than two dozen local people aged from their teens to mid-60s - some struggling to cope with social or learning difficulties, others suffering or recovering from mental health issues - attend the centre. They are supported by two full-time and three part-time staff, backed by a team of 16 volunteers.

The attendees are offered day care support and training in woodwork, horticultural, art, pottery, cookery and conservation.



The development work, tackled by staff and clients, offers public access along a featured pathway now lined by scented plants and shrubs and leading into an open glade with seating, benches which enjoy a view of the nearby River Deerness.



A once overgrown plot at the centre containing trees and shrubs - some of them rare - are now embraced within the new managed woodland venture.

Centre manager Brigid Press explained: "We had a thriving tea room before Covid but were forced to close it down. We then had to utilize that area to provide chairs, desks and sufficient space for clients to allow us to re-open. Now clients have been reluctant to give up their own little pieces of territory and the change happily works better by allowing us to take on more clients."





20/05/2025

### Birth and Death of a Village Remebered

A once thriving mining community on the outskirts of Durham, born in the early 19th century and disappearing 150 years later, is being permanently remembered in a heritage project supported by a local community group, the city's freemen and the county council.



The seeds of the village of Middle Rainton are reported to have been sown in 1820 with the sale of a plot of land - sandwiched between the existing villages of West and East Rainton - to the agent of Lord Londonderry, whose ambition was to sink a large pit and build homes for miners.

But by the summer of 1970 it was finally gone, victim of the county council's hugely controversial Category "D" Plan, launched in 1951 targeting 114 ailing villages of "limited economic development." The proposal suggested eventual demolition by cutting public support and watching the labelled communities "deteriorate out of existence." While many villages successfully fought off the "Category D" stigma others, among them Middle Rainton, appeared to accept their fate as inevitable - the last remaining part demolished to make way for the A690 dual carriageway.

Three years ago a small plot of land on which the village once stood has been transformed into a community orchard, an innovative plan suggested by the 16 members of the West Rainton Green Group.

Two memorial heritage boards are being crafted by the county council and one of them, outlining the lost village's history, will be paid for with a £1,250 grant from the city's freemen. The second will identify trees within the orchard and invite people from the local community to pick the fruit.

Wikipedia reports that within four years of his lordship's 19th century land deal the Meadows Pit and associated coke works became reality, one of six other ventures in the surrounding area which had started up as early as 1816.

Cottages for miners working the Meadows were speedily erected and census returns 30 years later confirmed the majority of Middle Rainton's 189 homes were occupied by pitmen and their families.

At its height the population topped more than 800, supported by shops, four pubs, a Salvation Army Citadel and Primitive Methodist Church - and a policeman living within their midst.

By the turn of the 20th century the village's population had dipped below 550 and the local medical officer of health expressed repeated concerns about insanitary conditions. Some homes fell into disrepair, others were uninhabitable and four were so bad they were demolished. By the end of the Second World War conditions remained a major concern, blighting its future. By 1950 just 30 properties survived with most residents migrating to East and West Rainton and Peterlee.



Annie Hastie, a member of the 16-strong the Green Group, allied to the West Rainton and Leamside Village Partnership, said: "We believe the project will benefit the whole community, an area where people can enjoy a walk in a pleasant space and, during the autumn, be at liberty to collect fruit.

"The county council, who have labelled the area a community site, will cut grass once a year and we have agreed to clear away the cuttings to encourage appropriate soil conditions."

Eric Bulmer, chairman of the freemen's charitable trust, said "We are pleased to support a group of volunteers not only providing a wonderful natural setting for the community but also informing today's generation of the heritage of the site and the vital part the mining history in supporting the industrial revolution."



29/02/2024

## Festival Targets Children And Young People To Build On Success

Organisers of a successful performing arts festival, planning their fifth successive annual event in Durham City, are focusing attention on children and young people in the surrounding communities to help build on dramatic rises in audience numbers.



Last summer the five-day Durham Fringe Festival sold 7,500 tickets – an increase of forty per cent - to performing arts audiences attending productions embracing music, dance, theatre, magic, stand-up comedy, cabaret and children's shows.

Supported by a new £1,000 donation from Durham City Freeman's Charitable Trust and £2,500 from EMG Solicitors, the festival team is working in partnership with the charity Durham Area Youth and local youth projects which are part of the Durham Youth Print network, to reach children and young people who live in local villages and areas on the outskirts of the city centre.

The community engagement project has involved pre-festival taster performances, including rising star Ben Donaghy at Pitlington Village Hall and North East Culture Awards Winner, Isabel Maria, at the Sir Thomas Allan Assembly Rooms in the city. Young people visiting the Assembly Rooms also had a "behind-the-scenes" tour backstage and heard from various staff members about their routes into careers in the arts.

Analysis of a survey carried out in the wake of last year's event, confirmed an audience satisfaction rate of over 93 per cent and also identified "the potential to deliver the magic and buzz of a festival experience" to young people from culturally deprived areas close to the city.

Festival director Stephen Cronin said: "Previous Durham Fringe Festivals in the city have proved the appetite and demand for a festival of this sort in an area which has one of the smallest arts and culture sectors in the country. We are constantly looking to grow and diversify our audience and the generous support of both the Freeman and EMG will be transformational and a key part of helping us to do that.

"This community engagement project with Durham Area Youth and Durham Youth Print is a logical next step for us and builds on partnership work in previous years. We were delighted when Durham Youth Print approached us with the idea for a joint project as we've always wanted to do more to reach children and young people who live so close to where the festival takes place.

"We are very aware of the cost of living crisis for families and the support from the freemen and EMG will mean we can offer tickets and support with transport for young people involved in the project. They will also have the chance to take part in supported volunteering. We've got some fantastic shows for younger audiences this year, so the timing of the project is perfect."

Eric Bulmer, chairman of the Freeman's charitable trustees said: "We are delighted once again to support the Durham Fringe, particularly its project to engage with young people in our communities."

Claire Hewitt, head of business development at EMG added: "Supporting our local communities is at the very heart of what we do and we are excited to be supporting this opportunity for so many young people who are interested in the arts."

Durham Area Youth's chief executive Emily Burns said: "It's a brilliant opportunity for young people from across the outskirts of the city to engage with the festival and have an experience they might not ordinarily have access to. It promotes collaboration and partnership working across sectors, all for the benefit of improving opportunities for young people."

## Durham City Freeman

08/07/2025

### Group Takes To The Road To Drive Home Prostate Cancer Message

Durham-based members of the region's only pro-active prostate cancer support and promotion group are taking their message on tour – thanks to the financial backing of the city's freemen.



The work of four dozen members of the group, who have all undergone prostate treatment, had been restricted to regular meetings at the Brawn's Den public house in Brandon.

More recently group members, supported by nine volunteers, have taken the opportunity to speak at a number of indoor venues. But, they can now reach a wider audience at outdoor events with a travelling promotional show underpinned by a £1,250 gift from the Freeman's Charitable Trust.

The money has been used to buy a gazebo, portable speaker, a table and chairs as well as promotional leaflets and posters. They will be used to drive home the message at selected local venues during the summer months, including car rallies, fairs, and trade shows

## Charitable Trust

Les Cleckner, a leading member of the group, said: "Prostate cancer is almost becoming an epidemic with, in some cases, one in four men being affected. Our aim is, in the first instance, to prompt awareness of the statistics and urge men to seek early medical screening for a disease which claims lives.

From our own experience we are also able to offer first-hand advice and answer questions about treatment options and what they involve."



Recently the group recruited the backing of Brandon Parish Council, whose members agreed to meet the cost of installing a defibrillator at the group's public house meeting place. Additionally, they have established links with Talking Prostate Cancer UK and the promise of support from former Tyne Tees TV newsreader Pam Royle.

Sixty-seven-year-old Les, a time served craftsman, was part of the maintenance team at the University Hospital of North Durham for 42 years before retiring in 2023. A year later Les, married with two sons and four grandchildren, was sworn in as a member of the freemen's Joiners' Company and was established in 1661.

Eric Bulmer, chairman of the charitable trust, said: "We are delighted to provide a grant to a group of such dedicated volunteers who provide such a valuable service within our community and beyond.

"It is also significant Les Cleckner, a fellow freemen at the forefront of establishing the group, is reinforcing the key role the city freemen's craft companies have played in the life and development of the city since the Middle Ages."



13/07/2025

### Summer Tea Party Launched in Royal Company

A lively summer afternoon tea party in the former Durham pit village of Waterhouses has proved yet another hit with local residents.



The launch of this latest event complements a range of popular activities which earned the community association a commendation from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth as part of her Golden Jubilee celebrations.

The party, organized by the village's small independently-run and self-funded charity, was open to villagers of all ages who enjoyed food and refreshments prepared and served by dedicated volunteers. Supported with a £600 donation from Durham City's Freemen, the Waterhouses Community Association's decision to introduce the summer event followed the success of a free Christmas lunch served up to 60 senior citizens.

"We have a population of just over 1,000 and our mission revolves around providing social leisure and educational activities for all ages and capabilities. The village hall offers a central hub for community life, lifts spirits, reduces isolation, and fosters a sense of togetherness and belonging where people can come together and enjoy each other's company," said Tracey Gemski, a trustee of the charity and events co-ordinator.

Over the past 28 years the association's activities have grown to provide coffee mornings, playgroups, cinema evenings, music and memory afternoons, scout meetings and social gatherings, with the Christmas lunch topping the list.



The Queen's letter of commendation hangs proudly in the foyer of the village hall and was joined at the end of 2024 by the King's cipher, hand crafted in sandstone. It was fashioned by Steve Mann, a Durham Cathedral stone mason and mounted on a wooden frame created by joiner Anthony Swallow, another member of the cathedral team. Both men are also city freemen.

Eric Bulmer, chairman of the freemen's charitable trustees said: "The community of Waterhouses is well served by this dedicated group of volunteers whose wide range of activities embrace people of all





## Durham City Freemen

18/07/2025

### Freemen Offer a Repeat Gift to City's Oasis of Calm

A late-night weekend refuge in the centre of Durham, offering a helping hand to anyone in distress, has been given a renewed boost by the city's freemen.



Last year they made a £1,000 donation to the funding-dependent Safe Hub, operating from within the Market Place's St Nicholas's Church - and have matched it with an identical gift this summer.

A late-night weekend refuge in the centre of Durham, offering a helping hand to anyone in distress, has been given a renewed boost by the city's freemen.

Last year they made a £1,000 donation to the Durham County Council-led Hub at St Nic's operating from St Nicholas's Church in the Market Place - and have matched it with an identical gift this summer.

In the intervening 12 months the centre's three Safer Street Wardens - currently operating between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights - have provided "pastoral care" to 1,000 individuals caught up in disorder. Within the safety of the church the team offer hot drinks, snacks, water, blankets and, where needed, flip flops to substitute for lost footwear.

## Charitable Trust

Since its launch in February 2022 the running total of alcohol, drug and domestic abuse related incidents, as well as those with suspected mental health issues, now stands at over 4,000 incidents to date.

The Hub remains a key element of a partnership led by Durham County Council who employ the wardens and is supported by Durham Constabulary, the parish council, city centre businesses, the Temperance Trust and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The operation was originally launched to aid women in distress but is now committed to extending a hand to anyone thought to be vulnerable. While demand for the Hub's services remains constant it has in the past risen at the start of the university's academic year.

Eric Bulmer, chairman of the freemen's charitable trust added: "We are pleased again to be able to support a group working to care for vulnerable people in a safe environment."

20/07/2025

### Ambulance Charity Urgently Seeks 'Good Samaritans'

An urgent public appeal for volunteer car drivers has been launched by the County Durham-based ambulance charity, Supportive, to help people of all ages - including children - reach both vital and routine health-related appointments and social activities.



The charity, based in Ferryhill, operates a two dozen-strong fleet of crewed ambulances and ambulance cars, committed to supporting services provided by the NHS and North East Ambulance Service.

But since its launch 30 years ago, it has also relied heavily on "Good Samaritans" from within local communities to meet up to a third of the calls from members of the public needing help. Before Covid 150 community drivers were available but since the epidemic the number has halved and new recruits are urgently needed.

Community drivers using their own cars have made tens of thousands of journeys, picking up isolated passengers, many unable to use or access public transport, to reach the specialist help they need to improve health and enjoy a better quality of life.

The current volunteers come from all walks of life, many retirees who give up

their time, sometimes a few hours a week, in return for a mileage allowance.

Among them is retired schoolteacher and mother-of-three Shirley Grayson, now in her 90s and one of six volunteer drivers in the Barnard Castle area. It is a service she has provided for 14 years, mostly in the Nottinghamshire area.



Robert Montanarini with Colin Tazey, Shirley Grayson, Eric Bulmer and Peter Embleton

But, when she moved to the dales three years ago to be near her daughter, she switched to Supportive and drives as and when required to hospitals in Darlington Teesside and, on occasion, Durham.

"I am comfortable driving within an hour of home on roads far less congested than those around my former home. In rural areas with limited bus services, people struggle to get to important hospital appointments and consultations and I am happy I can still help," said Shirley, who has seven grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. Her driving support during Covid was limited but admits it had a profound effect.

And retired civil servants Peter and Joyce Embleton, a married couple who live on the outskirts of Durham City, also provided critical support during the pandemic.

Joyce currently uses her car to make half a dozen trips a week, while Peter concentrates his efforts on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and can complete a dozen runs, some at short notice and on occasion involving children in care. His trips have, however taken him further afield to hospitals in Northumberland, Teesside, North Yorkshire and, on one occasion, Leeds.



## Durham City Freeman

20/07/2025

### The Law, The Beat - And All That Jazz

Solicitor Kenneth Howe continues to make his presence felt in retirement by holding, perhaps, one of his most unusual briefs - as drummer in a five-strong vintage swing and jazz ensemble.



Kenneth is a trustee of both Durham City Freeman and their charitable trust, while his musical adventures are fronted by founder and lead vocalist Damaris Jean alongside keyboard player Jonathan Howe, saxophonist Louise Lockhart with Simon Smiles on double bass.



The quintet - the Ragtime Rewind Vintage Swing Band - specialize in Swing,

## Charitable Trust

Charleston and Blues music from the 1920s to 30s but have added rock music and sultry vocals to their repertoire venturing, on occasion, into the hits of Lady Gaga and Dolly Parton.



Their most recent appearance at the Durham Fringe Festival, their fifth in successive years, was enthusiastically received by an audience at a venue on Palace Green. But journeys since their launch a decade ago have taken them much further afield.

As a group we have great fun doing what we do and that helps cultivate interaction with our audiences which is important," he added.

A well-known figure on the regional court circuit he started his legal career in 1967 and continues to maintain his longstanding links with Durham Rotary Club and Freemasonry.





10/06/2024

### All The “Smart” Moves Come With The Freeman’s Backing

A long-established community hub on the outskirts of Durham, facing rising costs and the threat of losing out to advancing technology, has been provided with a low-tech solution to high-tech problem by the city’s Freeman.



Part of the core business of the Framwellgate Moor Community Centre, a charity launched in the late 1960s, provides “wellbeing” activities for local people struggling with loneliness, mental health issues and social isolation.

But, in an average week, another 500 to 1,000 people pass through its doors, to take up education, learning, leisure, sport, fitness and cultural activities offered by a range of approved organizations whose hire of the three main halls and four meetings rooms provides vital income.

With a part-time staff of four, supported by six volunteers, the centre is also regularly used for coffee mornings and other highlights including a Christmas Fayre and refreshments following the Remembrance Day Parade.

Secretary Peter Sykes explained: “Over the past few months it has been discouraging to find we are missing out on potential hall hirings because we are unable to offer those enquiring the latest technology needed to support their work. This is almost entirely down to the inflexibility of our existing equipment

and the same problem has also affected receipt of grants for specific projects.”

The solution, provided by way of a £5,000 gift from the freemen’s charitable trust, covers the cost of new mobile smart screen technology, the installation of electronic sockets in every hall and room and secure storage for the equipment.

“What we will now have at our disposal a lasting facility which will significantly improve the centre’s attractiveness to current and potential users. We are immensely grateful to the Freeman and their generosity will be marked with a plaque displayed permanently in our premises,” added Peter.

Eric Bulmer, chairman of the charitable trust, said: “We are delighted to support a dedicated group of volunteers who are providing a wonderful environment in which the local community can benefit greatly from a wide range of activities.”

## Durham City Freeman

10/06/2024

### Freemen Help Trainees Break Down Barriers To Win A New Start In Life

A Durham-based charitable hub – one of four regional centres offering trainees from the margins of society the chance of advancement by learning new skills - is expanding its operation thanks to a gift from ancient trade guilds of the city's freemen.



For nearly fifteen years Handcrafted Projects has, from their Langley Moor skill and business base, delivered person-centred therapeutic activities alongside the charity's other centres in Chester-le-Street, Gateshead and Sunderland. During the last year they supported 650 people across their four locations.

The 170 adult trainees currently supported at their Langley Moor complex - their ages ranging from late teens to pensionable age - have taken up supervised woodwork training five days a week, opted for developing cooking skills twice weekly or, more recently, been offered places on accredited cookery courses with similar accreditation in woodwork also to be offered soon.

"Our aims are to reach the most marginalised people in society by working alongside them to help them take the first steps towards turning their lives around by overcoming the barriers they face – whatever they may be.

## Charitable Trust

"We offer tailored training opportunities, including accredited courses, to build confidence and nurture the coping strategies they need to reach their individual goals. Alongside this we offer a limited chance of supported housing in County Durham, Sunderland and Gateshead," said Lorraine Jones, the Durham Project Manager.

"All adults are welcomed at our free sessions, regardless of their background, history or current struggles. Many have poor mental and physical health, others a history of homelessness, crime, addiction, long-term unemployment and domestic abuse, or are simply seeking community to combat isolation," she added.



The £5,000 gift from the freemen's charitable trustees will help underpin further development of the ground-floor woodwork workshop and training kitchen as well as new areas on the first floor.

At ground level a new community room will offer an informal welcoming space for visitors and newcomers, as well as a designated area for trainees to sit together as a community to take their daily hot meal, which is free.

The first-floor will become a multi-purpose home to a range of new course ideas. Headings currently under consideration are employability, digital and craft skills, budgeting, barbering, pottery, literacy and numeracy, as well as therapeutic and creative activities.





## Durham City Freeman

10/06/2024

### With The Freeman On Board Pitmen's History "Seams" Clearer

The multi-million-pound rescue of Durham's Miners' Hall, to be formally unveiled to the public later this year - will be fronted by a key feature funded by a £3,000 gift from the city's freemen.



The transformation, which has breathed new life into the dilapidated Redhills building in Flass Street, was launched nearly a decade ago and has cost £12 million. It has now become a centre for education and, at the same time, honours the cultural heritage of the county's coalfield.

The Durham Miners' Association had offices in North Road before the switch to the Redhills in 1915, at that time representing three million pitmen and their families and going on to create a prototype welfare state.

The penny and halfpenny union subscriptions from colliers toiling below ground in hundreds of collieries large and small, were used to improve conditions above by building retirement bungalows, sports grounds and welfare halls with reading rooms and libraries.

One of the most striking elements of the restored complex is the Pitmen's Parliament, a Grade II-listed forum where DMA coalfield delegates would gather.

The DMA returned Redhills to the people of the county in 2018 and a charity now runs it on their behalf.

## Charitable Trust



The freemen's donation will cover costs of a display board at the newly modernized main entrance, giving visitors an understanding of the sequence and depth of coal seams beneath Durham's rolling hills and valleys - and the names by which they were known, among them Brass Thill, Busty, Five Quarter and Maudlin.





## Acknowledgements

### Dame Sue Snowdon

I heard earlier today that the Trust is coming to an end very soon.

I was so very sorry to learn this and wanted to express my thanks for all that you have achieved.

The trust generously supported local charities and many worthy causes and the apprentices. You leave a huge legacy, upholding the heritage of the Freeman by maintaining this important role, particularly vital in these challenging times for the most vulnerable in our local area, and I'm very sorry that it has come to an end.

With renewed thanks and every good wish

*Sue Snowdon*

### Hawthorn House

On behalf of everyone at Hawthorn House, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks for your incredibly generous gesture, Your continued kindness and support over the years have made a meaningful difference to our service users. We are truly grateful for your thoughtfulness and the positive impact you have helped to create. I will be honoured to receive the cheque on behalf of Hawthorn House and our service users, and I look forward to expressing our appreciation in person.

Thank you once again for your generosity and ongoing support.

*Susan A Smith – Registered Manager  
Hawthorn House*

### Durham District Prostate Cancer Group

This is amazing news for our group we have been so blessed to have the Freeman Charitable Trust and your amazing donations, the gazebo is working hard around the area raising awareness of prostate cancer in men and helping groups raise funds for St Cuthbert's hospice Durham. I will tell the group about the good news so we can do our own PSA testing at Brandon community centre. I will be attending the cheque presentation at Framwelgate Moor. Thank you Eric and the committee for your great donations it's gonna save mens lives.

*Les Cleckner  
Founding Member*

### Durham Alliance For Community Care

Thank you very much for your kind donation, we will do something special with our Members.

*Helen*

### Festival of Remembrance

It is such sad news that the Trustees have had to take the difficult decision to close the Charitable Trust; it is a tragic reflection of the challenging, often brutal, economic climate that we unfortunately find ourselves facing – something that I guess is also reflected to the Lord-Lieutenant's request not to increase ticket prices and allow for the Festival to remain as economically accessible as possible to the communities of Durham and the wider North East.

I am though extremely grateful to the Trustees for inviting us to apply to the Charitable Trust for a final grant for this year. We are hugely appreciative of the Charitable Trusts generosity and benevolence, particularly in the face of such severe challenges.

With very best wishes,

*Lieutenant Colonel Barney Barnbrook  
Regional Director North East & Yorkshire*

### Supportive

I would just personally like to extend our thanks for the continuous support of the Durham City Freeman and commend you and the trust for your charitable work that you do.

Please pass on my regards to the trust and their members. Thank you so much for your generous Grant you will be pleased to know this will support our volunteers a great deal.

*Robert Montanarini  
Project Lead Supportive*

## Durham City Freeman

### Remembrance Parade

Thank you so very much indeed. I am speechless!! Your support has been outstanding and very much appreciated.

*Arthur Lockyear*  
Chair of the Parade organising Group

### TIN Arts

It is very sad news that the Durham Freeman Charitable Trust will soon be dissolved as the Trust have helped lots of local organisations including TIN Arts. I'm sure all who have received support are grateful for the work you do and your support and will be saddened by this recent news.

*Claire Defty*  
Operations Manager

### Down's Syndrome North East

I am sad to hear that your charity is closing, thank you all for your continued support over the years. It has made a huge difference to our members.

I have fond memories of you coming to see our art and dance workshops and kindly providing a donation for BLAST! 2024 'Out of this World'. It was a big success with our members.

*Melanie Atkinson*  
DSNE Trustee and committee member

### Henry Smith's Charity

On behalf of the Trustees of Henry Smith's Charity I would like to express our thanks for the cheque recently delivered. As you might know we currently provide annual awards to apprentices at New College. This donation will allow us to enhance our future awards. We will be acknowledging the Durham City Freeman Charitable Trust donation in these awards.

We are also discussing with the Durham Sixth Form Centre the opportunity to develop a scheme to support apprentices encouraged by your donation.

*Ian Mackenzie*  
Chairman

## Charitable Trust

### St Cuthbert's Hospice

Thank you for ringing me with the wonderful news about the donation of £15,000 which is fantastic news.

I can't wait to tell everyone at the hospice when I'm there tomorrow.

On behalf of St Cuthbert's Hospice please pass on a massive thank you to everyone who is making this donation possible.

We really can't thank you enough.

*Patricia Boynton*

*Claire Defty*  
Trusts and Grants Manager

### Chemotherapy Unit University Hospital Durham

We would like to express our deepest gratitude for your generous donation of £1000.00 to support patients on the Chemotherapy Unit at University Hospital North Durham. We truly are grateful for your support.

The staff and patients are appreciative of your most generous donation.

County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust Charity helps to support the Trust to enhance patient care and wellbeing by providing medical equipment, products, and education that would not be available to the NHS other than through charitable funding so the impact you will make through this donation truly makes such a massive difference.

Thank you for helping to make a difference.

### Durham Action on Single Housing

I would like take this opportunity of thanking Durham City Freeman so much for their very kind and generous donation of £1,000.00 to Durham Action on Single Housing.

This donation is greatly received and will be shared amongst all of our residents within DASH accommodation services, whether this be towards individual Welcome Packs which consist of food parcel, toiletries, cleaning packs etc or activities to assist in emotional and wellbeing.

*Claire Knaggs*  
Senior Service Manager