**Circuit Property Report to Circuit Council and AGM June 2024**

Angie Creswick and Lois Cross

**Projects**

**Acomb Methodist Church – Tea and PV Project and Diamond Jubilee Projects**

In the last year Acomb has successfully completed the garden room project and installation of Solar PV Panels on the rear elevation of the rear hall to power the heat pump heating of the new space. The PV panels were fully funded by the District’s Tea and PV project with a grant from Centrica.

Acomb is now working on an ambitious ‘Net Zero Scheme’ to replace the church windows with double glazed units, repair and insulate the roof and add a 44kW solar panel array with 10kWh of battery storage.

The church are also working on plans to refurbish the former caretaker’s bungalow to the rear of the property and to make this available for rent as social housing through the City of York Council’s Yorhome scheme.

**Central Methodist Church** – **Chapel reordering, part of Transforming Central**

Central Hall Venues continue to work with the church on increasing use of the chapel and rear halls and they report a steady stream of enquiries from a wide range of sectors and an encouraging number bookings with users including Candlelight concerts, York St John University lectures.

After several years of negotiations with the Methodist Listed Building Advisory Committee about proposed changes to the chapel interior to facilitate better disabled access and more flexible use by church and community, the LBAC have withdrawn their objections and agreed to some limited box pew removal and installation of a mobile organ console. The church are currently awaiting the quinquennial report in order to incorporate repairs into development of the reordering project and seeking funding.

The usage of the premises by Carecent has expanded to include more afternoons and the feasibility of making further improvements to the Carecent spaces is currently being investigated.

Kyra Woman’s Project are based at Central and run a wide range support programmes for vulnerable women there although the lack of fully accessible space continues to be a challenge.

**Easingwold Methodist Church – Window replacements and flat roof work**

In the past year the church has replaced the windows with double glazed units and re-roofed the flat roofed sections of the building including improving insulation.

**Heworth Methodist Church – Window replacements, part of Open Church Project**

In the past year the church has installed new double glazed windows on the front and side elevation of the hall and front dormer as part of their project to engage better with their community and reduce their carbon footprint.

**Leases/ Licences**

**Trinity Methodist Church:** The licence with the Growth Company for the CFO Activity Hub will end in July 2024. Plans to sell the premises are ongoing (see below).

**Melbourne Terrace Institute/ Centre, re-Lease (FRI- full repairing and insuring):** Lambert Smith Hampton have been briefed to negotiate heads of terms to re-lease the property to CYC (City of York Council), the head leasee, and Blueberry Academy, the sub-leasee. The current lease runs until Nov 2025.

**Letting of Manse at Copperclay Walk, Easingwold:** A serious water leak earlier this year has taken a long time to dry out and for remedial decorating and safety work to be done. The property is now nearly ready to be let.

**Sales**

The sale of **Stillingfleet** Methodist Church for £85,000 was completed in February 2024.

We anticipate completing the sale of **New Earswick** Methodist Church to the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust in the next few weeks- the paperwork has been signed off and the last few processes are taking place. This will be for £25,000. Our options for disposing of this site have been limited due to restrictive covenants on the property.

**Dunnington Methodist Church:** We are still awaiting a formal response from the City of York on the pre-planning application which will inform how we can market the site. They have indicated that we will have to market the property for some time to establish whether there is any demand for it to continue being used as a community venue before an application for change of use will be considered.

**Stamford Bridge:** A Designated Advisor’s Report was received earlier this year and architectural fee proposals have been obtained as was advised. We are currently seeking advice from TMCP since the feasibility of getting planning permission for change of use has been questioned.

**Stillington:** The final service was held at Stillington in December 2023. Villages Together Methodist Church continue to be responsible for the building and sale, with assistance from Angie and Lois. A Designated Advisor’s report and architect’s advice has been received to inform the sale process.

**Trinity:** Lambert Smith Hampton have conducted some pre-marketing in advance of the building becoming vacant. So far there have been two viewing sessions each with a number of interested purchasers, including from several non-Methodist churches and cultural groups. We are seeking TMCP’s approval to proceed with best and final bids.

**Stillingfleet Methodist church**

The sale of this property for the price of £85,000 was completed in February 2024.

**Use of the Circuit Hub**

The Hub is now in use three days a week for work to support for asylum seekers and refugees run by Refugee Action York and York Learning on Mondays, language classes on Thursdays and York Family Learning providing support for the parents of children in local schools on Wednesdays. With Circuit youth activities on Friday afternoon/ evenings and frequent Circuit meetings on Tuesdays, this means the building is being heavily used during the week and the income from this has helped fund work to make our heating and lighting more energy efficient and install a fire alarm system.

Looking ahead, the above organisations want to use the hub Mon, Tue and Wed 2024/25. It is hoped that we can upgrade the insulation and look at other measures to reduce our energy consumption and make our guests welcome.

**Energy Audits/Net Zero**

In line with York Circuit’s Environmental Policy, we are introducing energy audits to help the Circuit and churches identify affordable ways to reduce the Carbon Footprint of all our buildings and reduce energy consumption. Some of these have been funded by the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Energy Efficiency Scheme and it is hoped that this will also lead to grant funding for the work.

Many churches are looking for ways to reduce their energy consumption because of the escalation in utility costs, their desire to provide community Warm Spaces and in response to climate change and injustice. Churches are encouraged to engage with the Circuit Eco task group for a wide range of ideas and encouragement and to look at the Action for Hope resources.

**Annual Returns**

Thank-you to the churches who have completed their Annual Returns and those who have attended the drop in sessions we’ve run recently to assist with the process. Please note the New Annual Return questions launched in 2023 included questions that help churches consider their mission and ministry in their particular context and questions about how churches are responding to the need for all of us to reduce our Carbon Footprint. The Old Annual Return questions are still available to help church managing trustees check they are compliant with their legal responsibilities but no longer need to be submitted online. Please speak to Angie or Lois if you need any assistance.