



THE DONNINGTON HOSPITAL TRUST

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Consultation on Proposed Changes to The Donnington Hospital's (DHT) Charity Commission Scheme

The Trustees of DHT are inviting the current beneficiaries of the Trust and other interested parties to comment on proposed changes to the Trust's Charity Commission Scheme (the statutory document by which the Trust is governed). The Trust wishes to expand its charitable objectives from almshouse provision and "relief in need" to a wider set of objectives, thus allowing the Trust to assist a far wider group of beneficiaries, voluntary organisations and charities over a wider area than just Berkshire and Oxfordshire. Accordingly, we would welcome your views and feedback by 1st April, 2022.

DHT's governing document is a Scheme dated 20 January 1989. As a charity DHT is obliged to make sure that it is furthering its charitable objects. As part of this obligation, the Trust needs to ensure that its activities reflect its charitable objects. In order to ensure that its objects are fit for purpose, DHT is proposing to modernise its governing document (Scheme) to update its charitable objects. It has already simplified, with the consent of the Charity Commission, its governing structure and that is now in place.

We set out below the proposed changes to the Trust's Scheme:

Proposed Changes to DHT's Objects

DHT proposes to update its charitable objects, as follows:

1. The provision of almshouses for the poor and relief of those in need;
2. To relieve financial hardship and distress;

These two objects are current, but they are not explicitly expressed in the 1989 Scheme.

3. To advance religion and spirituality for the benefit of the public (with special concern for, but not exclusively for, Christianity) by providing grants for the preservation, repair, maintenance, improvement and upkeep of churches, other religious buildings and meeting houses;



4. To promote for the benefit of the public good the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment to enable sustainable land management. “Sustainable land management” means management of land in ways which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; and
5. The area of benefit shall mean England and Wales.

The rationale for updating the objects is summarised below:

- A. The Trust wishes to set out clearly its charitable objects in an updated Charity Commission Scheme that reflects the ethos and spirit of Donnington Hospital which has been built up over 600 years. The Trust’s Scheme has been regularly updated over the last 60 years (1958, 1971 and 1989), the current Scheme is over 30 years old and is now considered outdated. The Trustees wish to adopt a Scheme that is fit for the 21st century.
- B. DHT wants to re-introduce the charity’s support for historic religious buildings, as set out at object 3. The charity’s original 1393 “Lawes, Statutes and Ordinances” (being the charity’s founding rules) stated that the residents of the almshouses had a duty to “worship of Almighty God and our Lady St. Mary and all the holy company of Heaven”. The charity feels that it is important to re-establish its support for preserving historical religious buildings and meeting houses.

As part of the provision of almshouses over the years, DHT has developed expertise in land and building management. Environmental concerns and practices have developed over time and the charity believes that it is now important to ensure that it provides and maintains its almshouses sustainably in the interest of future generations of beneficiaries. Housing for the elderly and vulnerable is not always available - demonstrated by the current housing crisis. In order to enhance almshouses, DHT considers current and social economic circumstances and the most sustainable means of carrying out their charitable purposes. Although DHT already has the ability to manage its land and buildings sustainably, by adding the duty to conserve the natural environment and promote sustainable land management as a charitable purpose, DHT will be able to support other charities in doing the same.

DHT is one of the largest almshouse charities in the UK and is well resourced to continue to support its current beneficiaries, principally the almshouse residents located at the six sites in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, whilst expanding the individuals and charities to whom it can offer support. The Trust therefore proposes to widen its area of benefit from Berkshire and Oxfordshire to be able to provide almshouses nationally. It is evident that many almshouse charities have not been fortunate and the Trust would like the option in the future to help, or merge with, struggling almshouse charities outside of the current locality to be able to help even more beneficiaries.



Corporate Trustee Appointment

DHT has recently undergone a governance restructure which has been approved by the Charity Commission. The Charity Commission has authorised the appointment of a Corporate Trustee of the charity. The Corporate Trustee will continue to be managed proactively with no change to the Trust's day to day functions. This change simply allows the Trust to modernise its structure whilst retaining its charitable history.

Administrative Amendments

The Trust is also taking this opportunity to update the Scheme to deal with administrative and procedural matters. This is mainly so that DHT's new Scheme can reflect the appointment of the corporate trustee, benefit from modern wording and be easier to read, understand and apply.

Your Feedback

If you have any views or comments on the proposed changes, please email them directly to office@donningtonhospital.com or you can post them to The Donnington Hospital Trust, The Trust Office, 1 Groombridge Place, Donnington, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 2JQ. The deadline to provide feedback is 1 April 2022.

1st March 2022