

Architectural Heritage Fund

The Waterhouse Chapels, Ince Cemetery – End of Project Report

1. Introduction

The Waterhouse Chapels project continues to gain momentum, building on a year of vibrant community engagement, creative partnerships, and growing local enthusiasm. Whether long-time volunteers or new supporters, we thank everyone for being part of this shared journey to bring the chapels back to life for the whole community.

2. Conservation and Design Progress

Our work with conservation architects **Buttress** is now complete. Their comprehensive study explored a range of adaptive re-use options and associated costs for the Waterhouse Chapels. Each proposal is guided by the principle of sustainability and community benefit, with a strong focus on transforming the chapels into a valued local space that celebrates both heritage and new use.

3. Creative Partnerships

A key highlight has been our collaboration with the **Manchester School of Architecture (MSA)**. Students produced a series of stunning architectural models of the chapels, reimagining how these historic buildings could serve modern community needs. The partnership has brought innovative ideas, creative energy, and professional visibility to the project—helping to inspire new thinking about restoration and reuse.

4. Digital and Outreach Developments

A website has been developed, providing a comprehensive platform for sharing stories, images, and research about the Waterhouse Chapels, Ince Cemetery, and the broader heritage of Ince. It serves as a central resource for the public, schools, and volunteers to learn more and get involved.

We have also continued to develop a strong online presence through the **Friends of the Waterhouse Chapels** community, encouraging dialogue and participation from across Wigan and beyond.

5. Engaging the Next Generation

We're now working with **two local primary schools** to deliver a dynamic heritage education programme this September. The sessions will include classroom-based creative activities and guided site visits, all focused on Alfred Waterhouse, the chapels, and the local history of Ince. This initiative will inspire young people to connect with their community's past while nurturing pride and curiosity in their shared heritage.

6. Community Events and Heritage Activities

Exploring Ince – Heritage Walk

A new **heritage walk** has been developed from Ince Bar to Ince Cemetery. The route explores key landmarks including industrial, religious, and social heritage sites—railways, canals, coal mining heritage, churches, and historic halls—telling the story of the people and industries that shaped Ince.

Cemetery Tours

Guided tours of **Ince Cemetery** are being introduced, highlighting notable monuments, the lives of significant local figures, and the story of Alfred Waterhouse and his architectural legacy in the chapels.

Heritage Open Days

As part of **Heritage Open Days**, we hosted two successful events:

- **12th September:** *Ince Heritage Walk*
 - **14th September:** *Chapels Presentation with Jim Meehan and Sean Jinks*
These events drew strong local attendance and reinforced growing community interest in the chapels' restoration.
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7. Community Consultation

A series of **Consultation Days** has been organised in partnership with volunteers at **Ince Community Centre**, providing local residents with the opportunity to share their ideas, memories, and aspirations for the chapels. The feedback gathered continues to shape our vision for future community use.

8. Partnership Working

The **Friends of the Waterhouse Chapels** group continues to work closely with **Wigan Council** and the **Wigan Building Preservation Trust** to move the project forward. This partnership remains central to unlocking the next stage of restoration, ensuring that the project is rooted in collaboration, shared stewardship, and community benefit.

9. Looking Ahead – Building on Strong Foundations

We are actively exploring new **funding opportunities** to support the next phase of the project. With a strong case based on heritage value, community use, education, and sustainability, we are confident that a compelling platform exists to attract additional support.

The foundation laid through community engagement, partnerships, and educational outreach provides a powerful springboard for the next stage—transforming the Waterhouse Chapels into a restored, thriving, and inclusive space for Ince.

10. Conclusion

The project has made significant progress, both in technical development and community engagement. Our work has deepened public connection to the chapels and strengthened the case

for their restoration.

Thanks to the dedication of our volunteers, partners, and supporters, the vision of bringing the Waterhouse Chapels back to life for the whole community is closer than ever.

Version 2

Architectural Heritage Fund

The Waterhouse Chapels, Ince Cemetery

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Our **new website** is now live, providing a comprehensive platform for sharing stories, images, and research about the Waterhouse Chapels, Ince Cemetery, and the broader heritage of Ince. It serves as a central resource for the public, schools, and volunteers to learn more and get involved.

We have also continued to develop a strong online presence through the **Friends of the Waterhouse Chapels** community, encouraging dialogue and participation from across Wigan and beyond.

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9. Looking Ahead – Building on Strong Foundations

We are actively exploring new **funding opportunities** to support the next phase of the project. With a strong case based on heritage value, community use, education, and sustainability, we are confident that a compelling platform exists to attract additional support.

As part of this next phase, we are **developing a list of companies that can provide financial and operational assistance through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes**. This will help build lasting partnerships with local and regional businesses who share our vision for community regeneration and heritage preservation.

The foundation laid through community engagement, partnerships, and educational outreach provides a powerful springboard for the next stage—transforming the Waterhouse Chapels into a restored, thriving, and inclusive space for Ince.

10. Conclusion

The project has made significant progress, both in technical development and community engagement. Our work has deepened public connection to the chapels and strengthened the case for their restoration.

Thanks to the dedication of our volunteers, partners, and supporters, the vision of bringing the Waterhouse Chapels back to life for the whole community is closer than ever.

Version 3

Executive Summary

The **Waterhouse Chapels at Ince Cemetery** project has made significant strides over the past year, successfully strengthening its foundations across community engagement, education, partnerships, and strategic planning. Through collaboration with conservation architects, educational institutions, volunteers, and local authorities, the project is building strong momentum toward the restoration and adaptive re-use of the Alfred Waterhouse–designed chapels as a vibrant community asset.

The completion of conservation and feasibility work by **Buttress Architects** marks a key milestone, providing a clear and costed vision for the chapels' future use. Parallel to this, an inspiring partnership with the **Manchester School of Architecture** has delivered a set of professional architectural models that creatively reimagine how the chapels could serve the community today.

Community involvement remains central to the project's success. A new **website** now serves as a digital hub for sharing the story of Ince's heritage, while a growing network of volunteers and local partners continues to drive awareness and participation. Engagement initiatives such as **Consultation Days**, **Heritage Open Day events**, **guided cemetery tours**, and a forthcoming **Heritage Walk** have all deepened local pride and understanding of Ince's cultural and industrial past.

Educational outreach has also expanded, with a new programme being introduced in collaboration with two local **primary schools**, combining classroom learning with creative heritage activities and site visits. This initiative ensures that the next generation is meaningfully connected to the area's history and the ongoing story of the chapels' restoration.

Looking ahead, the project is actively exploring **funding opportunities** to support the next phase of development. A key focus is on developing a list of companies that can provide **financial and operational assistance through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) partnerships**, strengthening the sustainability of future delivery.

Working in partnership with **Wigan Council** and the **Wigan Building Preservation Trust**, the Friends of the Waterhouse Chapels are continuing to build a compelling platform for investment, restoration, and long-term community benefit.

The achievements to date demonstrate clear progress, broad community support, and a strong strategic vision. Together, these form the foundation for the next stage of funding and delivery — ensuring that the Waterhouse Chapels are brought back to life as a lasting landmark of heritage, education, and community regeneration.

1. Conservation and Design Progress

- **Architectural Study by Buttress** completed, outlining a range of viable reuse options.
- Focus on sustainable, community-driven uses for the restored chapels.
- Costed proposals will inform the next stage of funding applications.

This professional analysis has provided a clear vision and technical foundation for the restoration, enabling informed discussions with stakeholders and funders.

2. Creative Partnerships

- **Manchester School of Architecture collaboration** completed successfully.
- Students developed architectural models and design concepts that interpret the chapels' potential for new uses.
- The partnership has introduced innovative ideas and raised awareness of the project within the architectural education community.

This collaboration has generated visual and conceptual material that will support engagement with funders and the public alike.

3. Digital and Outreach Developments

- Launch of a **dedicated project website**, providing accessible information about the chapels, the cemetery, and Ince's wider heritage.
- The website includes historic research, photographs, and project updates, increasing transparency and public engagement.
- Growing online community through the **Friends of the Waterhouse Chapels** social media platform.

This enhanced digital presence has strengthened communication and provided an educational resource for both local residents and heritage audiences.

4. Engaging the Next Generation

- Partnerships formed with **two local primary schools**.
- A new **heritage education programme** begins this September, combining creative classroom learning and on-site visits.
- Themes include local history, architecture, and Alfred Waterhouse's legacy.

This initiative ensures long-term sustainability by connecting young people with their heritage and encouraging family participation in the project.

5. Community Engagement and Events

- **Consultation Days** held with support from **Ince Community Centre** volunteers to gather public input and ideas.
- **Heritage Open Days 2025** featured two successful events:
 - *12 September – Ince Heritage Walk*
 - *14 September – Chapels Presentation with Jim Meehan and Sean Jinks*
- **Guided Cemetery Tours** launched, focusing on notable monuments, local figures, and Waterhouse's architecture.

- Development of the **Exploring Ince Heritage Walk**, highlighting key sites such as railways, canals, collieries, and historic halls.

These activities have drawn strong community participation, increased awareness of the chapels' significance, and fostered pride in local heritage.

6. Partnership Working

- Continued collaboration with **Wigan Council** and the **Wigan Building Preservation Trust**.
- Strong volunteer involvement through the **Friends of the Waterhouse Chapels** group.
- Ongoing relationship with **Ince Community Centre** supporting outreach, event delivery, and consultation.

These partnerships have been essential in maintaining momentum and ensuring local ownership of the project's outcomes.

7. Looking Ahead

- **Further Funding:** Actively exploring new funding streams to support the next development phase.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Developing a list of potential business partners to provide financial and operational support through CSR initiatives.
- **Next Phase Planning:** Using Buttress' feasibility findings to refine options and prepare for detailed design and capital funding applications.
- **Expanded Programme:** Building on the success of current community engagement to deliver additional tours, educational sessions, and creative workshops.

The strong base of community involvement and partnership working provides an excellent platform for securing the next stage of investment.

8. Conclusion

The past year has seen the Waterhouse Chapels project make tangible progress in both vision and community impact. With feasibility work completed, partnerships strengthened, and local enthusiasm growing, the project now stands ready to move into its next phase of development.

The Friends of the Waterhouse Chapels, working with Wigan Council and Wigan Building Preservation Trust, remain committed to ensuring these unique Alfred Waterhouse buildings are restored and repurposed for the benefit of the whole community—honouring Ince's past while building for its future.