

## **PROJECT 14 / – Report to the AGM of the Norman Nicholson Society, April 24<sup>th</sup> 2021**

**Charlie Lambert**

Despite the very considerable challenges posed by the Covid epidemic, the last 12 months has been a productive and promising year for our campaign to buy and restore Nicholson's lifelong home.

The project was formally launched in 2017 and had initial success in obtaining just under £10,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to carry out surveys and specialist reports. This led to an application for over £500,000 to the Lottery Heritage Fund in 2018 in order to go ahead with the purchase and the work, but this was rejected. We then went through a period of reflection and reassessment, took advice from Cumbria CVS and others, and in the autumn of 2019 your committee made the decision to set up a Community Interest Company (CIC) to drive the project forward.

The Norman Nicholson Society CIC was formally registered at Companies House in March last year – just as Covid was beginning to make life very hard for everyone. However, 12 months on, I am pleased to report that the CIC is up and running with a vibrant board of directors, has achieved notable successes by obtaining grants worth approx. £30,000, is about to sign a contract with one of the leading museum design consultants in the country, and has established itself as a significant player in the Millom and wider Cumbria community.

To put flesh on the bones of the above, the CIC secured £20,000 in funding from Copeland Borough Council, this being fast-track money made available through the Government's Towns Fund, a scheme to boost regeneration in towns across the country. The money was used to create a smartphone app, 'Norman Nicholson's Millom', from which users can download two walking trails around the Millom area, both routes taking them to places which were important to Nicholson, with audio, text, images and extracts of Nicholson's work being displayed on their phones as they walk. A condition of the grant was that the project had to be completed by the end of March, which effectively gave us four months from start to finish. We achieved this, despite the enormous difficulties created by the lockdown, and I am grateful to my colleagues on the CIC board Nick Lancaster, Janice Brockbank and Sue Dawson, for the immense amount of painstaking work they contributed in order to make this happen.

Our other major success is a grant of £7,800 from the Architectural Heritage Fund, confirmed in January. This in fact is the second piece of significant support we've received from the AHF, the first being in-kind funding of a business consultant's time to review the project's business plan, which took place in the autumn. The latest grant is paying for the services of the museum design consultant I mentioned earlier. The experience and contacts that the consultant will bring are outstanding. She has worked with the Wordsworth Trust and Windermere Jetty among other prestigious clients, and I am absolutely thrilled that she is going to be part of our team.

This being my first report to you since the CIC was set up, I should explain the make-up of the board. The CIC currently has eight directors. Four are well known to the Society already – Sue Dawson, Janice Brockbank and myself are all members of the Society committee, and Phil Houghton is a long-standing member of the Society and a great supporter of our activities over the years. Phil brings his professional expertise from his ‘other’ life as a quantity surveyor and consultant within the construction industry. Other board members are of Nick Lancaster, former MD of Langdale Leisure and a well-known figure in the world of tourism and hospitality; Dr Penny Bradshaw, Head of English at the University of Cumbria; Mel Narongchai, head teacher of Haverigg Primary School; and Andrew Makin, a financial advisor from Millom who, like Mel, is very prominent in supporting community activities in the area. I was honoured to be elected Chair of the CIC at the first full meeting of the board last May.

So where are we up to in terms of the whole point of the project, to buy 14 St George’s Terrace and breathe new life into the place? We are vigorously pursuing a variety of funding opportunities. Instead of putting all our eggs in one basket as we did at first when applying to the Lottery Heritage Fund, we are now making a number of applications for differing amounts. At the moment we have an application under consideration by Sellafield, and we are part of Copeland’s application to the Government for a multi-million pound grant under the main tranche of the Towns Fund scheme – decision due in May. Other applications will follow.

The CIC has its own website and if you would like more information please do check it out – [www.normannicholsonhouse.co.uk](http://www.normannicholsonhouse.co.uk).

And if you would like to support us and have a stake in this project yourself, there is a crowdfunding page now in operation. All donations are really welcome and will show funders that we, the Norman Nicholson Society, can contribute something ourselves towards developing Norman’s house for future generations. Please do chip in you can at [www.GoFundMe.com](http://www.GoFundMe.com) and search for Norman Nicholson House, or click on this link <https://www.gofundme.com/f/breathe-new-life-into-norman-nicholsons-house?qid=ddff07f6d75dbccdced6850c61f53253>

One final note from me, this time as the Society’s media officer – we now have our own YouTube channel, which can be found by going to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and searching for Norman Nicholson Society, or by clicking on this link [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=norman+nicholson+society](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=norman+nicholson+society). This adds to our website, Facebook page and Twitter feed in enabling us to connect directly with anyone interested in Nicholson worldwide. We also continue to enjoy a good relationship with the local media, especially BBC Radio Cumbria and the NW Mail, and it’s worth noting that BBC TV NW featured the launch of our trails app in their breakfast bulletins recently.