



# Walpole Old Chapel - June 2024



## Special Newsletter!

Dear Reader,

We are devoting this special newsletter to recent events which were very unexpected and may have major implications for The Chapel into the future.

Trustees of The Friends were informed on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May that Historic Suffolk had withdrawn its offer to take on ownership of The Chapel from the Historic Chapels Trust.

We were told by Chris Smith, Chairman of the Historic Chapels Trust that, unless a credible new owner could be found, The Chapel was at risk of being sold off by auction at the end of the three-year period that HCT has been given to 're-home' all of its 20+ buildings.

We already know, from discussions over the past two years, that none of the 'obvious' national organisations were prepared to take on HCT's buildings, with their repair liabilities. Those approached already by HCT included The National Trust, English Heritage, The Churches Conservation Trust and the Friends of Friendless Churches. So, with little hesitation, trustees offered that FWOC would be prepared to take on ownership of The Chapel. We have now been told that this is a 'strong possibility' but there are several steps to be successfully completed before a transfer could go ahead. Initially, we are providing HCT with additional information they have requested in order to carry out their 'due diligence' responsibilities.

It feels appropriate to we FWOC trustees that the ownership of one of the oldest Independent Chapels should return to the local community who cared for it for the first 300 years. But we are under no illusions - The Friends charity would be taking on substantial new responsibilities. We would become the lead organisation in relation to the 'Unwrapped' (re-rendering) project, rather than supporting another owner, and we would become responsible for the long-term care and maintenance of the building. Fortunately, through the first years of the unwrapped project, we have developed good relationships with excellent heritage conservation professionals. Also, the repair needs of The Chapel are firmly on the radar of important organisations, including the Local Planning Authority, Historic England, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Suffolk Preservation Society and the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust.

These new responsibilities would also have implications for the FWOC charity. We need additional Trustees and Friends with the following skills and experience to help ensure The Chapel is saved for future generations: events management; finance & resource management; building/yard maintenance; PR/advertising and fundraising. If you feel able to help, please contact us on [info@walpoleoldchapel.org](mailto:info@walpoleoldchapel.org).



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We will do our best to keep you fully informed about these momentous developments over the next few months. We are also very happy to answer any questions you might have. So, again, please do get in touch.

With good wishes from

The trustees of The Friends of Walpole Old Chapel:

Lyn Banks  
Lin le Versha  
Paul Simmons  
Miriam Stead  
Simon Weeks

## Events

We have already had some excellent events at The Chapel this season, with more music, talks, poetry and drama still to come. Check it out at <https://walpoleoldchapel.org/programme/>

## Contact information

Simon Weeks, Secretary: 01986 784348 or [info@walpoleoldchapel.org](mailto:info@walpoleoldchapel.org)

To become a Friend of the Chapel: [friends@walpoleoldchapel.org](mailto:friends@walpoleoldchapel.org)

To contact the Discovery Project team: [discovery@walpoleoldchapel.org](mailto:discovery@walpoleoldchapel.org)

## Patrons

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