

TILEHURST PEOPLE'S LOCAL CHARITY

Formerly the Poor's Land Charity of Tilehurst, founded 1811 (incorporating Wheat's Charity, 1731)

Regd Charity No. 204048 Website: tilehurstplc.org.uk

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Press Notice

A Tilehurst charity that has been helping people in hardship and distress for over 200 years is hoping that a land sale will bring in the cash it needs to secure its long-term future.

The Tilehurst People's Local Charity (also known as the Tilehurst Poor's Land Charity) (TPLC) owes its existence to an 1811 act which transferred local common land into a trust to provide fuel for the poor. As society has changed, the charity has adapted to meet a whole range of more modern-day needs, providing grants for essentials like cookers, washing machines, furniture and school uniforms, as well as funding course fees and school trips for students who would not otherwise be able to afford them. It does something which the Local Authority cannot do – helping people who have fallen through the safety net of the welfare state – people who are unable to meet their needs using the available state benefits.

For families who are struggling to make ends meet, a relatively small amount of support can be a real lifeline. It can open the door to a warm home in the winter, or nourishing food for the children, or a piece of carpet so that the baby doesn't have to crawl on a concrete floor. As one recent recipient of a grant put it, *"life has been a bit uphill for us, with a good dash of fear thrown in, but your help has made the world of difference ... God bless you for being there for me and for so many others"*.

The funds for this vital work still come from the charity's land-holdings, either in the form of rental income, or interest on the capital from previous sales. However, in many years the level of applications exceeds the money coming in, and the Charity doesn't have the funds to consider many of the requests it receives. In the face of ever-increasing need the Trustees have long wanted to scale up their activities, but cannot do so unless the charity's finances can be placed on a more sustainable footing. The situation becomes more pressing each year, but has a new urgency in the wake of a pandemic which has put many people's jobs at risk, and with projected fuel price rises set to push increasing numbers into poverty.

Thanks to Reading Borough Council's local plan, which earmarked areas of the charity's land for residential development, the Trustees are now a step closer to freeing up the funds needed to ramp up TPLC's poverty-beating work. Unused land at Kentwood Hill and Armour Hill is now on the market, with the proceeds of the sale set to be invested to provide a solid income – money which will be used to help many more local people for many years to come. None of the adjacent land that is now used as allotment gardens is up for sale, and TPLC has no plans to sell this land in the foreseeable future.

Notes for Editors:

1. The aims of the Tilehurst People's Local Charity (also known as the Tilehurst Poor's Land Charity) are the relief of poverty, by making grants of money for goods and/or services, to persons in need, hardship or distress.
2. Grant applications are referred to TPLC through Local Authority departments like Brighter Futures for Children, Adult Social Care and Housing, as well as other charities like Launchpad and the Citizens Advice Bureau. Recent grants have included:
 - Carpeting for a family where the father is suffering from cancer;
 - White goods for a family fleeing sexual violence;
 - School uniform for a mother with 3 children;
 - Clothing support for an Armed Forces veteran;
 - Furniture and white goods for a refugee family suffering domestic violence;
 - White goods for a family with 3 children with significant health problems.TPLC has also provided grants directly to organisations such as Launchpad and foodbanks. The charity receives many testimonials, from organisations and from individuals, as to the difference its help makes.
3. TPLC is not a *fund-raising* charity. It is an *endowed* charitable trust, whose Trustees are responsible for managing its endowment assets to generate income which is used to make grants to those in need. Most of the TPLC income is provided by interest on the capital obtained from historic land sales, and by rent from land that is leased or rented out. Income has varied in recent years from £18,000 to £20,000, and the Trustees have to be careful not to give out grants in excess of what the Charity can afford.
4. When originally set up in 1811 to 1817, the Trust was endowed with approximately 11.5 hectares of land, held in trust for the poor. Over time, sales of land have reduced this figure to approximately 6.5 hectares. The proceeds of all land sales must be invested, to yield the income which is needed to make grants.
5. In November 2019, after extensive public consultation, Reading Borough Council included two TPLC-owned sites in its Local Plan as "Development for Residential" areas. On 1st December 2021, these two development sites, plus a small intervening copse, known as "the Withies", were put up for sale to generate a continuing income stream for the charity. The area with trees is identified in the Local Plan as an Area of Biodiversity Interest, and is protected from development through planning restrictions and a Tree Preservation Order.
6. Despite claims on Social Media, no allotment gardens are included in the land for sale, and there are no plans to sell them.