Sudbury Arts Centre

Options for the future

Community meeting Tuesday 14th April 2026




Churches Conservation Trust

Purpose of the meeting:

To share with the Sudbury community, groups, volunteers and regional stakeholders the options being explored for post funding at SAC, from November 2026 and to seek support and input.

Key points to be covered

- Meet the team
- Brief background to the project
- Update on the process for options post funding
- The options still being explored
- Need for support
- Any feedback and questions

We have approximately an hour.

The Team

Judith Patrick – Director of Operations – lead at senior management and trustee level

Anna Wilson – Head of Region, SE – regional lead

Jane Hatton – Local Community Officer whose portfolio include St Peter's

The Arts Centre team:

Alli Burke – Arts Centre Project Manager

Claire Ashby – Events Coordinator

Sophie Woods – Participation & Engagement

Jonny Rogers – Facilities & hospitality assistant

Brief background

The project was long in the development phase, first being discussed in 2017, before successfully securing funding and completing capital works in 2023.

During that development phase, there were several operating models discussed, including the café being leased to a 3rd party. Ultimately, The Bridge Project partnered with CCT to operate the arts centre, employ the staff team and run the café in house.

After a very positive 18 months, and due to external factors not SAC, the Bridge went into administration in March 2025. This was a difficult time for the Arts Centre, its team and volunteers. Their continued dedication and passion for SAC is incredible.

CCT took over direct operation of SAC and employment of the team. The commitment by CCT was for the grant funded period subject to review and consideration after the funding ends.

Much of the funding was from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, this carries a 25-year contract between CCT and NLHF.

The project and beyond

The conservation (capital) works

This included creation of the mezzanine and kitchen with server and the toilets. New furniture and equipment was purchased and storage space created – all for the smooth operation of the Arts Centre.

An important output for NLHF is heritage restored in a better condition and this was a major part of the capital project.

The delivery phase (revenue funding)

This is the running and staffing of the Arts Centre, in line with the project approved purposes agreed with the Heritage Fund. It includes an intense activity plan, focusing on expanding access to heritage for all. This phase provides a funded opportunity to test and establish income generating activity and the team have worked really hard and been very successful.

CCT's current financial commitment

Insurance £8650; utilities will be c. £12,000 plus a 10% commitment to the project delivery phase

CCT's likely commitment after October 2026

This depends on the operational model favoured but it could be as much as £80,000.

The process for options post funding

- We are contractually required to consult the NLHF and seek approval from them for any significant change

- The ultimate decision on the future direction lies with our Board of Trustees, particularly given that it will have significant financial implications

- The business plan will need a full revision as it was written pre covid and much has changed

Options considered

The following options were presented to the NLHF and our trustees in March:

1. Continue with an ‘as is’ staffing model with a view to growing financial sustainability, including monetizing all activities of all roles. Income generation is key

2. Offer SAC to the market for a 3rd party operator

3. Employ a 3 day per week Site Coordinator who would facilitate access for dry hires

4. Continue with an ‘as is lite’ staffing model with a view to growing financial sustainability, reducing the team to 3.but generating income to sustain the operation

5. Close the doors – included to demonstrate the ongoing maintenance costs

Preferred options for further development and financial modelling

NLHF would prefer option 1 as this correlates with the business plan. For CCT, any end model will need to reduce financial liability and be affordable.

There is a recognition that SAC has had an interrupted delivery phase and has the potential to success and be sustainable. We want to give it the opportunity to prove this.

Options 1 and 4 are being further modelled and developed to consider their financial viability for a decision in June 2026

The need for support

What

- Championing/supporting – attending events and activities, using the centre and promoting it to your networks
- Financial support – costs will remain high, so the community can help by simple things such as buying tickets or refreshments or by bigger donations

Why

- To be successful, sites like Sudbury Arts Centre need to be used to remain financially viable
- Affordability is a major issue and consideration for CCT. We don't have an unlimited cash flow to heavily subsidise a site like SAC.
- CCT's core funding is reducing (DCMS not meeting inflation and loss of LPWS) and the grant funding landscape is highly competitive

Feedback and questions

We have a roving mike and are opening the floor to discussion.

It would be really helpful if you could provide your name and the organisation you represent.