



## POLTIMORE HOUSE TRUST

### Statement in support of the Trust's application for the sale of alcohol

#### 1. Poltimore House Trust

Poltimore House Trust is a registered charity established in 2000 for the purpose of bringing this historic, Grade II\* listed House & Grounds back to life for the benefit of the community. The Trust is governed by an active Board of five Trustees, three Advisors and a Trust Secretary, incorporating senior-level expertise in accountancy, architecture and design, business development, charity governance, communications, conservation planning, construction, education and heritage. Since October 2021, the Trust has been chaired by Dr Peter Totterdill, a company director and retired university professor. The Trust is also supported by some 45 active volunteers.

During the last four years, the Board's strategic focus has been on the development of longer-term plans for the House & Grounds, supported by sound governance and the development of sustainable sources of income. In 2023, Poltimore House Branches Café Limited was established to operate a Café within the former chapel building, and this now provides the Trust with its largest source of non-grant revenue as well as dramatically increasing visitor numbers.

Poltimore House & Grounds also sit in close proximity to major new housing developments at Westclyst, Pinn Brook and beyond, many of which lack community facilities. Since the establishment of the Café, there has been no charge for entry to our 13 acres of Grounds which have become a much-loved destination for local families, many of whom return week after week.

An ad hoc programme of events was run for many years by the Friends of Poltimore House (FoPH), a separate charity which was also responsible for volunteer management. Activities previously managed by the Friends are now fully integrated within the Trust, enabling greater integration, better day-to-day management, and a more strategic focus. FoPH is currently being wound up as a separate charity.

Following a major arson attack in 2024, the Trust urgently needs to strengthen further its capacity for income generation, not least to provide matched funding for grant applications to safeguard the remaining Tudor and Georgian structure of the House from further damage. A detailed roadmap for recovery and reuse of the House is currently under development in consultation with Historic England, East Devon District Council, the local community, and other stakeholders.

To achieve its financial targets, the Board recognises that it needs to make better use of existing assets, notably the Café and Grounds. Whilst the Trust has neither the intention nor

Poltimore House, Poltimore, Exeter EX4 0AU

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the capacity to introduce full-scale commercial activity on the site in the foreseeable future, the sale of alcohol would achieve the following purposes:

- i) Increasing both the popularity of the Café and the value of sales.
- ii) Enabling the Café to expand its programme of evening events, including meals created by guest chefs and performances by local musicians.
- iii) Supporting and developing the long-standing repertoire of events in our Grounds, including professional theatre, concerts, food fairs and other cultural activities.
- iv) To develop further the attractiveness of the site as a venue for summer weddings.

In summary, the granting of an alcohol licence is not intended to represent more than an additional offer to existing Café and Farm Shop customers, together with a gradual expansion of current activities such as ticketed events and private hires for weddings. In this sense it is largely a replacement for the Trust's current reliance on TENS for such events.

## **2. Addressing Objections**

Poltimore House Trust was established specifically to seek new uses for this historic House and its Grounds. Previous, well-publicised proposals have included the creation of a national Centre for Contemporary Arts in the Natural World, and part-use of the House as a hotel or residential accommodation, as well as the further development of community activities.

Since 2021, the Trust has adopted a more incremental approach to restoration, making no secret of its intention to create a focal point for arts, communities, creative businesses, education, heritage and wellbeing. This vision has been extensively reported in the press, television, social media, and by means of the Trust's periodic open days. Although the arson attack means that the Trust is starting from a different position, its overall vision has remained the same.

Poltimore House Trust has always taken care to minimise the impact of activities on neighbouring properties as far as reasonably possible. However, doing nothing with the site was never a feasible option in securing a sustainable future for the House & Grounds. The Trust believes that its current strategy will prove much less intrusive to neighbouring properties than other potential options.

The specific objections raised to the granting of an alcohol licence are considered below:

### ***Crime and Disorder***

A wide range of events have been held in the House & Grounds for at least two decades, and there is no record of these having led to any criminal behaviour. Several of these events have included the sale of alcohol under TENS licences. The Trust sees no reason why this should change under the proposed licensing arrangements given the types of event envisaged.

As in the past, the Trust will continue to require adequate security measures to be in place for weddings and certain categories of music event as part of its internal governance and site hire procedures. This may include the use of registered security companies.

Dave Lee, as the Designated Premises Supervisor, has 30 years' previous experience as a pub manager, and is currently one of four paid staff employed in the Café alongside its 20+ active volunteers. The Trust does not foresee the need to employ security guards during normal Café opening hours (10.00-15.30), and there is no reason why this should change as a result of alcohol sales. Likewise, previous experience of occasional evening events where alcohol has been for sale does not give rise to any cause for concern. Evening events will also be supported by volunteer stewards (some of whom live within a mile or so of the site) to facilitate practical arrangement such as parking).

### ***Prevention of Public Nuisance***

EDDC's Environmental Health Protection Team states, "it is agreed that we do not have any objection for the new premises license application to be approved, on the basis that to date there is no evidence of public nuisance reported historically for Poltimore House." No objections have been raised by the Police or Fire Service.

The Trust has submitted an Event Management Plan and Noise Management Plan in association with this application based on EDDC guidance. The application of these plans will be overseen by the Designated Premises Supervisor.

There are no plans for the Café to compete with local pubs; rather the intention is to serve alcohol as part of its usual menu during normal Café opening hours, and during (usually ticketed) events.

Off sales will only take place through the Farm Shop, normally restricted to daytime opening hours. In line with its wider ethos, the Farm Shop will specialise in selling more exclusive ranges of alcohol from local producers not widely available elsewhere.

Like many buildings, the Café does contain known asbestos-based materials. These are inaccessible to visitors, and are deemed safe as long as they are not disturbed. The Café is protected by a 24-hour alarm system connected to a call centre.

The Trust has never, and will never, grant permission for music to be played on its premises after midnight. We are unaware of the incidents to which the complainant refers, but they would certainly have been unauthorised.

The Trust's contract with Devon Contract Waste allows for on-demand collection of recycling materials and landfill. The bins are placed adjacent to the road and collected as close as possible to collection dates.

The Trust is aware that its current Site Co-ordinator talks informally to the residents of adjoining properties from time to time, and can act as a two-way channel of communication.

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### ***Public Safety***

We foresee no undue cause for concern or any need for measures beyond those already mentioned in our application.

Evening events, especially during hours of darkness, are typically supported by stewards to facilitate access and car parking, and to prevent obstruction. We are very surprised by the allegation of aggressive behaviour from a volunteer, and any future instances should be reported to the Trust.

Toilets are available in a building immediately adjacent to the Café, and further facilities are available in the Grounds for use during events.

### ***Protection of Children from Harm***

The application states that the care of children is the responsibility of their parents or guardians, and this will be enforced by the Designated Premises Supervisor and/or his trained staff and volunteers.

### ***Charity Commission***

This application is submitted by Poltimore House Trust, not The Friends of Poltimore House as stated in the objection. The Friends of Poltimore House has currently ceased operations (see above).

Charity Commission guidance allows the Trust to sell alcohol for specific fundraising events, whilst specifying that regular sales should be undertaken by a separate company. In line with this guidance, the Trust has enabled the formation of Poltimore House Branches Café Limited to run the Café and Farmshop, including the sale of alcohol. This licence application covers both the sale of alcohol by the Trust for events and the sale of alcohol by the company.

We understand that this arrangement is in line with Charity Commission guidance and have submitted details to them for formal confirmation.

**Poltimore House**  
**28<sup>th</sup> July 2025**