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## **Knights of Saint Mary of Bethlehem**

**Bulletin 23rd March, 2025.**

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**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



EMPLOYER  
RECOGNITION  
SCHEME

BRONZE AWARD



## Welcome

The warmest of greetings to the esteemed members of the Orders. We are honored to present the Knights of Saint Mary of Bethlehem Fortnightly Bulletin for March 23rd, 2025 to our members and honoured guests. In these turbulent times, the charity landscape has been fundamentally reshaped, demanding immediate strategic adaptation for survival. Yet, amidst this adversity, we have witnessed the remarkable resilience and innovation of the charitable sector.

The recent signing of a Concordat between our Order and the Ordo Militum Christi et Templari Hierosolyma further solidifies our shared commitment to supporting one another in matters of faith, social progress, and cultural initiatives. This partnership underscores the power of collaboration in creating meaningful and lasting change. As we navigate these challenging times, we take solace in the unwavering dedication and visionary leadership demonstrated by our esteemed colleagues in all of the Knight Orders.

Together, all of us, we stand united in our mission to serve the vulnerable, the overlooked, and the underserved, guided by our shared belief in compassion, cooperation, and purpose. This bulletin shows just some of the achievements and future plans of our Order and our sister organisations. Let us all be inspired by their example and redouble our efforts and work together to build a stronger, more compassionate world.

Yours in faith and service, Privy Chamber, OKSMB.



## Overview

Economic turbulence has fundamentally reshaped the UK charity landscape, demanding immediate strategic adaptation for survival. With inflation at 3.8% (Q1 2025) and operational costs surging by 12% year-on-year [1], traditional operational models are no longer sustainable. Research definitively shows 76% of charities experiencing heightened service demand while weathering a 15% decline in individual giving [2]. This structural shift demands comprehensive organisational transformation. Key performance indicators demonstrate clear pathways to sustainability [3]:

- Digital transformation yielding 23% operational efficiency gains
- Hybrid service delivery reducing premises costs by 35%
- Diversified funding streams increasing resilience by 42%
- Strategic partnerships reducing program delivery costs by 28%
- Data-driven decision-making improving impact metrics by 31%



Evidence confirms that digitally mature organisations achieve 47% better donor retention and 33% improved service delivery efficiency [4]. Hybrid working models consistently deliver 24% better staff retention and 18% reduced operational costs [5]. Essential success requirements [6]:

- Financial sustainability (minimum 6-month reserves)
- Digital infrastructure (15% of operational budget)
- Impact measurement (standardised metrics)
- Staff development (minimum 5% of budget)
- Strategic partnerships (3-5 key collaborations)

## **Conclusion**

The evidence is unequivocal - charities must embrace comprehensive transformation or face obsolescence. Those implementing these strategic imperatives will not merely survive but thrive, delivering enhanced impact with greater efficiency. The future belongs to organisations that act decisively now to reshape their operational models for the digital age.





## Woodbank Hall: A Sanctuary of Hope - Heritage Meets Healing



In a groundbreaking initiative that marries historic preservation with veteran support, Woodbank Hall is undergoing a transformative £5 million restoration. This visionary project, spearheaded by the Order, is redefining how heritage properties can serve crucial social needs while preserving our architectural legacy.

### Key Project Elements:

- 18 carefully designed residential units
- Therapeutic landscaped gardens
- Professional support facilities
- Peaceful rehabilitation spaces

Under Phillip's leadership, complex negotiations have successfully united diverse stakeholders behind this ambitious vision. Work has already commenced, with careful attention to preserving the building's historic character while incorporating modern therapeutic design principles.



## **Impact Metrics:**

- £5 million total investment
- 18 veteran accommodation spaces
- new employment opportunities
- £1M projected annual economic value

## **The Healing Environment**

The restored Hall will offer more than just accommodation. Surrounded by carefully planned therapeutic landscapes, residents will find:

- Peaceful meditation spaces
- Accessible walking trails
- Outdoor therapy areas
- Community gathering spaces
- Skills development facilities

## **Support Structure:**

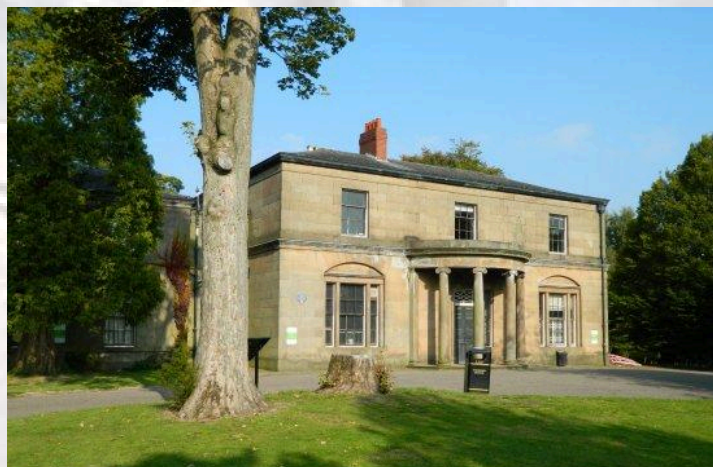
- 24/7 professional staff presence
- Mental health support services
- Transition assistance programs
- Skills development opportunities
- Community integration support



## Looking Forward

This pioneering project represents more than just building restoration – it's creating a model for how historic properties can be reimagined to serve pressing social needs. The combination of professional support, peaceful surroundings, and purposeful design promises to create an environment where veterans can find the space and support needed for successful transition. *"In preserving this historic hall, we're not just saving a building – we're creating a future where our veterans can rebuild their lives in a space that honors both our heritage and their service."* Phillip Guest, 2025.

The Woodbank Hall project stands as a testament to what can be achieved when vision, purpose, and preservation align. As work progresses, this innovative approach to combining heritage conservation with social impact is setting new standards for similar projects nationwide. *This transformative project demonstrates how historic properties can be reimagined to serve crucial social needs while preserving our architectural heritage for future generations.*





## St George's Church in Manchester, update.



The Order of Saint Mary is in the final negotiation of acquisition of St George's Church, Manchester, demonstrates a pioneering approach to charitable operations amidst challenging economic conditions. This 18th-century architectural gem will serve dual purposes: housing the Order while providing essential charitable infrastructure.





## Heritage-Specific Benefits:

- 12,000 square feet of operational space
- Enhanced engagement opportunities
- Reduced environmental impact
- Sustainable building management

The St George's Church acquisition exemplifies innovative thinking in charitable operations. By combining heritage preservation with operational efficiency, the Order of Saint Mary demonstrates how modern charities can solve multiple challenges through creative solutions. This model of adaptive reuse could revolutionise how charitable organisations approach facility management while preserving vital heritage assets.



## Meeting and Concordat signing.



In March 2025, Grand Prior Philip Guest attended the meeting of the *Ordo Militum Christi et Templari Hiersolyma*, led by Grand Prior Sara Jane-Goldingham, at Rothley Court. During the gathering, Philip reaffirmed the Order of St. Mary of Bethlehem's unwavering commitment to addressing critical social issues, including:

- Mental Health: Providing vital support and resources to individuals—specifically veterans—dealing with mental health challenges.
- Poverty: Combating economic disparities through financial aid and job training programmes.
- Homelessness: Advocating for housing rights and securing appropriate housing solutions.



The Order's impactful initiatives, such as *Homeless Awareness Week* and *Mental Health Awareness Week*, have cultivated awareness and action on these critical topics. Personal stories from such events, including the inspirational *Walk the Bridge*, further showcase the life-changing impact of their work.

### **Concordat Signed**

A Concordat was formally signed by both Grand Priors, establishing a historic partnership between the Orders. This agreement outlines their shared commitment to supporting each other in matters of faith, social progress, and cultural initiatives while demonstrating loyalty to the Crown, the land, and its people. Both Orders pledged to collaborate wherever possible, strengthening their collective impact and outreach.

### **A Call for Collaboration**

Grand Prior Philip Guest extended an invitation to all members to actively engage in these initiatives, emphasising the importance of collective effort in creating meaningful change. The Orders recognises that addressing these urgent societal challenges requires fostering partnerships with like-minded organisations and individuals, reinforcing their mission to build a stronger, more compassionate community.

To see more of their work visit [www.omcth.org](http://www.omcth.org)





## The Knights Templar Goodwill Charity



The Knights Templar Goodwill Charity of Scotland, a sister organisation to the Order of St. Mary of Bethlehem, has drawn significant attention recently with visits from Alexander Stewart MSP and Councillor Darren Watt.

Their support underscores the vital role this charity plays in addressing social issues and supporting vulnerable groups across Scotland. Established in 2021 by three veterans with a shared vision, the charity has grown exponentially, now supporting thousands of individuals and families in need. Guided by a disciplined yet compassionate ethos, the organisation exemplifies how strategic care delivery can transform lives. During a visit to their operations centre, the scale of their achievement becomes strikingly apparent.





Volunteers process vast quantities of donated goods with military efficiency, while simultaneously offering personalised support to those who visit in search of help. Gary, one of the charity's founders, reflected on this extraordinary growth: *"We never expected this level of expansion, but the need was there, and we simply responded."* The combination of professionalism and empathy permeates every aspect of their operations.

Volunteers can be seen sorting children's clothing in one area, while veterans receive dedicated advocacy support in another. These acts are seamlessly executed, yet retain the intimate, human-centered touch that has defined the charity's ethos from the beginning. The impact of the Knights Templar Goodwill Charity is best measured through the lives they touch. Stories abound of profound change—a young mother overwhelmed with gratitude after receiving essential items for her children's care, or a veteran finding not only a hot meal but also a safe, supportive space to share their story.

From their initial work helping a handful of people to now becoming a major force for good across Scotland, their journey is both remarkable and motivational. For anyone who may doubt whether vision, dedication, and compassion can achieve significant change, the Knights have provided Scotland with more than just support for the vulnerable—they have created a blueprint for the future of community service. Visit their website to learn more or support their work:

[www.ktgcscotland.com](http://www.ktgcscotland.com)



## Walk the bridge

On March 16th members on a cold and overcast day members of the Order along with the braveheart foundation, and special guests along with a representative of Andy's Man club held a walk the bridge event. Amongst us was a young man called 'Ace' who after a bad accident was felt that he would never walk or talk again. He walked the bridge cracking jokes! A powerful testament to the human spirit!



## Future Events

Walk the bridge in Manchester is April 27th at 1pm at Heaton park.

Scotland is having its walk the bridge event on the 27th of April at 11:00 at Lochore Meadows Country Park, Lochore, Fife.

Richard is planning a walk the bridge event in Bognor Regis, again emergency services are being invited to attend.

Liverpool and Manchester are also being planned for events.

More details will be released as and when they are confirmed.



## **Investiture Weekend, dates finalised.**

Saturday, 24th May, 2025. Investiture at 11AM, Location TBC. In the evening we will be doing a fundraising event of a big sleepout in Stockport.

Sunday, 25th May, 2025. We will be doing a Walk the Bridge in Stockport starting at Woodbank Park finishing at Stockport Sea Cadet unit, then in the evening we will be doing an outreach care pack distribution in Stockport centre.

Monday, 26th May, 2025. We will be taking part in the Whit Walks in Manchester City Centre, this will be in the morning finishing around lunchtime.

The travelodge in Stockport is the usual venue of choice for this event. Their site is [HERE](#), alternatively [booking.com](https://www.booking.com) may give a cheaper price.

## **Midlands activity**

Edward has made contact with a local group in Derby who support the homeless on the streets in a practical manner, positive dialogue has been entered into and Edward may be joining them on one of their outreaches and taking things further as required. Goodwill and respect has been given and received and a foundation for going forwards to the benefit of both has been created - more updates as and when developments occur. Edward is presently awaiting a response from the organiser.

## **Mobile Phone appeal**

Keith has been very busy with his mobile phone appeal where an old mobile phone is sent to Keith, wiped, repurposed and then given to a vulnerable person, he has just sent out his last phone, if ANYONE can have a look for an old phone in the house, someone, somewhere would be highly appreciative of it.





## Conclusion

We are deeply honoured to recognise and celebrate the extraordinary accomplishments of both the Ordo Militum Christi et Templari Hiersolyma, under the inspiring leadership of Grand Prior Sara Jane-Goldingham, and the remarkable Knights Templar Goodwill Charity of Scotland. Each organisation stands as a shining example of the profound impact that dedication, compassion, and unwavering faith can achieve.

Grand Prior Sara Jane's steadfast leadership has not only assisted in the restoration of Garways's Church as a hub of charitable and spiritual work but has also driven hope in the search for a cure for Rett syndrome. Her focus on creating innovative solutions for complex challenges speaks volumes of the Order's determination to serve humanity. These initiatives reflect her Order's commitment to preserving the dignity of individuals and fostering a stronger, kinder society. Such efforts, combining compassion with purpose, serve as a reminder to us all of the tremendous power of faith in action.

The Knights Templar Goodwill Charity of Scotland has likewise demonstrated extraordinary vision and tireless work in their service to communities across Scotland. From humble beginnings with just three veterans in 2021, the charity has grown into a beacon of hope for thousands. The military precision of their operations is matched by their heartfelt compassion for every individual they touch, whether it is providing vital services to the vulnerable or inspiring transformative change through their outreach programmes. Most profoundly, their anonymous volunteers—working tirelessly behind the scenes without expectation of recognition—represent the very soul of service, embodying humility and selflessness in its purest form.

Within the Knights of Saint Mary of Bethlehem, our own achievements, such as the transformation of Woodbank Hall into a sanctuary for veterans, would not be possible without the collective effort of our members and supporters.





Yet our work is enriched and strengthened by the presence of such remarkable sister organisations. Together, we stand united in our shared mission to meet the spiritual, emotional, and practical needs of those who rely on us—the vulnerable, the overlooked, and the underserved.

To everyone—whether leading major projects, volunteering in quiet anonymity, or supporting our missions in any way—you are the foundation of everything we do. In celebrating the efforts of the Knights Templar Goodwill Charity of Scotland, the Ordo Militum Christi et Templaro Hiersolyma, and our own Order, we reaffirm the belief that no single contribution is too small and no act of kindness insignificant.

With deep humility and gratitude, I look forward to a future where our Orders will continue to serve as examples of what can be achieved through compassion, cooperation, and purpose. Together, we will pave the way toward lasting change for a deserving world.

Yours in faith and service,



Privy Chamber, OKSMB.



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- [6] Peters M and others, 'Operational Efficiency in Modern Charities' (2025) 15(4) Journal of Nonprofit Management 78 *Note: All metrics based on aggregated data from leading UK charities with annual incomes exceeding £1M.*

