

# **Business Plan (2020-2025) of The Watkin Society**

## **Introduction**

**Thank you for your interest in The Watkin Society. We hope you find our plans for the development of this unique society interesting and informative.**

## **The Society's Background**

The Watkin Society has grown out of a community group called The Friends of Rose Hill, which was founded in 2015 as a result of a talk given to the Northenden Civic Society in south Manchester.

Rose Hill House, now a Grade II\* listed building, was where two forgotten stars of nineteenth century Manchester, Absalom and Edward Watkin, lived and died. The aims of the Friends remain to stimulate interest in the life and achievements of the Watkins and to make the woods in front of their former family home more accessible to the public, while respecting the integrity of the woods as displaying a high degree of bio-diversity not seen in many cities.

The group was asked to become the heritage partner for three highly successful local projects: "The Wonders of Wythenshawe", "The World of Watkin" and "The amazing Watkins of Rose Hill and their Woods".

"The Wonders of Wythenshawe" project was led by the Wythenshawe Community Housing Group. It looked at the development of the local community and its historical roots. The story of the Watkins and Rose Hill became a highlight for many people participating in this wide-ranging project and it soon became apparent that there was a resurgence in understanding the roles the Watkins had played in Northenden in particular. It was also clear that the story resonated with young and old alike.

The "World of Watkin" project saw young people researching the Watkin Story while learning transferable skills in a multimedia project. A booklet, "Jack's Story", was produced which detailed their efforts and illustrated the life of Edward. As part of their project the young people produced portraits of Edward and recreated "The Icebergs" painting that Edward had bought in 1862. It hung in Rose Hill House for 116 years until in the 1970s it was sold for two and a half million dollars at auction in New York. It is now in prize position at the Dallas Museum of Art in Texas. The young people visited Chetham's Library in Manchester, used Minecraft to build the world of Watkin, developed a website, interviewed key figures in the story and created a short film about the project, culminating in a showcase at a Grand Victorian Tea Party.

Encouraged by the success of the first two projects, the Friends of Rose Hill applied for and were granted finance from the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop the third project: "The amazing Watkins of Rose Hill House and their Woods". They worked with 120 pupils and staff of two local schools to organise art workshops, visits to the Woods and to St Wilfrid's parish church and creative writing workshops. The project resulted in the production of a "Watkin Times" magazine of the children's work, drama performances, and a unique banner telling The Watkin Story. This now hangs in St. Wilfrid's, where the Watkins are buried, and

which contains family memorials and several stained-glass windows commissioned by Edward. The Friends also recovered Edward's memorial to his father which had been 'lost' in an overgrown section of the Woods, they created pathways and benches in the Woods, restored the Watkin graves in St. Wilfrid's churchyard, commissioned a BioBlitz survey of the Woods from the Greater Manchester Ecological Unit, installed information lecterns in the Woods and developed a Watkin Walk so that visitors could interactively discover the Watkins. Additionally the Friends drew attention to the Sharstone, a large ice-age boulder in the grounds of the House, led talks at the Manchester Histories Festival, developed audio talks, contributed to Manchester's parks history, developed a Watkin beer (The Watkin Special 200) to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Edward's birth and unveiled plaques at Philips Park (Edward led the campaign that created the first three Parks for the People in Manchester and Salford) and Marylebone Station in London to commemorate Edward Watkin's railway achievements. The Friends received several awards for their work, which was celebrated with an exhibition and a short film at the beginning of 2019.

The three projects generated a group of volunteers - adults, young people and children - supported by professionals to deliver a large variety of activities promoting the Watkin Story. They brought the lives of two of Manchester's forgotten stars to the fore and placed them at the heart of Victorian society in Manchester.

Early in 2019 the Friends decided to form a Woods group and a History group in order to give a better focus to their twin aims. In addition to other activities, the Woods group are now working closely with St. Wilfrid's Primary School in Northenden, who are using the woods as one part of the school's plan to develop as a Forest School. Manchester City Council and key partners in the local community are supporting this initiative.

In June 2019 the History group - realising the great potential of the Watkin Story – decided to hold an exploratory facilitation meeting in St Wilfrid's Church. The aim was to discover how much interest there was in the Watkin Story and whether people wanted to work as a team to achieve its wider recognition.

The meeting looked at all aspects of the Watkin Story and allowed those present to discuss openly how important taking the life and times of the Watkins beyond the borders of Northenden and Manchester actually was to them. They went through exercises designed to bring their knowledge of the story and their specific points of interest to the table. A rudimentary skills and assets assessment was made and those present divided into interest groups. The evening confirmed that there were many people who wanted to be involved in this pathway. It had two significant outcomes:

1. To constitute formally a Watkin Society. This would build on the four years' solid local achievement by The Friends of Rose Hill but make the history of Edward and Absalom Watkin nationally known, in Edward's case, internationally known.
2. To hold an open public meeting and exhibition with a showing of the short film and a display of successful projects related to the Watkin Story.

The meeting was held at the end of October 2019 in the Central Library in Manchester. The audience, many from outside Manchester, were asked through discussion and completing a questionnaire to indicate their own interests in the Watkin Story, including listening to

presentations, visiting places of interest, researching and archiving of Watkin related materials. Everyone present asked to be contacted further.

As a result of the meeting in Manchester, the committee of the Society decided to commission a professional business plan to help structure its future development. One-to-one interviews with Watkin Society committee members, volunteers and other interested parties helped provide material for the plan. A newsletter was sent personally to every contact, to give information and ask for comments and ideas. This was also made available on The Watkin Society web pages.

Unfortunately, a promising process of development, which was gathering momentum, was interrupted by the Covid lockdown of March 2020. This necessitated a re-write of this business plan with modifications to the Society's tasks, though not to its strategic projects.

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## **The Society's Tasks and Projects**

To explain how The Watkin Society can make progress the tasks and projects required have been broken down into categories. In this document we see 'tasks' as the regular repeated work that makes the society function. 'Projects' are defined as the larger elements that the Society can focus on to create interest and develop a new or existing part of the story. While each project and task is looked at in isolation it is clear that there will be many cross-over points with inter-linked areas, especially in the research and archival projects.

### Tasks

It is important that The Watkin Society is well organised and responsive to the needs of members and the aims of the Society. Many of our members are older and in the current climate have considerations regarding isolating and the Covid-19 crisis. It is imperative that the Society factors this into its day-day operations and ensures that members and the public at large can enjoy engaging with the Watkin Story without increasing health risks.

The general function of the Society is led by the committee through a Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and committee members meeting regularly. These enable analysis and prioritisation of the tasks and projects at hand with occasional facilitation events with members to make progress on the future work of The Watkin Society.

It is key that the committee is developed by new and existing volunteers to manage committee processes, secure funding through a financial development plan, facilitate development meetings and task groups, host public meetings (live and virtual), update members through social media and using traditional methods such as public talks, encourage input from general members not attending committee meetings and share the work of the committee openly and transparently, for example by sending out regular newsletters and specific information to all contacts and asking for feedback.

The roles within the committee could be further defined to include the tasks required of each member, in effect a job description for roles that benefit The Watkin Society and help the Society to achieve its aims in the long term. Most members have long standing experience of committee work and expertise brought into the Society from their work experience.

### Projects

The Watkin Society's main aim is to share the Watkin Story with as wide a range of people as possible. Significant steps have already been taken over the last five years with successful projects in the community of Northenden and Wythenshawe taking the story to local schools, youth groups and societies. The chair of the Society has also given numerous talks to other interested societies and groups and spread the story beyond local borders.

The Watkin Story naturally focuses on Edward as his achievements are legion and can be viewed in the same pioneering and visionary spirit as other reforming Victorians in British society e.g. Richard Cobden, Octavia Hill, and John Ruskin. His accomplishments were many and wide-ranging and he is clearly the main focus of most of the committee and members. His father Absalom was however the starting point in many ways as "The Diaries Of Absalom Watkin: A Manchester Man" (pub. Sutton 1993) was a way into the story of the

Northenden community and provides an insight into the life not only of Absalom but also the lives of Mancunians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Absalom was involved in the formation of the Peterloo petition, he was an Anti-Corn Law campaigner and a member of the Little Circle of liberal thinkers that was key in the national campaign that led to the passing of the great Reform Act of 1832.

There are many projects that members would like to see happen or take part in creating in order to help achieve the aims of the Society. Below we have listed those that members feel are the most important. They are not in any order of priority for delivering.

- The creation of Data Banks from archival workshops and members' individual efforts. The Watkin Society is fortunate to have some superb archivists and historians among its members and can access archives in Manchester through the Archives+ Section of the Central Library, Ryland's Library, Chetham's Library and other locations that have relevance to the Watkin story, e.g. Brent/Wembley Libraries Service, Stockport, Grimsby, Folkestone & Hythe, The British Library, Hansard, Canadian archives, railway and engineering archives and many more. These collated data banks would include a comprehensive bibliography that would also support The Watkin Society members and students to join the dots of the Watkin story and allow for granular detail analysis to link the story to Victorian society and future developments from the vision of the Watkins. Archives+ would be interested in developing workshops to assist in this process. It would also help in the creation of interesting and engaging online resources. In light of Covid-19 developments this could also be a key way of engaging self-isolating and vulnerable people in the Watkin Story remotely, with society researchers creating the data bank for others to explore in more detail.
- The current website is shared with the Friends of Rose Hill (please see below for further details). The two groups have separate Twitter feeds although development of The Watkin Society feed is needed. In time it is felt that the Society will want to develop its own website and Facebook channels.
- A YouTube channel ('World of Watkin') has been reclaimed from the World of Watkin project and needs development and updating. It currently features video of the World of Watkin project but can easily be added to and host self-produced short films, documentaries and updates. This could well become a key project. It is possible that The Watkin Society could create Instagram and other social media avenues for people to engage with. This would provide engagement methods for interested people from all over the world but particularly those that only engage through online methods such as young people and those isolating.
- The more traditional methods of engaging people should not be neglected. A booklet ('Nimble Ned') was published to accompany talks and exhibitions. Its popularity led to a more substantial account of Watkin's life being written. This ('Victoria's Railway King') is to be published by the Pen&Sword company in March 2021. It should generate publicity for the profiles of Watkin and the Watkin Society and income for the Society.
- A significant aim for the Society would be for a major broadcaster to create a documentary or film based on the Watkins as this would instantly put the story into the skills in video production within the Society too.

- A regular newsletter for members is required to keep the activities of The Watkin Society in the public eye and to encourage members to get involved. It can also be used to celebrate the achievements of members in telling the Watkin Story and to make it personal and in the present. To date two newsletters have been published and distributed.
- The development of audio books (physical and virtual) to complement the talks given by the current Chair could be an avenue for income generation as the Society looks to sustainability.
- Development of a team of people to attend and speak at History Festivals, Pop-up events and Ad-hoc events, both local and national, to widen the knowledge of the Watkin Story is needed. This work could be fed into the social media channels with the creation of audio/video from the events.

The variety of specific projects for development reveals the astonishing breadth of both the Watkins' interests.

- **The Northenden Story and St Wilfrid's Story** will be a fertile field for research, including how the Watkin story impacted on the development of the local community and church. A group has been formed at St. Wilfrid's to analyse the church magazine and records with a view to archiving references to Absalom, Edward and the Watkin family along with other key points of interest for the church and Northenden community including Rose Hill House and woods. This group will be looking at the implications of the Covid-19 regulations around social distancing but is well placed as they have access to a church and a large meeting space..
- **The Manchester Story**. Absalom was a key figure in Manchester in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. "The Diaries of Absalom Watkin: A Manchester Man", form a detailed picture of his interests and reflections on Manchester and reform politics at this time. Not forgetting his personal life too! His role in the Peterloo protest could be a rich project and his business and societal impact also needs to be examined in a modern context. People like Absalom and Edward can be seen as Northerners and key holders to the Northern spirit - something that Mancunians are very proud to hold.
- **Formation of local newspapers**. Both Absalom and Edward had roles in the story of the formation of three local newspapers: The Manchester Gazette, The Manchester Observer and The Manchester Examiner, as well as The Manchester Guardian. Both were suggested as editors of local newspapers.
- **Manchester's public parks**: Edward played a major role in the creation of the first public parks in Manchester and Salford and the wider health and environmental benefits that came from this. Manchester eventually became a pioneering city in the formation of public parks and Edward led the campaign to raise money for the purchase of lands that became Philips and Queen's Parks in Manchester and Peel Park in Salford. The first annual Watkin Award for volunteer work in Manchester Parks was made in February 2020, when Manchester Council agreed that his role in the creation of the parks deserves recognition.

- **Graduate level research:** Absalom and Edward's activities had a broader societal impact on Victorian Britain and beyond. This could be the subject of research aimed at graduate level students. Access to the Watkin data bank and bibliography would be key to making this easier and accessible.
  
- **The development of school/student resource packs** will be one of the Society's most exciting and extensive fields for development. This work would build on the highly successful Watkin project involving 120 primary school children in Northenden. The resources would need to be aimed at a range of ages and abilities, e.g. Primary, Secondary, College, Extended Project Qualifications, University, Youth projects/clubs and could lead to Watkin prizes for schools' involvement. There is a huge number of study areas that could be included in the resource pack: Creative Writing, English, Art, Design, Performance, Physics, Geography, Geology, Maths, Engineering, History, STEM projects, Worksheets, Costumes, Competitions, Puzzles, Quizzes, Colouring books and in both physical and virtual formats. The Watkin Society could also look to engage directly the interest of teachers and educators and look to embed the Watkin Story in school curriculums and relevant localities. Many schools now look at the Victorian age through the eyes of important individuals of the time. On a multi-local level Edward and to some extent Absalom's achievements would allow a school to tell its own unique variation on the Watkin Story. This was a hugely successful method of engaging schools during the "The Amazing Watkins Of Rose Hill House and their Woods" project and led to the creation of The Watkin Times by St. Wilfrid's Primary and Northenden Community Primary schools. It would be fascinating to see how children and young people in other linked localities responded to the story. Resource packs could also be a novel way of engaging people in the new age of distance learning as well as enabling the Society to reach into localities and communities not within our current Manchester base.

**Railways:** Edward was known as the last of the Railway Kings. His role in building railways and the companies that ran them was one of his key achievements and is probably what he was most famous for. There is a huge project in this area alone as it also touches on nearly all other aspects of Edward's achievements. He played a major role in the development of railways in Britain and across the world, significantly so in Canada as it led to the formation of the country itself. He was a giant in the Victorian Railway Age and it could be said that British Rail was built on the back of Edward's work and that of other Victorian railway pioneers such as George Hudson and the Stephensons. They set Britain up for the transportation and environmental challenge of the next century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This project area alone could involve joint activity with many enthusiastic railway societies. Edward's role as a railway company manager or chairman in Britain and across the World e.g. London and North Western Railway (LNWR), Worcester and Hereford Railway, Manchester Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway (MSLR), Grand Trunk Railway of eastern Canada, the Athens–Piraeus Railways, Indian railways, transport in the Belgian Congo, the Great Western Railway, the Great Eastern Railway, the Cheshire Lines Committee, the East London, the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire, the Manchester, South Junction & Altrincham, the Metropolitan, the Oldham, Ashton & Guide Bridge, the Sheffield & Midland Joint, the South Eastern, the Wigan Junction and the New York, Lake Erie and Western railways. He was also instrumental in the creation of the MS&LR's 'London Extension', which became the Great Central Main Line from Manchester to London, opened in 1899. This is now celebrated with a commemorative Watkin

plaque in the concourse of Marylebone Station, which was erected as a result of the Society's initiative.

- **The Channel Tunnel:** One of Edward's most famous projects was his attempt to build the Channel Tunnel in 1880. The project started at Folkestone but was curtailed by fears of invasion from the French side. The tunnel was debated at length in Parliament. *Punch* magazine poked fun at Watkin for his support of the scheme in Commons debates, referring to him as "Lord Chunnel-Tunnel". There is a wealth of information to explore on this particular subject.
- **Canada:** Watkin rescued the finances of a bankrupt railway in Canada, the Grand Trunk, and developed it into the longest railway in the world at the time. He was asked by the British Cabinet to become involved in the negotiations that resulted in the founding of the Dominion of Canada. He wrote extensively on his travels across Canada and the United States.
- **The Icebergs:** The story of the painting, "The Icebergs" by Frederic Edwin Church, is fascinating. Edward purchased the painting for somewhere between \$10,000-\$11,500 in 1863. It was lost for over a century but was actually in Rose Hill. By the time of its sale at auction in 1979 in New York it was considered one of America's greatest paintings and sold for \$2.5 million, the highest price paid for an American painting at that time. The Icebergs is now on display in the Dallas Museum of Art in Texas.
- **The Watkin Path:** Edward created a path from a quarry to the summit of Snowdon. This was the first designated public footpath in Britain, and the first step towards opening the countryside to walkers. He built a holiday chalet at Cwm Llan in the foothills of the mountain. There is also a beautiful waterfall named for Edward on the path.
- **The Wembley Tower and Park.** Without the development of the park which Watkin created, the Empire Exhibition of 1924 would not have been held and Wembley Stadium would not have been built. This story is of particular relevance currently as the area is being redeveloped by the Quintain company. They have recognised Edward as the originator of 'Wembley'. Brent Council have offered access to records of the time in their archives and the Wembley History Society is interested in a joint enterprise with The Watkin Society.
- **Watkin connections with London** include the Watkin Folly Pub, Marylebone Station, the Five-Star Landmark Hotel (which he created) and his dispute with Lords cricket ground.
- **Watkin as an MP:** This could involve research into his political career and time as an MP through Hansard and contemporary publications and newspapers. He was a strong supporter of Manchester Liberalism and first elected Liberal Member of Parliament for Great Yarmouth (1857–1858), and then Stockport (1864–1868). In 1874 he was elected Liberal MP for Hythe in Kent and remained as an MP till 1895.
- **Famous friends:** These included Richard Cobden, William Gladstone, John Bright and many more. Many came to stay at Rose Hill and would be invited on

walks in the Woods. Watkin had many business enemies but never bore a personal grudge.

- **Watkin Walks:** A Watkin Walk has been created in Northenden. Further walks could be created in many other of the localities that the Watkin Story impacted on. There are also national and international aspects to the Story that could be “walked” using online tools and virtual/augmented reality tools.
- **Organised visits:** Trips for members of the Society could be organised to places that figure in the WatkinStory.. Some could be combined with the aforementioned walks.
- **Edward Watkin – the visionary:** A different but fascinating project would be to focus on Watkin’s vision. His concepts of a railway in Canada linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, a leisure centre in Wembley and above all his Channel tunnel in 1880 are just examples of his ability to think ‘outside the box’. An examination of his vision could include speculation on what would have been the outcomes if the Channel tunnel had been built, along with his projected tunnel linking Scotland to Ireland and his plan for a railway to India, which pre-dated the recent Chinese railway lines to western Europe.

Special attention should be given to identifying key societies, organisations and groups that have potential links to the Watkin Story. This would benefit many of the project ideas above. As each project area was explored a whole new raft of societies and groups should emerge for the Society to partner with as it is clear that the Watkin Story cuts across many aspects of Victorian life and the development of British society in the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

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## **Strategic planning**

In order to enable the aims of the Society to be achieved the following strategies and proposals have been identified:

### **A. Financial & Income Strategy**

The Society needs to develop a comprehensive strategy to sustain the work needed to make the Society successful. The strategy needs to look at managing resources and assets (funds and people) effectively and plan for new roles/projects that affect aims. It should be coupled with an annual development and planning project.

Only so much can be achieved through voluntary methods. The Society needs a Finance Action Group to develop a funding plan. This would identify key funders and projects that would be fundable as well as generating methods of sustaining the Society. It would also analyse the advantages of forming the Society as a charity, including how that could impact on grant funding as well as the aims of the society.

The Society can draw on the experience of the Friends of Rose Hill, who worked in partnership with the Wythenshawe Community Housing Group in their application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The national lottery is an area that The Watkin Society should explore but there are others.

The Society should aim to attract individual benefactors and companies that have a connection to the Watkin Story. An example of this could be the Quintain company as they are currently developing Wembley Park in London and recognise the part Edward played in the creation of the Wembley area as a destination for leisure. It is also possible that rail companies may be interested in funding projects related to Edward as “The Railway King”.

There is a host of organisations that could support a funding application, especially as The Watkin Society sees its future in working with children and young people to tell its story. Some examples would be Awards For All, Esme Fairburn, Heritage Lottery Fund, AHRC Arts and Humanities Research Council, Arcadia Fund, Art Fund/Headley, Arts Council, The Institute of Historical Research, Pears Foundation, Roger de Haan Charitable Trust (Folkestone & Hythe), Royal Historical Society, Railway Heritage Trust, The British Association for Victorian Studies.

The proceeds from talks and the sale of books/audio books could help support the work of The Watkin Society and over the long term the sale of resource packs or for members of the Society to support school projects directly could attract payments. However, The Watkin Society would need to balance furthering the aims of the Society in spreading its story without hindering access through its charging policy.

#### **Proposal:**

#### **Key projects/tasks:**

1. Set up the funding group with key members to start identifying immediate funding applications.

2. Develop a clear and wide-ranging document within the group detailing income streams and possible avenues of sustainability over a three to five-year period.
3. Write applications and work with key partners to bring income into the society for most important projects

### **B. Group Development Strategy**

One of the key elements of any group working in the voluntary or community sector is to understand how to keep the actual society moving forward on a daily basis. (These are the “tasks” described earlier in this document, as opposed to the wider “projects”.)

A key element of this is to create an assets list that identifies key skills in members and that distributes those tasks accordingly across the committee and membership. It is imperative in the Society that we know who can complete tasks to the highest standard possible, consistent with their age and personal circumstances, and to ensure that those people are sensitively supported and in some cases trained to do those tasks.

The Society needs to develop methods of remote support via teleconferencing to ensure key people can continue to support the group while also making sure that new blood is introduced to the Society as it grows out into the wider world. One aim is to see the Watkin Society embedded into communities of interest, not only in Britain.

The Group development strategy would be heavily informed and partnered with the Finance Action Group and report to the committee to ensure that decisions from both groups were in line with the Society’s aims. An ongoing discussion needs to be maintained with the committee and members to understand their personal development and rotate positions within the groups as members’ circumstances and interests change.

#### Proposal:

1. Survey committee and members for skills asset list.
2. Develop group strategy with key members identified through the skills asset survey process
3. Support group strategy through meetings, training and teleconferencing.

### **C. Partnership Strategy**

The partnership strategy would be the foundation that promotes good working relationships with partners and engages partners in projects that meet the Society’s aims and have cross-over with the aims of the partner agency.

This has already been shown to work well in practice when significant projects of The Friends of Rose Hill met the aims of the group and of schools, education groups, councils, youth services and other societies.

The Watkin Society would aim to work closely with other societies locally, nationally and abroad with linked themes. These could be societies and organisations with a focus on Victoriana, family history, railway groups (including steam trains), engineering societies, the Department of Transport, engineering institutes, Manchester University, mental health

groups, walking groups and groups linked to the localities of the Watkin story. It is important that the Society gets to grips with new methods of communication as soon as possible.

Proposal:

1. Create a method for working with partners in remote situations.
2. Identify and contact key partners to discuss joint aims and look at how formed projects could be completed and in some cases funded.
3. Attempt to visit in person as many groups and partners as possible.

### **D Marketing & Community Engagement Strategy**

The Society will need to plan carefully its marketing strategy as it promotes its links with other communities and interest groups. It will need to take a decision on membership policy. Attempts to reach out have already been made with the publication of two newsletters and public events. The use of social media such as websites, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube (among many others) can attract younger and computer literate communities while doubling up as an avenue for remote learning possibilities. The global appeal of the Watkin Story necessitates a strong online presence with the tools needed by members and those wishing to work with the Society. That presence needs to be available on demand.

The Society will as soon as possible raise its profile through public events and celebrations of key dates or places in the Watkin story, including by means of face to face working.

Proposal:

1. Develop online spaces for marketing and engagement.
2. Build website with information and archival databanks accessible on demand.
3. Add to current social media presence and build a strong following in preparation for launch in the UK and abroad.

### **E. Volunteering & Employment Strategy**

It is clear that The Watkin Society will always be dependent on volunteers for long-term sustainability. They are the drivers of the Society and will always have key roles within it. The committee's key roles are taken by volunteers. Its skills and knowledge are a credit to those involved. Members have wide-ranging skills in researching and archiving with historians involved on the committee and access to archives across the country well able to join the dots of the Watkin Story. Members have deep experience of supporting charities, societies and organisations at a granular level with direct skills in financial controls, fund raising, secretarial roles and advocacy to bring the vision of the Society to others, important contacts to develop projects and a partnership working ethos with statutory, business and voluntary groups.

However, it also clear that volunteers have time constraints on how much they can deliver on project work and as ever volunteers tend to donate time to things they love and have a personal interest in. The Society should recognise this and support volunteers and committee members to achieve the ultimate aims of the Society without encroaching on their personal lives and health. However, if the Society is to make an impact in the UK and abroad professionals will be needed to support the more intensive parts of delivering project work,

relieving the pressure on volunteers and enabling a more rapid progression for the aims of the group. This employment role could be expanded to support volunteers in group and individual settings.

The Society hopes to expand its reach to other communities of place and interest and will need to examine more closely how it can support those volunteers too and ensure that they feel connected to the Society and any training or development programmes that are offered.

#### Proposal

1. Work with volunteers to identify key skills that can support the Society.
2. Develop volunteers through training programmes and personalized support
3. Work towards employing Society Manager (funding, planning, project delivery, marketing role)

### **F. Children, Youth & Schools (Learning) Strategy**

One of the major successes of the Friends of Rose Hill has been in its engagement with schools, children & young people and associated services. The Watkin Society will be looking to create a comparable offer to engage with the Society and its aims, highlighting the fun and detective work in discovery. The emphasis should be on the learning curriculums and personal interest and satisfaction.

The strategy will need to examine some of the key elements of learning across curriculums e.g. the focus on Victorians in British primary schools. For associated services learning packs and projects could focus on students gaining Arts Awards, adding to the enjoyment of Child/Youth holiday projects while also aiming for higher-level learning to be taken on an individual basis by secondary, college and university students.

#### Proposal

1. Create basic learning packs for children and young people in a wide variety of learning settings
  2. Create a process that enables higher-level learning for advanced students and for researchers to use and add to the Society's data banks.
  3. Examine how this can be used in distance learning methods such as downloadable learning packs and online resources.
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## Executive Summary

The purpose of this Business Plan is to set down in detail the ways in which the Watkin Society should develop in the future.

The Society, established in September 2019, has the benefit of building on four years of work by its 'parent' organisation, the Friends of Rose Hill Woods, which is described in the opening section of this document. However, the world has changed between the point at which we started to develop this plan and the “new normality” we are now facing as a result of Covid-19. It is imperative that the Society sees this as an opportunity as well as a challenge but our intention has not changed: it is to identify and pursue projects that will bring the fascinating and often dramatic Watkin story to the attention of children and adults in the Manchester region, Britain and abroad.

Those projects have been identified through discussion with the Society’s committee members and draw on previous experience in drawing up business plans. They remain as our aims, though we recognise that the upheaval of Covid-19 will inevitably affect our activities and our priorities. But we believe that our emphasis on research projects can be a lifeline for Society members in isolation while providing many opportunities for people who can get out, to identify and inform others in the Society’s reach.

A key feature of our work will be to develop educational packs to attract and inform a wide range of ages and interests. Designing, researching and writing up packs to support the many rich strands of the Watkin Story which are detailed in this Plan will be key to the Society’s development as it extends its reach inside and beyond Manchester. Supporters who are unable to travel will still have an important role to play in this part of the process.

We intend to digitalise all our records to form a Watkin archive, and to make them available online.

As well as seeking to interest individuals we will look for common ground with other communities and interest groups (railway societies are just one example) round the country and abroad and to involve members of the Society who live inside and outside the original base of the Friends of Rose Hill in Manchester.

Four key decisions to be taken are:

- How to publicise the work of the Society.
- How to attract additional active members.
- How to raise funds.
- Whether to apply for charity status. This would involve redeveloping its board (or committee). and its structures to reflect the change.

**And finally.....**

**In Edward Watkin but also in his father, Absalom, we are dealing with key figures of the Victorian era who deserve to be remembered for amazing achievements which changed the lives of countless people, not just in this country. Edward was a great, dramatic character of vision, whose reputation in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century stretched way beyond Manchester and Britain.**

**The Watkin Society is determined to restore that reputation. Our business plan shows that we are no amateurs but are making a serious bid for attention on a much wider stage than the lovely Cheshire backwater of Northenden, where the two men lived and died.**

**We hope our business plan interests and stimulates you. It shows in detail what we have to offer.**

**To make an impact however, we need money, skilled advice and enthusiasts.**

**If you would like to take the contact further, you will find us at <http://friendsofrosehill.org/the-watkin-society-watsoc/> and can contact us by email at [thewatkinsociety@gmail.com](mailto:thewatkinsociety@gmail.com) or Twitter @WatkinSociety**