The Charleston Trust kicks off a new chapter in digital transformation

iplicit

Sector **Non-profit**	Previous Finance System **Sage 50**	Number of iplicit users **25**	Go Live Date **October 2022**

Switching to iplicit enables The Charleston Trust to make a big leap on their digital transformation journey.

"I'm genuinely delighted by iplicit," says Louise Zandstra of The Charleston Trust following her organisation's move to iplicit.

"Changing finance systems is massive, especially for a very small team in a small organisation. But having previously gone through a similar process with a non-finance system, which wasn't great, this one was really positive and the benefits are very strong for us."

The Trust looks after Charleston. The modernist home and studio of the painters Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, Charleston was a gathering point for some of the 20th century's most radical artists, writers and thinkers known collectively as the Bloomsbury group. It is where they came together to imagine society differently and has always been a place where art and experimental thinking are at the centre of everyday life. Today, Charleston presents a dynamic year-round programme of exhibitions, events and festivals. As Director of Finance and Enterprise, Louise is responsible for retail, catering, operations and front of house as well as leading the three-strong finance team.

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"Being able to see the main Trust and its trading company — side by side in one ledger is amazing. I really like the way I can quickly and easily change how I view information within iplicit. I can view by fund, by period, by project, just by changing the view with the little cog icon in iplicit, rather than by running six different reports. When I realised I could do that, I thought: 'Mind blown"

**Louise Zandstra
Director of Finance
& Enterprises**

Charities are complex and the right reporting is crucial.

"My experience is that charities, particularly arts charities, are often complex," says Louise.

The Charleston Trust is responsible for the house and its collection, as well as delivering the events and exhibitions programme. A trading company looks after retail on site and online. The trading company is also responsible for an outsourced cafe and the licensing of Charleston's intellectual property, name and logo.

"There's a real mix of commercial and charitable aspects, with complexity coming from restricted funds and grant funding and also Cultural VAT Exemption and Museums and Galleries Tax Relief. It makes reporting complicated because you need certain information pulled together in different ways."

'Our old system had accumulated a lot of clutter'

When Louise arrived at The Charleston Trust, two weeks into the first Covid lockdown, she was faced with a host of challenges, including a creaking Sage finance system.
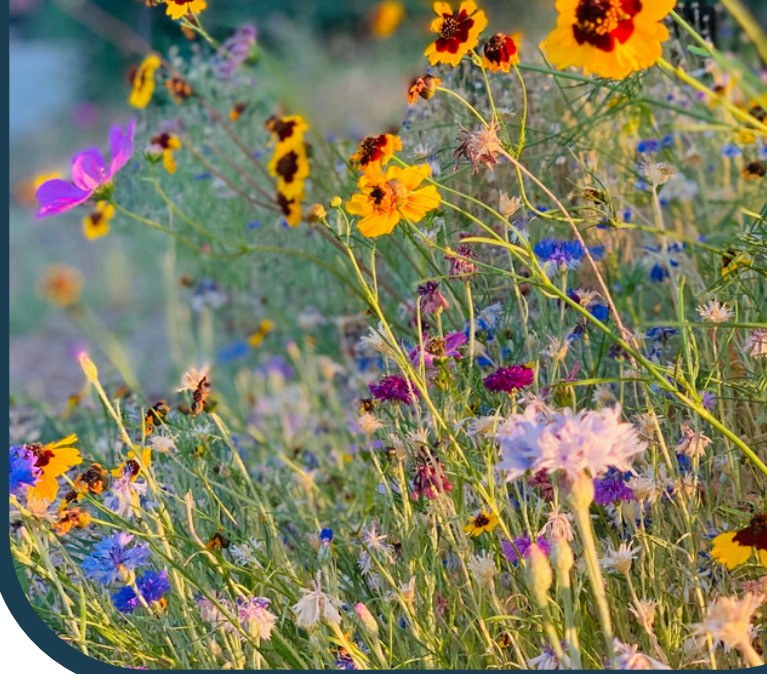
"We'd had Sage for a long time. It was one of those situations where it's evolved, people have added accounting codes and you had hundreds of codes with 'Do not use' next to them.

"We didn't have Sage set up to deal with restricted funds, partial VAT exemption, all of these things which are quite standard for charities. I'm sure there are better ways to use Sage, but what I saw when I arrived was a very basic system that had accumulated a lot of clutter over the years and everything else was done on spreadsheets outside the system."

'Picking iplicit was a gut decision'.

"I'd used Exchequer in my previous two jobs but it hadn't significantly moved on in all the time I'd been using it," says Louise.

"Some of the things I loved about Exchequer were the OLE (object linking and embedding) functionality with Excel, the

reporting, and the job codes and project costing, which I used to manage theatre productions in previous places I'd worked. But I felt that functionality hadn't really moved on in all the time I've been using it, which goes back to about 2012/13.

"As I was leaving my old job, I got an email from iplicit saying, 'We've developed this new system from some of the people who brought you Exchequer'.

"I had a meeting with Paul Sparkes, iplicit's Commercial Director, and there were some similarities with Exchequer, so I was confident I'd be able to implement it.

"It ended up being very much my decision and it was kind of a gut decision. When I saw it, I felt I understood enough of it and could see the similarities to the system I'd used before — so I felt it would be a good fit."

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> **Louise Zandstra**
> **Director of Finance**
> **& Enterprises**

We needed to make sure we chose the right finance system

"Having gone through one quite bruising implementation process with a non-finance system, I couldn't afford to have another experience like that," says Louise.

"But iplicit was a dream. iplicit's implementation consultant was great at training everybody remotely. I've done these things as on-site, all-day sessions in the past and it's really draining, but with this one, we built the knowledge up over time and consequently I feel I really understand the system, although we're still finding things and saying 'Oh, it does this; that's amazing'. We're really delighted by it."

Getting everything into the finance system and reducing the reliance on spreadsheets is the goal

"We've been able to start getting rid of some of our spreadsheets. We had spreadsheets for everything — and some were needlessly complicated. We want to minimise the amount of work we're doing outside the finance system, so we're making more use of things like reconciliations in iplicit. Everything is in the system — not in six spreadsheets and then put into the system three weeks after month end.

"With things like the approvals process — getting invoices into the system and matching them up with purchase orders — is really starting to save time.

"We've been able to get people putting their own expenses in. And I'm setting up a process to give budget holders more ownership and visibility over their projects, so they don't have to ask us 'Have I spent my budget yet?'

"Being able to see the two companies — the main Trust and its trading company — side by side in one ledger is amazing," says Louise.

"I'm responsible for management accounts and I really like the way I can quickly and easily change how I view information within iplicit. I can view by fund, by period, by project, just by changing the view with the little cog icon in iplicit, rather than by running six different reports. When I realised I could do that, I thought: 'Mind blown.'"

"We've evolved from solutions we'd cobbled together to having everything in the finance system."

**Louise Zandstra
Director of Finance
& Enterprises**

Flexibility and adaptability: enhancing hybrid working

"We've adapted to hybrid working and we needed our systems to adapt with us," says Louise.

"iplicit has been a big leap on that journey. We've evolved from solutions we'd cobbled together to having everything in the finance system.

"The money to go ahead with this came from our Cultural Recovery Fund grant from Arts Council England. Part of that funding was to help organisations become more resilient and I think there's an understanding that part of that is about having improved financial management and putting systems in place to help you report and understand your financial position in real time.

"Covid accelerated things we needed to do anyway in terms of moving to a paperless solution. Within a short period, people had to adapt to hybrid working, and now most people don't work in the office most of the week.

"Traditionally, finance teams have thought you have to be in the office, with the paperwork and files around you. But it turned out you didn't. We went home on a Tuesday in lockdown and that was it."

Accounting software for charities and nonprofits

iplicit is empowering nonprofit organisations around the world to take control of their finance operations and focus on what really matters. iplicit can help you upgrade with a number of solutions to support with accounting software for charities

True-cloud accounting software without the sky-high pricing. iplicit is the award-winning accounting solution that pays for itself.

With iplicit's automation tools you can close month end fast and with unlimited reporting dimensions, get critical insights quickly.

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