

Under fire charity increases annual grants after criticism

Trustees of a charity set up to help the poor increased the number of grants issued last year after they faced criticism over its lack of charitable activity.

The Dr Bruce Fund, which was set up more than 200 years ago to help the poor in Musselburgh, is overseen by East Lothian Council with ward councillors appointed as trustees.

But they have faced criticism in recent years from Audit Scotland for failing to promote it effectively.

Despite having an estimated £20,000 in the bank the charity made only small awards to the same two individual each year between 2016 and 2022 of between £25 to £40 each.

Now a report on its accounts for last year has revealed the trustees increased the amount issued last year to £1,465 with seven individual grants of £40 and £1,185 granted to an unnamed individual to help with flood damage restoration.

The trustees report said: "The trustees have worked to improve the process for awarding grants to enable the trust to fulfil its intended objectives which has increased the grant awards made.

"The trust intends to continue to make annual awards as funds allow."

The fund was established by Charles Key Bruce, who studied in

Musselburgh before making his fortune in East India.

When he died he bequeathed £2000 to a permanent fund from which the interest was to be used to give poor relief to people in the town.

At its height it was widely used in the town and was mentioned during 19th century hearings into the Poor Law in Scotland.

The trustees said the main aim of the grants was to support those in financial need, in particular, at Christmas time.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter