

Company Registration Number 04027621

Registered Charity Number 1086471

**COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION
AGENCY TRADING AS THE FORGE**
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)

REPORT AND ACCOUNTS
For the year ending 31 March 2025

**COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
TRADING AS THE FORGE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
TRUSTEES' REPORT
*For the year ended 31 March 2025***

The Trustees, who are also Directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2025.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered Charity Name	County Durham Arts In Education Agency (trading as The Forge)
Charity registration number	1086471
Company registration number	04027621
Registered office	The Forge, Stanley Education Centre, King Edward VIII Terrace, Stanley, County Durham, DH9 0HQ

Trustees

For the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, the Board of Trustees is the Board of Directors of the charitable company and is referred to as the Trustees throughout this report.

The Trustees of County Durham Arts In Education Agency during the period and to the date of signing this report are as follows:

Mr M Gilbey (Chair)	
Ms G Callaghan	
Mr R Cradock	Resigned 3 February 2025
Ms S Dixon	
Mr B Ebbatson	Deceased 19 July 2024
Ms A Nicholson	
Ms R Robson	Resigned 28 October 2024
Dr J Thomas	

Company Secretary	Mr A Harrington
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Independent Examiner	Pete O'Hara FCA, Chartered Accountant, 26 La Sagesse, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 3AF
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STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing Documents

County Durham Arts In Education Agency Ltd is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 5 July 2000, registered in England and Wales under company number 04027621 and governed by its Articles of Association, originally registered upon incorporation, as amended by Special Resolutions dated 26 March 2001, 23 January 2014 and 26 July 2023.

The charity was registered with the Charity Commission on 3 May 2001.

The Directors of the company are also Trustees of the charity.

Eligibility for membership of the charity, and membership of the Board of Trustees, is governed by the Articles of Association. There are no restrictions in the governing document on the operation of the charity other than those imposed by general charity law.

Structure and Governance

As at 31 March 2025 the charity had a Board of five non-executive Trustees.

The Board meets a minimum of four times per year. The Executive Director is in attendance but has no voting rights. Additional committees and working groups are established from time to time to explore specific issues.

Detailed written Board reports and an agenda are prepared and circulated in advance of meetings.

Recruitment and Appointment of Board of Trustees

The minimum number of Board Members is three and the maximum is 12.

In the past, potential new Board Members were identified through a mixture of formal and informal means, including discussions and recommendations offered by Trustees, outside advisors to the organisation, peer organisations and Arts Council England as well as through a range of advertising channels. Following an extensive process, including making knowledge of vacancies public through various channels, two new trustees were recruited to the Board in 2024. As part of the Board review process, a working group was established to review our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and our organisational policy and action plan was reviewed.

The Board also identified the need to reflect the characteristics and diversity of the communities we serve in the programmes we develop with those communities. To achieve this, we have identified a working group of teachers and educationalists drawn from the North Durham area. We can draw upon the support and advice from this group in service delivery on an ongoing basis.

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STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT (CONTINUED)

Trustee Induction and Training

New Trustees are inducted by the Chair of the Board and Executive Director and are provided with a range of resources and publications to support their understanding of The Forge's activities, including the latest annual report and accounts, a full role description and information on current and past projects.

The organisation also holds periodic Board development days and Trustees are encouraged to take up training opportunities outside the organisation when they become available.

Trustees are also kept informed on an ongoing basis around developments in both the arts in education and wider charity sectors by the dissemination of relevant information and newsletters from Arts Council England and the Charity Commission.

Organisational Structure

Day-to-day responsibility for the management of the organisation is delegated to the Executive Director, who is supported by the Creative Producer and an Administrator. Line management, supervision and appraisal is undertaken of all staff to ensure the team continues to develop their skills and working practices as part of our drive to continually improve quality.

The Board has taken an active approach to succession planning in 2024/25, reflecting the need for continued operation in the case of the absence, for any reason, of existing staff.

To this end, the Board set aside a significant element of reserves to cover the impact of absences, to fund temporary staff when necessary, to cover periods of reduced income in the event of staff absence and turnover, and to fund recruitment of new staff if and when necessary.

In the course of 2024/25, the Board commissioned a specialist agency to review and update current contracts of employment and job descriptions in preparation for any staff changes.

The Board remains heavily involved in the creation and implementation of key policy.

Key Management Personnel

The Board, who give their time freely and have received no remuneration in the year in relation to their role as Trustees, has considered who are the Key Management Personnel (KMP) of the charity. Together with the Board, these KMP are those in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the activities of the charity on a day-to-day basis.

The remuneration of the KMP is reviewed annually. The Trustees benchmark against pay levels of other charities and similar organisations within the sector and the region. Pay levels are set using this information together with the budget and forecast information, ensuring that the charity can afford any proposed increases. The Board then agrees any uplift to remuneration also reflecting indices of inflation.

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STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT (CONTINUED)

Reserves Policy

The Trustees have reviewed the charity's needs for reserves in line with the guidance issued by the Charity Commission and have established the required optimum levels of reserves for the organisation.

The Forge often requires a long lead-in time to plan programmes and projects, working within the expected programming schedules of schools, communities and artists. The reserves policy reflects the need to provide a degree of security to support planning, and to provide confidence to stakeholders that artistic plans are soundly-based and funded.

The Trustees aim firstly to hold a level of unrestricted Reserves which enables the charity to have sufficient financial resources to meet various liabilities which would crystallise if The Forge's funding were to be interrupted or withdrawn and/or it were unable to continue operating.

Unrestricted Funds – General Funds

The Trustees have allocated £115,500 to enable the organisation to meet contractual liabilities and to maintain continuity in the event of delays with receipt of funding, or severe public sector cutbacks, or schools being less likely to spend money on arts related activities.

It has allocated a dissolution fund of £36,750 which provides for the costs of dissolution should the charity be unable to continue. It will be used to pay notice periods, redundancies and the expenses of running The Forge until closure of the organisation.

The Trustees have also allocated £26,250 to cover costs to mitigate risks associated with the potential loss of long-standing post holders in a small core team, eg succession planning, appointing short term staff to bridge any gaps in staffing, external consultancy, and appointment of new post holders. The Board drew from these funds in 2024/25 to review contracts and job descriptions (referenced above).

The total free reserves required by the organisation are therefore £178,500.

Unrestricted Funds – Designated Funds

In addition, the Trustees have then agreed to retain an additional allowance of £60,000 as Designated Unrestricted Funds, to enable the charity to:

- respond flexibly to issues or appropriate initiatives which might be identified outside of its annual budgeting process
- contribute match funding to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Talking Cameras project
- contribute match funding to the Youth Festival

The charity's total unrestricted Reserves at 31 March 2025 are £271,542 (2024: £237,647). The charity's 'free' unrestricted Reserves at 31 March 2025, defined as non-designated unrestricted funds, excluding the £162 value of unrestricted Tangible Fixed Assets, are £271,380.

This policy will be reviewed by the Trustees on an annual basis as part of the charity's budgeting processes.

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STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT (CONTINUED)

Fundraising Policy

The charity is required to report how it deals with fundraising from the public. The charity does not use a professional fundraiser or commercial participator to raise funds. Any monies raised direct from the public follows all guidelines set out by the Charity Commission and UK law in every respect. We respect the privacy and contact preferences of all public donors.

Grant Making Policy

The charity does not currently engage in grant-making activity.

Investment Policy

The Forge's cash reserves, over and above those required for day-to-day working capital, have typically been invested in a combination of a higher-rate, instant access deposit account and various fixed-term cash deposit accounts.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Charitable Purpose

County Durham Arts In Education agency's charitable objects are to foster and promote the maintenance, improvement and development of the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts in education.

Aims and Objectives

County Durham Arts In Education Agency's charitable objects are to foster and promote the maintenance, improvement and development of the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts in education.

The charity aims to fulfil this by creating participatory arts projects that inspire young people to become successful, confident individuals, capable of reaching their full potential and by making cultural programmes that are courageous, relevant and excellent.

Public Benefit

The Trustees understand and have discussed the implications of the provisions of the Charities Act 2006, which state that all charities must demonstrate that they are established for public benefit, and have had due regard to the public benefit guidance issued by the Charity Commission. The Trustees believe that the charity meets both of the key principles.

- Principle 1 - There must be an identifiable benefit, or benefits
- Principle 2 - Benefit must be to the public, or a section of the public

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OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

Public Benefit (Cont.)

The Forge exists to widen access to high-quality arts education and cultural experiences for children, young people, and communities in North East England, particularly in areas of social and economic disadvantage. All of our work this year has been aligned with these charitable aims, ensuring that public benefit remains central to our mission and delivery.

In 2024/25, our programmes provided significant public benefit by increasing access to creative learning, promoting digital and cultural literacy, and strengthening local cultural infrastructure. Through our Grow Future Skills programme in County Durham, we supported six primary schools to integrate digital arts into the curriculum, enhancing pupil engagement and teacher confidence in creative technologies such as animation, Augmented Reality (AR), and game design. These activities have not only improved educational outcomes, but also fostered inclusion, expression, and skill development for children from underserved communities.

Our work at The Dales School, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, enabled children with additional needs to use photography as a powerful alternative to writing. The project empowered young people to tell their own stories, supported teacher innovation, and contributed to national knowledge exchange through published case studies and professional conferences.

We also extended our public benefit through strategic partnerships with health and housing organisations. In collaboration with the NHS, we co-produced exhibitions in community hospitals to showcase children's creative work, bridging education, well-being, and cultural engagement. With Karbon Homes, we delivered a high-impact placemaking project in Stanley, Home/Hyem, giving children and local residents a visible and valued presence in the public realm.

In addition, we continued to pilot the Artsmark Place-Based programme with two non-Artsmark schools in North Durham, enabling them to develop long-term creative strategies and improve access to cultural learning in rural and semi-rural areas.

Across all projects, we prioritised co-design with communities, embedded professional development for teachers, and maintained a clear focus on equity, inclusion, and long-term sustainability. We also actively evaluated our impact to ensure continued relevance and quality.

The Trustees confirm that they have referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when reviewing The Forge's aims and objectives and in planning future activities. We are proud to continue delivering on our charitable purpose, ensuring that creativity remains a force for education, empowerment, and social good.

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OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

Risk Management

The Trustees regularly review the major governance, operational and financial risks which the charity faces as part of its annual business planning process and confirm that systems have been established to mitigate these risks. Current circumstances have brought new risks, which the Board is actively reviewing as part of a fresh look at the place and role of The Forge in a post-COVID world.

We have a risk management strategy in place which comprises:

- an annual review of the strategic risks the charity may face via the business plan
- the establishment of systems and procedures to mitigate any risks identified
- the implementation of procedures designed to minimise any potential impact on the charity should those risks materialise.

The Trustees are satisfied that appropriate financial systems and controls and employment policies and practices are in place.

The Trustees have for some years considered the key risks facing the charity and the mitigating actions taken to be as follows:

Long-term absence/resignation of Executive Director, Creative Producer or Trustees

- Increasing artistic team improves succession plans for Executive Director
- Increasing Trustees improves resilience and Trustee succession planning
- Increased Board capacity supports Creative Producer absence / recruitment
- Reserves Policy contains provision to take mitigating action in the event of extended staff absence

Not achieving income targets (trusts and foundations, earned income, individual giving):

- Development of a strategic plan to support further diversification of funding
- Collaboration with national and international partners improves awareness of relevant commissioning and funding opportunities.

Not achieving audience targets:

- Developing a teacher advisory group to support alignment of programme with schools' needs
- Ongoing review of relevance and value of programme
- Developing a robust marketing plan for every project
- Collaborating with venue partners and Audience Agency, to analyse data
- Increased understanding of audiences informs effective marketing.

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OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

Risk Management (Cont.)

Not delivering artistic excellence:

- Engaging a highly experienced artist as a mentor for major projects' creative teams
- Implementation of the Arts Council's Quality Principles for children and young people
- Collaborating with exceptional artists
- Sharing work-in-progress with audiences and peers to gain critical feedback
- Evaluating artistic achievements and shortcomings for every project
- Creating plans to continually improve artistic practice.

The Trustees also manage the general financial risks arising by ensuring that:

- Prudent budgets have been set for the next financial year
- The charity maintains a low-cost base
- Regular management accounts are provided, showing the performance against budget
- Contingency plans are in place for the actions which would be taken if income appears unlikely to reach its target
- Reserves policies have been adopted which provide an appropriate amount of uncommitted Reserves which will always enable the charity to meet all its liabilities even if income targets are not achieved.

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ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Achievements in the Year

This year has been one of deepening impact, growing partnerships, and purposeful innovation at The Forge. Against a backdrop of social and educational challenge, our work has remained grounded in community and powered by creativity. Whether embedding digital literacies in primary schools, amplifying children's voices through photography, or contributing to cultural regeneration in Durham, we have continued to deliver programmes that are responsive, inclusive, and future-focused.

Our commitment to place-based working remains central. Across education, health, and housing, we've strengthened relationships and co-designed projects that reflect the identities and aspirations of the communities we serve. We're proud to have supported schools in developing sustainable creative practice, worked alongside national funders to model inclusive pedagogy, and collaborated with local partners to make visible the value of creativity in everyday life.

This review captures some of our key achievements from 2024/25 – the stories, partnerships, and learning that define our work. It also looks ahead to what's next - how we can scale impact, deepen our role as a trusted cultural partner, and continue to advocate for creativity as a powerful force for equity and transformation. We're grateful to all those who have joined us on this journey – especially our partners, artists, educators, and funders.

Expanding Reach through Strategic Collaboration

In 2024, our partnership with Durham County Council to deliver the **Durham International BRASS Festival** Education Programme reached 15,165 pupils across 64 schools. The programme continues to offer children vibrant, live musical experiences that spark curiosity and cultural engagement. The Council has reaffirmed its support following enthusiastic feedback from schools, and we look forward to building on this success to further embed music and creativity into educational settings across the region.

Grow Future Skills: Embedding New Literacies in Primary Education

This year, *Grow Future Skills* (GFS) – a core strand of the *Into the Light* place-based programme – has taken bold steps in reimagining how digital creativity can be embedded into the fabric of primary education in County Durham. Led by The Forge, this initiative supports schools, artists, and educators to co-create meaningful learning experiences where new literacies, from animation to augmented reality, become integral to classroom life.

At its heart, GFS is about **unlocking digital potential** – in children, in teachers, and in the artists who support them. It is rooted in curriculum, but ambitious in scope. This is not a bolt-on enrichment activity, it is a systemic intervention that places creativity, technology, and pedagogy in conversation.

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ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)

Achievements in the Year (Cont.)

Reimagining Curriculum Through Digital Practice

Over the 2024/25 academic year, six County Durham primary schools participated in bespoke digital residencies. Each programme was co-designed with teaching staff and responded directly to school priorities and pupil needs. From exploring Greek myths through game design, to using AR to deepen reading comprehension, projects aligned closely with English, history, and computing curricula – proving that digital arts can both enrich and extend core learning. Crucially, the artists – Cloe Sparrow, Jo Hislop, and Guy Schofield – brought cutting-edge practices into classrooms. Their work bridged fine art, film, immersive technologies, and artificial intelligence, demonstrating how digital tools can unlock new modes of expression and engagement.

Building Teacher Confidence and Capability

Recognising the importance of teacher learning, GFS prioritised **professional development at every stage**. Each artist-led residency began and ended with CPD sessions tailored to the host school. These sessions provided hands-on exploration of tools and techniques, pedagogical frameworks for digital arts, and space for critical reflection. Teachers responded with enthusiasm and curiosity, and early feedback indicates a **marked increase in confidence** around using creative technologies – especially among educators who previously saw themselves as ‘non-digital’. GFS is not just changing practice; it’s shifting mindsets.

Evaluation for Learning and Impact

The programme was designed with continuous learning in mind. Evaluation was embedded from the outset, capturing both qualitative and quantitative insights into pupil engagement, teacher development, and the role of digital creativity in supporting wider school goals. Regular observation, reflection, and feedback loops have been used to adapt delivery and ensure quality.

What’s emerging is a compelling story: of children becoming authors, animators, and designers of their own learning; of teachers discovering new professional identities; and of schools recognising digital creativity not as a luxury, but as an essential part of future-facing education. With the first year almost complete, the groundwork is in place for broader reach and deeper impact. Year Two will see the recruitment of new schools, with plans to scale teacher development and further integrate **emerging technologies** such as AI, and interactive storytelling.

A strengthened evaluation framework will also track longitudinal impacts on learning, inclusion, and community engagement. *Grow Future Skills* is not just a programme – it’s a proposition: that creative digital literacies are vital for the next generation. And that, with the right support, every school can be a space where technology, imagination, and learning come together to shape brighter futures.

Talking Cameras - Paul Hamlyn Foundation Programme | 2024/25

Throughout 2024/25, our work with children at The Dales School has continued to flourish through a photography-focused strand of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation programme. This innovative approach has placed children’s voices and creative choices at the heart of the project, offering them new tools for expression, communication, and storytelling.

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ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)

Achievements in the Year (Cont.)

Photography in Practice

This year, we have deepened our focus on **photography as an alternative to writing**. Pupils have used photography to document their learning, whether through classroom projects or off-site visits to partners such as **Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art** and **Clarty Commandos**.

Encouragingly, some teachers are now adopting this method independently, using photography to support alternative forms of assessment and expression in the classroom.

Our photography strand has also been integrated into **Forest Schools activities**, with pupils using cameras to explore the natural environment. This work is supporting the development of digital and observational skills in outdoor settings, expanding the ways children engage with learning beyond the classroom.

Advocacy and Sector Sharing

Our partnership with **nasenConnect**, the national magazine for SEND professionals, has led to the publication of a co-authored article by Assistant Head Liz Sanderson and The Forge, spotlighting our approach and learnings. The article, featured in the Summer 2025 edition, has helped to share best practice nationally with SEND educators and advocates.

We were also pleased to present our Paul Hamlyn Foundation work at the **'Have Some Imagination'** conference for educators and artists, hosted by Baltic and Northumbria University.

This platform enabled us to reflect on our methodologies and share our learning with other practitioners working at the intersection of creativity, education, and inclusion.

NHS Hospital Exhibitions

Working in close collaboration with the staff team of the Dales, the creative team and NHS leads at the Bright Northumbria Healthcare Charity, we have progressed two new photography exhibitions celebrating the creative work of children from Blythdale and Ashdale units. These exhibitions will be held at **Blyth Community Hospital** and **Wansbeck General Hospital**, with launch events scheduled for June 2025. Pupils will be invited to attend alongside staff, and separate invitations will be sent to families via school newsletters.

In addition to the hospital-based shows, we are planning two complementary exhibitions at each school:

- A **permanent outdoor installation** celebrating pupil work in the school grounds
- A **temporary, process-focused exhibition** showcasing how the work was created, highlighting the project's journey as well as its outcomes

These exhibitions represent a major milestone in bringing the children's creative efforts into public and community-facing spaces, while fostering connections between education and health.

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ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)

Achievements in the Year (Cont.)

Exploring Artsmark in Rural and Semi-Rural Priority Places

Year two of our Artsmark Place-Based Pilot is now well underway, supporting schools in rural and semi-rural areas to develop rich, sustainable creative education offers. The pilot aims to test how the **Artsmark Framework**, supported by Arts Council England (ACE), can be adapted to meet the specific needs of **non-Artsmark schools** in priority communities.

School Partnerships and Artist-Led Programmes

We continue to work closely with **Annfield Plain Junior School** and **Shield Row Primary School**, each undertaking bespoke artist-led projects that reflect their unique school contexts, history, and community priorities.

At **Shield Row Primary School**, artist **John Quinn** is leading a drama-based programme with Year 5 pupils, exploring the story of the **West Stanley Pit Disaster**. This local-history-inspired project will culminate in performances both at the school and at **Beamish Museum** in Summer 2025. The programme has been carefully designed to support staff CPD alongside pupil learning, ensuring that drama skills and techniques are embedded in classroom practice beyond the life of the project.

Meanwhile, at **Annfield Plain Junior School**, **Miscreations Theatre Company** is delivering a new place-based, mask-theatre piece to celebrate the **150th anniversary of the school's founding**. This programme will include mask-making workshops and culminate in a public performance, linking creative expression with local identity and history. In a new development, the school has also agreed to host and help shape **Underground**, Miscreations' latest touring performance, embedding further co-creation and legacy opportunities into the school community.

Sector Engagement and National Interest

This year, we were pleased to host two Artsmark Officers from **Arts Council England**, for a visit to Stanley. Their time with The Forge team and school leaders included classroom observations, discussions on the local socio-economic context, and exploration of the pilot's early impacts. Both officers expressed strong interest in how this model could support **wider engagement with Artsmark in County Durham** and were particularly impressed by the commitment of both school communities to creative education.

Looking Ahead

Both Shield Row Primary School and Annfield Plain Junior School have shown continued enthusiasm and ownership of their creative journeys. We are now in the process of evaluating the pilot's second year, with a view to identifying how the Artsmark framework might be scaled or adapted to support other non-Artsmark schools in **left-behind or underrepresented areas**.

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ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)

Achievements in the Year (Cont.)

Locality Development in Stanley: Creative Placemaking through Partnership

Home/Hyem and the Forge's Role in Local Cultural Infrastructure

Over the past year, The Forge has deepened its role in supporting creative place development in Stanley, embedding cultural practice within the fabric of local life and strengthening our commitment to long-term, place-based collaboration.

A key strand of this work has been our ongoing partnership with **Karbon Homes**, a major social housing provider whose *Fairer Foundations* strategy places creativity and community voice at the heart of local regeneration. Together, we have helped shape how cultural projects can drive visibility, identity, and pride in communities across the Stanley area.

The *Home/Hyem* project continues to grow in profile and purpose. Originally designed as a participatory photography and storytelling programme with local children, the work has now taken on a more prominent civic role. In collaboration with Karbon, we ensured the children's images and writing – originally displayed on the Old Board School – were carefully reproduced and mounted on the **site-protection hoardings** surrounding the deteriorating building.

This intervention was more than a practical re-siting of artwork. It was a statement: that young people's creative voices deserve public space, and that regeneration can begin with imagination.

The display now holds a more prominent position in the heart of the town, featuring not only the children's visual storytelling but also project recognition and crediting, reinforcing the visibility of the partnership and The Forge's curatorial role in the area.

Growing Local Partnerships: Shutter Art on Front Street

Following the success of *Home/Hyem*, Karbon Homes commissioned The Forge to deliver a new **shutter art programme** along Stanley's Front Street. This hyper-local project brings art directly into public view while responding to local narratives and aspirations.

A Trusted Anchor in the Local Cultural Ecosystem

Our work in Stanley is emblematic of The Forge's wider ambition: to act as a **trusted anchor** for culture-led development in underserved areas. We do this not by importing cultural activity, but by building partnerships that **amplify local voices**, centre community priorities, and bring high-quality, collaborative arts practice to the fore. These projects seed new ways of thinking about place, ownership, and visibility. And they continue to reinforce our role as a responsive, values-led organisation, deeply embedded in the places we serve. Looking ahead, we will continue to build on these foundations, seeking out partnerships where creativity and community are seen not as add-ons, but as essential drivers of change.

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ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)

Achievements in the Year (Cont.)

Developing our Profile

This year, The Forge was delighted to be **shortlisted for the 2024 North East Culture Awards** in the category of *Best Arts and Business Partnership* for our collaboration with **Karbon Homes**. The nomination recognised our shared commitment to using creative practice as a tool for community development, civic pride, and inclusive regeneration.

The awards ceremony, held at **The Fire Station, Sunderland**, brought together inspiring projects from across the region – a reminder of the richness of cultural activity happening in the North East. While we didn't take home the award on the night, the shortlisting itself was a meaningful acknowledgement of the impact and innovation made possible through cross-sector collaboration.

The nomination has helped increase our visibility across the region and has positioned The Forge as a **key player in community-embedded arts partnerships**. It also affirms the value of our approach – combining strategic partnerships, place-based programming, and participatory arts – in creating lasting cultural and social benefit.

We were also invited by **Karbon Homes** to co-present our work in South Moor during a visit from Culture Secretary **Lisa Nandy MP** and **North Durham MP Luke Akehurst**. The visit spotlighted our *HOME/Hyem* project, and Ms Nandy was so impressed by the children's artwork that she requested postcards to display in her Westminster office—affirming the power of local creative work to inform national conversations.

In the coming year, we will continue to build our regional profile by deepening partnerships with organisations like Karbon Homes, contributing to sector conversations, and showcasing our work through public platforms. Recognition such as this helps us advocate for the power of creativity in transforming places and lives – and strengthens our case for continued investment and collaboration.

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ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)

Achievements in the Year (Cont.)

Financial Review

The out-turn for the year is an unrestricted surplus of £33,895 (2024: Surplus £15,912). The surplus will be added to Unrestricted Reserves, leaving a balance on Unrestricted Funds, including Designated Funds, at 31 March 2025 of £271,542.

In the course of 2024/25, The Forge Officers and Board continued to work hard to develop the sustainability of the organisation. This included short, mid- and long-term planning and financial modelling. We have a two-pronged approach to income generation which includes:

- Direct earned income for services
- Income generated from external funders to deliver produced programme

We were proactively responding to pressure on school budgets and strengthening our resilience through:

- Developing staff skills
- Raising our academic and research profile
- Development of evidence-based arts interventions that appeal to school leadership priorities
- Securing funding from a wider range of non-arts based social action funding streams
- Deepening our relationship with existing funders through responsive stewardship
- Diversifying and developing our market share to include FE and Sixth Form Colleges

The Finance and HR Sub-Group takes a hands-on approach to resilience and feeds back to the full Board on a quarterly basis. Arts accountancy specialist Pete O'Hara has continued in his role as a financial advisor to the Board.

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PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

Building on the progress made this year, our focus for the coming period is on deepening impact, strengthening partnerships, and extending access to high-quality arts and cultural learning. Guided by our revised Theory of Change and strategic goals for 2023/26, we will continue to respond to local needs, champion creative equity, and invest in sustainable, community-led programmes that support children, young people, and underserved groups across County Durham.

Organisational Review and Theory of Change

To guide our 2023/26 strategy, we carried out a comprehensive organisational review with input from our Board, service users, and stakeholders. A dedicated Board development day in September supported new members and helped reset priorities. We also refined our Theory of Change to sharpen our focus on improving access to arts and culture for those most in need. Our updated strategic model aligns with Arts Council England's *Let's Create* strategy and reflects a strong understanding of local needs and context.

Our Five Strategic Goals:

1. **Expand Access to High-Quality Arts:** Increase access to cultural learning and participatory arts opportunities in schools and communities, ensuring more young people can experience high-quality arts.
2. **Developing multiliteracies and Tackling Digital Poverty:** Develop targeted photography and digital arts programmes to help young people affected by digital poverty to unlock their creativity.
3. **Tailor Arts Education to Needs:** Offer a range of differentiated, high-quality arts education programmes that support diverse creative ambitions and learning needs.
4. **Co-Create with Lived Experience:** Ensure our programmes are increasingly shaped and led by those with direct, lived experience of poverty or disability, to better address their specific needs.
5. **Drive Sustainable Regional Change:** Lead efforts to strengthen regional infrastructure, optimising and extending the impact of cultural and creative initiatives in the community.

Achieving Our Goals: Key Initiatives

To meet these strategic goals, we will implement research-informed, data-driven programmes that engage and inspire young people, addressing their needs as identified by themselves and by partner agencies, including schools, youth clubs, and organisations supporting those not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Our programmes will build cultural capital, broaden horizons, and support both personal and academic development.

Strengthening Research and Data-Driven Approaches

Our initiatives will draw on robust, peer-reviewed research conducted in partnership with Durham, Newcastle, and Northumbria Universities. We will utilise local data on health and well-being, school attendance, and pupil demographics, along with insights from our community networks, to target our efforts effectively. This approach will also guide our evaluation of impact, using context-sensitive frameworks.

COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
TRADING AS THE FORGE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
TRUSTEES' REPORT
For the year ended 31 March 2025

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS (CONTINUED)

Training for Teachers, Artists, and Cultural Providers

We will continue to enhance training programmes informed by leading research, including our own findings and those of the Durham Commission. These programmes will support educators, artists, and cultural providers in embedding creativity in their practice, in alignment with DfE guidelines, ACE's Quality Principles, and our experience from the Artsmark programme.

New Studios for Expanded Arts Delivery

Building on our experience with photography and writing programs funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, we are establishing The Forge's Mobile Studio. These facilities will enable us to deliver photography, animation, and filmmaking activities to young people in diverse settings and further expand our offerings across visual arts, creative writing, performance, and music.

Strategic Areas of Focus for 2023/2026

1. Creative Programmes in Schools:

We will develop and deliver artist-led programmes designed to enrich the lives of children and young people in County Durham, particularly in three "Left Behind" neighbourhoods. This will include a new programme aligned with the Artsmark framework, a co-created initiative under the County-wide Into the Light Programme, and ongoing SEND-focused projects aimed at using creative tools to support autistic children and those with motor skill challenges.

2. Improving Teaching for Creativity:

We will cascade the learning from our past programmes to educators and cultural providers, advocating for creative teaching practices and sharing insights from our SEND programmes. This will include consultancy and partnerships to embed creative practice in schools across the North East.

3. New Participatory Programs for Young People and Families:

We will create new partnerships and strengthen existing collaborations to promote arts practice locally. Informed by recent consultations, we will launch a new youth and community programme in Stanley in 2024/25.

4. Developing Career Pathways in the Creative Industries:

We will support emerging artists from disadvantaged communities by offering targeted training opportunities and career support, focusing on young people facing barriers due to class, qualifications, disability, or access needs.

5. Driving Sustainable Change through Regional Collaboration:

We will work with local authorities, cultural organisations, and community groups to place culture at the centre of regional planning. Our engagement with various networks will ensure our programs align with local priorities and address the needs and aspirations of young people.

With continued support from Arts Council England and other stakeholders in 2024/25, we are delivering work that is both impactful and transformative. Our renewed vision and strategic goals are enabling us to widen access, foster creativity, and drive lasting change across County Durham. We remain committed to working in partnership with schools, communities, and stakeholders to realise our shared ambitions for a more creative and equitable future.

COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
TRADING AS THE FORGE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
TRUSTEES' REPORT
For the year ended 31 March 2025

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRUSTEES

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of County Durham Arts in Education Agency for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The Trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In preparing this report, the Trustees have taken advantage of the small companies exemptions provided by Section 415A of the Companies Act 2006.

Signed by order of the Trustees



M Gilbey
Chair/Trustee
Company Registration Number 04027621

18 August 2025

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS ON THE UNAUDITED ACCOUNTS OF COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY TRADING AS THE FORGE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

I hereby report to the Trustees/Members of County Durham Arts In Education Agency (Charity Registration Number 1086471) on the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025 set out on pages 21 to 34.

Responsibilities and Basis of Report

As the charity's Trustees (and also its directors for the purposes of company law), you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5) (b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent Examiner's Statement

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000, your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods or principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities (applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102)).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



**Pete O'Hara, FCA, Chartered Accountant
Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales**

26 La Sagesse, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 3AF

18 August 2025

COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
TRADING AS THE FORGE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Income					
Income from Investments	3	1,187	-	1,187	1,852
Income from Donations, Grants & Legacies	4	102,554	132,103	234,657	386,554
Income from Charitable Activities	5	3,600	-	3,600	53,562
Total Income		107,341	132,103	239,444	441,968
Expenditure					
Expenditure on Raising Funds	6	37,989	-	37,989	39,804
Expenditure on Charitable Activities	7	35,457	205,978	241,435	243,507
Total Expenditure		73,446	205,978	279,424	283,311
Net Income/(Expenditure)		33,895	(73,875)	(39,980)	158,657
Balance brought forward at 1 April		237,647	192,659	430,306	271,649
Balance carried forward at 31 March	13	£271,542	£118,784	£390,326	£430,306

The notes on pages 23 to 34 form part of the financial statements.

All of the activities of the company are classed as continuing.

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses in the year and therefore a statement of total recognised gains and losses has not been prepared.

COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
TRADING AS THE FORGE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
BALANCE SHEET/STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 31 MARCH 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
Fixed Assets			
Tangible Fixed Assets	10	162	9,896
Current Assets			
Debtors	11	73,493	215,004
Cash At Bank & In Hand		363,804	254,975
		<u>437,297</u>	<u>469,979</u>
Creditors – Amounts Falling Due Within 1 Year	12	(47,133)	(49,569)
Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)		<u>390,164</u>	<u>420,410</u>
Total Net Assets	13	<u>£390,326</u>	<u>£430,306</u>
Represented by:			
Unrestricted General Funds	14	211,542	177,647
Unrestricted Designated Funds	14	60,000	60,000
Restricted Funds	14	118,784	192,659
		<u>£390,326</u>	<u>£430,306</u>

The notes on pages 23 to 34 form part of the financial statements.

The Trustees are satisfied that for the year ended 31 March 2025 the charity was entitled to exemption under section 477(2) of the Companies Act 2006.

The Trustees also confirm that the Members have not required the charity to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for:

(i) ensuring that the charity keeps adequate accounting records which comply with section 386 of the Act, and

(ii) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity as at the end of the financial year and of its profit or loss for the financial year in accordance with the requirements of section 393, and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Act relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charity.

These financial statements were approved and signed by a Member of the Board of Trustees on 18 August 2025.



M Gilbey
Trustee
Company Registration Number 04027621

**COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
TRADING AS THE FORGE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025**

1. Accounting Policies

Charity Information

County Durham Arts In Education is a private company, limited by guarantee, incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is The Forge, Stanley Education Centre, King Edward VIII Terrace, Stanley, County Durham, DH9 0HQ.

The charity is a public benefit entity.

Basis of Accounting

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable United Kingdom accounting standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 – 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland' ('FRS 102'), and with the Companies Act 2006 and the Statement of Recommended Practice (Charities SORP FRS 102) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" and the Charities Act 2011.

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis, modified to include certain financial instruments at fair value.

Advantage has been taken of the provisions in the SORP for Charities applying FRS 102 Update Bulletin 2 not to prepare a statement of cashflows.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity.

Income

All income is included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) when there is entitlement, certainty of receipt and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Such income is only deferred when the donor or funder has specified that the grant or donation can only be used in future accounting periods or where the donor or funder has imposed conditions which must be met before the charity has unconditional entitlement.

Investment income, including interest on funds held on deposit, is recognised on a receivable basis.

COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
TRADING AS THE FORGE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

1. Accounting Policies (Continued)

Expenditure

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and is recognised when a liability is incurred.

- Expenditure on raising funds are those costs of seeking potential funders and applying for funding.
- Charitable activities include expenditure associated with the planning and delivery of artistic productions and associated activities. This includes both the direct costs and support costs relating to these activities.
- Support or Indirect costs are those costs incurred in support of the charitable objectives. These have been allocated to the resources expended on a consistent basis that fairly reflects the true use of those resources within the organisation, such as allocating staff costs by time spent and other costs by their usage.
- Governance costs are those incurred in the governance of the charity and its assets and are primarily associated with the constitutional and statutory requirements.

Pensions

The charity contributes to two pension schemes; one is a multi-employer defined benefit final salary scheme and the other is a defined contribution scheme. Further details can be found in Note 9.

The assets of the multi-employer scheme are held separately from those of the company in a separately administered fund. However, it is not possible to identify the charity's specific share of the underlying assets and liabilities. Consequently, the scheme has been accounted for as if it were a defined contribution scheme; and in accordance with FRS17 the costs of the scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities.

For the defined contribution scheme the amount charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in respect of pension costs is the contributions payable in the year. Differences between contributions payable in the year and contributions actually paid are shown as either accruals or prepayments in the balance sheet.

Tangible Fixed Assets and Depreciation

Depreciation is provided on any fixed assets at rates calculated to write off the assets over their remaining useful lives as follows:

Furniture, Fittings, IT & Office Equipment - 25% straight line

A full year's depreciation charge is applied in the year of acquisition and no charge is made in the year of disposal.

**COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025**

1. Accounting Policies (Continued)

Financial Instruments

The charity only has financial assets and liabilities of a kind which qualify as basic financial instruments. Such instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value.

Fund Accounting

General Funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity.

Designated Funds comprise unrestricted funds set aside by the Trustees for a specific purpose.

Restricted Funds reflect income received which a funder or donor requires must be spent on a particular purpose or where funds have been raised for a specific purpose. Such income and associated expenditure is shown as Restricted in the Statement of Financial Activities, whilst any unspent balances at the year-end are carried forward as Restricted Funds.

Taxation

County Durham Arts In Education Agency meets the definition required of a charitable company for UK Corporation Tax purposes. Consequently, the company is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively for charitable purposes.

2. Going Concern

The Trustees have reviewed the circumstances of the charity and consider that adequate resources continue to be available to fund the activities of the charity for the foreseeable future. The Trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

**COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

3. Income from Investments

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£
Bank Interest Receivable	1,187	-	1,187	1,852
	£1,187	£-	£1,187	£1,852

The 2024 total of £1,852 was wholly attributable to Unrestricted Funds.

4. Income from Donations, Grants & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£
Donations	-	-	-	-
Grant Income				
Arts Council England – National Portfolio Organisation	89,054	-	89,054	89,054
Arts Council England – Artsmark Pilot Research	-	23,500	23,500	5,000
Culture Bridge North East – County Durham Cultural Education Partnership	-	10,000	10,000	16,500
Durham CC – Grow Future Skills / Into The Light	-	97,603	97,603	-
Durham CC – Culture Bridge North East Partnership	-	-	-	15,000
Durham County Council Adult & Community Services	13,500	-	13,500	13,500
Newcastle CC – Culture Bridge North East Partnership	-	1,000	1,000	10,000
Paul Hamlyn Foundation – Talking Cameras	-	-	-	237,000
UK Parliament - Speakers Art Fund	-	-	-	500
	£102,554	£132,103	£234,657	£386,554

Of the 2024 total of £386,554, £103,054 was attributable to Unrestricted Funds and £283,500 to Restricted Funds.

COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

5. Income from Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£
Consultancy Fees	-	-	-	27,250
Critical Friend Income	3,600	-	3,600	3,600
DurhamWorks Fees	-	-	-	19,600
Education Programme	-	-	-	2,000
Speaking Fees	-	-	-	500
	-	-	-	612
	£3,600	£-	£3,600	£53,562

The 2024 total of £53,562 was wholly attributable to Unrestricted Funds.

6. Expenditure on Raising Funds

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£
Salaries & On Costs	37,989	-	37,989	39,804
	£37,989	£-	£37,989	£39,804

The 2024 total of £39,804 was wholly attributable to Unrestricted Funds.

COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
TRADING AS THE FORGE
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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

7. Expenditure on Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Artistic Production/Project Costs				
Programme Costs	1,450	126,089	127,539	127,187
Salaries & On Costs	17,474	71,167	88,641	88,520
Support Costs				
Premises Costs	4,390	-	4,390	5,583
Administration & Office Costs	6,935	-	6,935	7,935
Depreciation	1,012	8,722	9,734	10,678
Governance Costs				
Independent Examiner's Fees	1,200	-	1,200	1,200
Other Finance/Accountancy Fees	442	-	442	264
Board Development	1,000	-	1,000	1,475
Consultancy	720	-	720	-
Governance Meeting Costs & Expenses	834	-	834	665
	£35,457	£205,978	£241,435	£243,507

Of the 2024 total of £243,507, £102,752 was attributable to Unrestricted Funds and £140,755 to Restricted Funds.

8. Net Income/(Expenditure)

	2025 £	2024 £
Net income/(expenditure) is stated after charging/(crediting):		
Independent Examiner's Fees – current year	1,200	1,200
Depreciation of owned Tangible Fixed Assets	9,734	10,678

**COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025**

9. Staff Costs & Trustees' Remuneration

	2025	2024
	£	£
Gross Salary Costs	113,337	115,642
Employer's National Insurance	7,168	6,827
Employer's Pension Contributions	6,125	5,855
	£126,630	£128,324

Remuneration of Key Management Personnel, defined as the Chief Executive, was £54,217 including Employer's Pension Contributions (2024: £54,301). No employee received gross remuneration of more than £60,000 during the year (2024 - Nil).

The average number of staff employed during the year, calculated as full-time equivalents, was as follows:

	2025	2024
	No.	No.
Fundraising	1	1
Artistic Production and Support	2	2
	3	3

In the year to 31 March 2025, £8,800 (2024: £13,000) in freelance fees were invoiced to the charity by Ms Sally Dixon, a Trustee, for work as a consultant and a freelance programme producer. At 31 March 2025 £Nil was owing to Ms Dixon (2024: £5,800).

In the course of 2024/25 and 2023/24, there were two occasions where the above-named Trustee was appointed to deliver work for which they were funded directly or indirectly by the Forge.

The first related to work done for the County Durham Cultural Education Partnership. The appointment was by the Partnership, the work overseen by the Partnership and the report was to the Partnership, but, for reasons of administrative convenience, the Partnership funds passed through The Forge's accounts and so were paid by The Forge to the Trustee concerned. In this case full and explicit agreement of the arrangement was made and formally recorded at a Forge Board meeting. This was in the full understanding that because the appointment and work were not for The Forge, there was no conflict of interest.

**COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
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FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025**

9. Staff Costs & Trustees' Remuneration (Cont.)

The second related to a contract with Karbon Homes, (see below) for which we were put under severe time pressure. We approached four local consultants, who were all competent to do the work, to see if they were available to complete it within the very short timescale. Only one responded positively: they were a Forge Trustee. Other Trustees were approached (outside the meetings structure, because of the pressure of time) and agreed the proposal. The Trustee concerned attended no meetings, took no part in any decisions and received no information, until after the final conclusion of the project.

No other remuneration has been paid to any Trustees in the year (2024: £Nil).

No reimbursement was made in the year to Trustees for Travel and Subsistence expenses incurred in respect of their attendance at meetings of the charity (2024: £Nil).

Pension benefits for senior staff are provided through Durham County Council Pension Fund, which is a defined benefit scheme. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the company in a separately administered fund. In the year to 31 March 2025, on the advice of Durham County Council, County Durham Arts In Education Agency made an employer's contribution of Nil% (2024: Nil%) of pensionable pay.

Pension benefits for other staff are provided through a Group Personal Pension Scheme, which is a defined contribution scheme. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the company in a separately administered fund. In the year to 31 March 2025 County Durham Arts In Education Agency made an employer's contribution of 10% of pensionable pay, provided that the employee made a minimum contribution of 5%. These amounts are paid over to the scheme on a monthly basis.

Contributions of £766 were outstanding at 31 March 2025 (2024: £732).

**COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
TRADING AS THE FORGE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)**

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

10. Tangible Fixed Assets

	IT & Office Equipment £	Total £
Cost		
At 1 April 2024	46,309	46,309
Additions in year	-	-
Disposals	-	-
At 31 March 2025	46,309	46,309
Accumulated Depreciation		
At 1 April 2024	36,413	36,413
Charge for year	9,734	9,734
Disposals	-	-
At 31 March 2025	46,147	46,147
Net Book Value		
At 31 March 2025	£162	£162
At 1 April 2024	£9,896	£9,896

11. Debtors

	2025 £	2024 £
Trade Debtors	900	36,012
Other Debtors	-	30,893
Prepayments	1,331	1,099
Accrued Income	71,262	147,000
	£73,493	£215,004

12. Creditors – Amounts Falling Due Within 1 Year

	2025 £	2024 £
Trade Creditors	34,386	34,445
Other Creditors	1,177	809
Other Taxes & Social Security Costs	1,010	879
Accruals	10,560	13,436
	£47,133	£49,569

COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
TRADING AS THE FORGE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

13. Analysis of Net Assets between Funds

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets	162	-	162	9,896
Debtors	2,231	71,262	73,493	215,004
Cash at Bank and In Hand	293,846	69,958	363,804	254,975
Creditors – Amounts Due Within 1 Year	(24,697)	(22,436)	(47,133)	(49,569)
	£271,542	£118,784	£390,326	£430,306

14. Analysis of Charitable Funds

	Fund at 1 April 2024	Income in Year	Expended/ Transfers in Year	Fund at 31 March 2025
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted Funds				
General Funds	125,647	107,341	(73,446)	211,542
Designated Funds				
Strategic Development Fund	60,000	-	-	60,000
	237,647	107,341	(73,446)	271,542
Restricted Funds				
ACE - Artsmark Pilot Research	3,169	23,500	(10,905)	15,764
Children In Need	8,722	-	(8,722)	-
Culture Bridge North East - CDCEP	13,925	10,000	(18,936)	4,989
Durham CC – Are You Listening?	3,850	-	-	3,850
Durham CC – Into The Light	-	97,603	(83,437)	14,166
Durham CC / Newcastle CC – CBNE Partnership	6,604	1,000	(7,604)	-
Paul Hamlyn Foundation – Talking Cameras	156,389	-	(76,374)	80,015
Total Restricted Funds	192,659	132,103	(205,978)	118,784
Total Funds	£430,306	£239,444	£(279,424)	£390,326

**COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
TRADING AS THE FORGE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025**

14. Analysis of Charitable Funds (Cont.)

Name of Designated Fund	Description, Nature & Purpose of the Designated Fund
Strategic Development Fund	Towards the cost of exploring new ways of working and new partnerships and creating a provision for match funding for specific projects
Name of Restricted Fund	Description, Nature & Purpose of the Restricted Fund
Arts Council England - Artsmark Pilot Research	Towards the costs of undertaking Artsmark Pilot Research
Children In Need	Towards the cost of equipment for use with Children & Young People
Culture Bridge North East - CDCEP	Towards the costs of the County Durham Cultural Education Partnership
Durham CC – Are You Listening?	Towards the cost of the Are You Listening project
Durham CC – Into The Light	Towards the cost of the Into The Light project
Durham CC / Newcastle CC – CBNE Partnership	Towards the cost of a culture-led mental health wellbeing programme
Paul Hamlyn Foundation – Teaching Cameras	Towards the cost of Talking Cameras

**COUNTY DURHAM ARTS IN EDUCATION AGENCY
TRADING AS THE FORGE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025**

15. Related Party Transactions

The charity has a close working relationship with Arts Council England which is a registered charity and has provided significant project funding which enables the charity to carry out its charitable objectives. In total, grant funding of £112,554 (2024: £94,054) from Arts Council England was recognised in the year.

At 31 March 2025, £22,262 was owing to County Durham Arts In Education Agency from Arts Council England (31 March 2024: £Nil).

16. Taxation

The company is a registered charity and no provision is considered necessary for taxation.

17. Financial Commitments

No material financial commitments have been made in respect of future financial periods.

18. Company Limited by Guarantee

The charity is incorporated under the Companies Act 1985 and is limited by guarantee, each member having undertaken to contribute such amounts not exceeding £1 as may be required in the event of the company being wound up whilst he or she is still a member or within one year thereafter.

There are currently 5 members of the company (2024 - 7 members).