



Enabling disabled people to develop their creativity and unlock their talents through the use of innovative technologies

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The Founder & Trustees are pleased to present their report and the financial statements of Decibels for the year ended 31 March 2024. These comply with Decibels governing document and the relevant Statement of Recommended Practice

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Founder/Voluntary Executive Director: Ken Carter.

The Honorary President: Lord Michael Berkeley of Knighton, CBE.

Honorary Vice Presidents: Professor Adam Ockelford; Caroline Parker, MBE, Veronica Franklin Gould & Sannah Gulamani.

The Board of Directors and Trustees:

Chairperson: Paul Townson.

Acting Honorary Treasurer & Company Secretary –Ken Carter.

Trustee/Directors: Rosie Axon & William Ogden.

Projects Co-ordinator & Administrator: Debbie Flory

The registered address of the charity:

Decibels, ITEC R & D Enterprises, 121 Greys Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 1TE

The charity is registered under the charity number 1109004, and the company is incorporated with the company registration number 5301729.

The Trustees made the following appointment when the charitable company was set up in 2005:

Banker: CAF BANK Limited, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4TA.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Status & History

Decibels was founded by Ken Carter and became a registered charity in 2005. It is governed by the rules and regulations set down in its company Memorandum and Articles of Association. Every member undertakes to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the charity in the event of the charity being wound-up during the period of membership, or within one year thereafter.

Organisational Structure

The overall strategic direction of the charity is determined by the Trustees of Decibels. The role of the Trustee is one of guidance and governance. They are responsible for overseeing the activities and finances of Decibels and ensuring that the best interests of the charity are protected and promoted at all times. They are also responsible for ensuring any income is spent fairly and appropriately. Included in their responsibilities is the setting of the strategic direction of Decibels, with considerable input from the Founder/Voluntary Executive Director, Ken Carter, and where appropriate Debbie Flory to support, and maintaining the long term viability of the charity.

The Board of Trustees should have at least three members, but no more than eight. The Board is defined to be quorate when there are at least three appointed Trustees in attendance.

Trustees are required to attend four quarterly Trustee meetings per year including the AGM. These meetings are attended by the Trustees and the Founder/Executive Director, and others as and when required.

The Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day management of Decibels affairs and for implementing policies agreed by the Board of Trustees which cover four main functions, namely:

1. Operations - this includes day-to-day management of all the programmes, services and products produced and delivered by Decibels.
2. Research - undertakes the majority of our research backing up current project work and generating ideas for future projects.
3. Finance - ensuring all financial transactions are complete, managed, controlled and reported upon and the statutory accounts are completed.
4. Fundraising and Marketing – a dual role involving the growing of both restricted and unrestricted funding, along with the marketing and PR of Decibels.

These four areas are encompassed in an Enterprise work plan (2022-/2024). The Charity is principally UK based with a temporary office in Henley-on-Thames (Oxfordshire)

Recruitment of Trustees

Recruitment is undertaken through a variety of methods – word of mouth and personal recommendation; via partner organisations; employee volunteer schemes and advertising. Selection is what they can contribute to Decibels.

Induction & Training of Trustees

Each Trustee appointed should be able to offer some relevant specific skills and areas of expertise required by Decibels.

Risk & Internal Control

The Trustees have developed a comprehensive risk management strategy which involves a regular review of the key risks faced by the charity and the establishment of systems and procedures to address their potential impact and likelihood of occurrence.

Decibels Child Protection Policy

Decibels recognises its responsibility for the safety of children that come under its care, and also that Decibels present consultants and volunteers will benefit from its Child Protection Policy and procedures.

Trustees' & Directors' Responsibilities in the Preparation of Financial Statements

The trustees (who are also the directors of Decibels for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' annual report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law, the trustees have prepared the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law).

Under company law, the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they 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 income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and 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 Companies Acts 2006. They 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 Under company law, the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from the legislation in other jurisdictions.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Charitable Objectives

The charitable objectives for which the charity was established are as follows:

Decibels is a charitable company which aims to promote the education and training of people with a variety of special needs/disabilities for the purpose of enabling them to learn, appreciate and enjoy sound, music, the arts and performance through the use of technology.

It seeks to advance this work by providing facilities, equipment and research with the view to include those with special needs/disabilities (deaf, hard of hearing, blind, learning difficulties, old age, gifted, autistic etc.) into the community and the musical and artistic worlds.

Decibels aspires to establish a spirit of innovation by incorporating technological development into various aspects of research, training and music practice.

Charitable Powers & Activities

The main powers that Decibels has under its Memorandum & Articles of Association are to:

- To develop professional working and learning environments that promote inclusive practice which provide mutual learning opportunities to all parties.
- To engage people in a musical and artistic education and experience that is relevant to the society in which they live by providing access to new technologies and different modes of learning.
- To encourage excellence and build success.
- To raise personal expectations, promoting self-esteem and encouraging positive responses to challenges and responsibilities by providing opportunities to excel.
- To encourage professionalism and creativity through a range of training, performance, production and IT based initiatives.
- To establish centres for the practice of Decibels.
- To recruit a President, Vice-Presidents, Trustee/Directors, Friends and associate members to fundraise and market the charitable company.
- To provide courses, seminars, conferences, workshops, classes at the centres to carry out the work of decibels.
- To provide inclusive music practice that caters for those with special needs: sensory, neurological/physical difficulties, old age, early years, gifted and talented and those who are socially, emotionally and behaviourally challenged.
- To establish partnerships with universities, local authorities, voluntary sector/charities, arts and music organisations, government, corporate bodies and to share expertise and achievement with them.
- To undertake research in inclusive practice, education, arts and health and cultural music development.
- To design software and interface devices and equipment to suit various educational needs.
- To develop audio, visual, tactile and kinaesthetic resources to be adapted for respective groups.

- To initiate and develop real and virtual partnerships in global communications for the purposes of distance learning regarding inclusive music practice.
- To involve people from the artistic and musical worlds to help foster, initiate and develop projects concerned with global communications.
- To establish a spirit of innovation by incorporating technological development into various aspects of research, training and music practice.
- To develop creative thinking in cross arts/media/technological formats.
- To challenge learners with cultural diversity and change.
- To promote positively adaptability, flexibility, personalised and independent living, communication and innovation.
- To develop imaginative activity that produces outcomes that are both original and of value.
- To motivate people through specialist knowledge.
- To be an effective advocate for “inclusion through innovation” at the highest levels.

Public Benefit

All our activities are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the benefit of the public. The trustees have taken The Charity Commission’s specific guidance on public benefit (contained within the guidance publication “The Advancement of Education for Public Benefit”) into consideration in preparing this statement on public benefit.

Trustees’ Assessment of Public Benefit

An outcomes focused approach is used in monitoring the progress of the charity against the delivery of its activities for the benefit of the public. The outcomes focused approach means that regular collection and evaluation of information is embedded in all our work, ensuring that this process is relevant and valuable and that our professional practice is ultimately improved. Detailed project timetables with deadlines, expected outcomes and progress are reviewed regularly and updated as necessary. At each stage, internal aspects of individual projects are considered including dealing with stakeholders, funders, media coverage and other bodies outside the project team. In addition, regular meetings and quarterly reports to trustees and funders ensure that the work is monitored.

Brief Summary of Activities undertaken between 2023 and 2024

Due to the “Pandemic” our activities have been affected but we still used digital technologies to communicate with a variety of participants for some of the following projects:

“Creating music through Technology for Deaf and Special Needs People”

Some of the sponsorship by the Sobell Foundation, has enabled Decibels to continue providing some of the following online activities such as:

Makey Makey

It basically turns everyday objects into touchpads with sound output by attaching the kit to said objects and to the computer in turn and then utilizing many apps and games on the internet. As the participants sit around the table, they are shown the pretty printed ‘Makey Makey’ circuit boards which are then connected up to a computer via a USB cable. Then supplementary wires with crocodile clips on the terminals would run from the Makey Makey to conductive objects such as playdough, bananas, aluminium foil, coins and such.

See an important previous link - <http://www.decibels.org.uk/projects/makey-makey-creating-music-through-technology/>

Challenges of Music through Online Audiological Technology

Ken Carter has been trying, with assistance from other deaf and hearing colleagues, how Decibels can continue to create challenging, empowering and enjoyable activities for those who are deaf, hard of hearing, have other related disabilities and hearing people and for them to be able to appreciate more about sound, silence, music, art, film, drama and new technologies including audiology & hearing aids. See a previous link

<http://www.decibels.org.uk/projects/decibels-audiovisability-challenges-of-creating-music-through-audiological-technology/> .

Playing music together

We have been exploring how we produce online compositional workshops working with those who mainly have learning and physical disabilities using specific technological equipment such as the SoundBeam to allow participants to develop, explore sounds and create compositional pieces based on a current and relevant themes around disability and image. See-

<http://www.decibels.org.uk/projects/short-interim-report-playing-music-together/>

The Dressage Two Hearts Project

The vibrotactile or 'woofer' vest is worn on the torso that connects you wirelessly to the music via pulsing vibrations that can be augmented, or otherwise the woofer vest cannot in any way monopolise the deaf person's music access. The vibrations alone cannot convey other, subtler, musical elements. It was very important to give Laurentia Tan a real music learning experience, as opposed to just putting the vest on and going for a ride. See-

<http://www.decibels.org.uk/news/the-dressage-music-project/>

http://www.ruthmontgomery.co.uk/?page_id=92

it is not an overstatement to say that this project has fundamentally changed the competitive landscape for Deaf athletes – we took on the Paralympic Committee and won! Laurentia can now wear Supac in her future competitions and finally is on an equal footing with her hearing peers. As a celebration to our background work in Tokyo, we took centre stage, literally, at the CBSO centre with the live stream concert. This was such an incredible experience and the feedback we have had from the Deaf community has been overwhelmingly positive. We experimented with VV, Sign

Language interpretation, and creative captioning to make a classical concert welcoming for Deaf audiences. None of this would have been possible without Decibels, Arts Council England funding and the involvement of our partners; Deaf Explorer, Sobell Foundation, Subpac Company Dressurstaal Volker Eubel, Singapore Sports Institute and of course, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

Colour Music

We have once again involved Ruth Montgomery, Eloise Garland & Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq to work Online and interact with children with and without disabilities to express their emotions, thoughts and feelings in understanding music through the use of Art. The children involved have gained an emotive understanding of music and developed a sense of creativity. They have been encouraged to understand the basic terminology, pitches, texture and timbre that music compositions and performances incorporate and this will then therefore establish their concept of music.

Kidzaloud

We have been trying to restart this project by focusing on children and young people (aged between 10 and 16) who have been identified as having autism spectrum disorders so that they learn, appreciate and enjoy sound, music, the arts and performance with added value from information technology.

Hands on Shakespeare

We are aiming to still encourage, promote and develop young people's visual and literacy skills, have a greater understanding of the English language and its components, develop confidence, creative skills, artistic development & stronger communication skills and reduce isolation, communication breakdowns and improve interaction. Our Initial funding from the Youth Philanthropy Initiative.

Sign Along with Music (originally funded by the BBC Children in Need)

We are still working on an online project which will allow children and young people to use one fundamental national language of communication and expression; sign language. Participants will have an opportunity to learn basic British Sign Language along with classic pop songs, chart hits and musical show tunes. They will also have the ability to develop performance skills, expression, language development and interaction. Decibels intends to seek funding from the BBC Children in Need in 2025.

The Barbados "Calypso" Project -supporting Deaf Lives through Music & Arts

The 'Calypso' project is a collaboration between Decibels, Audiovisability, Barbados Council for the Disabled, SpecialKidz International, The Peter Boos Foundation and other partners. We are still trying to organise this project by bringing together deaf and hearing musicians, artists, filmmakers, and writers from across the UK, USA, and Barbados but the pandemic has prevented it from taking place. We have had many Zoom meetings which has been inspirational as it has led us to start organising a UK Calypso project in 2022. Music is such a powerful expressive tool in society and, in our digital age, often attracts and inspires people from all corners of the world.

Updating the Website

Decibels continues to work on its website (www.decibels.org.uk) so as to accommodate its focus and strategy on creativity, talent, technology and disability. We want to exploit the benefits of an active social media presence, promoting the work we do widely amongst individuals and organisations in the field of music, arts, dance, drama, disability, health, technology, education, training and employment.

Benefits & Beneficiaries

The main benefits provided by Decibels are to blend face-to-face, technology-based and online opportunities for children, young people and adults with disabilities to access training, information and resources through "enabling". This is in alignment with Decibels' general aim of contributing to the quality of life of people with disabilities of all ages by expanding their horizons and quality of life through the innovative use of ICT. In addition, Decibels works with the wider community to promote awareness, inclusion and equality.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

1. Decibels wants to increase its income through more robust fundraising, marketing and sales strategies. This will need to include the development of strategic tools focusing on marketing via social media and fundraising, alongside the delivery of major donor and legacy programmes.
2. We want to continue to explore collaboration and funding partnerships with the University of Reading and its many departments, other charitable enterprises (Deafax, Specialkidz, Ability2Access, EASiTEC, Deaf Sports Football Foundation, Deaf Aspirations & GOALS4LIFE), and with musical and arts organisations in the UK and worldwide.
3. We want to build onto our new focus on Creativity/Talent/Technology & Disabilities plus social media to increase awareness of our work, expand our pool of volunteers, opportunities to

collaborate and share information. We need to expand our digital information during next few years to include blogs, videos ensuring that these formats are both accessible and disability-friendly.

4. We want to involve Berkshire Community Foundation so that we can organise Music for Special Children workshops in the Reading/Berkshire area under the Musical leadership of Ruth Montgomery & Dr Paul Whittaker, OBE who are deaf and highly accomplished performers.
5. We are in the process of trying to organise a Decibels Year of Sound 2025 event at the House of Lords and hosted by Lord Michael Berkeley of Knighton, CBE who is Decibels Honorary Vice President. See information regarding the Decibels Year of Sound 2016 - <http://www.decibels.org.uk/international/week-of-sound/>.
6. Due to the BA (Hons) TAEDS (Theatre Arts Education & Deaf Studies) closing at Reading University, Decibels wants to set up DACAT (Decibels Academy for the Creative Arts & Technology) in 2025.
7. We need to give attention to trading initiatives to an ever-wider public audience and bring in earned income so we are better placed to determine the future of our work.
8. We need to address our events portfolio of fundraising and profile-raising activities.
9. We have benefitted from some online volunteers this year but we do need to recruit more highly professional support and expertise particularly in the areas of digital strategies and fundraising.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Decibels income generation, including donations and grants, has gone down this year –see Accounts The pursuit of new restricted funding to enable us to implement our innovative project ideas has been continuing through the pandemic and we are fairly optimistic that we will secure more funding as most of our projects were “pilot” ones and therefore have the potential to be funded as they were highly successful. There is a need in 2024-2025 to focus more on larger funding applications which will enable us to introduce projects on a greater scale and build up our core funding from Foundations which give specifically for the running of charitable companies.

This report was approved by the Decibels Trustee/Directors on the 17th April, 2024.



Signature.....Date...28/07/2024.....

Kenneth Charles Carter-Founder & Executive Director of Decibels

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF DECIBELS

I report on the financial statements of Decibels for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

The Trustees (who are also directors of the company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements. The trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the financial statements under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145 (5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the financial statements present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- 1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
 - to prepare financial statements which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities have not been met; or
- 2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Name of Independent Examiner.....DANIEL GRANTHAM.....

Signature.....Date 19/12/2024



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	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 Total Funds £	2023 Total Funds £
<u>Incoming Resources</u>				
Funds carried forward as at 31 st March 2023	8,042	16,706	24,748	14,759
Voluntary income – donations	11,754	-	11,754	16,324
Income from grants	-	10,000	10,000	10,075
Rental contributions	-	-	-	-
Total Incoming Resources	19,796	26,706	46,502	41,158
<u>Recourses Expended</u>				
Administration & general office expenditure	3,133	2,096	5,229	7,142
Fundraising Consultancy	-	-		121
Consultancy Fees	869	10,751	11,620	4,478
Website	376	75	451	628
Telephone & Internet	290	-	290	791
Rental/Gas/Electricity	1,335	-	1,335	3,250
Sponsorship	-	-	-	-
Total Resources Expended	6,003	12,922	18,925	16,410
Net Movements in Funds	-	-	-	-
Funds carried forward at 1st April 2023	8,042	16,706	24,748	14,759
Funds carried forward at 31st March 2024	13,793	13,784	27,577	24,748



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DECIBELS BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST MARCH 2024

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 Total Funds £	2023 Total Funds £
Fixed Assets				
Tangible Assets	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Current Assets				
Cash in Bank	13,793	13,784	27,577	24,748
Creditors – Account Due within one year	13,793	13,784	27,577	24,748
Net Current Assets	13,793	13,784	27,577	24,748
Total Assets	13,793	13,784	27,577	24,748
Reserves				
General Fund	13,793	13,784	27,577	24,748

Audit Exemption Statement: For the year ending 31st March 2024, the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. Directors' responsibilities: the members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476; they acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts; these accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.


PAUL TOWNSON (CHAIR)

DATE 3rd July 2024


KEN CARTER (TREASURER)

DATE 3rd July, 2024

Founder/Executive Director: Ken Carter

Hon. President: Lord Michael Berkeley of Knighton, CBE

Acting Company Secretary/Treasurer: Ken Carter

Hon. Vice Presidents: Professor Adam Ockelford

Trustee Directors:

Caroline Parker, MBE

Paul Townson (Chairperson)

Sannah Gulamani

Rosie Axon

Advisers: Dr Nicholas Bannan (International Music Education)

William Ogden

Helen Lansdown (Chief Executive of Deafax)

Creative Arts Director: Ruth Montgomery

Riccardo Mancuso (Business & Strategy Planning)

Projects Co-ordinator & Administrator: Debbie Flory

Registered Address: 121 Greys Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 1TE

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www.decibels.org.uk

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