

INVISIBLE PALACE

Trustees' Report



For the period from: 1st April 2024
To: 31st March 2025

Charity Name: Invisible Palace

Charity registration no.: 1165888

Registered address: 23 Dulwich Wood Avenue
London, SE19 1HB

Trustees

Julianne (Jules) Hussey	Reappointed 26/08/2020	Resigned 11/04/2024
Rosalind (Rosie) Hunter	Reappointed 26/08/2020	Resigned 03/01/2024
Gail Rowe	Appointed 26/08/2020	Later resigned 27/09/2024
Ayesha Begum	Appointed 01/11/2022	
Sarah Patterson	Appointed 01/11/2022	
Isabelle Mae Skelly	Appointed 01/11/2022	Later resigned 04/08/2024
Katerina Kantalis	Appointed 13/12/2023	Resigned 07/01/2024
Aoife Dawe	Appointed 06/02/2025	
Mary Lines	Appointed 06/02/2025	
Catherine O'Connor	Appointed 06/02/2025	

2023–24 marked a significant transition for the charity, with the departure of founding trustees Rosie Hunter and Jules Hussey. Over many years, the founding trustees provided exceptional commitment and support, forming the bedrock of the charity's work and governance.

During the year, financial pressures placed increased demands on the remaining fundraising trustees. In response, four new trustees were recruited by November 2024 and, following appropriate checks, were formally appointed on 6 February 2025.

The Trustees are pleased to present this Report for the charity's ninth full year of operation.

Summary

This reporting period marks the start of the most challenging time that Invisible Palace has faced. A significantly changed context for heritage projects alongside economic downturn making funding scarce. Participants continue to be affected by the cost-of-living crisis and volunteering patterns continue to vary.

From the point of writing now in January 2026 the climate for small arts and heritage charities is harder than it has ever been in the 10-year life of the charity. However, looking to the future there is hope for collaborative opportunities between Invisible Palace and Crystal Palace Park Trust.

Introduction

Context

The suburb of Crystal Palace straddles the boundaries of five London boroughs. This has led to fragmented services, competing priorities, and long-term underinvestment. Cultural provision and public services are often concentrated within individual boroughs, leaving boundary areas with limited access and fewer opportunities. As a result, value is lost for both people and place.

Invisible Palace works with communities across these borough boundaries to reduce barriers to participation in arts, heritage, and nature-based activities.

Crystal Palace Park, the focus of much of the charity's work, came under the management of the Crystal Palace Park Trust in September 2023. Over the long term, a dedicated organisation stewarding this significant social-value asset has the potential to bring meaningful improvements to the local area.

What we do

Invisible Palace create accessible and welcoming activities where a broad range of people can come together through shared interests for collective activity.

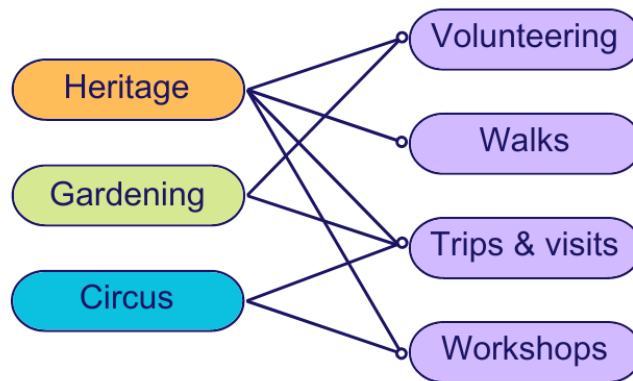
We believe in a place where arts, heritage, and green activities are available, affordable, and accessible to everyone.

Based in South East London, Invisible Palace works across the five boroughs of Bromley, Croydon, Lambeth, Southwark, and Lewisham, focusing on neighbourhoods surrounding Crystal Palace Park.

Our programmes emphasise experiential learning, rooted in the history of the local area and people's relationship to it. Activities are participant-led, with a small team developing and delivering programmes that respond to local needs at both an individual and community level.

People are brought together through communities of interest, rather than being defined by demographic, background or life stage.

Invisible Palace currently delivers work across three strands: **heritage, gardening, and circus**. These include volunteering opportunities, creative sessions, trips and visits, and walks and talks.



This year in numbers

Invisible Palace delivered over **265 hours of activity**, engaging more than **350 people** from local communities in one or more events.

This is a **43% increase in activity hours** compared to last year. However, this headline figure masks a significant decline in the heritage programme following the end of funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Mayor of London.

The increase in hours delivered is largely due to higher attendance within the circus programme, with children taking part in more sessions than in previous years. In contrast, reduced heritage provision resulted in a loss of value within this strand, with **177 fewer participants** taking part overall.

Heritage

- **14 hours** of activity across **7 events**
- **73 participants**
- All activity was self-funded by Invisible Palace
- Represents a **70% reduction** in both activity and participation without major funder support

Gardening

- **91 hours** of activity across **44 events**, including **3 visits** and **1 plant sale**
- **41 people** took part in volunteering, with a further **7 people** joining trips
- Up to **100 added attendees** at the Spring plant sale

- A **modest** increase in hours delivered, with **twice as many volunteers** compared to last year

Circus

- **30 hours** of after-school Circus Club
- **8 hours** of Summer Intensive sessions
- **6 hours** of aerial circus taster sessions for youth groups
- **95 hours** subsidised classes delivered at My Aerial Home
- **129 children** took part an increase of 22 from last year

The year April 2024 to March 2025

Heritage work

The 2023–24 reporting year marked a peak in the delivery of heritage events by Invisible Palace, both in terms of the number of activities delivered and the quality of engagement. Events that used creative approaches to explore challenging or complex heritage themes received particularly strong audience feedback.



Photos by Jules Hussey and Sue Giovanni

A small, self-funded programme of heritage events was delivered during the year:

- **Secrets of the Sculptures** walk – 24 April, led by Andrea Vail
- **World on the Upper Terrace** – 2 June, led by Manasi Pophale
- **Palace People Place** – 23 June, led by Carlos Cortes
- **Drawing from Life** – 30 June, led by Dawn Pereira
- **Secrets of the Sculptures** walk – 14 July, led by Andrea Vail
- **Visit Dulwich Picture Gallery sculpture trail** – 13 August, led by a Dulwich Picture Gallery volunteer guide
- **Secrets of the Sculptures** walk – 16 November, led by Andrea Vail

Due to limited funds, these events relied primarily on digital marketing through Eventbrite and social media. In the previous year, Invisible Palace had also used printed flyers distributed through local libraries, cafés, and community noticeboards. The absence of printed marketing in 2024–25 had a noticeable impact on both attendee numbers and the diversity of audiences at some events.

During the reporting year, the operating context for heritage activity changed. In December 2024, the Crystal Palace Park Trust introduced a policy that groups could no longer apply independently for park-related heritage grants. As a result, planned project development was paused, including activity intended to build on pilot work delivered through *Untold Stories*, funded by the Mayor of London. The policy change also led to the withdrawal of Heritage Compass fundraising strategy support, and Invisible Palace concluded its participation in the programme earlier than expected.

Looking ahead, there is an intention to work collaboratively with the Crystal Palace Park Trust on future projects and funding bids, as opportunities arise.

Gardening

The gardening project based at the Vicar's Oak offers a drop in volunteering opportunity on a Friday morning. People of all ages, from a range of backgrounds, come together in the heart of Crystal Palace, through a common interest in gardening. Volunteers build connections, learn skills, and improve the local area both for people and wildlife. The project is supported by a professional gardener who leads the volunteering sessions. Sessions during this financial year were funded by Building strong Communities – Mayor of London till June 2024 then by Hubbub and self-funded by Invisible Palace.

Invisible Palace has kept a similar model of delivery since 2021:

- fortnightly volunteer sessions over the winter months
- weekly sessions from spring till autumn
- a minimum of one plant sale per year
- trips to other gardens or museums for volunteers and friends

This approach allows the charity to offer a level of consistency on a small budget. Between April 2024 and March 2025 Invisible Palace ran 44 different gardening-related sessions, 48 people got involved in one or more session, with a core group of 8 gardeners.

Invisible Palace has continued a relationship with Turner Townsend corporate volunteers, one team from this company use their individual volunteering days with our gardening project. Two new relationships were developed this year – a bespoke session was offered for Family Volunteering Club and disabled students from Shaftsbury Nash College joined our regular sessions during the summer months to gain gardening experience.

From June onwards, funding from Hubbub enabled Invisible Palace to transform an overgrown and neglected area of Crystal Palace Park near the Crystal Palace Museum. The project focused on regenerating existing flowerbeds to create a more attractive, biodiverse, and accessible space.

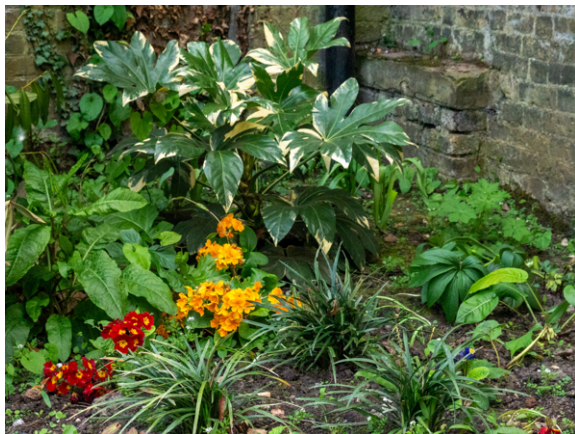
The redesigned planting scheme has introduced year-round seasonal interest, with a greater range of flowering plants including early, late, and winter-flowering varieties. Mahonia plants, which are typically pruned back in winter, were retained to allow berries to remain available for wildlife. The improved space has also provided volunteers with a quieter, more relaxing environment in which to work.

Progress was delivered within a relatively short timeframe, from funding confirmation through site clearance, planting design, and installation. This visible change was welcomed by volunteers, with one commenting: *"It's nice to see something come to fruition."* Within six months, the project demonstrated tangible outcomes, offering a positive and self-contained example of regeneration in a park where change is often long-term and incremental.

Updates posted on social media were very well received showing this type of work is backed by park and museum visitors alike.



Invisible Palace Charity Commission Report April 2023 to March 2024



Defy Gravity Social Circus in partnership with My Aerial Home

Text in this section is drawn from a report written for the National Lottery Community Fund by Niki Lavithis and Sue Giovanni.

Funding from the National Lottery Community Fund has enabled Invisible Palace to fulfil their charitable purposes by providing opportunities for children and young people in Penge, Anerley, and Lewisham to experience circus arts. Those taking part have had fun, made social connections, achieved the unexpected, and built confidence.

How does the project work?

There are several entry points on the Defy Gravity project:

Circus Club - after school club at St John's CE Primary - 30 sessions per year for up to 16 people

Summer Intensive - daytime sessions at St John's CE Primary for KS2 - 4 x 2-hour sessions

Taster session - aimed at youth groups - between 3 and 4 sessions per year

Participants who have enjoyed taking part and shown aptitude have been able to continue lessons by taking up regular circus places on Monster Club or the Summer Camp at My Aerial Home. This is possible due to a combination of discounts offered by My Aerial Home and support from NLCF.

Families of children attending Monster Club at My Aerial Home have told us:

"I am happy for R to be a part of this group because she gained confidence by meeting other people from different culture and she really loved it."

"We are very happy that N is attending these classes. [She is] very active physically and she is fitter. [The best thing has been] physical development and great satisfaction."

"My daughter enjoys the activities and also making new friends. She also talks about the staff to be friendly and warm. She is more flexible on/or her body weight."

"The best thing has been learning a new art craft. I have noticed she is more confident in undertaking new things. More adventurous. Really amazing undertaking, a new/ different type of sport which is not normally taught or seen. Excellent for fitness and creating."

"She has improved a lot in a social life. We have noticed that she likes doing sport activities at home and with her friend. We encourage the staff to continue to do the good work that helps the children develop. Good job to you all."

Delivery Output and Dates

Defy Gravity Social Circus Project runs from March 2023 to March 2026, this is the second year of the National Lottery Community Fund grant

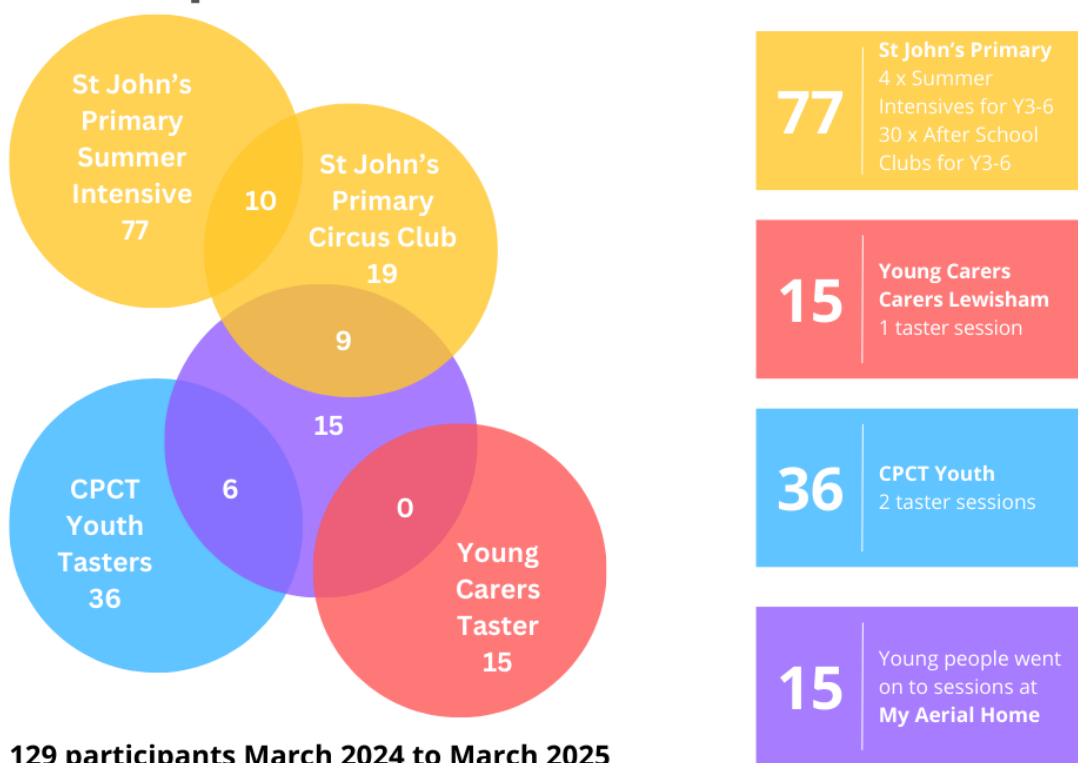
Planned outcomes that will help the project achieve the impact targets for each year are as follows:

- 15 pupils will benefit from the after-school Circus Club at St John's CE Primary School
- 48 pupils will benefit from the Summer Intensives at St John's CE Primary School
- 18 young people will benefit from the Aerial Taster sessions with CPCT Youth Club
- 15 young people will go on to take up sessions at My Aerial Home circus school

Year 2 March 2024 to March 2025 has seen:

- 30 After School Club sessions at St John's CE Primary School, 10 per term
- 3 Aerial Taster sessions at My Aerial Home, 2 with CPCT Youth and 1 with Carers Lewisham
- 4 Summer Intensives at St John's CE Primary School during the school day – KS2 classes participated in different elements of the programme
- 15 funded places on My Aerial Home's weekly Monster Club classes or Summer School
- 20 low-cost tickets for CPCT Youth to attend Revel Puck Circus show in Beckenham Place Park

Participation March 2024 - March 2025



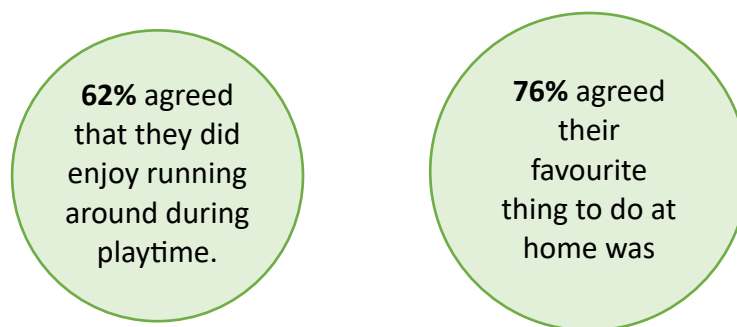
The project is offering accessible high-quality circus arts to under-served young people. Four key areas of impact were identified for reporting:

- Increased participation in physical activity
- Increased strength, flexibility, and balance
- Have improved confidence, resilience, tolerance of others
- Increased social inclusion

Increased participation in physical activity

Various tools are used to measure this including Participatory Action Research, questionnaires and direct feedback.

Newcomers were asked about their participation in physical activity



This shows that when given a chance, the young people do enjoy taking part in physical activity, but that maybe the opportunities at home weren't as reachable and so screentime became the favoured activity.

Over 65% of KS2 students at St John's CE Primary reported that they took part in physical activity outside of school (mainly football), however Circus Club participants stated they did no other physical activity clubs outside of school hours. Families of this group were encouraged by their child's improved interest in physical activity and planned to capitalise on this – hoping to take up opportunities for more circus, along with gymnastics clubs.

A positive note in observations from class teachers (also noted last year) regarded levels of engagement in physical activity during PE improving for the circus session. 3 out of 4 class teachers saw some improvement in their student's willingness to take part and 1 out of 4 saw great improvement.

Increased strength, flexibility, and balance

In the year 1 of the project, we decided that circus facilitator assessment would be right for this measure. During the first two years of the project findings showed clear improvements in all 3 areas.

Have improved confidence, resilience, tolerance of others

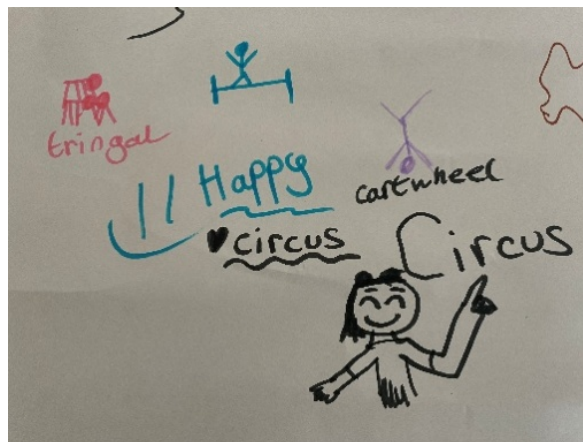
Circus is not only beneficial for physical skills. As all professionals involved in the project observed, circus developed a whole range of valuable, additional skills: sharing; turn taking; good listening skills; patience; teamwork; focus and de-escalation skills. As one circus

facilitator noted: “These things were not in abundance at the start of term. We work on these week by week and they have improved a lot.”

In all of the three key areas - confidence, resilience and tolerance of others – class teachers saw improvements after just the 4 summer intensives, with all 4 teachers who completed the questionnaire saying that they saw class member’s confidence growing with them taking risks and working as a group.

Really positive observations from 2 class teachers were that their pupils were “so proud” and “extremely proud” of themselves.

Participants themselves commented on the improvements. A Year 6 participant at St John’s CE Primary school said that circus “...affect[s] me in lessons to be better.” Even in a taster, one participant noticed that what they loved was seeing “Everyone supporting one another”



Parents reflected that circus provided structure for their children. They would return home, and still find structure as they remembered skills learnt, practising them which - as well as a further opportunity for physical activity - developed their memory, and in turn - built confidence.

Increased social inclusion

“I have taught a few of the students at MAH and have found they have come out of their shell in both ability and confidence. I put this down to meeting a lot more children both their age and younger/older, as well as being outside of a school setting. I see them creating meaningful friendships which have a different dynamic to those we view in school.”

- Circus Facilitator, Defy Gravity Social Circus

In year 1, as a baseline, we asked children in years 5 & 6 at St John's CE Primary School what was most important to them outside of school, and it was encouraging to see that they found importance in sociable activities with family and friends.

Circus Club, Summer Intensives, and Taster sessions all encourage children to learn new social skills but take place within pre-existing social groups. Following on from these sessions 15 children attended at My Aerial Home and it was encouraging to see them mix with other

participants. 3 parents specifically identified the social aspect of these sessions as a direct benefit for their child.

"I am happy for R to be a part of this group because she gained confidence by meeting other people from different culture and she really loved it."

"My daughter enjoys the activities and also making new friends."

"She has improved a lot in a social life."

Enjoyment of Circus

Alongside the 4 main areas of focus, it's important to summarise what the participants across all activities enjoyed about participating in circus. This word cloud consists of everything participants loved and how they'd describe circus positively. This summarises over 170 words or phrases.



Financial Review

The charity's Financial Statements form pages 15 and 16 of this report.

The charity prepared Receipts and Payments accounts for the financial year. Total receipts were **£58,191** and total payments were **£55,606**. At the year end, the charity held **£33,717** in assets, all of which was cash held at bank.

During the year, the charity received ongoing project funding of **£36,538** from the National Lottery Community Fund, **£7,840** from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and **£1,707** from the Greater London Authority. A new funder, Hubbub, awarded **£7,500**, of which **£4,500** was spent within this financial year.

The local organisation Friends of Crystal Palace Subway was dissolved after achieving its aims. Its remaining funds of **£1,429** were donated to Invisible Palace.

Unrestricted funds received during the year totalled **£2,928**. Unrestricted fund expenditure was **£2,630**. At the end of the financial year, unrestricted funds stood at **£6,453**, which includes an opening balance of **£6,154**. The unrestricted fund balance has reduced compared with the previous year.

The finances this year were again independently examined by Stefan Bort a Chartered secretary for Bort Corporate Solutions Ltd.

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' Report above and the financial report on pages 15 and 16.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signature(s)



Full name(s)

Ayesha Begum

Aoife Dawe

Position (e.g. Chair)

Chair of Trustees

Finance Trustee

Date

26/01/2026

26/01/2026

Invisible Palace Registered Charity no. 1165888 Receipts & Payments Account for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 The charity holds no endowment funds at present There were no sales or purchases of assets or investments.			
	<u>Restricted Funds</u>	<u>Unrestricted Funds</u>	<u>Total</u>
Receipts	£	£	£
Donations	1,012	615	1,627
Crystal Palace Park Trust - CPPT	250	-	250
CAF Donate	116	36	153
Easy Fundraising	-	278	278
Family Volunteering Club	300	-	300
Friends of Crystal Palace Subway	-	1,429	1,429
Gift Aid	-	34	34
Hubbub foundation	7,500	-	7,500
Greater London Authority - GLA	1,707	-	1,707
National Lottery Community Fund - NLCF	36,538	-	36,538
National Lottery Heritage Fund - NLHF	7,840	-	7,840
Tickets	-	485	485
Interest Received	-	50	50
Total net receipts for the period	55,262	2,928	58,191
Payments	£	£	£
Artists' and Project Management Fees	42,875	1,450	44,325
Equipment and Materials	3,175	61	3,236
Training	100	-	100
Volunteers' Expenses	684	45	729
Staff Expenses	44	7	51
Publicity & Promotion	3,075	527	3,602
Event Costs	-	24	24
Administration / Overhead	2,983	345	3,328
Bank Charges	-	60	60
Fundraising Costs	40	111	151
Total net payments for the period	52,976	2,630	55,606
	<u>Restricted Funds</u>	<u>Unrestricted Funds</u>	<u>Total</u>
	£	£	£
Opening Balance	24,978	6,154	31,133
Cash Funds at end of period	27,265	6,453	33,717

Invisible Palace
Registered Charity no. 1165888

Statement of Assets and Liabilities
for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

<u>Assets</u>	<u>Restricted Funds</u>	<u>Unrestricted Funds</u>	<u>Total</u>
	£	£	£
Funds held	27,265	6,453	33,717
Other monetary assets	-	-	-
Investment assets	-	-	-
Assets retained for the charity's own use	-	-	-
Liabilities			
Any invoices outstanding at 31 March 2025	-	-	-
Total Assets at end of period	27,265	6,453	33,717

ACCOUNTS PREPARED BY
 Marcella Caramba-Coker
 MACC Services

APPROVED BY THE TRUSTEES ON

Signed
 Aoife Dawe



Date

30th October 2025

Signed
 Mary Lines



Date

3rd November 2025



CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name

INVISIBLE PALACE

On accounts for the year
ended

31 MARCH 2025

Charity no
(if any)

1165888

Set out on pages

15 & 16

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2025

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

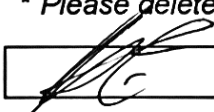
I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:



Date:

17/1/26

Name:

STEFAN EDWARD BORT

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

ASSOCIATE CHARTERED GOVERNANCE INSTITUTE

Address:

3 DULWICH WOOD AVENUE
LONDON SE19 1HB

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ACCOUNTS PREPARED BY
 Marcella Caramba-Coker
 MACC Services

APPROVED BY THE TRUSTEES ON

Signed
 Aoife Dawe



Date

30th October 2025

Signed
 Mary Lines



Date

3rd November 2025



CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name

INVISIBLE PALACE

On accounts for the year
ended

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Independent
examiner's statement

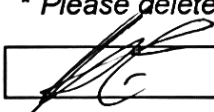
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* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:



Date:

17/1/26

Name:

STEFAN EDWARD BORT

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

ASSOCIATE CHARTERED GOVERNANCE INSTITUTE

Address:

3 DULWICH WOOD AVENUE
LONDON SE19 1HB