





CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

This year we continued to progress our strategy aimed at ensuring the sustainability of The Engine Shed's activities, including continuing our capital campaign to secure our own permanent unit in Reading. The Reading unit, which we currently rent, is a 1000 square feet space, with multiple layouts for all ages. We have had a great year of recreational activities for all ages at the unit and further success with our fundraising. The £150,000 sum required is a substantial amount to raise and much more than we are used to raising as an organisation. We look forward to more success in the coming year, as we intensify our fundraising efforts.

The Engine Shed in Bromley has gone from strength to strength, clocking up a second full year of activity, with very positive feedback from attendees. The Chingford group has continued to attract lots of families and maintained a strong community in this corner of North East London.

Once again we enjoyed some great days out to local railway attractions during the summer. We are grateful to the organisations for offering these opportunities including the inimitable Fawley Hill, and the ever welcoming High Wycombe Model Engineering Club who offer us lunch and home-made cakes alongside unlimited rides.

We appreciate the support from local and national funders which has enabled us to pay the rent on the Reading unit, the venue hire at the London venues, further develop our railway layouts, purchase refreshments and to run the groups in three localities. As always our train sessions are free, with no need to book and free refreshments. We want to remove all barriers to participation and cost can be a key issue when accessing community play facilities, especially when people attend as a family group. We always welcome feedback on how we can increase the accessibility of our sessions.

Finally, all of our train-related fun requires many volunteers. We appreciate everyone involved in The Engine Shed - those helping with social media, writing funding applications, doing heavy lifting, helping with electrical work, creating innovative layouts and making tea for everyone. It truly is a joint effort.

We are now associate members of PhaB which allows us to get support with our DBS applications, and advice on safeguarding, legal and other issues as necessary. This also allows us to access PhaB activities - including the flying experience that members were able to enjoy this summer.

We look forward to another year of inclusive play with the Engine Shed community.

Sarah Snow, Chair

ABOUT THE ENGINE SHED

Set up over fifteen years ago, The Engine Shed runs special interest recreational activities for autistic children, young people and adults. We are run by volunteers. The organisation was set up by parents and carers in response to the lack of welcoming and supportive recreational facilities for our autistic children and the profound isolation that autistic children and their family members were facing as result of this. We run regular train play sessions at our unit in Reading, in community halls in Chingford and Bromley, organise days out at railway-themed attractions and also run sibling activities and parent information sessions and training when funding allows. We are one of the '10 Best UK Rail Adventures for Children' (Telegraph 2018).



The Bromley Engine Shed group

TRAIN PLAY SESSIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

We now have the lead Engine Shed group in Reading and the two groups in the London area: Chingford in the North and Bromley in the South.

We had a busy year with a total of twenty-two recreational play sessions delivered in the London area. We work closely with local authorities, the voluntary sector and schools to promote these sessions, and attendance is always strong. The Bromley group joined local charities to mark Autism Acceptance Day in April, and promoted the sessions to the surrounding community. The Reading group attended two SEN information sessions organised by Reading Families Forum.

At all of our sessions, train lay-outs are set up for all abilities (Lego, wooden, various electric ones etc) and to provide hands-on activities, with refreshments and a relaxing space for parents and carers. Paediatricians, GPs, Local Authorities, voluntary groups and schools tell newly diagnosed children's families about The Engine Shed: they come along and find a ready-made community of people who have walked the same path in their locality.

We have welcomed lots of new families along this year, many of whom are on the pathway to a diagnosis appointment and are struggling to find suitable activities in the community. We want to ensure that they can benefit from a full range of activities at this early stage of the journey.



Play sessions at the Chingford group



Enjoying the trains at High Wycombe Model Engineering Club



Images show Lady Judy McAlpine, our Patron, welcoming us at the Fawley Estate, with scenes from the day. The last photo shows the plane that members flew in as part of the PhaB day out.

FUN DAYS OUT

We enjoyed a number of train days out this year. At Lord McAlpine's estate in Fawley Hill in August we enjoyed rides across the estate on a full size diesel train, including journeying up the steepest stretch of track in the UK. As always we were surrounded by herds of rare deer, alpacas and peacocks. We are grateful to the team at the Museum who make every effort to ensure that all members of our group can get the most out of the visit.

High Wycombe Model Engineering Club (HWMEC) offered us their annual summer fun day at Holmer Green. We are grateful to the local Freemasons for organising this event, and funding lunch and cake - and the team at HWMEC for their hospitality. This is our 10th year at HWMEC; we remain in awe at the commitment of the railway community to delivering and maintaining substantial train-related projects and engaging with groups to share their passion.

We are very grateful to Phab for the wonderful flying day that some of our families joined at Redhill Aerodrome in June. People could choose to be a passenger or pilot and families really enjoyed this rare opportunity to take to the skies. Thank you to PhaB for this wonderful experience.

The days out provide valuable opportunities for further interaction and bonding for our children, young people and adults and are a key part of what we offer at The Engine Shed.

SPECIAL DONATION FROM US SUPPORTER

About five years ago an engineer Tom Stephenson in Seattle found us on the internet; he liked what we were doing and decided he was going to support us, though he is 6,000 miles away. He designed, created and dropped off handmade wooden track and buildings for us in 2020 – these are a firm favourite with the group. This year Tom, en route to a European holiday, dropped off the most beautiful layout on a carved stand, with

The Engine Shed logo carved at the end. It was quite emotional watching him unpack and screw together this work of art; a beautiful gift to a group of people that he did not personally know, with no expectation of anything in return. This layout is now a much loved resource and is particularly well used by children with mobility issues who find floor play more difficult.



A PERMANENT HOME FOR THE ENGINE SHED IN READING

Having our own (rented) unit in Reading is already enabling us to deliver more activities. In 2023 we moved into a dedicated rented Engine Shed space in Reading where the trains can be laid out and we can offer more regular sessions throughout the week - including early years sessions, youth groups and other activities. Before taking on our current rented unit in Reading, we were running regular pop-up sessions in a community centre in Reading which had no storage. Sessions involved a convoy of vehicles and carrying our huge electric layouts (nailed to 7 internal doors) from a van into the building, with a two hour set-up time.

The Reading unit, which is just over 1000 square feet, has a large open space for electric layouts of various sizes, two rooms with hands-on trains and track, and two sofa areas for relaxing. We are establishing a permanent resource for the local community where autistic people of all ages, and their carers as appropriate, can come for trains, support and community. This comes at a substantial monthly expense which relies on intense fundraising by volunteers.

The space in Reading provides further recreational and also volunteering opportunities for our adult members. Newly-diagnosed early years children have particular needs, and their parents are looking for support at the start of their journey. Having our own space in Reading is enabling us to offer sessions all week, for different age groups, where we can also deliver other activities and forms of support for children, young people, and parents/carers.

The £150,000 sum required is a substantial amount to raise and much more than we are used to raising as an organisation. The Engine Shed has always been a small organisation with our energy focused on our activities, and not exponential growth. We are currently paying £1,200 a month for our unit in Reading and the sooner we can purchase the unit, the sooner we can stop the need to generate and pay for this large monthly outgoing - expenditure which further delays us from reaching our final total.

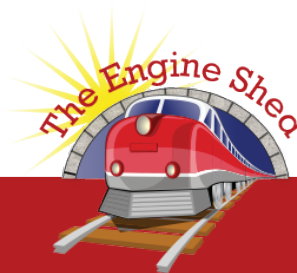
We look forward to more success in the coming year, as we intensify our fundraising efforts.



SUSTAINING OUR ACTIVITIES

The Engine Shed is committed to accessibility. We have always sought to remove obstacles to individuals and families attending Engine Shed sessions - you do not need to book, you do not pay, refreshments are free. There are now a number of toy train-related activity schemes which are charging £12-£13 for a two-hour session. If you have 3 children like many of our attendees do, this equates to £35+ for two hours of playing with trains in a local hall. This is beyond the reach of many of the people who would benefit from the club's activities. During a financial crisis it is more important than ever that we keep sessions free of charge. In addition, booking online in advance does not always work well for families who are taking one day at a time depending on the needs of the child or young person.

We remain committed to this no-cost / no-fuss model which is part of The Engine Shed's success. We fundraise on an ongoing basis to keep the activities free of charge to our attendees. Trustees will continue to explore funding opportunities this year, and will hold our own Charity Draw, selling raffle tickets to support our work. We would love to hear from anyone who would like to run a marathon, hold a cake sale or organise a fundraising event for The Engine Shed. We can help with publicity, materials and other support required.



The Engine Shed

31 Grove Hill, Reading, RG4 8PN

Registered Charity No. 1187504

www.theengineshed.org.uk

mail@theengineshed.org.uk

The Engine Shed
Accounts Year Ended 31st March 2025

	2025 Restricted	2025 Unrestricted	2025 Total	2024 Comparison
Income				
Grants received:				
Screwfix	-	-	-	5,000.00
Berks Community Fdn	1,600.00	-	1,600.00	9,570.00
Good Exchange	3,460.00	-	3,460.00	0.00
Baily Thomas Trust	-	-	-	0.00
Reading Borough Council	4,210.00	-	4,210.00	3,900.00
Post Code Society Trust	-	-	-	6,000.00
The Coop Community Fund	500.00	-	500.00	2,441.49
Souter Charitable Trust	-	-	-	3,000.00
Local Giving	-	-	-	500
Awards For All	19,745.00	-	19,745.00	9,950.00
Masonic Charitable Trust	1,628.00	-	1,628.00	0.00
Misc donations	-	2,327.36	2,327.36	1,712.78
Other income	-	-	-	-
Total income	31,143.00	2,327.36	33,470.36	42,074.27
Expenditure				
Venue Hire and Rent	15,150.00	-	15,150.00	14,472.20
Minibus and related costs	4,062.52	-	4,062.52	1,288.97
Utilities and rates	3,845.24	-	3,845.24	1,642.62
Equipment	2,174.90	-	2,174.90	1,886.41
Days Out	15.00	-	15.00	492.15
Volunteer expenses	233.50	-	233.50	523.10
Refreshments	448.00	-	448.00	768.73
Website, promotional mats etc	102.00	-	102.00	150.00
Train and Book resources	128.00	-	128.00	-
Insurance	408.24	-	408.24	408.24
Fees, misc expenses, running costs	2,126.94	-	2,126.94	3,134.94
Other expenditure	-	-	-	-
Total expenditure	28,694.34	-	28,694.34	24,767.36
Total Income less Total Expenditure	2,448.66	2,327.36	4,776.02	- 16,280.50
Opening bank balance	17,967.86	3,152.04	21,119.90	3,744.29
Surplus/(loss) from above	2,448.66	2,327.36	4,776.02	17,375.61
Closing bank balance	20,416.52	5,479.40	25,895.92	21,119.90

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2025

	£
Current Assets: minibus	16,000.00
Debtors	0
Cash at Bank	25,985.92
Total current assets	41,985.92
Current Liabilities	
Creditors	0
Total Net Assets	41,985.92
Funds	25,985.92

Signed



Sarah Snow, Chair of Trustees

Signed



Maria Baker, Independent Examiner

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of The Engine Shed

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above CIO, Registered Charity Number 1187504, for the year ended 31st March 2025.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

As the charity trustees of the CIO, 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 CIO'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.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention 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.

Signed

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Independent Examiner

24 January 2026

M.Baker MA