

Charity Commission Annual Review 2025

This review is the annual report that the Trustees of Richmond Walking and Book Festival are legally required to make to the Charity Commission. It covers the period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025.

Governance

Richmond Walking and Book Festival (the Trust) is a charitable incorporated organisation with limited liability. The Trust's only voting members are its charity trustees (foundation model constitution). It is governed by its constitution and was registered as a charity by the Charity Commission for England and Wales on 7 October 2020 – registration number 1191688. The Trust's registered office is:

17 New Road
Richmond
DL10 4QS

Objectives and Activities

The objects of the Trust are:

- (1) The advancement of education in the arts for the public benefit, in particular the art of literature, by the provision of an annual book festival in and around Richmond, North Yorkshire.
- (2) The promotion of community participation in healthy recreation by providing guided walks with the aim of offering opportunities for exercise and access to the countryside, local history, the physical and natural environment, flora and fauna through the medium of an annual walking festival in and around Richmond, North Yorkshire.

Public Benefit Statement

The objectives of the Trust are set out above. The Trust has fulfilled these objectives by providing a walking and book festival from 19th to 28th September 2025 plus a small number of events outside of this period. In making decisions and exercising its powers the Trust has had due regard to the Charity Commission Guidance on Public Benefit.

Organisation

The Trust is managed by a Board comprising all the Trustees. Some operational decisions are delegated to subgroups for walks, book events, and marketing. The Board of Trustees is assisted in its roles by some volunteers but there are no paid employees. It is estimated that about 50 people helped with the 2025 Festival.

Friends and Supporters

The only members of the Trust are the Trustees. The Trust has a Friends scheme, but Friends have no voting rights. There are currently 82 Friends (61 in 2024) including 51 paid friends in 2025, 4 friends for life, 11 Trustees (including ex-trustees) and 16 advertising friends. We have a supporters' email list (including Friends) of 733 (660 in 2024) people.

The Trustees

The Trust constitution requires that there should be a minimum of three trustees. There were nine trustees during the year one of whom resigned at the year-end.

Barbara Gravenor	Chair
Susan Young	Book Events Subgroup
Geoff Wall	Walk Coordinator
Jane McLennan	Minute Secretary and Book Events Subgroup

James Gravenor	Treasurer and Book Events Coordinator
Kathryn Streatfield	Book Events Subgroup (resigned 31/12 2025)
Nick Long	Walk Subgroup and Sponsorship Coordinator
Mark Leigh-Howarth	Book Events Subgroup
Helen Roberts	Walk Subgroup (appointed 25/02/2025)

Links to other organisations

The Trust maintains close links with Richmond Town Council, several non-profit making bodies, providers of venues and accommodation, local businesses and local schools. The Trust is a member of Original Richmond Business and Tourism Association and is affiliated to the Swaledale Outdoor Club and the Ramblers Association. It has also recently become a member of the British Art Festivals Association.

Risk Management

The Trust identified several risks in providing both guided walks and book events and reviewed these risks during the year and implemented appropriate measures to reduce and manage those risks. The Trust also took out relevant insurance.

The 2025 Festival

The Richmond Walking & Book Festival 2025 ran from 19th to 28th September with children's events on 20th August and 28th October. This was the 20th Festival (the 5th to be organised by the Richmond Walking and Book Festival charity). The Festival was a success judged both financially and by the respondents to a survey we conducted: 97.4% of those who responded said they would recommend the Festival to a friend. Customer comments were overwhelmingly positive. 359 (250 in 2024) people participated in the 28 walks provided and 944 (988 in 2024) tickets were issued for 21 book events. 1 book event was cancelled because of low advance sales and 1 event because the speaker was ill. A major speaker withdrew before the Festival and was replaced by another but less known speaker. 1 walk was cancelled because of the weather. The strong partnership with Richmond School continued with school pupils previewing and reviewing talks. These pupils were given a free copy of the book they reviewed and tickets for them and a parent to the talk. We offered a 50% reduction on the ticket price for people on income related benefits or in full time education or accompanying carers, for all walks and for book events. Excluding Georgian Theatre Royal events 14 concessionary tickets were sold (compared to 9 in 2024).

The Speakers

Feedback from the speakers who gave talks at the Festival was very positive.

Independent Review of Educational Content of Festival

The Trust commissioned an independent review of the educational content of the Festival from Delphine Ruston, former English teacher at Richmond School and Sixth Form College. This review is attached in full as an appendix 1 to this report.

Finances

In 2025 walking events produced a surplus of £759 after donations were made to the National Trust, the Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust, Hazel Brow Farm, Swaledale Mountain Rescue, and the Heggs Castle project. The book events produced a surplus of £2,153. Grants, sponsorship, advertising, donations and other fund-raising activities generated income of £5,441. After deducting marketing and website expenses (£3,400) and administration expenses net of bank interest (£866) the Festival made a surplus of £4,087 (£380 in 2024) which when added to our balance brought forward means that we carry forward a balance

of £22,755 as at 31 December 2025 to underwrite future Festivals. The Trust aims to maintain reserves of £17,000. It proposes to invest some of the excess reserves into an improved sound system and staging.
Statements of Receipts and Payments and Assets and Liabilities are attached as Appendix 2.

Barbara Gravenor
Chair
Richmond Walking and Book Festival

Signed by:

Barbara Gravenor, Chair

Date:

Handwritten signature of Barbara Gravenor in black ink.

Jane McLennan, Minute Secretary

Date:

Handwritten signature of Jane McLennan in black ink.

AGM Appendix 1 Richmond Walking and Book Festival 2025 – Education Report

2025 marks the twentieth year of the Walking and Book Festival. Each year there is a range of popular, established walks, some local to Richmond and others further afield in the Dales, graded from easy, to moderate to hard. The festival organisers continually develop the programme. This year, there were 30 walks, of which 15 were new. There were 13 book talks and two participative events. The festival attracts both locals and visitors. Events are often integrated with other organisations and initiatives.

There are recurring themes which the festival organisers revisit and expand each year: history and archaeology, both local and worldwide, modern and ancient; nature, the environment and ecology; non-fiction, including biography, covering topical issues; varieties of new fiction and the craft of writing. An emerging subject has been the link between walking, the outdoors and mental health and well-being. The focus of some events is local, while others are national and international in scope.

The target audience is mostly adult. However, students at Richmond School are offered free tickets and invited to read and critique a book and follow-up with a review of the associated event. Both articles are published online. This year, four students took advantage of this enrichment opportunity. There is also a summer event for primary school children.

Children's Event

For the third year running, the festival offered a children's event in the summer holidays. Twenty-nine 7-11-year-olds attended an afternoon at Catterick Library where local author and archaeologist, Caroline Hardie, presented her book 'Little Loco's Big Day Out' about the inaugural journey of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825. Caroline gave an enthusiastic rendition of the story accompanied with slides of the book's witty illustrations. Children then sang a train song together. They coloured-in their own poster depicting Little Loco and, to conclude the afternoon, viewed a film of a dramatisation of the story performed by children from Darlington schools. There was a lively, fun atmosphere throughout. Some children already knew about the significance to the world of the first railway being at Darlington and some had been to the new Hopetown Museum. All went away knowing that the first train journey in the world was in 1825, that the route between Darlington and Stockton was 26 miles long and that 600 people travelled on Locomotion 1 in open wagons. The event dovetailed meaningfully with the national Summer Reading Challenge which has been popular at the library.

History and Global Issues

The children's event was complemented by a talk for adults in the main festival period, also given by Caroline Hardie with journalist Chris Lloyd, as part of a series of national events to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. The story is well known but, referring to their extensive research, the presenters powerfully illuminated the ground-breaking achievements of the railway pioneers and the importance to the world of this first passenger rail journey.

By contrast, a current global issue was presented by China expert, Tim Clissold, who talked about his new book, 'Teach the People: What we don't know about China and what they know about us'. Tim explored controversial and thought-provoking questions about China as a major world power. Several sixth form students from Richmond School attended this talk, one of whom had written a review of the book:

The treatise of his latest book is that China has now essentially overtaken countries like Britain, but that we still tend not to try to learn from them. He argues that the West is in need of an established

knowledge of China, available to all – not just experts and academics. 28% of Chinese people are learning English while only 0.28% of English people are reportedly learning Chinese. Similarly, the study of Shakespeare is mandatory in Chinese middle schools, whereas an education on Confucius or Mao is largely overlooked here, aside from the odd A-Level history class.

Nature, the Environment and Ecology

Global issues concerning nature, the environment and ecology were presented by high-profile wildlife presenter, conservationist and author, Megan McCubbin, at a sell-out evening at the Georgian Theatre Royal. Megan used stunning images to demonstrate the work she has been involved with across the world, as a scientist on conservation projects and as a campaigner. There was much challenging information concerning endangered species and the threats to the natural world but Megan balanced this with hopefulness and urged people to take action to protect nature in whatever small ways they can in their local environment.

The potential and impact of individual action was a message in other environmental talks and walks, for example the Discovery Walk at the Heggs-Castle Renaturing Project, where three Arkengarthdale farmers are working together to reforest the land, increase biodiversity and create natural flood defences; and the Discovery Walk at Hazel Brow Farm in Swaledale where participants learned about the challenges facing upland farmers and the measures being taken to adapt and diversify.

Several walks and talks investigated the controversial issue of pollution in British rivers. Members of local action group Save Our Swale led a 4-mile walk along the River Swale to explain their work as citizen-scientists trained by the Environment Agency and in liaison with the national research project Surfers Against Sewage to monitor water quality, and with The Riverfly Partnership to monitor invertebrate health. Monitoring equipment had been set-up at the riverside so that participants could learn how the process works. The walk raised awareness of the complexity of the issue and how a longitudinal-research approach will be necessary if water quality is to be improved for the benefit of both humans and wildlife.

The British coastline is the subject of Roger Morgan-Grenville's latest book, 'The Restless Coast'. He presented an entertaining, informative and challenging talk about his travels around the 11,000 miles of British coastline, investigating the many geographical and geological issues, for example coastal erosion and climate change, as well as the plight of neglected and deprived coastal communities.

Social History and Politics

Unfortunately, the headline event by historian David Olusoga was cancelled as he had a conflicting engagement. Also, because of ill health, Afghan writer, Asad Qureshi could not deliver his talk about being a journalist under the Taliban. However, author David Kennedy stepped-in to deliver a fascinating talk about his work, 'Art and Class', how working-class people used to visit art galleries but over a period of time have been denied access to art spaces. Former Labour politician, Chris Mullin, returned to the festival to give another popular, insightful talk, this time about his latest diary publication, 'Didn't You Used to be Chris Mullin?' which charts his twelve years from the end of the Labour government in 2011 to the death of the Queen.

Historian Lucy Adlington also returned to give another talk about her research into the relationship between clothing and people who lived through Auschwitz. Her historical novel 'Four Red Sweaters' was reviewed by a Richmond School sixth former:

... in Lucy Adlington's 'Four Red Sweaters' the abstract and somewhat unbelievable concept of having to knit to survive, in more ways than one, is truly brought home in the most resonating way. Adlington uses an everyday garment to echo the past and humanise the forgotten lives of genocide, putting names and faces behind otherwise hazy and somewhat dehumanising statistics.

Another sixth former wrote about Dr Jade Scott's book, 'Captive Queen: The Decrypted History of Mary Queen of Scots':

More than a biography, Captive Queen invites readers to step into Mary's world and experience her struggles first-hand through her letters. Scott's work breathes new life into a figure too often reduced to scandal or tragedy, offering instead a deeply human account of resilience, betrayal, and survival.

Mental health and well-being

The festival linked into the local Ramblers Wellbeing Walks with two free walks offered. These are gentle walks run by volunteers to promote physical and mental health. In a similar vein, writer Annabel Abbs gave a talk on her recent book, 'The Walking Cure' which explores new science about the effects of location on health and happiness. She also led a new walk in connection with another book, 'Sleepless: Discovering the Power of the Night Self', in which participants went on a night-walk. Along the way, Annabel explained new findings from science about how the brain changes at night and the benefits of night walking.

Perhaps the most extreme and impressive account of the connections between physical activity and mental health came from adventurer and writer Jessica Hepburn who talked about her book, 'Save me from the Waves' which documents her achievement in swimming the Channel, climbing Everest and running a marathon. Partly, her three-part goal was fuelled by her disappointment in not being able to have a child. The story is told against the backcloth of Jessica's love of the Radio 4 programme, Desert Island Discs. It was an inspiring event. Jessica's message was to live adventurously, despite life's disappointments.

Learning about the craft of writing and practical workshops

Audiences gain many insights into the craft of writing from the diverse authors at the festival. For example, crime writer Michael Jecks presented the Peter Robinson Memorial Event, in which he explored how he incorporates landscape into his crime novels.

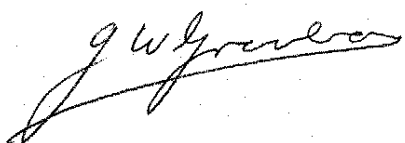
At a practical level, local artist Liz Harvey led a workshop where participants went for a three-hour stroll with stops to practise sketching under Liz's guidance. For the fourth year running there were also two beginners' bookbinding workshops with all twelve participants expressing a desire to develop their new skills in a follow-up workshop.

The ten days of the festival offer a rich diet of walks and talks. Individuals are implicitly invited to shape their own programme from the daily variety. There is a wealth of new learning to take away from the festival and much to continue exploring long after it has closed.

Delphine Ruston
5 October 2025

Richmond Walking & Book Festival Accounts 2025		
	1 January - 31 December 2025	1 January - 31 December 2024
Receipts and Payments	£	£
Receipts		
Grants	1,000	1,000
Donations	604	160
Friends scheme	855	480
Gift Aid	128	103
Bank Interest	348	167
Sponsorship and advertising	3,105	1,770
Quiz night	249	209
Book events	9,008	14,197
Book sales	2,910	2,539
Bar	507	710
Bag sales	60	126
Walks	2,255	1,698
Sub-Total	21,028	23,159
Payments		
Book events - speaker & related expenses	7,412	13,073
Book purchases	2,380	2,176
Bar costs	209	354
Walk expenses	1,386	609
Bank charges & commission	715	993
Advertising, promotion & website	3,400	4,284
Other expenses	1,438	1,290
Sub-Total	16,941	22,779
Surplus for Year (unrestricted funds)	4,087	380
Statement of assets and liabilities at 31 December	2025	2024
Cash in Current Account	2,769	5,527
Cash in Savings Account	20,088	13,141
Total Cash	22,857	18,668
Less		
Income in Advance	102	
Net Assets	22,755	
Funds brought Forward	18,668	18,288
Surplus for Year	4,087	380
Unrestricted Funds Carried Forward	22,755	18,668

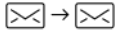
Signed by James Gravenor Treasurer



Date: 10th January 2026

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