

# The Open Table Network Trustees' Annual Report

## For the period 1<sup>st</sup> January-31<sup>st</sup> December 2025



The Open Table Network (OTN) is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) no. 1193868 registered with the Charity Commission in England & Wales.

**In 2025, OTN continued to provide safe, affirming spaces for LGBTQIA+ people of faith across England and Wales - offering belonging, community, and hope to people who are often excluded elsewhere.**

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**The quotations highlighted in the text of this report came from Open Table community members and leaders during the year.**

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### Objectives and activities

The object of the CIO is the promotion of equality and diversity, and the relief of those in need for the public benefit, particularly in the area of LGBTQIA+ equality in religious organisations in the UK, by:

- a) building a network of mutually supportive communities for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+) across the UK, to ensure they have equal access to a community where faith and LGBTQIA+ identities can be explored and celebrated in safe, non-judgmental spaces
- b) relieving mental and emotional distress, reducing social isolation and promoting mental, spiritual and physical well-being for isolated, unsupported LGBTQIA+ people who seek the potential well-being provided by a faith community but currently find no welcome, affirmation or tolerance in many faith communities, by training and supporting OTN community leaders to provide long-term unconditional welcome to LGBTQIA+ people, their families and friends
- c) providing activities and information to foster understanding between people from diverse backgrounds and cultivate a sentiment in favour of equality and diversity.

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**'What a gift. A place where those left wandering through hatred elsewhere are wanted, made to feel at home, belong.'**

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### Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit:

- Enables Open Table communities for LGBTQIA+ people hosted by affiliated churches.
- Resources Open Table communities, churches, individuals, and the wider community by providing signposting, training, events, materials, and support.
- Maintains an online presence offering solidarity and signposting for LGBTQIA+ people.
- Works in partnership to share best practice and amplify marginalised voices.

The trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit.

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**‘It’s our job to make room at the table, so everyone feels welcome’.**

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### **Contribution made by volunteers:**

As a growing partnership of communities across the UK, **we hugely valued the contributions of 399 volunteers across the 41 communities we supported in 2025** (37 existing communities and four new communities). **133 were new to volunteering with Open Table communities this year.**

Using data from our 2021 research into volunteer time contributions, we estimate that **Open Table volunteers gave around 4,000 hours a month in 2025 - an increase of 10% since 2024.**

Open Table community members tell us that **the role of volunteers is ‘highly significant’ in creating these safer spaces in our church communities.**

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**‘We are proud of the fact that many of us are showing courage... sharing our lives with each other in an atmosphere where no-one’s going to criticise...’**

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### **Achievements and performance**

At a time where most other public places welcome them equally, LGBTQIA+ people are still not always welcomed in UK churches. They are significantly more likely to experience mental distress, which research has shown relates explicitly to discriminatory pastoral practices of local churches.

**In 2025 we re-commissioned independent research into the experiences of OTN's community members and leaders, to update the charity's Research and Case for Support published in 2021:**

- **A critical lifeline for well-being:** 90% of Open Table community members reported that joining an Open Table community has improved their well-being - **more than 60% described their well-being as ‘very much’ or ‘extremely’ improved.**
- **Barriers to belonging are intensifying:** A significant **78% of members now identify being visible as LGBTQIA+ as a barrier to belonging** in mainstream church communities. In 2021 the figure was 56% - There is a sharp rise in the perception that being LGBTQIA+ prevents belonging in mainstream faith communities.
- **The power of connection:** Open Table communities continue to be vital spaces for social connection. **83% of members feel less isolated because of joining an Open Table community.** This has remained consistently high over five years (87% in 2021).
- **A sanctuary of safety:** The ‘unapologetically queer space’ of Open Table communities is essential for their spiritual safety. **82% of respondents feel safer within an Open Table community.** In 2021 the figure was 89% - while 4 out of 5 still feel significantly safer, the slight dip may reflect a more hostile external environment for LGBTQIA+ people of faith.
- **The ‘only space’ for faith and identity:** For one in five members (20%), **Open Table is the only place they access in their entire month that is both faith-based and LGBTQIA+ inclusive.**
- **Spiritual homelessness:** Qualitative feedback indicates **many members feel ‘spiritually homeless’ elsewhere,** making the Open Table community their primary or only source of spiritual support.

**The full updated Research & Case for Support will be published in mid-2026.**

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**‘For a few years now, I’ve felt like I’ve been in the desert... being part of Open Table has given me the opportunity to be part of a Christian community.’**

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### **Growth, resilience, and impact in 2025:**

The need for safe, inclusive spaces of faith is not just persistent - it is accelerating. In 2025, the Open Table Network (OTN) navigated a shifting landscape with resilience, expanding our reach to new seekers while deepening our influence within the wider Church.

#### **Our Network in numbers:**

- **38 active communities:** 2025 ended with 38 vibrant Open Table communities across England and Wales. We **supported 37 communities** throughout the year (including three that made the prayerful decision to finish their season of meeting), and **launched four new communities**, resulting in a net growth of our national footprint.
- **A catalyst for change:** Beyond our established communities, we also supported **24 exploring churches** as they considered hosting an Open Table community. This represents a significant ‘ripple effect’ - regardless of whether a community eventually launches, OTN actively guided two dozen leadership teams through the vital work of LGBTQIA+ inclusion.
- **Reaching new seekers:** Our average monthly contacts grew to 738 in 2025 - **around 9% higher than in 2024. New in-person contacts also increased by 9%**, reaching 839 for the year.

#### **What this tells us:**

1. **Steady growth is resilience:** In a period where many traditional faith communities are seeing declining attendance, **OTN continued to sustain loyal monthly communities while also welcoming growing numbers of new people.**
2. **A primary point of entry (or re-entry):** The **9% increase in new community members** is our most telling statistic. It confirms that Open Table is increasingly the first door LGBTQIA+ people walk through when they decide to re-engage with faith. We are reaching the ‘de-churched’ - those who may have stayed away from church for years - at a higher rate than ever before.
3. **Systemic influence:** The **24 churches currently ‘exploring’ an Open Table presence** highlight OTN’s role as **a consultant for the wider Church.** We are not just building a network; we are changing the internal culture of churches across the UK, one conversation at a time.

#### **2025 was a year of renewal:**

While the core of our network remains rock-solid, the growth in new contacts and exploring churches shows that our Open Table continues to grow larger, reaching those who need it most.

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**‘I just attended my first ever Open Table service  
and it was so wonderful to be accepted and welcomed  
into the church family as a trans person’**

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## Expansion across England & Wales:

2025 was a landmark year for the OTN. With four new communities, our network now stretches across more of the UK than ever before.

From Haverfordwest to Canterbury, Sunderland to Weymouth, our network now spans around 300 miles from west to east and north to south.

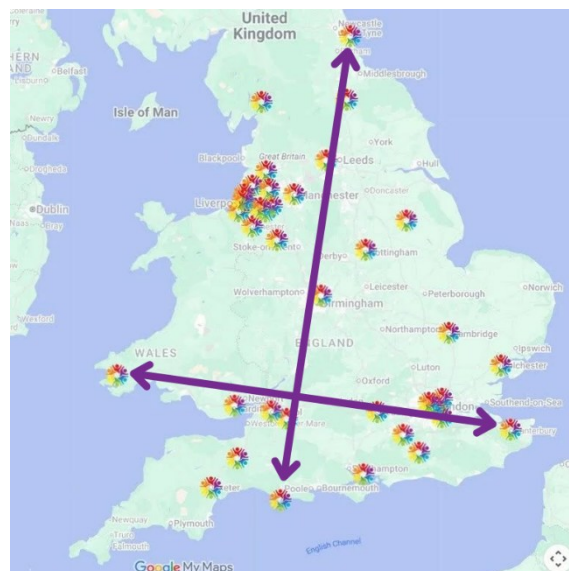
From Pembrokeshire to Kent, Tyne & Wear to Dorset, our communities are dotted across the map, each a safe, welcoming space for faith, identity and belonging.

Each new community brings its own spirit, energy, and stories, yet all share the same vision: to create safer, more welcoming spaces where faith and identity can meet without fear. This expansion is a testament to the dedication of local leaders, volunteers, and members who make these communities thrive.

As the network grows, so do the connections that keep it alive.

Looking ahead to 2026, we celebrate not just the distances covered, but the friendships, stories, and shared faith that make our network what it is.

**Here's to a network that keeps growing, connecting, and celebrating everyone, from one end of the UK to the other.**



Google Maps image of England and Wales with an Open Table logo marking the locations of our communities and arrows between the communities furthest to the west and east, north and south.

## International connections:

OTN's Secretary to the Trustees, who is experienced in international development, continues to respond to international enquiries by offering online support and signposting to local allies. In 2025 he supported 18 people from North America and South America, Africa, Asia, and Europe, a 20% increase on 2024. OTN also published blogs from Brazil and Uganda encouraging Open Table members to share solidarity with LGBTQIA+ people in other cultures.

## Digital presence and media:

Our ***This is my story*** podcast, launched in 2023, continued its occasional series of short devotions, based around the Bible, the experiences of Open Table members, reflection, and prayer. Two new episodes released in 2025 were among the most viewed posts on the OTN website, and the podcast saw a 14% increase in engagement.

We also grew our presence across several platforms:

- **Bluesky:** OTN completed its first full year on this platform, averaging 33 engagements per month.
- **Facebook:** Average monthly content interactions 1,200 **(+14%)**
- **Instagram:** Average monthly content interactions = 126 **(+14%)**
- **Website:** Average monthly visits = 3,869 **(+21%)**. Thanks to pro bono support from the Delivered Social digital marketing agency, we have begun the redevelopment of the OTN website laying the foundations for a relaunch in 2026 to improve accessibility and reach.

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**‘We don’t just say that ‘all are welcome’... everybody who comes through the door is genuinely welcomed, accepted, loved, cared about.’**

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### Key partnerships and collaborations:

We collaborated with diverse partners to achieve our mission, including:

- **Inclusive Church:** Signposted every church with which we worked to resources from this educational charity. One of OTN's trustees is also a trustee on the Inclusive Church board.
- **Greenbelt Festival:** OTN's Director collaborated with this annual festival of ‘art, activism, and belief’ to co-host a space for LGBTQIA+ people of faith with partners Inclusive Church, Out@Greenbelt (the festival's LGBTQ+ event team), and the United Reformed Church. More than 60 people gathered to build community and carry a message of hope and inclusion beyond the event.
- **Methodist Church in Britain:** The national church’s communications team published ‘*Will it be Open Table?*’ - *The question that started a movement* - a blog for LGBTQ+ History Month on OTN's vision, mission, and values and how churches might join the Network.
- **Quest (for LGBTQ+ Catholics):** OTN leaders co-hosted with them an annual LGBTQ+ Christian retreat weekend in North Wales which is always over-subscribed - clear evidence of need for more opportunities like this. Feedback included:
  - ‘A real oasis of affirmation, love, and a time to deeply connect with God and LGBTQ+ siblings’.
  - ‘A very positive but rare opportunity to be fully myself’.
  - ‘A supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment’.

### Financial review

#### Income and expenditure:

Income and expenditure have both decreased significantly, though this was expected. Since October 2024 OTN's Director (and sole member of staff) has worked part time (0.6FTE) as he is training for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church. This significantly reduced salary costs. The reduction in capacity also meant fewer opportunities to pursue income-generation through grants, donations, and training delivery. The ongoing support for our new and existing communities was prioritised and sustainably maintained.

OTN's income decreased by 36% to **£41,417** (2024: £64,907):

- **Donations:** **£7,030** (2024: £15,678 – incl. an exceptional donation of £7,891)
- **Fundraising:** **£12,025** (2024: £11,234)
- **Grants:** **£17,367** (2024: £31,277)
- **Other income:** **£4,994** (2024: £6,718)

Expenditure decreased by 25% to **£37,471** (2024: £50,143).

This resulted in a **surplus of £3,946** (2024: £14,764). At the end of the year, **unrestricted reserves stood at £19,565** (2024: £15,619).

## Fundraising highlights:

OTN raised **£12,025** through fundraising activities, **7% more than in 2024**. This was mainly the **Big Give Christmas Challenge** which ran from 2<sup>nd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> December 2025. We had **25% more donors** - 71 (2024: 57) and reached our target on the fourth day (2024: last minute!). In total our donors contributed £6,104, matched by £2,500 in pledges from OTN supporters and £2,500 from a match funder which supports Christian organisations making a positive impact. Gift Aid contributions made the final total **more than £11,600**.

## Reserves policy:

As approved by the Trustees on 5th April 2025, OTN aims to hold reserves equivalent to 3-6 months of core operational costs. This buffer will help to:

- manage short-term cash flow
- cover emergency funding gaps
- invest in strategic development
- wind down operations if necessary.

At year-end 2025, unrestricted reserves stood at **£19,565**, an increase from £15,619 in 2024. This is equivalent to around five months projected operating expenditure, so we are now comfortably within our policy limits. This puts the charity in a stronger position to meet its policy target and respond to future opportunities and risks.

## Plans for 2026 and beyond:

In 2026 the charity will seek funding to employ a second part-time worker, enabling OTN to develop a regional model of support for our communities and the people who lead and volunteer with them. This will bring our income and expenditure closer to 2024 levels.

Our three-year grant from the United Reformed Church Legacy Fund ends in March 2026. We have already begun seeking funding to replace this.

## Risks

The Trustees have identified and addressed several key risks and mitigations:

**Financial sustainability:** We have mitigated financial risk through diversifying income streams, securing multi-year funding, and building reserves to our target level of 3-6 months of operational costs.

**Safeguarding:** As an organisation created by and for LGBTQIA+ people who have often experienced harm in religious spaces, we are deeply committed to creating safer environments. In 2025 we appointed OTN trustee Sue Say as Safeguarding Lead to support Co-Chair Andrew Howorth and Director Kieran Bohan. We also registered OTN with thirtyone:eight, the Christian safeguarding specialist, to enable us to maintain safer recruitment of staff and volunteers.

**Reputation and quality:** The Open Table name represents a quality mark that signifies genuine welcome and inclusion. In 2025 we consulted community leaders on a Network Agreement, which will help ensure consistent standards across all communities while allowing for local flexibility and ownership.

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**‘I didn’t have to hide being lesbian, struggling  
with my mental health or being autistic’.**

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## Structure, Governance and Management:

OTN is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) governed by its constitution.

OTN's new Network Agreement, on which Open Table community leaders gave feedback in 2025, outlines the relationship and commitment between OTN, local Open Table communities, and the churches which host them. It includes commitments to our shared vision, mission, values, and objectives, to ensure that OTN, and all our Open Table communities, are welcoming, supportive, accountable, and safeguarded. Representatives of OTN, our Open Table communities, and the churches which host them, will be asked to sign this Network Agreement in 2026.

Trustees are recruited by nomination from within the membership and leadership of Open Table communities, and from stakeholders with whom we have worked in partnership. We recruited two new trustees in 2025.

All persons appointed or re-appointed as charity trustees shall be asked, on being invited to accept appointment, to indicate in writing whether they identify as Christian and whether they accept OTN's Statement of Faith. No appointment shall have effect if the person appointed does not accept the Statement of Faith. No appointment shall have effect if it would bring the proportion of charity trustees not identifying as Christian at the time of last appointment to greater than one-third.

The Statement of Faith can be read here: [opentable.lgbt/our-faith-belief](https://opentable.lgbt/our-faith-belief).

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**‘After worrying about walking into places of worship many times...  
for the first time I felt safe and at home in my faith’.**

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## Reference and administrative details

### Trustees:

- Dr Carol Joyner  
(Co-Chair from 05/04/25)
- Andrew John Howorth (Co-Chair)
- Neil Gordon Rees (Secretary)
- Revd Aiyana Gardner-Houghton  
(from 19/07/25)
- Andrew (Roo) George Stewart
- Revd Calum Crombie
- Revd Jayne Taylor
- Revd Rosemary Elizabeth Hill
- Sue Say (from 05/04/25)
- Revd Yin-An Chen.

### Former trustees who served during the year:

- Sarah Louise Hobbs  
(Co-Chair until 05/04/25)
- Mr Peter Nicholas Jones  
(until 05/01/2025)

**Staff:** The Director of OTN, Kieran Bohan, is the charity's sole employee. Since October 2024 he has worked 21 hours a week (0.6 FTE) while training part-time for Methodist ministry.

**Advisors:**

- **Treasurer:** In 2025 OTN recruited a new volunteer treasurer, Natasha Gonsalves, who plays a vital part in the good governance of the OTN charity. She works with our Board of Trustees to ensure that OTN remains financially healthy, transparent, and compliant, and supports our Director with financial planning and reporting.
- **Funding & Governance Advisor:** Sarah Jones has, since March 2024, provided paid support with fundraising and pro bono support with governance and management.

## Contact details

**Registered address:** In 2025, OTN moved to a new office at Liverpool Parish Church, providing a central, accessible base to strengthen collaboration and support our growing team and network.

**Liverpool Parish Church, Old Churchyard, Chapel Street, Liverpool L2 8TZ**

**Email:** [network@opentable.lgbt](mailto:network@opentable.lgbt)

**Mobile:** 07501 753 618

**Website:** [www.opentable.lgbt](http://www.opentable.lgbt)

**Social Media:** @opentablelgbt  
(Facebook/Instagram/Bluesky)

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/company/opentablelgbt](https://linkedin.com/company/opentablelgbt)

**YouTube:** [youtube.com/opentablenetwork](https://youtube.com/opentablenetwork)

## Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

**Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:**

**Signature(s):**



**Full name(s):**

Carol Joyner

Neil Rees

**Position:**

Co-Chair

Secretary

**Date:**

25/04/2026

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**'It was through the Open Table community that I slowly found my way back to a place of belonging within a church, where I could be all of me. Where I could breathe again without fear of discovery, or stigma.'**

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**OPEN TABLE NETWORK  
ACCOUNTS**
**SUMMARY RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS**

|                          | <u>Year ending 31/12/2025</u> |               | <u>Year ending 31/12/2024</u> |               |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Receipts                 | £                             | £             | £                             | £             |
| Donations                |                               | 7,030         |                               | 15,678        |
| Fundraising              |                               | 12,025        |                               | 11,234        |
| Grants                   |                               | 17,367        |                               | 31,277        |
| Other                    |                               | 4,994         |                               | 6,718         |
| Total                    |                               | <u>41,417</u> |                               | <u>64,907</u> |
| Payments                 |                               |               |                               |               |
| Charitable expenditure   |                               | <u>37,471</u> |                               | <u>50,143</u> |
|                          |                               | 37,471        |                               | 50,143        |
| Surplus / Deficit        |                               | <u>3,946</u>  |                               | <u>14,764</u> |
| Reserves brought forward |                               | 15,619        |                               | 855           |
| Reserves carried forward |                               | <u>19,565</u> |                               | <u>15,619</u> |

The notes to these accounts form a part of them and include detailed receipts and payments  
 Restricted and unrestricted funds are disclosed in Note 3, Details Receipts and Payments  
 Accounts All operations are classed as ongoing operations.

## OPEN TABLE NETWORK

## STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

|                             | 2025<br>£        | 2024<br>£        |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Assets:</b>              |                  |                  |
| Cash at Co-Op Bank          | <u>19,565.35</u> | <u>15,619.13</u> |
| <b>Represented by:</b>      |                  |                  |
| General Fund (unrestricted) | 19,565.35        | 14,822.57        |
| Restricted Fund             | 0.00             | 796.56           |
| Total                       | <u>19,565.35</u> | <u>15,619.13</u> |

## TRUSTEES RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Charity Law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which comply with the regulations set out in the Charities Act 2011. The Trustees have elected to take advantage of the provisions that apply to small charities and have prepared a Receipts and Payments Account and Statement of Assets and Liabilities which are set out above

Approved by the trustees on 25 April 2026.

Signed on their behalf by:



Carol Joyner  
Co-Chair

- 1      ACCOUNTING POLICIES  
The accounts have been prepared under the "Receipts and Payments" basis as prescribed by the Charity Commission.  
There has been no change to the methods of accounting since last year.
- 2      PAYMENTS TO TRUSTEES  
No trustees received remuneration, or payment for goods or services during the year
- 3      DETAILED RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS  
See next page
- 4      RESTRICTED FUNDS  
OTN received a restricted grant in year from LGBT+ Futures: Faith Fund of £700. The whole amount was spent by the year end.

**Detailed Receipts & Payments Accounts 2025.**

|                                  | <b>Total</b>            |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Reserves brought forward</b>  | <b>15,619</b>           |
| <b>Receipts</b>                  |                         |
| Donations                        | 7,030                   |
| Fundraising                      | 12,025                  |
| Grants                           | 17,367                  |
| Other                            | 4,994                   |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b><u>41,417</u></b>    |
| <b>Payments</b>                  |                         |
| Development work.                | 18,899.68               |
| Travel                           | 2,832.00                |
| Office rent                      | 1,026.00                |
| Training                         | 250.00                  |
| Events                           | 785.00                  |
| Phone/IT related                 | 4,292.35                |
| Consultants                      | 6,911.50                |
| Good for sale                    | 693.5                   |
| Other (inc Postage)              | 1,780.85                |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b><u>37,470.88</u></b> |
| <b>Surplus/Deficit</b>           | <b>3,946.22</b>         |
| <b>Reserves carried forward.</b> | <b><u>19,565.35</u></b> |

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT, TO THE TRUSTEES OF OPEN TABLE NETWORK,  
(CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER 1193868)**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Open Table Network ('The Trust') for the year ended 31 December 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 all 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 in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

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.

Signed: 

Name: Mr William Todd, for and on behalf of Roman Candle Ltd  
Address: 57 Moorfield Road, Liverpool L23 9UB  
Date: 25 April 2026