



## **National Education Opportunities Network (NEON)**

### **Trustees Annual Report**

**For the year ended 31st of July 2024**

## **Objectives and Activities**

### **Summary of the purposes of the charity as set out in its governing document.**

NEON works for the public benefit to promote routes into, and success in, higher education in such ways as the charity trustees think fit, including by:

1. Supporting organisations to work with all learners, especially those from under-represented groups.
2. Identifying, and researching, barriers to higher education and sharing potential solutions.

### **Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts.**

NEON believes that access to, and success in higher education should not be related to social background but based on ability and willingness to participate. In order to achieve this, we support our members to both identify and address challenges that may both stop learners being able to enter, or succeed within higher education through a comprehensive events programme, research reports and a weekly newsletter.

Over the period of this report NEON has held 25 events. The aim of these events is to help educational practitioners understand barriers that learners face, in terms of gaining entry to, and achieving success within, higher education, and to learn from policy, research and practice to help inform their own strategies and activities with learners. The events also present the opportunity for attendees to network, and engage with, other attendees, make connections and share practice. These events are open to all with the majority of them being held online.

In addition to these events NEON offers its members the opportunity to attend themed, online working group meetings based around key topics of concern. These include:

- Access and outreach for disabled learners
- Addressing differential outcomes for ethnically diverse learners
- Establishing evidence and measuring impact
- Mature learners

- Mentoring to widen access
- Primary age outreach
- Supporting access, success and progression for vocational learners
- Widening participation in postgraduate study

The meetings give attendees the space to consider these topics, discuss and debate current approaches and decide upon possible future actions to address challenges that arise. They work on producing resources and examples of practice that are made available to all NEON members. Outcomes of the meetings are shared online, being available to any person accessing our website.

Each year NEON holds an annual conference, the NEON Summer Symposium, offering those concerned with widening access the opportunity to hear from key policy makers, stakeholders and other practitioners about the importance of widening access. This two-day event is the largest UK conference dealing with these issues.

### **Statement confirming whether the trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit**

The trustees confirm that they have had due regard to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit, both in agreeing NEON's aims and objectives, and in planning all future activities. Our work focuses upon equitable access to higher education for all learners who are able to benefit from it and we work closely with other organisations within the Education sector in order to achieve this.

### **Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity's work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole.**

We are pleased to be able to report on another very successful year for NEON, despite the prevailing challenges of funding in the Higher Education sector. We have enjoyed our first full year as an independent charity and strengthened our relationships with the sector, our members and our hosts, the University of West London.

We have been able to advance our objectives in a variety of ways, for example by advocating for educational opportunity, providing professional development for our members, encouraging networking and the exchange of good practice through working groups, the dissemination of knowledge through our annual symposium and our 'NEON Summits' both online and in person. We were also able to successfully run our Annual NEON Awards with many excellent nominations, 77 in all, but the unexpectedly early General Election meant that we had to postpone the Award Ceremony, due to be held in May at the Palace of Westminster, until early in the next academic year (December 2024).

The Trustees have endorsed a funding model that charges a modest membership fee and raises income to maintain the work of the charity through charging for attendance at meetings and seeking external funding for research. At the end of the period we had 149 member organisations, of which 106 are universities.

Our finances remain healthy, and we have made a surplus of £87k on a total turnover of £187k. As the charity now employs four staff, through the University of West London as employer, we aim to build a reserve equivalent to at least six months operating costs. The University of West London will also make a charge for the hosting of NEON, and we anticipate this will be in the region of £65k to cover the previous years they have hosted NEON, and then an annual payment thereafter. This will be finalised in 2024/25.

The highlight of the year was undoubtedly our Annual Symposium, held in London for the first time at the University of West London. Some 211 persons attended this two-day meeting.

We held five on-line and one in person NEON Summits on various key issues suggested by our members, which attracted 174 attendees in total. The lower average attendance than expected perhaps reflecting the time pressures in a stressed working environment.

Our professional development work via our 'Access Academies' continued to be well regarded and the total attendance at 15 events was 237.

Some 50 people came as invited guests to two advocacy events. A major focus of our advocacy this year has been the effect on disadvantaged students of the proposed defunding of certain BTEC qualifications. We have worked with the 'Protect Student Choice Campaign' to explain the issues to policy makers and educationalists.

For the first time this year we ran a Workshop which attracted 44 participants.

The many member-led Working Groups on topics of mutual interest continue to help disseminate practice amongst colleagues. NEON staff provide administrative support and 10 meetings were held with 161 attendees. A new Working Group on estranged students is in the process of establishment.

We have continued to engage in research and advocacy. This includes the work to protect student choice cited above as well as events on skills and lifelong learning. A research report on progression to higher education entitled 'Universities not for everyone: levelling up and who is missing out on higher education in England' was launched at the Palace of Westminster. A second part is now in preparation with more granular information. NEON also made a submission to the Parliamentary Enquiry on 'Boys' Attainment and Engagement in Education.'

Following the generous allocation of funding from the Saville Foundation in South Africa, NEON was able to host a meeting to discuss relaunching the World Access to Higher Education Network (WAHEN) in Oxford in September 2023. The meeting was attended by interested parties from across the world with 29 leaders concerned with social mobility in attendance. We continue to build our social media presence.

## **Achievements against objectives set**

This year saw our second highest number of delegates (211) attending our annual conference. In terms of events held this year saw an increase in their numbers, with a slight reduction in average attendance. Widening access remains an important area to our members and, with a new Labour Government, is likely to remain so. We continue to offer a high level of support both to our members and the broader education sector.

## **Financial Review**

### **Review of the charity's financial position at the end of the period**

The charity is in a strong position given this is the second year of its operation as a charity and has a financial surplus.

### **Statement explaining the policy for holding reserves stating why they are held**

The trustee's policy is to build up unreserved funds that amount to six month's running costs, which amounts to £70,000 to allow for adverse economic conditions and other potential threats, safeguarding NEON's long-term future as well as a further £65k to cover potential hosting charges from the University of West London.

### **Amount of reserves held**

£120,786

### **Details of fund materially in deficit**

There are no funds in deficit.

### **Explanation of any uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern**

There are no concerns about NEON continuing as a going concern.

### **The charity's principal sources of funds (including any fundraising)**

- Income from NEON events.
- Membership subscriptions.

### **A description of the principal risks facing the charity**

- A fall in membership subscriptions.
- Reduced income from events programme.
- Changes in government policy regarding participation in higher education.
- The loss of key staff from NEON.

## **Structure, Governance and Management**

### **Description of charity's trusts:**

- **Type of governing document (trust deed, royal charter):** Constitution.

- **How is the charity constituted?** Charitable Incorporated Organisation.
- **Trustee selection methods including details of any constitutional provisions e.g. election to post or name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees** Election by members with option to co-opt (with regard for experience and skills).
- **Policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees:** New trustees receive full information about the workings of NEON.
- **Other:** Before becoming a CIO, NEON was based at the University of West London. Since becoming a CIO, the University continues to employ NEON staff.

## Reference and Administrative details

- **Charity name:** National Education Opportunities Network
- **Other name the charity uses:** NEON
- **Registered charity number:** 1199280
- **Charity's principal address:**

c/o University of West London  
St Mary's Road  
Ealing  
London  
W5 5RF

## Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year
Margaret Greenfields		
Hannah Merry		
Anna Toyne		01.08.23 - 11.12.23
Les Ebdon	Chair	
Peter John		
Peter Riley		01.08.23 - 11.12.23
Sarah Harder-Collins		01.08.23 - 11.12.23
Ellie Rowley		01.08.23 - 11.12.23
Sam Dunnett		01.08.23 - 11.12.23
Karen Lipsedge		11.12.23 - 31.7.24
Anna Wooley		11.12.23 - 31.7.24
Lynne Downey		11.12.23 - 31.7.24
Stacey Mottershaw		11.12.23 - 31.7.24

## Corporate trustees – names of the directors at the date the report was approved

**Director name:** Martin Webster

## **Funds held as custodian trustees on behalf of others**

**Description of the assets held in this capacity:** None

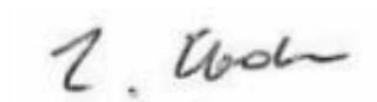
**Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members:** Martin Webster

## **Declarations**

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

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

- **Signature:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ebdon', is written over a faint, light blue circular stamp.

- **Full name:** Sir Professor Les Ebdon
- **Position:** Chair of NEON
- **Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025

National Education Opportunities Network		No - 1199280		CC16a
Receipts and payments accounts				
For the period from	Period start date 1/8/2023	To	Period end date 31/07/24	

## Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
<b>A1 Receipts</b>					
Events	100,884	-	-	100,884	173,692
Projects	35,723	-	-	35,723	73,699
Membership	50,567	-	-	50,567	-
Other Income	267	-	-	267	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total (Gross income for AR)</b>	<b>187,442</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>187,442</b>	<b>247,391</b>
<b>A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>187,442</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>187,442</b>	<b>N/A</b>

### A3 Payments

Staffing	32,650	-	-	32,650	150,546
Events	54,244	-	-	54,244	48,361
Consultancy	6,576	-	-	6,576	11,138
Expenses	5,890	-	-	5,890	3,794
Publications	847	-	-	847	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>100,208</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100,208</b>	<b>213,839</b>

### A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)

	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

### Total payments

<b>100,208</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100,208</b>	<b>213,839</b>
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### Net of receipts/(payments)

#### A5 Transfers between funds

#### A6 Cash funds last year end

### Cash funds this year end

<b>87,234</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>87,234</b>	<b>33,552</b>
<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>33,552</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>33,552</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>120,786</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>120,786</b>	<b>N/A</b>

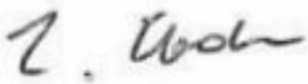


## Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Balance at the end of July 2024	120,786	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	<b>Total cash funds</b>	120,786	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
<b>B5 Liabilities</b>			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
		LES EBDON	27/05/2025



**Report to the trustees/  
members of**

Charity Name

NEON

**On accounts for the  
year ended**

31<sup>st</sup> July 2024

**Charity  
no (if any)**

1199280

**Set out on pages**

7, 8, 9 and 10

(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 **31/07/2024**

**Responsibilities and  
basis of report**

As the charity trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with 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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect,:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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.

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

**Signed:**

Lynn Hill

**Date:**

28/05/2025

**Name:**

Lynn Mary Hill

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

Fellow of Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (FCMA)

**Address:**

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

**Give here details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.**

None