

The Women's Prize for Playwriting

Charity number 1208693

Annual Trustees' Report and Financial Statements

for the period ended

30TH April 2025

Wenn Townsend

Chartered Accountants

Oxford

The Women's Prize for Playwriting

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The Women's Prize for Playwriting

Reference and administrative details for the period ended 30th April 2025

Registration:	The charity was registered on 17 June 2024
Charity Registration Number:	1208693
CIO Number:	CE036462
Registered office:	Bank Chambers 1 Central Avenue Sittingbourne ME10 4AE
Trustees:	E Keel – Chair (appointed 17 June 2024) R Gavin (appointed 8 October 2025) K Ashton (appointed 17 June 2024) K Bacon (appointed 17 June 2024) R Kapashi (appointed 17 June 2024) (resigned 6th December 2024)
Independent Examiners:	Wenn Townsend 30 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LE

The Women's Prize for Playwriting

Trustees Report For the period ended 30th April 2025

Preliminary Notes

The Women's Prize for Playwriting (WPP) was registered as a charity (no: 1208693) on 17th June 2024. As such, this report refers to the period June 2024 - April 2025.

During this period, the charity had four Trustees: Katherine Ashton, Kathleen Bacon, Raxita Kapashi, and Ellie Keel (Chair). Of these, Ellie Keel also works day-to-day for the charity in the role of Founder Director and is responsible for all strategic and operational matters relating to WPP.

Raxita Kapashi resigned as a Trustee on 6th December 2024. The charity now (time of writing: February 2026) has another Trustee, Sir Rupert Gavin, who was appointed in October 2025.

Trustees

K Ashton

K Bacon

R Gavin (appointed 8th October 2025)

R Kapashi (resigned 6th December 2024)

E Keel (Chair)

Address:

Bank Chambers
1 Central Avenue
Sittingbourne
ME10 4AE

Phone:

07955656853

Email:

ellie@womensprizeforplaywriting.co.uk

Website:

www.womensprizeforplaywriting.co.uk

Charitable Objectives (as per WPP's Constitution)

For the public benefit, the advancement of the art of playwriting and the education of the public in the work of playwrights from the UK or Ireland who self-identify as women or non-binary and who are underrepresented in theatre by: (1) the production, publication and licensing of such plays in the UK or Ireland so the public can access them and be exposed to new dramatic voices from an underrepresented group; and (2) the award of an annual prize or prizes for such plays, as selected by a panel of experts, in order to encourage women and non-binary writers to engage in playwriting and facilitate the public's access to work of a high calibre.

The Women's Prize for Playwriting

Trustees Report For the period ended 30th April 2025

Context for this report

The Women's Prize for Playwriting was co-founded in 2019 by Ellie Keel in partnership with touring theatre company Paines Plough, in response to troubling statistics highlighting gender inequality among playwrights whose work is staged on major stages across the UK and Ireland. In 2018, only 26% of new main stage plays in the UK were written by women. By 2023, that figure had risen slightly to just over 30%. To further illustrate the problem, since the inception of the Olivier Awards in 1976, the award for Best New Play has been won by a woman only seven times.

The aim of the Women's Prize for Playwriting is to champion female playwrights and to campaign for their plays to be more widely and prestigiously produced. This is achieved through the following process:

- An open call-out for full-length plays by women and non-binary people. There is no charge to submit to the prize.
- Submitted scripts are processed with the support of a panel of experienced 20 freelance readers drawn from across the industry from a diverse range of disciplines and backgrounds (in 2025, 1,275 submissions were received, the highest number to date).
- Following the announcement of a longlist of 40 plays and a shortlist of 20, the final five scripts are passed to a panel of expert judges, who meet to determine the recipient of the £20,000 First Prize.
- The £20,000 First Prize is awarded in respect of an option for Paines Plough and the Women's Prize for Playwriting to co-produce the winning play. To date, three winning plays have been co-produced to critical acclaim: Reasons You Should(n't) Love Me by Amy Trigg (2021); You Bury Me by Ahlam (2023); and Consumed by Karis Kelly (2025). The 2023 winner, Intelligence by Sarah Grochala, is currently in development. The 2025 First Prize was awarded to Georgina Duncan for her play Sapling at a ceremony in the West End on 9th February 2026.

From October 2019 (when the Prize was founded) until June 2024, WPP was run first as a sole trader by Ellie Keel and then from April 2023 as a limited company (the Women's Prize for Playwriting Ltd). The decision to apply for charitable status was taken in order to secure the longevity of the prize.

The Trustees are supported by an Advisory Council made of individuals with a range of experience and expertise:

Rosie Alison, Producer at Heyday

Aidan Grounds, Producer at Rodeo Productions

Tessa Murray, Director of Communications at the Financial Times

Daisy Goodwin, writer and screenwriter

Chair's Statement

WPP's Mission and Objectives

The Women's Prize for Playwriting (the Prize) is a UK-and-Ireland based prize established in 2019 to champion female and non-binary playwrights and to address gender imbalance in theatre. Its objective aligns with advancing dramatic arts and public access to underrepresented voices by discovering, developing and promoting new full-length stage plays by women and non-binary writers.

The Prize explicitly aims to support plays that may not otherwise reach production, contributing to cultural enrichment, diversity in storytelling and education of audiences through dramatic work. It provides financial awards, development pathways and opportunities for production and publication of winning scripts.

The Women's Prize for Playwriting

Trustees Report For the period ended 30th April 2025

Chair's Statement

WPP's Mission and Objectives (continued)

The Prize runs biennially. Day-to-day, the Prize is run by Founder Director Ellie Keel, with Literary Manager, Charlie Coulthard and Communications Associate, Natasha Ketel. All team members work remotely and on a freelance, part-time basis. The WPP team works closely with Paines Plough, the co-founding partners of WPP.

Key Developments

The financial year ending April 2025 was a pivotal one for the Women's Prize for Playwriting. Having registered as a charity in June 2024, the remainder of that year was spent preparing to launch and open submissions for the 2025 Prize: the fourth iteration of the prize since we were founded in 2019, and our first as a charity. We launched the 2025 prize with a press release and online promotion in December 2024, and submissions closed in April 2025. For that reason, this report will only cover the launch of the prize and the submissions window.

The Chair of Judges for the 2025 prize was Indhu Rubasingham, reprising her role from the 2023 prize (indeed, Indhu has been a supporter and judge of the prize since the first year). Indhu's appointment in late 2023 as Director of the National Theatre, and her subsequent agreement to continue as Chair of Judges for WPP, was transformational for the profile of the prize. The rest of the panel included directors Milli Bhatia and Alice Hamilton; actress Romola Garai; Literary Agent Mel Kenyon; playwright Morgan Lloyd Malcolm; Artistic Director of Bristol Old Vic Nancy Medina; Literary & Development Associate at Wessex Grove Kat Pierce; the National Theatre's Director of New Work Nina Steiger; and Guardian Editor-in-Chief Katharine Viner. This judging panel was the Prize's most high-profile yet and comprised leaders in their fields from across the industry, whose expertise would ultimately prove invaluable at the Judges' Meeting in January 2026.

The 2025 Prize also saw the prize fund increase from £12,000 to £20,000, as a result of a very generous donation from The Eggardon Trust.

There were two other significant organisational developments in this prize cycle. The first was the appointment of Charlie Coulthard as a dedicated Literary Manager. Charlie joined the WPP team from Concord Theatricals, where she was Senior Manager, Acquisitions & Artistic Development. In fact, Charlie was instrumental in establishing WPP's long-standing Publishing and Licensing Partnership with Concord Theatricals before the first prize launched in 2019. This meant that Charlie already had in-depth knowledge of the Prize's operations before joining us. Her input into the submissions process for this Prize cycle was invaluable, including but not limited to:

- Re-structuring and managing our submissions portal and process
- Promoting and marketing WPP much more widely, leading to our highest number of submissions yet (and a 27% increase on the previous year) from all over the UK and Ireland
- Facilitating more frequent and in-depth communication with playwrights about the submissions process, the opportunities the prize offered and ensuring the prize's profile was accessible and approachable to playwrights
- Co-conceiving and co-writing an application to Arts Council England for the Future Light project, which has been offered to the 41 playwrights on the 2025 Longlist and is the most extensive talent development programme offered by any literary prize in the UK.

Charlie has also provided significant operational support to Ellie Keel in the running of the charity, including events, fundraising and communications.

The Women's Prize for Playwriting

Trustees Report For the period ended 30th April 2025

Chair's Statement

Key Developments (continued)

The second key development was our new partnership with Sheffield Theatres, who became WPP's first Theatre Partner. Before partnering with Sheffield Theatres, it had been felt that the prize should not be connected with a theatre building, in order to give the greatest possible flexibility to the kind of plays submitted. However, when the approach was made to WPP by Sheffield Theatres, it was felt that they would be a suitable partner on the basis of their three spaces and their capacity to bolster the resources of the prize. Sheffield Theatres are a hugely prestigious regional theatre with a fantastic commercial and artistic track record. This partnership has again boosted the profile of the prize and our offer to potential winners.

WPP also continued its close partnership with touring theatre company Paines Plough, who are the co-founding partners of the prize and Lead Producers on the productions of winning plays. In the financial year ending April 2025, Paines Plough led on the development and programming of the 2022 prize-winner, *Consumed* by Karis Kelly, which was directed by Paines Plough's Joint Artistic Director, Katie Posner. In March 2025, a run of Kelly's play was programmed at the Traverse Theatre, Belgrade Theatre, Sheffield Theatres, Leeds Playhouse, and at the Yvonne Arnaud in Guildford, produced by WPP, Paines Plough, Belgrade Theatre and Sheffield Theatres. A full report on the tour will be provided in next year's report. It's important to note that Paines Plough provide valuable in-kind support in terms of staffing and strategy, as well as their cash partnership contribution.

During the submissions window, Ellie Keel and Charlie Coulthard travelled to theatres including Bristol Old Vic, Theatr Clwyd and Sheffield Theatres to meet playwrights and staff, promote the prize, and encourage submissions. Online information events were also run via Zoom in collaboration with organisations including Playwrights Studio Scotland and Abbey Theatre Dublin to encourage writers to submit. This combined with significant media coverage (Ellie Keel featured on BBC Radio London discussing the prize, features in TLS and more) increased our reach and contact with writers further.

In February 2025, we continued our commitment to offering playwrights access to free learning and development opportunities by offering a workshop with Olivier-Award winning playwright, Morgan Lloyd Malcolm at the National Theatre Studio focused on 'Digging Yourself Out of a Block'. There were 19 participants who left the workshop feeling inspired, galvanised and appreciative of the opportunity to meet fellow playwrights. Many of the attendees went on to submit to the prize.

The year ending April 2025 saw many achievements for WPP, 27% increase in submissions – representing as it does the encouragement and celebration of so many writers – as our greatest milestone, as set against our charitable objectives.

The Women's Prize for Playwriting

Trustees Report For the period ended 30th April 2025

Chair's Statement

Financial Review

Revenue for the period was £63,750. Reserves at 30th April 2025 stood at £39,953. The Trustees aim to maintain a level of unrestricted reserves sufficient to meet any un-budgeted running expenditure.

Fundraising

In this financial year, the Prize's fundraising energies were focused on two main strands: firstly, the partnership contributions made to the prize by Paines Plough, Sheffield Theatres and Concord Theatricals; and our stepped-up campaign for private donations from families and individuals.

The latter strand involved a letter-writing campaign which yielded donations from Hugh Bonneville and Sir David Hare; and also, a fundraising event held at a Soho restaurant in which Ellie Keel and a former WPP winner, Karis Kelly, both spoke about the prize and its impact. The fundraising event generated over £30,000 in pledges for this financial year and future iterations of the prize.

The prize was also very generously supported in this period by donations each from trustees Katherine Ashton and Kathleen Bacon. These amounts were instrumental in providing a financial bedrock for the charity in a pivotal stage of its growth.

Trustees' responsibilities statement

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England & Wales requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the Charity for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charity will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act and the provisions of the trust deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

On behalf of the Trustees



.....
E Keel

Chair

27th February 2026

The Women's Prize for Playwriting

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of The Women's Prize for Playwriting

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the period ended 30 April 2025 which are set out on pages 9 to 13.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees 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 charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 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 charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do 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.



J Bull FCA

Partner

Wenn Townsend Chartered Accountants

27th February 2026

The Women's Prize for Playwriting

Statement of financial activities (including income and expenditure account) for the period ended 30 April 2025

		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total Funds
		£	£	£
Income:				
Voluntary Income	2	35,750	-	35,750
Charitable Activities	3	28,000	-	28,000
Total income		63,750	-	63,750
Expenditure:				
Charitable Activities	4	19,281	-	19,281
Raising Funds	5	4,079	-	4,079
Other Costs	6	437	-	437
Total expenditure		23,797	-	23,797
Net Income/(Expenditure) before Transfer		39,953	-	39,953
Transfer between funds		-	-	-
Net Movement		39,953	-	39,953
Reconciliation of funds				
Fund balances brought forward		-	-	-
Fund balances carried forward	10	39,953	-	39,953

The Women's Prize for Playwriting

Balance Sheet as at 30th April 2025

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds £
Current assets				
Debtors	7	39,953	-	39,953
		39,953	-	39,953
Current liabilities				
Creditors: due within one year		-	-	-
Net current assets		39,953	-	39,953
Net assets		39,953	-	39,953
The funds of the charity:				
Unrestricted funds	15	39,953	-	39,953
Restricted funds	15	-	-	-
Total charity funds		39,953	-	39,953

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 27th February 2026 and signed on their behalf by:

.....
E Keel
Chair
 27th February 2026

The Women's Prize for Playwriting

Notes to the accounts for the period ended 30th April 2025

1. Accounting policies

General information

The Women's Prize for Playwriting is a charity registered in England and Wales. The address of the registered office is given in the charity information on page 2 of these financial statements.

The charity's main purpose is that of a public benefit entity.

Basis of accounting

The financial statements have been prepared on the Receipts and Payments basis under the historical cost convention and in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011 and UK Generally Accepted Practice.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the entity and rounded to the nearest £.

Going Concern

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis as the trustees believe that no material uncertainties exist. The trustees have considered the level of funds held and the expected level of income and expenditure for 12 months from authorising these financial statements. The budgeted income and expenditure is sufficient with the level of reserves for the charity to be able to continue as a going concern.

Judgement and key sources of estimation uncertainty

The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported. These estimates and judgements are continually reviewed and are based on experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

Fund accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in the furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the charity for particular purposes. The cost of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific funds.

Current assets and current liabilities are subsequently measured at the cash or other consideration expected to be paid or received and not discounted.

Voluntary income

Donations and gifts are recognised on receipt by the charity.

Expenditure and liabilities

Expenditure is accounted for at the time the liability is incurred.

The Women's Prize for Playwriting

Notes to the accounts for the period ended 30th April 2025

2. Voluntary Income

	2025
	£
Gifts and donations	35,750
	35,750

3. Incoming resources from Charitable Activities

	2025
	£
Partnership Contributions	20,000
Grants	8,000
	28,000

4. Charitable Activities

	2025
	£
Workshop Fees	300
Producer Fees	10,433
Prizes	38
Readers	2,040
Support Costs (IT & Trustee Remuneration)	6,470
	19,281

5. Raising funds (all unrestricted)

	2025
	£
Fundraising Expenditure	1,276
Marketing & Promotional	496
Travel & Subsistence	346
Website Costs	400
Printing & Stationary	165
Sundries	251
Support Costs (IT & Trustee Remuneration)	1,145
	4,079

6. Other Costs

	2025
	£
Bank Charges	16
Sundries	421
	437

The Women's Prize for Playwriting

Notes to the accounts for the period ended 30th April 2025

7. Debtors

	2025
	£
Other debtors	39,953
	39,953

8. Trustees Expenses and Remunerations

During the period, a trustee received remuneration of £7,459 for literary and communication services. This role is separate to her role as a Trustees.

Expenses totalling £346 were reimbursed to two trustees for travel and subsistence costs incurred whilst carrying out their duties.

One trustee was reimbursed £670 for payments made personally on behalf of the charity.

Two trustees made donations to the charity in the period totalling £20,000.

9. Related Party Transactions

During the period the Charity received funds and paid expenditure through The Women's Prize for Playwriting Ltd, a company registered with Companies House under the company number 14782142, of which Miss E Keel is a director. These transactions did not relate to the activities of the Company, which was acting purely to enable the charity to operate until it could open its own bank account. The amount owed to the charity as at 30 April 2025 was £39,953 and is included within other debtors.

10. Funds reconciliation

Unrestricted funds

	17 June 2024	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	31 December 2025
	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds	-	63,750	(23,797)	-	39,953