

# EastSide Arts

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024.

#### Reference and administrative details

<b>Registered charity name</b>	EastSide Arts
<b>Charity registration number</b>	107782
<b>Company registration number</b>	NI628773
<b>Principal office and registered office</b>	Avalon House 278-280 Newtonards Road Belfast BT4 1HE Antrim

#### The trustees

F Bell	
R Davison	
M Turtle	(Resigned 16 April 2024)
E McCracken	(Appointed 4 July 2023)
J McGrath	(Appointed 4 July 2023)
M Neill	(Appointed 4 July 2023)
J Sialianskaia	(Appointed 4 July 2023)

**Company secretary** Tony Wilson

**Auditor** Finegan Gibson Ltd  
Chartered accountants & statutory auditor  
Causeway Tower  
9 James Street South  
Belfast  
BT2 8DN

**Solicitors** Hewitt and Gilpin  
8 High Street  
Holywood  
Co. Down  
BT18 9AZ

# **EastSide Arts**

## **Company Limited by Guarantee**

### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

**Year ended 31 March 2024**

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#### **Structure, governance and management**

##### ***Governing Document***

EastSide Arts is a company limited by guarantee and is a charity recognised by the Charity Commission for NI. It is a not for profit organisation.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the company and is governed under its Articles of Association.

##### ***Appointment of trustees***

The Chairperson and the trustees recommend new trustees as needed. New trustees are recruited on the relevance of their skills, and their potential to be able to make a helpful contribution to the governance of the charity. As part of this process they are made aware of a trustee's legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the decision-making processes, the business plan and recent financial performance of the charity.

Once the potential new trustee has agreed to be considered for appointment they can be co-opted by the directors until formal voting by members occurs at the next Annual General Meeting.

##### ***Trustee induction and training***

A trustee induction process is in place for all group companies.

##### ***Organisation structure and how charity makes decisions***

EastSide Arts is governed by the board of directors. The company is managed on a day to day basis by a senior management team.

The board of directors meets quarterly, and is appointed by the members at the AGM.

A senior management team manages the day to day activities of the company, and reports on company performance to all board meetings.

##### ***Arrangements for setting pay and remuneration of key management personnel***

The directors consider the board of directors, who are the charity's trustees, and the senior management team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the charity on a day to day basis. All directors give of their time freely and no director received remuneration in the year. Details of directors' expenses and related party transactions are disclosed in note 13 to the accounts.

The pay of the senior staff is set by reference to NICVA guidance and utilisation of NJC pay scales. In view of the nature of the charity, the directors benchmark against pay levels in other similar sized charities run on a voluntary basis when appointing new members of key management.

##### ***Relationships with related parties***

None of our trustees receive remuneration or other benefit from their work with the charity.

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### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

**Year ended 31 March 2024**

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#### ***Risk management***

The company aims to mitigate the major risks it faces by implementation of the following procedures:-

- Significant external risks to funding have led to the development of a strategic plan which clearly identifies funding requirements going forward; and
- Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions with a financial implication.

#### ***Directors***

The directors serving during the year were as follows:-

F Bell  
R Davison  
E McCracken  
J McGrath  
M Neill  
J Sialianskaia  
M Turtle

# EastSide Arts

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### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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##### Objectives and activities

EastSide Arts seeks to create an east Belfast that is a thriving cultural hub; where the arts are valued, creativity is for everyone and people are connected with each other and the wider world.

EastSide Arts is one of the 5 specific projects identified by EastSide Partnership, a regeneration charity, to be delivered via subsidiary companies or project committees during 2021-2024. EastSide Arts works within this context to challenge barriers to participation and demonstrate that the arts and creativity are for everyone, bringing regeneration to the east of the city through creative engagement.

In terms of external strategic context, the company works within the strategic service delivery and funding context of the Programme for Government and Belfast Agenda. We are a key partner in delivering the strategic objectives of our core funders, the Arts Council Northern Ireland (ACNI) who is our principal funder; Belfast City Council, specifically the Belfast Agenda and 10-year Cultural Strategy, *A City Imagining*; and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation with whom we have 4-year funding to deliver the Creative Citizens project (2023-2026).

Within the overall Programme for Government, EastSide Arts is most strategically aligned with Outcome 5: *We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential*; and Outcome 9: *We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity*.

Within Belfast City Council's Belfast Agenda we are most strategically aligned with Outcome 5: Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city; and Outcome 2: Belfast is a welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive city for all.

EastSide Arts is proud to be part of the cultural landscape of Belfast, contributing to the growth and development of the Arts Sector in Northern Ireland.

The company employed 3 full time members of staff during the course of the year.

##### Charitable Purpose

The purpose of EastSide Arts, as expressed in its objects is to: advance education, to promote the arts, heritage and culture and to promote the benefit of the people of East Belfast and its environs of Greater Belfast without distinction of age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnic identity, political or religious opinion, by associating the statutory authorities, community and voluntary organisations and the inhabitants and in particular:

- a) to encourage appreciation for and active participation in community based visual and performing arts including music, visual art, comedy, theatre, film and literature
  - b) to encourage appreciation of the arts and stimulate the artistic creativity of people in the area of benefit and to produce performances and exhibitions of works of cultural and educational value including entertainments and exhibitions
  - c) to advance any other exclusively charitable purpose as the directors may, from time to time, decide in accordance with the law of charity.
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# EastSide Arts

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2024

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#### Strategic report

The following sections for achievements and performance and financial review form the strategic report of the charity.

#### Achievements and performance

##### *Public benefit report*

From our company objects flow our organisational purpose which is "to create an east Belfast that is a thriving cultural hub; where the arts are valued, creativity is for everyone and people are connected with each other and the wider world." The different elements within our purpose are further broken down into four Strategic Objectives as follows -

1. To improve equity of opportunity for people in east Belfast to engage with creative activities
2. To create a variety of meaningful, open and inclusive opportunities for people in east Belfast to explore creativity and connect with others
3. To celebrate the past, present and future of east Belfast;
4. To develop relationships that ensure the long-term stability of EastSide Arts and create investment in the arts in east Belfast

During 2023/24 we worked towards achieving our objectives in the following ways:

##### **Objective 1: To improve equity of opportunity for people in east Belfast to engage with creative activities**

We have been developing our community engagement practice since EastSide Arts was formed in 2016, and concluded that in order to provide more equitable access to the arts and creativity in east Belfast, we needed more information about the residents of this part of the city. We made an ambitious application to the Paul Hamlyn Fund for 4-year funding in 2022 and were awarded a 4-year grant of £317K for the '**Creative Citizens**' project in November of that year. This programme aims to increase the engagement in and impact of arts and creativity across east Belfast by non-traditional arts audiences by increasing equity of access for everyone.

The first phase of the project was the Cultural Research and Engagement Tender which was awarded to Smith and Kent Consulting in June 2023. Over the period of 9 months they were asked to:

- Create an asset map of the cultural, geographic, economic, social and sectoral assets of east

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#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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##### Belfast

- Create a report detailing who and why people engage, and don't engage, in culture and the arts in east Belfast
- Create an Impact Evaluation Framework for the 4-year project
- Identification of a group of Delivery Partners interested in co-designing pilot creative programmes
- Development and facilitation of a network of Research Partners who are interested in cultural regeneration and community engagement

In service of these goals, Smith and Kent:

- Mapped over 200 assets in East Belfast
- Spoke to 871 individuals across 87 engagement sessions which took place in shopping centres, shops, cafes, a hairdresser, a leisure centre, parks, festivals, family fun days, pubs, social clubs, sports clubs, churches, community centres and more.
- Ran a social media campaign asking people what creative pastimes they enjoyed which received 182 social media responses #ItsAllGoneEast

Key points that we heard and learned from the research:

- People are generally very proud of east Belfast although this became less so as the researchers moved into more working-class communities.
- The words "culture" and "arts" are barriers.
- Whether people did art at school or were good at "arty-stuff" as a child seems to be more of a determinate of whether they consider themselves arty as an adult, regardless of what they do now.
- Keeping kids happily occupied - or just tiring them out! - is a major motivator for parents and grandparents.
- Community and connection are key motivators.
- Whole-cost is a concern across most groups - ticket price, merchandise, sweets, ice-cream, food, beer, transport, babysitter and so on.
- Night-time transport is another barrier with limited public transport and scarce, expensive taxis.
- East Belfast was frequently described as green, and residents love the Greenway and outdoor festivals and events, and they see this as good for their mental health.
- Bandsmen see bands not as creative but as cultural, a way of life.
- People do a lot in the comfort of their own homes, particularly baking, drawing, painting and craft.
- Younger people, people with poor mental health and neurodivergent people are particularly prone to social anxiety and need a lot of assurance to try something new or go somewhere different.
- There is a strong desire for more outdoor public-space events including on streets, in carparks and outside libraries, shops or other familiar venues.

This information informed our planning for years 2 and 3 of the project, and we also sought opportunities to share our findings and learnings with colleagues in the community and arts sector. To this end we continued to develop our networks in east Belfast and to have discussions about equitable access to arts and creativity with colleagues including:

- Race Relations Network
- East Belfast Community Development Cafes
- East Belfast Community Development Association
- Ballymac Friendship Centre

New connections were made with the managers of Flourish who support survivors of human.

**Objective 2: To create a variety of meaningful, open and inclusive opportunities for people in east Belfast to explore creativity and connect with others**

We believe that to make creative opportunities **meaningful**, they need to resonate with the

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#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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participants/audience. To this end we have the aim of telling east Belfast stories, and during the reporting period we had the opportunity to support the writer Alice Malseed to tell the story of poverty in east Belfast, which is alarmingly prevalent. The collaborative project worked with the following partners -

- EastSide Partnership anti-poverty Scaffolding Project
- East Belfast Anti-Poverty Alliance
- The Larder Social Supermarket
- Kabosh Theatre Company

Alice created a 4-hander play called **Three Pay Days**, which was shared as a work in progress at The Larder during the 2023 EastSide Arts Festival. We invited the audience of invited guests, interviewees and ticket buyers to give us their thoughts on the play to support Alice in writing the next draft.

Audience feedback from the festival reading -

Stunning work, exploring such an important theme. Thank you.

A powerful piece of political theatre/ work-in-progress. Excited to see the final product.

In Spring 2023 we toured the one-man drama **Billy Boy** by Rosemary Jenkinson, a play about a young bonfire builder that was inspired by conversation with young people with lived experience of bonfire culture, to 4 x Belfast community venues through partnership with Green Shoot Productions. This play also reflects our desire to tell east Belfast stories, specifically the stories of people that are frequently the most marginalised within our community.

Our year-round community engagement programme aimed to meet our objective of creating open opportunities through 3 x targeted programmes that brought people together to enjoy creative community-

- The EastSide Choir
  - o 3 x terms x 8 weeks per term
  - o Rehearsals took place at Short Strand Community Centre
  - o Performances at the EastSide Arts Festival in July, the C.S. Lewis Festival in November, at the Waterfront Hall in December
  - o Special Winter Warmer event at Short Sports & Rec Club in December
  - o 40 choir members (open access, no auditions)
  - o 2 x professional musicians employed as Choir Masters
  - o Hundreds of people enjoyed listening to the choir performances
- Artful Ageing
  - o 2 x programmes running simultaneously:
    - o CreativiTEA Tuesdays
      - Delivered in ArtsCare by artist Kirsty McGuinness
      - 80 participants in total across 7 sessions
    - o Music and Memories
      - Delivered in 4 x residential care facilities in east, by musician and facilitator Seonaid Murray.
      - 96 participants in total

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#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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*"Our residents with dementia were upbeat and most carried on signing for the rest of the afternoon"*

- The Big Kids' Society
  - o 12 x monthly creative socials (106 participants)
  - o Venues used (Studio Stereo on the Cregagh Road and the Lamppost Café on the Newtownards Road) are accessible to disabled customers
  - o Events often sold out within several hours of going on sale, so –
  - o 1 x Big Kids' Society Extravaganza during the arts festival (40 participants)
  - o 1 x Big Kids' Society Christmas Winter Party (34 participants)
  - o 1 x 'Chunky Cherubs and Shit Sonnets' valentines themed event (34 participants)

During the reporting period we focussed again on how we can make all of our programmes as **inclusive** as possible, and in service of this aim we developed several new collaborations with –

- Siobhan Brown, the founder of the Soultrane, a new MOBO festival with the aim of piloting events that will appeal to people of colour in the 2024 EastSide Arts Festival.
- Andrea Montgomery, Artistic Director of Terra Nova Productions, Northern Ireland's intercultural theatre company, to support a Shakespeare competition and masterclass for global majority actors who have expressed frustration with not being cast in Shakespeare and classical productions. Both will be progressed in the following year.
- We began the first stage of a **venue audit** to ensure the spaces we use are at the very least wheelchair accessible.
- We sought advice from University of Atypical and Arts for All to bring lived experience expertise to the next stage of the audit.
- We began working with Paula Clark, a deaf artist and activist, to devise a series of events in the 2024 EastSide Arts Festival. We hope this is the start of a process to ensure that the festival is accessible to the **d/Deaf community**, and in the longer term, we hope to train our staff and freelance staff in British Sign Language, and include d/Deaf artists in the festival programme.
- With the aim of developing our 'Shared Curation' model, we recruited **2 x Youth Programmers** to programme and promote an event in ESAF23 that appealed to a younger demographic.

#### Achievements and performance

In the above programmes we engaged with

- 755 participants
- 101 hours of face to face engagement
- 1647 estimated audience
- 56 artists employed
- In 16 east Belfast locations

Development of the Creative Citizens programme included the creation of an Artist Support Programme with the aim of equipping artists to meet the needs of local groups and residents when working in more challenging environments in east Belfast. To inform how the support programme would best serve both professional artist facilitators, and the local community, we held 2 x round table events which established the following -

- Both artists and those working with groups agreed that the following training was needed / desirable
  - o Gender/identity/LGBTQIA;
  - o Neurodiversity in adults and children;

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#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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- o Trauma Informed Practice
- Artists also expressed the need for training in basic good facilitation practice and the business of being facilitator

We responded by designing the Artist Support Programme to include -

- 'Enhance' compassionate facilitation training
- 'Understand' bespoke training programme in the 3 x areas listed above
- 'Share' training and networking events covering therapeutic practice and boundaries, personal brand, marketing and engagement, business development and communications and pitching.

We recruited participants for Enhance in Q4 of the year and had so many applications we decided to run 2 x facilitation training days, with a total of 24 artists.

**Organisational transformation** is an important part of the Paul Hamlyn funding, looking at how EastSide Arts will be more effective and financially sustainable as a result of 4 years of support. The Manager worked with the Chair, staff and CEO of EastSide Partnership to develop new strategic objectives for the company going forward. These priorities were agreed by the EastSide Arts Board and will inform our work in the incoming financial year.

Objective 1: Artists are supported to work in east Belfast

- Artists are part of the fabric of the community
- The arts are seen as a valid career choice
- Artists are supported to make work

Objective 2: Increased diverse opportunities for people to be creative, on their terms

- More creative things happening, and more people doing them

Objective 3: More places in east Belfast are animated with creative activities

- Non-arts spaces are fit for arts purposes and are accessible to everyone
- Non-traditional arts spaces are animated with arts events by ESA and others

Objective 3: To celebrate the past, present and future of east Belfast;

The EastSide Arts team worked in partnership on a number of important projects across the year that met this objective

- July Weekender in C.S. Lewis Square on 8 & 9 July; delivered with colleagues in EastSide Partnership
- C.S. Lewis Festival in November from 24th - 26th November; delivered with colleagues in EastSide Partnership
- HUB-IN project that animated sites on the Maritime Mile via AR/VR; delivered with colleagues in EastSide Tourism and Daffyd Hall Williams of Ulster Touring Opera
- The Manager was part of the Design Team for the roll out of the Belfast City Council Participatory Budgeting project, The Bank of Ideas; part of the Belfast 2024 events; delivered with Belfast City Council culture team and 12 x colleagues from the cultural sector across Belfast.
- Small NI tour of Billy Boy by Rosemary Jenkinson to The Glens Centre, Manorhamilton, The MAC, Belfast and The Playhouse in Derry, playing to a total audience of 253 people; delivered with Producer Stephen Beggs, colleagues at each of the venues and with support from the Department of Foreign Affairs.

A key part of our annual programme is the EastSide Arts Festival. The festival is designed to celebrate and showcase the creativity of the people and places of east Belfast, and to encourage domestic

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### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) (continued)

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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tourism from other parts of the city, the country, the UK and Ireland.

Following the 10th birthday of the festival in 2022, the Manager worked with the Chair and Trustees of EastSide Arts and the CEO and colleagues at EastSide Partnership to refresh the objectives of the festival to make sure it continued to align to the ESA and ESP strategies.

It was agreed that going forward, the festival could contribute to regeneration through 5 broad themes:

- Showcasing people and place
- Promoting wellbeing (moments of joy, enjoyment, connection)
- Supporting creativity (artist development and creative pathways)
- Celebrating diversity and supporting inclusion
- Giving people a voice (platforming local themes, issues and challenges)

The 2023 festival was designed with these key themes mind, and met its objectives as follows -

- The festival ran from 27 July - 6 August
- 65 x arts, culture and heritage events took place
- The festival animated 30 venues across east Belfast
- We employed more than 200 artists and 8 x freelance staff
- 7843 audiences and 1515 participants attended events
- Our audiences were primarily from the UK (largely NI) with less than 2% of attendees coming from outside the UK
- 64% of bookers were from Belfast; meaning 36% are visitors from outside Belfast with bookers from Ards/North Down and Lisburn/Castlereagh making up an additional 23% of bookers
- 71% of bookers live in BT4, BT5 and BT6 making the festival audience hyper-local
- 12% of bookers are returning customers (attended last year) which is higher than the 2022 figure of 11%
- 304 comment cards were completed by festival goers at 23 festival events. When asked to rate the event as excellent, good, average or poor:
  - o 85% rated the event as excellent
  - o 99% rated the event as excellent or good
  - o 1.6% rated the event as average
  - o Nobody rated the event as poor

What the festival-goers said -

*This was a morning of creative bliss. Gives inspiration and the tools to go and create independently. Thank you everyone @ EastSide Arts*

*WOW. What a performer! An excellent show- perfect venue - MORE!*

*What an incredible night thank you. Hope there is plenty more nights like that in the pipeline.*

*Brilliant event. Perfect way to get my head out of 'work mode' for the weekend.*

*Loved all aspects of this event, reminded me how fun craft is. I've really enjoyed this experience, well organised and staff were lovely.*

#### **Objective 4: To develop relationships that ensure the long-term stability of EastSide Arts and create investment in the arts in east Belfast**

We understand that achieving long-term stability is based on financial security, and that true

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#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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sustainability is almost impossible to achieve in the current climate and in sector suffering from a long-term critical lack of investment. With this in mind we worked towards ensuring the EastSide Arts was in as strong a position financially in the following ways -

- The EastSide Arts Festival was programmed with a mixture of fully funded free events, ticketed events that are designed to break even, and a small number of events that are designed to make a small profit.
- We focussed our marketing spend on sales-focussed digital campaigns which were trackable and best use of advertising spend
- We programmed music and comedy events that had the highest ticket yield
- In doing so we exceeded our festival ticketing income target
- We secured funding from Halifax Foundation and National Lottery Awards for All which allowed us to deliver free events for families and the local community

We are aware that strong relationships and a good reputation within the arts sector is also vital in securing long-term sustainability. To achieve this priority we -

- Designed our programmes to employ local artists, facilitators, creatives and suppliers
- We exceeded our target of 60% of all project spend going towards artist costs across all programmes
- We paid 90% of all invoices within the 30 day contractual period

We invested in our board and staff across the year to ensure that the company maintains an optimum level of committed, capable trustees and has a staff team capable of delivering the strategic plan.

- Due to a board recruitment exercise we met our target of 8 Trustees during the financial year, with 4 new trustees attending their first board meeting in Q2.
- Many of the EastSide Arts Trustees were involved in workshops to develop the new EastSide Partnership 5-year Strategy
- All staff carried out personal development throughout the year by way of either mentoring/coaching or training/qualifications.

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## **Company Limited by Guarantee**

### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

#### **Year ended 31 March 2024**

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##### **Financial review**

The results for the year are set out in detail on pages 19 & 20. The company returned a surplus for the year of £58,438 (2023: surplus of £71,036).

At 31 March 2024, the total funds of the charity amounted to £209,728 (2023: £151,290), comprising restricted funds of £109,644 (2023: £83,613) and unrestricted funds of £100,084 (2023: £67,677).

The unrestricted funds are essential to provide sufficient funds to cover any unforeseen costs which may arise and fulfil the legal obligations of the charity in the event that current levels of income are not maintained.

##### ***Reserves policy and going concern***

A policy has been implemented by the company in order to recognise the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the organisation. It has established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed should equate to between 25% and 50% of annual administration overheads. The aim is to provide sufficient funds to cover any unforeseen costs which may arise, as well as allowing for the payment of any liabilities which would arise should the company cease to operate. The company recognises that such targets may remain aspirational.

##### **Trustees' responsibilities statement**

The trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, 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 applicable Charities SORP;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and 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 Companies Act 2006. 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.

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### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

**Year ended 31 March 2024**

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#### **Auditor**

Each of the persons who is a trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees' annual report and the strategic report were approved on 6 December 2024 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



Tony Wilson  
Charity Secretary