Guildford Book Festival

Registered Charity No. 1158746

Registered Company Number 8971550 (England & Wales)

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 December 2025

www.guildfordbookfestival.co.uk

CHARITY OVERVIEW

Registered name:	Guildford Book Festival
Registered Charity No:	1158746
Registered Company No:	8971550
Registered Office:	2 Hindmoor Manor, Hindhead Road, Hindhead GU26 6AX
Secretary	Emma McKenzie
Trustees/Directors:	Patricia Grayburn MBE DL (deceased 17.02.26) Nikki Nelson-Smith Gordon Jackson (resigned 11.05.26) Will Salmon Andrew Whitby-Collins Christopher Wade Jane Purnell Michael Hacon Susan Lea (resigned 14.09.25) Emma McKenzie
Festival Director:	Alexandra Andrews
Treasurer:	Michael Hacon
Independent examiner:	Sue Reekie, CPFA

2025 SPONSORS

Festival funders:	Guildford Borough Council Cressive DX Martin Grant Homes Old Dungate Press Worshipful Co of Makers of Playing Cards Arts for Impact
Festival supporters:	Guildford High School The National Trust Activate Learning Waterstones The Haslemere Bookshop Patricia Grayburn Clandon Wood Nature Reserve Watts Gallery
Media partners:	BBC Surrey Round & About The Guildford Magazine Muddy Stilettos Vantage Point The Guildford Dragon

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

Constitution

Guildford Book Festival is a company limited by guarantee, formed on 1 April 2014, which was registered with the Charity Commission as a charity on 1 October 2014 and commenced trading in 2015. The company now runs the Guildford Book Festival previously run by an unincorporated charity No. 1131040.

Management

The Guildford Book Festival is managed by the Board of Trustees named on page 2. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees is Nikki Nelson-Smith.

The Trustees engage the services of an independent contractor, Alex Andrews, to act as Festival Director and to administer the day-to-day operations of the Guildford Book Festival.

The arrangement for marketing and sponsorship functions remained unchanged – the Festival Director worked closely with Wigwam PR.

Charitable Objectives

To advance education for the public benefit by promoting and providing opportunities for the appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of literature and the arts, in particular by operating an annual literary Festival.

This key objective is achieved through the following subsidiary objectives:

- Deliver a financially sustainable Festival
- Raise awareness of the Festival
- Encourage a love of books and reading in young people
- Celebrate books and reading
- Ensure equality of access to all members of the local community
- Enable adults to develop creative writing skills
- Promote Guildford as an arts and cultural centre

Trustees

Trustees are elected under the terms of the Articles of Association. Regular reviews are held to identify any expertise gaps within the Board of Trustees and appointments made when required to strengthen the Board of Trustees, subject to all Trustees' approval. No other person or external body is entitled to appoint any Trustees of the charity.

The Trustees who served during the year and after the period end are shown on page 2.

Statement of Public benefit

The Trustees confirm that they have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers or duties.

ACTIVITIES OF THE CHARITY

The 2025 Festival was held from 14 September to 23 October 2025, with a few events held just prior and after this period. The programme for schools ran throughout the year.

The Main Festival

Now in its 36th year, Guildford Book Festival continues to champion reading, encouraging audiences of all ages to discover books and develop a lifelong love of literature.

For our main Festival this year we curated a vibrant programme of 35 daytime, evening and weekend events over 26 days in 15 different venues. We hosted 62 authors and attracted 2,000 audience members.

Events

We kicked things off with a new addition to this year's programme, a full-day nature writing workshop led by Alice Fowler in the beautiful setting of Hatchlands Park. This event explored how the natural environment can inspire creativity, encouraging participants to engage their senses, generate ideas and share their writing in a supportive setting. We returned later in the Festival for a family storytelling workshop with Catherine Cawthorne.

This was quickly followed by our annual Literary Lunch, again hosted for us by the County Club, where we were treated to a brace of Sunday Times bestselling authors, Heidi Parks and Lucy Foley, in conversation. Later that day we were joined by another bestselling author, and women's champion, Kate Mosse to discuss her new *Feminist History for Every Day of the Year*.

History Day brought together four renowned historians, Valentine Low, Daniel Swift, Victoria Bateman and Alison Weir to discuss books covering the power dynamic at the heart of the British state, the making of William Shakespeare, a global history of women, wealth and power and the secret life of Thomas Wolsey. The day was hosted by ITV's Chris Ship, whose interviewing skill ensured an engaging and lively experience for everyone who attended.

Our Readers' Day events continue to prove popular and this year we hosted both Spring and Autumn Readers' Days at West Horsley Place. These engaging and thought-provoking events brought together leading fiction writers to share their work and insights. Hosted by Patricia Nicol, The Sunday Times culture section columnist, the line-up included bestselling authors Milly Johnson, Ruth Ware, Francesca Segal, Lily Samson, Alex Hay and S J Parris, alongside Festival patron Elizabeth Buchan and actor Larry Lamb.

We were delighted to welcome several household names throughout the Festival to talk about their latest works and prompt discussion and dialogue. These included, Andrew Morton on how Winston Churchill shaped a royal dynasty, Mike Berners-Lee, on the challenges presented by climate change, Andrew Lownie, discussing his timely, as it turned out, book *Entitled: The Rise and Fall of the House of York*, Robert Hardman, with his encyclopaedic knowledge of King Charles III and Jeremy Hunt sharing his insights of his time as Chancellor and Foreign Secretary captured in his book *Can We Be Great Again? Why a Dangerous World Needs Britain*.

Other timely topics were covered by Kwajo Tweneboa, discussing his book *Our Country in Crisis: Britain's Housing Emergency and How We Rebuild* and Luke Pepera with his book *Motherland: A Journey Through 500,000 Years of African Culture and Identity.*

The Reverend Richard Coles and Greg Mosse entertained us in conversation with one another talking about cosy crime and their novels, *A Death on Location* and *The French Bookshop Murder*. Maz Evans continued the murder theme with her new novel, *That'll Teach Her*, about the murder of a headmistress, appropriately, or not, hosted by Guildford High School.

Watts Gallery – Artists' Village provided an engaging setting for children's events with Helen Peters and Amanda Wood, and also hosted adult authors Judith Mackrell and Luke Sherlock, whose book *Forgotten Churches* features Watts Chapel.

James Campbell delighted attendees with the previously untold story Winne-The-Pooh author AA Milne and illustrator EH Shepard captured in *The Men Who Created Winnie-The-Pooh*, published in time for Pooh's centenary.

We were also pleased to host a series of family events, more of which below, including Stephen Mulhern and Peter Brown, who joined us while on tour from the United States.

In line with our aim of inspiring a love of reading and the development of creative writing skills, along with our established creative writing course, another new addition to the programme this year was a publishing workshop. The event attracted aspiring writers eager to hear from five locally based authors, Alice Fowler, Ally Sherrick, Louise Morrish, Sarah Hegarty and Jo Foat, about their journeys to publication. Hosted at Zero Guildford's Riverside Business Centre site, the workshop was well received.

Reaching and Engaging with Audiences

Family events continued to play a key role in broadening our reach. We were delighted to welcome television presenter Stephen Mulhern, best known for *Catchphrase* and *In for a Penny*, to Guildford Baptist Church. He entertained audiences with live magic inspired by his latest book, *Unbelievable!* For this event, we offered a number of complimentary tickets to local families who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to attend, helping to widen access and participation.

Other family events included Catherine Cawthorne, Alex Milway and Amanda Wood.

This year we also programmed an event with theatre and opera director Stephen Unwin, who explored the history of society's interaction with people with learning disabilities in his book *Beautiful Lives: How We Got Learning Disabilities So Wrong*. Offered as a free event, it was promoted to schools and organisations supporting individuals with additional needs. As a result, we welcomed a diverse audience, including attendees connected with Halow, Guildford Challengers, Surrey Choices, Surrey Family Voices and other local charities.

Our involvement in the *Raindrop Falls* project, a collaboration with the Surrey Hills Society, further extended our community engagement, enabling us to invite families to Clandon Wood Nature Reserve for a special award ceremony with author Lucy Reynolds and illustrator Katie Hickey. This event provided an inclusive and celebratory opportunity for participants to share their achievements.

Partnership Programme

As highlighted above, we continued to build on our established partnerships with Watts Gallery and Hatchlands Park, delivering a series of highly successful events.

We were also delighted to collaborate with Clandon Wood Nature Reserve, which generously provided access to its striking glass pavilion for a number of wildlife-focused events featuring Peter Ross and Patrick Galbraith. These events were a valuable addition to the programme, and we look forward to developing this partnership further.

Our ongoing relationship with Activate Learning saw Guildford College host an event with world-renowned chef Raymond Blanc in conversation with former *Good Food Guide* editor Andrew Turvil about his *Simply Raymond Kitchen Garden*. This highly entertaining event attracted a new audience, and catering students from the college enhanced the experience by preparing canapés for guests, as well as having the opportunity to meet Raymond Blanc in person.

We also continued to support and collaborate with local creative organisations, including promoting the Wey Poets Open Afternoon through our brochure and digital channels, and working with Guildford Jazz on a musical event featuring Nick Smart, Emma Rawicz and renowned guitarist John Parricelli.

Volunteers

The fantastic volunteers were invaluable in delivering the 2025 Festival, with great enthusiasm and flexibility. Their focus on the guest experience makes a big difference, for which the Trustees are grateful.

Volunteers also provided support at the Festival's stand at The Farmers Market in Guildford, and in distributing Festival brochures to villages outside Guildford.

Guildford Book Festival continues to welcome new volunteers and supports their development by encouraging sharing knowledge and experience, which is working well.

Venues

We are very grateful to all the venues which hosted Festival events throughout 2025: Guildford Baptist Church, Guildford College, Guildford High School, The Guildhall, Guildford Pavilion, The County Club, Friends' Meeting House, Hatchlands Park, The Hive, Holy Trinity Church, Ivy Arts Centre, St Mary's Church, Watts Gallery, West Horsley Place and Zero.

Schools' Programme

Our Schools Programme continues to play a central role in engaging and inspiring young readers by bringing authors and illustrators directly into local schools. It provides pupils from both primary and secondary state schools with the opportunity to meet leading writers and illustrators face to face, fostering a lasting love of reading, writing and illustration, and encouraging the next generation of storytellers.

The programme continued to grow in 2025, reaching pupils from over 19 local state schools and engaging more than 5,000 children. Events spanned all age groups, from sessions with Catherine Cawthorne for younger pupils to secondary school events with Nathanael Lessore.

Together with librarian Geraldine Tame (Holy Trinity School, Guildford) and Jennifer Hall from the West Surrey Partnership, we put on The Brilliant Book Awards. The Awards expanded this year, relaunching as the *Literally Brilliant Book Awards* with a refreshed identity and the addition of new participating schools. The initiative aims to connect children with new authors and books, with pupils from 15 schools across Surrey receiving free copies of shortlisted titles

and voting for their favourite. This year's winning book was *Movies Showing Nowhere* by Yorick Goldewijk. Children were invited to a celebratory event in June, hosted by Jack Meggitt-Phillips, author of *The Beast and the Bethany* series.

The Book Festival also built on its successful illustration workshops, welcoming Emma Dodd, Jonny Lambert and Yuval Zommer. With support from the West Surrey Partnership, we were able to provide transport, lunch and art supply goody bags. In collaboration with teachers, places were prioritised for pupils who might not otherwise have access to creative opportunities of this kind, ensuring the workshops delivered meaningful impact.

"I wanted to send a HUGE, HUGE thank you... the children were so excited to tell me about their masterclass sessions with Emma and Jonny. They were very inspired!

I cannot begin to express my thanks enough to you all for your effort in organising this and everyone's time that they had provided us.

This experience is something our children (and staff) will truly treasure."
Headteacher — Clandon CE Primary School

We raised money through Arts for Impact that was match-funded by the Big Give arts champions to support the 'A *Raindrop Falls'* project. This was a collaboration with the Surrey Hills Society, where author Lucy Reynolds and illustrator Katie Hickey ran a number of on-site and classroom workshops with a class of year 4 children at a local school to co-create the book, which Old Dungate Press kindly offered to professionally print and publish. Guildford Book Festival then arranged for the final book to be taken into a further 19 schools to bring to light the importance of water and the risks and challenges it is facing in our local area.

Funding and Sponsorship

The Book Festival received grant funding from Guildford Borough Council. Sponsorship came from local and national businesses including Old Dungate Press, Martin Grant Homes, Cressive DX, and the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards.

We successfully applied for money from Arts for Impact, a Big Give initiative, and they duly match-funded our crowdfunding, which was wonderful.

The Kingfisher Farm Shop in Abinger Hammer and Squires Garden Centre in Milford kindly provided 150 seed packets between them to distribute in the goody bags we provided at Spring Readers' Day.

Book sales

Waterstones Guildford continued as the main festival bookseller - selling books at the majority of events.

Local independent bookshop The Haslemere Bookshop continued to supply books for the schools' programme throughout the year.

Challenges

Challenges which were overcome in the year included the short notice closure of our usual main venue, The Electric Theatre. Alternative venues with the required capacity of 150–300 seats are in limited supply, so we are very grateful to Guildford High School for

accommodating multiple events across two of their theatres. Other factors which caused us to innovate included feedback about the barrier Guildford parking charges present, and the compliment of imitation by one of our venues, which decided to host its own History Day. This resulted in greater use of venues out of the town centre and experimenting with Charterhouse School as a venue.

We partnered with the University of Surrey and Guildford Shakespeare Company on a planned discussion of Frankenstein, featuring director Caroline Devlin, author Jody Cooksley and Patricia Pulman. Unfortunately, the event had to be cancelled shortly before it began due to a campus-wide power cut, which raised health and safety concerns.

Reserves Policy

The Trustees have adopted a reserves policy, which seeks to ensure that Guildford Book Festival maintains a positive cash balance throughout the year and concludes each financial year with adequate reserves to ensure financial continuity into the following year and Festival season. Reserves at the end of this reporting year were £21,576.

Financial Performance

2025 proved to be a challenging year for Guildford Book Festival. Despite organising an interesting and varied array of events across several venues in and around Guildford, the number of tickets sold in 2025 fell from the previous year. Ticket income in 2025 was £29,692 compared to £37,324 in 2024.

The finance challenges, also faced by many other organisations in 2025, meant that sourcing sponsorship for Guildford Book Festival proved to be more difficult this year. Such income for 2025 was £10,257, compared to £13,974 in 2024.

The Trustees are once again grateful for the support from Guildford Borough Council. This year funding was £5,000, the same amount as received in 2024.

As in previous years, Waterstones provided valuable support by paying commission on sales of books at Guildford Book Festival events.

Overall, annual costs remained in line with those for the previous year: £59,148 in 2025 compared to £58,665 in 2024.

The consequence of the fall in activity levels in 2025 meant that Guildford Book Festival delivered a net loss of £8,312 for the year, compared to net income of £1,533 in 2024.

Festival Director

The Trustees are grateful to the Festival Director, Alex Andrews, for her valuable work and for organising a successful Festival.

Emma McKenzie
Director and Secretary

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

To the Trustees of the Guildford Book Festival

I report on the financial statements for the period ended 31 December 2025, which are set out on pages 11 to 15.

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Independent examiner

The charity's Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's Trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the financial statements under section 145 of the Charities Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commissioners under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from the Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

1. In connection with my examination, no material matter has come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that, in any material respect:
   - accounting records were not kept in accordance with s130 of the Charities 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.

2. 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 on order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: S. Reekie

Date: 10 June 2026

GUILDFORD BOOK FESTIVAL

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

For the year ended 31 December

		2025 £	2024 £
Incoming resources			
Unrestricted funds			
Incoming resources from generating funds:			
Voluntary income	3.1	16,656	19,656
Activities for generating funds	3.2	4,488	3,218
Incoming resources from charitable activities	3.3	29,692	37,324
Total incoming resources		**50,836**	**60,198**
Resources expended			
Costs of generating voluntary funds	4.1	4,529	4,413
Charitable activities	4.2	54,569	54,204
Governance	4.3	50	48
Total resources expended		**59,148**	**58,665**
Net (deficit) / incoming resources		**(8,312)**	**1,533**

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER	**2025**	**2024**
	£	**£**
Fixed assets	-	-
Current assets		
Cash at bank	22,987	30,726
Debtors	1,549	1,735
Total assets	24,536	32,461
Creditors	2,960	2,573
NET ASSETS	**21,576**	**29,888**
Resources		
Unrestricted funds		
Resources as at 1 Jan	29,888	28,355
Net incoming resources	(8,312)	1,533
Restricted funds	-	-
TOTAL RESOURCES	**21,576**	**29,888**

For the financial year in question the company was entitled to exemption under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

No members have required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to the companies subject to the small companies' regime.

Guildford Book Festival has opted not to deliver a copy of the profit and loss accounts.

Approved at a meeting of the Trustees on 9th June 2026

and signed on their behalf by

Director and Secretary

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the period ended 31 December 2025

1. Basis of preparation

1.1 Basis of accounting

These financial statements have been prepared on a historic cost basis and in accordance with:

- Accounting and Reporting by Charities – Statement of Recommended Practice
- Relevant Accounting Standards
- Charities Act 2011

2. Accounting policies

Incoming resources

1. Recognition of Incoming resources
   These are included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SoFA) when:
   * the charity becomes entitled to the resources
   * the Trustees are virtually certain they will receive the resources; and
   * the monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability

2. Incoming resources with related expenditure
   Where incoming resources have related expenditure (as with fundraising or contract income), the incoming resources and related expenditure are reported gross in the SoFA.

3. Grants and donations
   Grants and donations are only included in the SoFA when the charity has unconditional entitlement to the resources.

4. Gifts in kind
   Gifts in kind are accounted for at a reasonable estimate of their value to the charity or the amount actually realised.
   Gifts in kind for sale or distribution are included in the accounts as gifts only when sold or distributed by the charity.
   Gifts in kind for use by the charity are included in the SoFA as incoming resources when receivable.

5. Donated services and facilities
   These are only included in incoming resources (with an equivalent amount in resources expended) where the benefit to the charity is reasonably quantifiable, measurable and material. The value placed on these resources is the estimated value to the charity of the service or facility received.

Expenditure and liabilities

6. Resources expended
   Resources expended are included in the Statement of Financial Activities on an accruals basis, inclusive of any VAT, which cannot be recovered.

Assets

7. Tangible fixed assets for use by the charity
These are capitalised if they can be used for more than one year, and cost at least £1,000.
They are valued at cost or, if gifted, at the value to the charity on receipt.
Depreciation is assessed on a straight-line basis over the lifetime of the asset.

3. Incoming resources

	2025 £	2024 £
3.1 Voluntary income:		
Guildford Borough Council	5,000	5,000
Other Sponsorship	10,257	13,974
Friends Membership	0	0
Other	1,399	682
	16,656	19,656
3.2 Activities for generating funds:		
Commission on book sales	2,088	2,318
Advertising	2,400	900
	4,488	3,218
3.3 Charitable activities:		
Ticket income	29,692	37,324
	50,836	**60,198**

4. Resources expended

	2025 £	2024 £
4.1 Costs of generating voluntary funds:		
Festival Director	4,331	4,275
Administration & overheads	198	138
	4,529	4,413
4.2 Charitable activities:		
Festival Director	24,542	24,225
Author & other professional fees & expenses	6,084	6,340
Venue hire & expenses	8,223	8,791
Marketing	13,109	11,136
Books	287	1,380
Administration & overheads	2,324	2,332
	54,569	54,204

4.3 Governance:		
Strategy meeting	50	48
The Trustees, Treasurer and Independent Examiner provide their services without receiving any remuneration or expenses.		
	59,148	**58,665**

5. Donated services

The Guildford Book Festival relies heavily on its supporters and volunteers who donate their services for no remuneration. The value of these services cannot be reasonably quantified and so have not been reflected in these financial statements.

6. Related party transactions

There were no related party transactions for the reporting year.