Bristol Insight Meditation



Annual Report and Financial Statements
Year Ended 31 December 2025

Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Registered Charity No 1162182

About Bristol Insight Meditation

In this tenth annual review, we set out our charitable objectives and our activities to promote those objectives for public benefit.

Background information

In 2003, a small group of people who had been to retreats at Gaia House in Devon got together to support each other in their meditation practice – and Bristol Insight (originally named Bristol Gaia House Group) was born. Today, whilst our original, supportive intentions remain unchanged, that small group has grown organically into a peer-led registered charity - a network of over 350 people involved in a wide range of organised activities.

Our approach

At Bristol Insight Meditation, we support the practice and study of Buddhist Insight Meditation, also known as Vipassana (literally translated as 'seeing deeply or clearly'). This is the practice of developing a calm and mindful investigation into the nature of experience, leading to wisdom, compassion, and the end of suffering. The Vipassana movement began in the Theravada schools of Buddhism in the early 20th century in Burma, and Thailand, and attempts to reconnect with the teachings of early Buddhism. In its spread to the West, teachers such as Jack Kornfield and Christina Feldman integrated Vipassana with understandings from Western culture, while remaining true to the Buddha's teachings.

It is from this group of pioneer Western teachers that centres such as Gaia House in Devon and Spirit Rock and IMS in the USA were formed. Bristol Insight Meditation has close links with Gaia House and draws inspiration from the wide range of teachers and teachings from the worldwide Insight meditation community. As well as Vipassana, some of us have practice backgrounds in traditions such as Quakerism or Tibetan and Zen Buddhism.

Our approach emphasises inquiry, experiential exploration, and mindfulness amongst many other influences. It is not important to hold particular beliefs or to consider yourself to be a Buddhist to participate in our activities; all are welcome. What we do have in common is an interest in our own personal development as part of a supportive community. Ethical living is important to us too, including our collective responses to current social and environmental challenges.

Our aims and values

Through our groups and activities, we aspire to build a community that nurtures wisdom and compassion: for ourselves, for others, and for the world we live in. We strive to be open to all

and do not seek to convert or discriminate, irrespective of religious or political beliefs, ethnicity, gender, social background, age, sexual orientation, or disability. We invite donations to cover our costs but our activities are open to everyone, irrespective of means.

What we do

We offer a range of activities to support meditation practice. Please visit our website: **www.bristolmeditation.org.uk** for full details. Our longstanding association with Gaia House, a well-known retreat centre for Insight Meditation, means we regularly invite their teachers, as well as those from other linked traditions, to lead our own retreat days and courses. These are reputable, highly experienced teachers who commit to a code of ethics. Our supporter-led charity is run by a small team of volunteers.

2025 Annual Review

Charitable Objective

To advance the education of the public in the subject of meditation and the teachings of the Buddha in particular but not exclusively by supporting and encouraging the study and practice of Buddhist Insight Meditation (also known as Vipassana meditative practice) for the benefit of people in Bristol and the surrounding areas.

Education

During the year we organised the following activities to promote education:

Four teacher-led day retreats:

- Stephen Fulder – How to Thrive in Hard Times (online)
- Mary-Rose Finnegan-Clarke – Dharma Inquiry Day: Reclaiming Your Attention in the Digital Age
- Kisten Kratz – To Expect Wonders
- River Wolton - Tending Joy, Sustaining Compassion

One 4-week introductory course:

- We ran a four-week introduction to insight meditation course in the autumn of 2025, led by Mike Baker and assisted by Eugene Furniss

Supporting practice

We provide a number of opportunities for people to support and develop their meditation

practice through small group communities:

- Weekly Tuesday evening sitting group, combining practice and discussion to support individual practice
- Monthly ‘Self-led’ day retreat, which provides alternative sitting and walking practice sessions, together with opportunities for discussion
- Monthly nature meditations in open woodland
- Overnight camping meditation retreats in open woodland
- Monthly Insightful Ageing group
- A monthly newsletter with news and contributions from the sangha
- A website that provides up to date information and links to bookings for our events
- A WhatsApp group for the Sangha

All activities are publicised widely, including on our website, in the WhatsApp group, and in our monthly email newsletter. Participants are requested to make donations to cover associated running costs, but low income is not a barrier to participation.

“Without community my practice would mean very little. I take delight in helping to run the Tuesday meditation group. This involves welcoming newcomers and overseeing the meditation and mindful sharing sessions. As we sit in a circle a deep sense of connection and community emerges. I’m also a member of the day retreats team helping to bring dharma teachers to Bristol for a day of practice for our wider community. It is deeply satisfying to work within a team to plan retreats, from the initial idea to organising the day itself and to know that many people have benefited.”

Highlights from 2025

Teacher-Led Retreats (Claire-Louise Symonds)
We had 5 teacher-led day retreats booked for 2025. These were facilitated by teachers associated with Gaia House Retreat Centre, Devon, on a range of subjects, combining teaching and practice. In 2025, one retreat was online and all of the other retreats took place in person at Glenfrome Primary School. We had to cancel one retreat as there were very low numbers as the date clashed with the Summer Solstice weekend. So, we had the following retreats:

• Stephen Fulder – How to Thrive in Hard Times (online)

• Mary-Rose Finnegan-Clarke – Dharma Inquiry Day: Reclaiming Your Attention in the Digital Age
• Kisten Kratz – To Expect Wonders
• River Wolton - Tending Joy, Sustaining Compassion

The Retreat Day that was cancelled due to low numbers would have been with Gavin Milne on Intuitive Awakening.
The Teacher Led Retreats team have worked hard over the last year to organise 5 retreats which feels more manageable for the team. The retreats have reflected a rich variety of perspectives and practices within the Insight tradition. We are tending to run one online retreat each year to be accessible to a wider group of participants and to attract teachers who are not able to travel to Bristol.
The in-person retreats took place at our usual venue at Glenfrome School. The numbers are steadily growing again but are still a bit lower than they were pre-Covid. We now have a four-tiered pricing system of tickets that is working better to cover our costs and to give our participants flexibility in terms of ticket prices.
We continue to ask for feedback from participants after each retreat, and a number have fed back that the online facility suited them as they live further afield. We continue to get regular updates regarding the Led Team finances from the Treasurer, which is helpful.
We have made a profit over the year. The team decided to donate an extra amount to each teacher at the end of 2025 so there wasn't a surplus in the account.
We continue to run a structured booking system with four levels (early bird and tier 1, waged and unwaged) to try to encourage people to book on earlier to be more certain that we can cover our costs. However, we also have a freely given option for people who have limited funds in order to be as inclusive as we can.
We continue to ask people to sign up for Gift Aid. Therefore, we are claiming back on a number of the booking fees through this scheme. We continue to have a capped accommodation budget at £30 for those teachers choosing to stay overnight in accommodation other than that offered by the team. We encourage teachers to book travel etc as early as possible to keep those costs to a minimum. Many teachers are now choosing to travel to Bristol and back on the same day as our day retreats finish at 4pm rather than 5. This saves on the accommodation costs quite considerably. We have had quite a lot of new people attending these days which is encouraging.

Introductory course (Mike Baker)
We ran a four-week introduction to Insight Meditation course in the autumn of 2025 at the Central Quaker Meeting House, led by Mike Baker and assisted by Eugene Furniss.

We felt the course in general achieved its aims of introducing participants to the practices of Insight Meditation and helping them to establish a regular meditation practice. We felt too that an ethos of respect, inclusivity, openness was established and that participants felt welcomed and able to share their experiences. The participants seemed to happily “gel” with each other and enjoyed the social aspect of the course.
10 people enrolled for the course. We had stated an upper limit of 12, due to the size of the room and the wish to give optimal individual assistance to each participant. The group was diverse in terms of ethnicity, age and gender adding a richness to the sessions. We were impressed by the group's willingness to engage with the activities offered, their receptivity and their willingness to share their experiences of their first tentative steps in meditation. Two of the group were not new to Insight Meditation but wished to refresh their practice after it had lapsed. They expressed that the course was helpful in this regard.
Participants were invited to offer feedback. All felt that the course was as described, met or exceeded their expectations. All felt they had benefited from the course in some way mainly in terms of their motivation, confidence, self-awareness, the variety of ways to support their meditation practice and the value of a sense of community.
Further regular courses will be run in 2026, facilitator and premises permitting

Self-Led Day Retreats (David Ringsell)
The self-led retreats were well attended in 2025. We had between 8 and 15 participants approximately each Saturday. We kept the same popular structure of silent sitting and walking meditation periods. We included a one hour recorded Dharma talk and 1/2 hour sharing period. The day does not include any specific meditation instruction. Participants generally have some meditation experience. They select a meditation style that works for them. The day starts with a clear introduction to the meditation schedule.
The verbal feedback from participants is positive. They appreciate the opportunity to meditate for a whole day in a supportive atmosphere. The talk and sharing sessions are also valued. Full details of the retreat can be found on the Bristol insight website.
The team of organisers continue to volunteer their services, including David and Caroline. When they are not available Tony has facilitated the retreat. We have occasional short meetings and emails to coordinate this. We are changing the name of the retreat to ‘community meditation retreat’ from 2026 onward. The Bristol Insight website will be updated to reflect this.

Tuesday Evening Sitting Group (Jonathan Edwards)
During 2025 the weekly evening sit met every Tuesday at the Central Quaker Meeting House (except 23rd December). Weekly attendance ranged between 6 and 26 practitioners, averaging out at 15, with several new people joining the group during the year. The evening starts with a round of names, where each person’s name is repeated back by the collective

Sangha to recognise and appreciate the presence of each individual. There is a space for our "Caring Sangha", where we bring to mind a person, or group of people, who may be suffering, or maybe we bring something in our life to share and celebrate with the Sangha. This is followed by a 40-minute unguided silent meditation session, after which for 20 minutes we appreciate each other's company whilst enjoying a cup of tea. In the second half of the evening we have our "Deepening our Practice" programme of practices, studies, and activities. During 2025 this included a monthly Mindful Sharing, quarterly Poetry & Prose sharing, sessions on meditation and social and political engagement, mindful movements, mindful communication and mindful joy; listening to, and reflecting on, some of the suttas and studying various aspects of the Buddha's teachings including metta bhavana practice, the foundations of mindfulness, early Buddhist iconography and reflecting on the five precepts and the eightfold path as points of enquiry. We end each quarter with a social "Chat Cafe" evening. A very special social evening was organised for 30th September to celebrate 10 years of Bristol Insight as a registered Charity – this was great opportunity to informally chat and share our experiences with several members of our community who don't usually attend our Tuesday evening sit, whilst enjoying pizza and other goodies!

Insightful Ageing Group (Ray Woolfe)

This group has been going for more than nine years. When it began, we wondered if it would last but it has in fact continued and thrived. The composition has changed over time, and it now has nine members who meet monthly for two hours. I would describe the group as friendly, supportive but serious in its aim to understand and support meditative practice in the context of ageing.

Sessions consist of a period of meditation plus another activity such as exploring readings on the subject of Buddhism and ageing; listening to readings from the dharma; sharing poetry; with a brief opportunity for us all to share issues that arise for members if individuals want to share but no obligation to do so. We meet in people's houses and there is always a possibility of new members joining.

Nature Meditation (Lesley Wye)

In 2025, we offered seven Sunday afternoon nature meditation retreats. Two others were cancelled because of strong winds (Jan) and low interest (Feb). Throughout the year, 7-29 people attended each retreat. Lasting about three hours with a variety of sitting, walking and nature practices, each retreat had a theme, such as 'Appreciation for the Overlooked' and 'Equanimity'.

Increasingly, we have retreats with a special focus, often relating to the time of the year. The theme of 'Darkness' featured in our annual night time retreat which fell perfectly on 31 Oct. Our annual Twixmas retreat between Christmas and New Year was our biggest retreat ever with

nearly 30 people attending, including the family members of many practitioners. Both the Samhain and Twixmas retreats included a shared vegan feast. Michael Gregg led a successful retreat in May on 'Mindful drawing', the first time for this topic. We also offered two working retreats in Wildflower Woods in March.
Overall, nature meditation retreats continue to attract new participants while retaining a core of regular attenders. They appear to be highly valued.

Rewilding Meditation Retreats (Lesley Wye)
2025 was the sixth year of offering overnight nature meditation retreats, with the intention of reconnecting practitioners with nature to deepen their practice. This year, we held three overnight weekend retreats of two- and three- night duration in May, June and August. One retreat was cancelled because of low numbers (July). Two retreats were women only including one for experienced practitioners. Between six to seven practitioners attended each retreat. Themes included: 'Unfurling the Heart', 'Rewilding Creativity' and 'Creating a Clearing'. All retreats took place in Wildflower Woods near Bruton.
An innovation for 2025 was having two facilitators instead of one facilitator and one cook. This worked well; Lesley co-led the May retreat with Sarah Davies and the August retreat with Shauna Hope. Lauren Mason and Liz Kalaghuer led the June retreat on their own. By widening the pool of potential nature meditation teachers, we are working towards the sustainability of overnight nature meditation retreats for Bristol insight.
Those attending the Rewilding Meditation retreats fed back how much they appreciated extended time to practice in the woods, enjoying all that nature offers. These retreats will continue for 2026.

Charity Information

Legal Status
The charity was registered by the Charity Commission on 15 June 2015 as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
Charity No 1162182

Charitable Objective
To advance the education of the public in the subject of meditation and the teachings of the Buddha in particular but not exclusively by supporting and encouraging the study and practice of Buddhist Insight Meditation (also known as Vispassana meditative practice) for the benefit of people in Bristol and the surrounding areas.

Further Information
Website: www.bristolmeditation.org.uk

Governance
The charity is managed by a group of trustees. All trustees are required to be members (supporters) of Bristol Insight. Trustees are recruited on the basis of the skills needed, as identified by the group of trustees. A variety of methods are used to identify suitable candidates. Trustees are elected by the members (supporters) of the charity at the Annual General Meeting. Each year one third of the trustees retires by rotation. The group of trustees has the power to co-opt members during the year but these members must stand for election at the next Annual General Meeting. Trustees are encouraged to identify gaps in their knowledge, which are then addressed by briefings or other training delivered to some or all of the trustees as appropriate.

Management
The Committee of Trustees comprised 5 members and met approximately 6 times a year. The trustees are supported by 'organisers' who organise and support activities on an operational basis.
Trustees serving during the year 2025 were:

Jocelyn James (elected 7 July 2020, re-elected 25 September 2023, stepped down 31 March 2025)
Christine Ramsey-Wade (elected 7 July 2020, re-elected 25 September 2023)
Morag Rose Ruffell (elected 14 Sept 2022, re-elected 17 April 2024; stepped down April 2025)
Lesley Wye (elected 7 July 2020; re-elected 14 Sept 2022)

Maddy Longley (elected 25 September 2023)
Nadja Klose (elected 31 March 2025)
Joe Pusey (elected 31 March 2025)
Eugene Furniss (elected 31 March 2025)

Financial Review

Total income for the year was £11,457.35 (2024: £13,748.87) and total expenditure for the year was £12,663.92 (2024: £14,387.20). The total net assets held at 31st December 2025 were £5,812,81 represented by cash at bank.

Risk Management

The major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by the trustees, have been reviewed during the year and the trustees are satisfied that systems have been established to mitigate those risks. The charity has arranged employers and public liability insurance cover of £10M through an insurance policy underwritten by the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group.

Format of financial statements

The report and accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011.

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

Legal regulations require the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the charity's financial activities for the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to:

• select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
• make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
• state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice 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 accounting records which 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 2011. 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.

Bankers

The Co-operative Bank, PO Box 250, Skelmersdale WN8 6WT

Independent Examiner

Independent scrutiny of accounts is not required where the gross income for the financial year is £25,000 or less.

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 December 2025

INCOME	Day retreat	Self-led	Tues sit	Courses	Woodland	TOTAL 2025	TOTAL 2024
Donations	1,573.62	1,652	2,926.75	0	4,294.50	**£10,446.87**	**£12,107.58**
Gift Aid 2023-4							**£1,466.39**
Gift Aid 2025	120.63	315.76	0	36	538.09	**£1,010.48**	
Internal Transfers							**£175**
TOTAL	£1,694.25	£1,967.76	£2,926.75	£36	£4,832.59	**£11,457.35**	**£13,748.97**

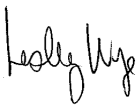
EXPENDITURE	Day retreat	Self-led	Tues sit	Courses	Woodland	TOTAL 2025	TOTAL 2024
Venue Hire	-£372.50	-£2,150.50	-£3,506.19	-£142.24	-£1,245	**-£7,416.43**	**-£7,686.18**
Food, drink & catering	-£35.16	-£21.80	-£21.79		-£1,157.30	**-£1,236.05**	**-£1,635.51**
Travel	-£202.30				-£30.50	**-£232.80**	**-£263.48**
Admin	-£640					**-£640**	**-£667.50**
Purchases	-£80.48	-£37.50	-£72.50		-£670.86	**£861.34**	**-£454.79**
Printing							**-£55**
Insurance	-£25.20	-£25.20	-£25.20		-£25.20	**-£100.80**	**-£176.40**
Website	-£21	-£21	-£21		-£21	**£84**	**-£180.58**
Refund					-£137.50	**£137.50**	**-£638**
Donations*	-£400	-£100			-£1,455	**£1,955**	**-£2,629.76**
TOTAL	-£1,776.64	-£2,356	-£3,646.68	-£142.24	-£2,742.36	**-£12,663.92**	**-£14,387.20**

*Donations = Dana for dharma teachers, Dharmaseed & Wildflower Woods infrastructure, as per agreement with trustees.

Balanced and net movement of funds

Activity	Balance 01-Jan-25	Income	Expenditure	Net movement	Balance 31-Dec-25
Day retreats	£1,693.68	£1,694.25	-£1,776.64	-£82.39	£1,611.29
Self-Led	£1,447.29	£1,967.76	-£2,356	-£388.24	£1,059.05
Tues Sit	£1,492.48	£2,926.75	-£3,646.68	-£719.93	£772.55
Courses	£1,422.18	£36	-£142.24	-£106.24	£1,315.94
Woodland	£963.75	£4,832.59	-£4,742.36	£90.23	£1,053.98
Total	**£7,019.38**	**£11,457.35**	**-£12,663.92**	**-£1,206.57**	**£5,812,81**

Approved by the Committee of Trustees and signed on their behalf by



Lesley Wye, Trustee and Treasurer