# Isle of Wight Literary Festival

*Trustees' annual report for the year ended 31 December 2025.*

**Registered charity number 1164814**

## Objectives and public benefit

The Isle of Wight Literary Festival promotes literature and the arts for public benefit and advances education by helping people appreciate, understand, and enjoy literature. It does so through its annual Festival in Cowes, a free programme of author visits to Island schools and opportunities for local writers to share their work.

The trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. The three strands serve different audiences. Together they bring writers and readers into conversation, give children direct access to authors through their schools, and ensure that Island writers have a place in the Festival.

## Achievements in 2025

The Festival took place from 9 to 12 October, with Northwood House at its centre. More than 6,000 tickets were sold. The programme combined fiction and poetry with history, politics, sport, food, and music. It included Dame Prue Leith, Gyles Brandreth, Joanne Harris, Sue Barker, Helen Lederer and John Suchet. LitFeast brought food writers and cookery demonstrations into the programme.

The variety was a strength. It gave established readers the chance to discover unfamiliar subjects and offered people who might not ordinarily attend a literary festival a way in. Bringing these events to Cowes gave Island residents access to a wide programme close to home, while the October dates added to the Island's cultural offer beyond the summer season.

In 2025, the charity introduced discounted student tickets and disability support tickets and made hearing assistance headsets available at no extra charge. These were practical steps to widen access to the public programme, alongside the free Schools' Programme.

Write on Wight returned for a second year. Through an authors' marketplace and events for local writers, it gave Island voices space alongside visiting speakers and an opportunity to meet readers. Creative writing activity also invited people to take part, rather than only listening. The trustees regard this as a core part of the Festival's purpose, not an addition to its headline programme.

## Schools' Programme

In 2025, the Festival's free Schools' Programme reached 5,000 children across 95% of the Isle of Wight's primary and secondary schools, with visits from 23 authors.

Each year, the Festival carefully selects a diverse range of authors for primary and secondary school audiences. Through assemblies, workshops and interactive sessions, children meet the people behind the books, explore new stories and ideas, and are encouraged to develop their own reading and writing. Schools either host authors themselves or attend sessions at a 'hub' school, extending the programme's reach across the Island.

The programme brings the Festival directly into children's school lives, including those who might otherwise have no opportunity to attend a literary event. It reflects the charity's belief that every child should have the opportunity to discover the enjoyment of reading and the possibilities that literature can open up.

There is no charge to participating schools. The programme is funded entirely by private benefactors, sponsors, and charitable donations. The trustees are grateful to these supporters, and to the authors, teachers and volunteers whose contributions make this work possible.

## Volunteers

Volunteers make the Festival possible. They help curate the programme, raise funds, welcome audiences, and speakers, run events, and organise the work in schools. The King's Award for Voluntary Service recognises the scale and value of their contribution. The trustees thank them, together with the authors, schools, venues, donors, sponsors, and other supporters who made the year's activities possible.

## Financial review and reserves

The Festival cost almost £145,000 to deliver in 2025 and reported a surplus of £5,380.56. Donations and sponsorship totalled approximately £37,260, including around £13,000 for the Schools' Programme. Ticket income funds much of the public Festival; donations and sponsorship allow the charity to offer school visits without charge.

The charity's reserves policy is to retain enough unrestricted funds at the year end to begin planning and committing expenditure for the following Festival before ticket income is received. At 31 December 2025, unrestricted reserves were £34,734. The trustees considered this sufficient to meet the initial commitments for the 2026 Festival, with further expenditure to be managed in line with anticipated ticket income, donations, and sponsorship. Any restricted funds are excluded from general reserves.

The modest surplus is welcome but does not remove the need to secure funding before making commitments. The trustees will continue to manage the scale of the Festival and Schools' Programme against the resources available.

## Plans for 2026

The trustees intend to maintain a varied Festival in Cowes, develop Write on Wight, and bring authors to more children where funding permits. Securing support for the Schools' Programme and maintaining sufficient reserves remain central to those plans.

## Structure and governance

The charity is a charitable incorporated organisation governed by a foundation model constitution. Trustees are appointed in accordance with that constitution. The Festival is delivered by volunteers under the trustees' oversight.

**Trustees serving during the year ended 31 December 2025:**

- Margaret Edwina Ankers (Chair)
- Janet Lee Allan
- Graham Barnetson
- Robin Vandeleur Courage MBE
- Julia Dams
- Vanessa Elizabeth Hounsfield
- Gioia Minghella-Giddens
- Victoria Mary Guesdon Orr-Ewing

There were no changes to the trustees during the year.

**Principal address:** Northwood House, Ward Avenue, Cowes, Isle of Wight [postcode].

Approved by the trustees on 15.10.2026 and signed on their behalf:

Margaret Edwina Ankers, Chair



CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

# Independent examiner's report on the accounts

## Section A Independent Examiner's Report

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Report to the trustees/ members of** | Charity Name<br>Isle of Wight Literary Festival | | |
| **On accounts for the year ended** | 31 December 2025 | **Charity no (if any)** | 1164814 |
| **Set out on pages** | 11 to 12<br>(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets) | | |

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 December 2025.

**Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, 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 Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Signed:** | | **Date:** | 30/10/2026 |
| **Name:** | Mark Paxton | | |
| **Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):** | ACCA | | |
| **Address:** | BRIGHT BROWN LIMITED, CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS, EXCHANGE<br>HOUSE, ST CROSS LANE, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT PO30 5BZ | | |

## Section B Disclosure

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

| | |
|---|---|
| **Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose**. | None |

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

| Charity Name | No (if any) |
|---|---|
| Isle of Wight Literary Festival | |

# Receipts and payments accounts

**CC16a**

| For the period from | Period start date | To | Period end date |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1st January 2025 | | 31st December 2025 |

## Section A Receipts and payments

| | Unrestricted funds to the nearest £ | Restricted funds to the nearest £ | Endowment funds to the nearest £ | Total funds to the nearest £ | Last year to the nearest £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A1 Receipts** | | | | | |
| Tickets | 102,230 | - | - | 102,230 | 86,096 |
| Donations and Sponsorship | 27,696 | - | - | 27,696 | 34,277 |
| Bar Donations | 182 | - | - | 182 | - |
| Local Council Support | 2,000 | - | - | 2,000 | - |
| Gift Aid | - | - | - | - | 775 |
| Headline Sponsor | 1,691 | - | - | 1,691 | |
| Benefactors | 7,945 | - | - | 7,945 | 4,835 |
| Advertising | - | - | - | - | - |
| Red Funnel Limited | - | - | - | - | - |
| Literary Lunch | 6,216 | - | - | 6,216 | 6,453 |
| Medina publishing | 5,053 | - | - | 5,053 | - |
| Schools | - | - | - | - | - |
| Merchandise sales | 101 | - | - | 101 | 360 |
| Car park | 1,521 | - | - | 1,521 | 1,321 |
| ***Sub total*** *(Gross income for AR)* | 154,634 | - | - | 154,634 | 134,117 |
| **A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).** | | | | | |
| | - | - | - | - | - |
| | - | - | - | - | - |
| ***Sub total*** | - | - | - | - | - |
| ***Total receipts*** | 154,634 | - | - | 154,634 | 134,117 |
| **A3 Payments** | | | | | |
| Project management | 20,478 | - | - | 20,478 | 15,436 |
| Website | 1,061 | - | - | 1,061 | 2,494 |
| Advertising. Marketing and media,programme printing | 16,504 | - | - | 16,504 | 5,332 |
| Author's fees, accommodation and transport | 28,133 | - | - | 28,133 | 17,823 |
| Book cost | | - | - | - | - |
| Venues and audio visual | 33,386 | - | - | 33,386 | 36,942 |
| Musicians | 2,443 | | | 2,443 | 420 |
| Professional fees | 736 | - | - | 736 | 880 |
| Volunteer expenses | | - | - | - | - |
| Insurance | 1,412 | - | - | 1,412 | 1,306 |
| Sundry | 5,290 | - | - | 5,290 | 7,472 |
| Literary lunch | | - | - | - | - |
| Office rent and rates etc. | 4,471 | - | - | 4,471 | 4,246 |
| Bank charges | 8,387 | - | - | 8,387 | 6,947 |
| Schools programme | 24,003 | | - | 24,003 | 18,082 |
| ***Sub total*** | 146,303 | - | - | 146,303 | 117,380 |
| **A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)** | | | | | |
| | - | - | - | - | |
| | - | - | - | - | |
| ***Sub total*** | - | - | - | - | - |
| ***Total payments*** | 146,303 | - | - | 146,303 | 117,380 |
| ***Net of receipts/(payments)*** | 8,331 | - | - | 8,331 | 16,737 |
| **A5 Transfers between funds** | | | - | - | - |
| **A6 Cash funds last year end** | 26,403 | | - | 26,403 | 9,666 |
| ***Cash funds this year end*** | 34,734 | - | - | 34,734 | 26,403 |

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

| Categories | Details | Unrestricted funds to nearest £ | Restricted funds to nearest £ | Endowment funds to nearest £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **B1 Cash funds** | Bank current account | 34,734 | | - |
| | | - | - | - |
| | | - | - | - |
| | ***Total cash funds*** (agree balances with receipts and payments account(s)) | 34,734 | - | - |
| | | OK | OK | OK |

| | Details | Unrestricted funds to nearest £ | Restricted funds to nearest £ | Endowment funds to nearest £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **B2 Other monetary assets** | | | - | - |
| | | | - | - |
| | | - | - | - |
| | | - | - | - |
| | | - | - | - |
| | | - | - | - |

| | Details | Fund to which asset belongs | Cost (optional) | Current value (optional) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **B3 Investment assets** | | | - | - |
| | | | - | - |
| | | | - | - |
| | | | - | - |
| | | | - | - |

| | Details | Fund to which asset belongs | Cost (optional) | Current value (optional) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use** | Computer equipment | Unrestricted | 3,000 | 100 |
| | Desks | Unrestricted | - | 300 |
| | | | - | - |
| | | | - | - |
| | | | - | - |
| | | | - | - |
| | | | - | - |
| | | | - | - |
| | | | - | - |

| | Details | Fund to which liability relates | Amount due (optional) | When due (optional) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **B5 Liabilities** | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | - | |

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

| Signature | Print Name | Date of approval |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |