Company registration number 06373460 (England and Wales)

Charity registration number 1165434 (England and Wales)

THE HEART OF THE CITY PARTNERSHIP

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

THE HEART OF THE CITY PARTNERSHIP

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Trustees	Mr GM Black	
	Mr J Grundy	
	Dr RM Pears	
	Miss E MacRobert	
	Miss K Mountain	
	Mr I Ayris	
	Mr A Serfontein	
	Very Rev'd LP Batson	(Appointed 17 July 2025)
	Ms C Winfield	(Appointed 30 September 2025)
	Ms P Allen	(Appointed 23 June 2026)
Charity number	1165434	
Company number	06373460	
Registered office	Fernwood House Fernwood Road Jesmond Newcastle Upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE2 1TJ	
Auditor	Robson Laidler Accountants Limited Fernwood House Fernwood Road Jesmond Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear England NE2 1TJ	
Bankers	Handelsbanken Earl Grey House 75-85 Grey Street Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1TJ Virgin Money 5 Cattle Market Hexham NE46 1NJ United Trust Bank One Ropemaker Street London EC2Y 9AW	

THE HEART OF THE CITY PARTNERSHIP

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THE HEART OF THE CITY PARTNERSHIP

TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

The trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2025.

The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015).

Charitable Purpose

The charity is established for:

- The advancement of education and promotion of learning in relation to the history and heritage of the area around Newcastle Castle, in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne
- The advancement of culture and heritage by the encouragement of the local community and visitors to the city to appreciate and enjoy the history and fabric of these buildings; and
- The preservation and protection of Newcastle Castle as a building of historical interest and public importance and particularly the Grade 1 Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments known as the Black Gate and Castle Keep.

The Heart of the City Partnership (HOCP) leases Newcastle Castle from Newcastle City Council at a peppercorn rent and operates the heritage asset as a predominantly paid-for visitor attraction. HOCP's strategic approach is based on the principles that safeguarding the future of Newcastle Castle for the city and advocating for appreciation from the public, local businesses and local schools is the most effective way of realising our charitable objectives and demonstrating the public benefits of the heritage asset.

In 2025, Newcastle Castle was primarily available to the general public as a paid for visitor attraction, open 7 days per week between April and October and 5 days per week during the rest of the year. Opening hours were normally 10am to 5pm and in any given year full closure of Newcastle Castle on a normal opening day is only permitted for a maximum of 10 days through the year, this being to facilitate all-day venue hires e.g. weddings, but balancing the public benefit derived from being open as a place to visit.

Information about Newcastle Castle and its history is provided to visitors through a guidebook, audio guides, interpretation panels and tours. In addition, Newcastle Castle runs an education programme of school visits to the castle and outreach sessions. Much of Newcastle Castle' public-facing work is supported by volunteers.

Public Benefit

The trustees confirm that they have referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when reviewing the Trust's aims and objectives in planning future activities.

Referring to our aims and objectives, achieving and maintaining independent financial sustainability is core to preserving and protecting the buildings we operate. Keeping the buildings in the hearts and minds of local communities and those from further afield is a key engagement target.

The board of trustees is aware that admission fees can exclude people with low disposable incomes and is keen to ensure access to this heritage asset is possible for all. Our admission charging structure allows discounts for certain priorities e.g. unwaged, families, disabled, senior citizens, armed forces, NHS etc. HOCP also engages with schemes such as MaxCard and Living Social. Admission fees are benchmarked against similar attractions in the region.

Our formal (schools and groups) education provision, informal learning (outreach and early-years provision) and informal lifelong learning (interpretation, events, talks, lectures etc) are at the heart of our work of advancing education and learning in relation to the history and heritage of Newcastle Castle and the surrounding area, with a report on numbers of beneficiaries detailed below.

In addition to the primary offer, we offered a range of immersive, interactive experiences and events, such as film nights, talks, lectures, theatre shows and workshops on carefully selected days and evenings in order to attract a 'non heritage consumer' audience base. However, after review towards the end of 2025 due to rising costs, these events are not considered to be financially sustainable, and focus has shifted to more frequent free drop-in activities during opening hours. This strategic decision was taken to grow our family visitor-base and create opportunities for volunteers to deliver activities during daytime opening hours. Similarly, the decision was taken to scale down Venue Hire for the same reasons. These decisions will be reviewed during the delivery of the Castle Business Plan 2026-2029.

HOCP maintains an ongoing dialogue with the neighbouring Newcastle Cathedral including exploring avenues of partnership.

The Castle team of staff and volunteers also take an active role in the land around the two historic buildings which is public realm space and not included within the lease terms between Newcastle City Council and the Heart of the City Partnership.

The land is part of the historic footprint of the original Castle and also includes the marked buried archaeology of the Roman Fort that formed part of Hadrian's Wall.

The Castle team undertake daily litter picks and monitoring of the environment including reporting and taking action on a range of anti-social behaviour impacts. Unfortunately, the Castle area is a recognised local hot spot for anti-social behaviour, and we extend our public benefit objectives by leading aspects of anti-social behaviour mitigation.

Together with a multi-agency team that includes the Police, Newcastle City Council Community Safety Team, NE1 Street Rangers and Clean Team the Castle team attends monthly Crime Safety Team meetings reporting incidents and impacts and hosts regular visits to the area from staff employed by these agencies. This work has resulted in a reduction in anti-social behaviour and the creation of a safer space for members of the public to enjoy albeit that the negative range of anti-social activity is still high.

Bringing local small businesses together for mutually beneficial activities was also triggered by the Castle team in 2025. A local souvenir shop, coffee shop, Airbnb and local design company have all been brought together by the Castle to aid the wider activation of the outdoor spaces around the Castle.

The Castle took part in the national Heritage Open Day scheme opening the whole Castle free to visitors for the day. Almost 2,000 people took advantage of this which was the first time the Castle had participated in this national programming initiative.

Daily external tours, costumed character activities and further activation of the outside spaces by the Castle team are planned for 2026 after successful testing and pilot operations in 2025.

Report on Achievements and Performance
2025 was a challenging year for HOCP in which we did not hit income targets and saw overspend in some areas, causing an overall deficit at end of year.

Building on surplus generated in 2023 and 2024, HOCP agreed a deficit budget for 2025, aimed at inward investment and development of the visitor experience. Due to unforeseen circumstances, including three long-term absences (one at senior level) team capacity was stretched and we were unable to deliver on the strategy to achieve the 38,974 visitors targeted, and resulted in significant budget underperformance.

The Chief Executive Officer stepped down in July 2025, and a new Chief Executive Officer assumed the post in September 2025. With this, came a renewed strategic plan aimed at developing the core offer, the creation of additional visitor components and enhanced service to the city in line with a new co-created Spirit of Place: "Castle Central – connecting people to the city and inspiring discovery of the past". These are the principles that HOCP are working to deliver across the life of the new Business Plan (2026-2029). The period of change felt across 2025 and looking towards 2026 is demonstrated throughout this report.

General Visitors

The general public currently constitutes the majority of visitors to Newcastle Castle, and ticket sales are the largest income stream for the charity. We continue to utilise an annual ticketing strategy to boost local engagement, having launched this in 2023. We continue to monitor the impact of this by tracking numbers of returning visitors this has changed by 156% from 2024 (495) to 2025 (1,267).

In 2025 we elected not to increase the price of an annual pass in order to provide best value for money to the general visitor, whilst strategic objectives were delivered to increase overall visitor numbers.

Based on a short-term strategic plan and growth potential as indicated by 2023 visitor numbers, the target number of annual paying visitors for 2025 was 38,974. We were not able to achieve this level, with the actual total number of annual paying visitors in 2025 being 33,154. However, this marks a 2.6% increase in visitor numbers since 2024 (32,293) and highlights growth potential.

In 2025, Newcastle Castle was open to visitors for 320 days (324 in 2024), with a reduced emphasis on all-day venue hires that required closure, such as weddings. We saw an average of 104 visitors per day, as opposed to 100 in 2024.

Moving into 2026, visitor numbers remain our biggest performance indicator and new, more in-depth monitoring processes are being established so that underperformance can be highlighted earlier in the financial year.

Marketing and Communications

With a full-time Marketing and Communications Officer in post throughout 2025, we continued to develop our promotion and awareness-raising of Newcastle Castle and HOCP's activities in a number of ways:

- **Print advertising** - We advertised in print publications including: The Crack, Primary Times, and Living North. We also provide flyers in relevant local hospitality businesses and are progressing partnership development. We are currently reviewing processes to monitor and evaluate these types of promotion.
- **Website** - The website is used to enable visitors to book in advance and provide information about Newcastle Castle's public events programme as well as highlight charitable work and raise awareness for ongoing fundraising campaigns. Unique visitors to the website in 2025 was 219,000. This peaked in October with 23.5K.
- **E-newsletter** - At the end of December 2025 our general e-newsletter, which is sent out every three weeks, had 5115 subscribers, an increase of 472 over the year. We sent out 18 general e-newsletters with an average open rate of 35-45% (38% in 2024) and an average click-through rate of 2-3% (6.7% in 2024).
- **Social media** - HOCP uses social media to raise awareness about its activities and charitable status, publish blogs about historical topics and engage with partners. During 2025 social media engagement grew, demonstrated by an increase of 796 Facebook followers from end of 2024 to end of 2025. Current subscriber counts (as of March 2026) are as follows:
    - Facebook: 15,420 followers
    - X (formerly Twitter): 4,320 followers
    - Instagram: 2,049 followers
    - TikTok: 1,092 followers
    - LinkedIn: 604 followers
- **Google My Business** - We also continued to use Google My Business in 2025. During 2025, we had 86,466 business interactions up from 44,802 in 2024. We have 3,239 Google reviews (up from 2,890 in 2024) and an overall star rating of 4.5 out of 5.
- **TripAdvisor** - Newcastle Castle is currently has an overall rating of 4.4 stars from 1,106 reviews. Our medieval walking tour is one of our key bookable products and has an overall star rating of 4.9 from 46 reviews.

Education

Engaging with school groups is a key workstream for HOCP, in line with our charitable objectives. In 2025, the number of visitors from schools was 3,962, an increase in numbers when compared with 2024 (3,635). This was supported by an additional part-time Learning Officer on the payroll from January to September.

People participating in outreach sessions was 382 (a decrease of 2024's 982 participants, mainly due to the long-term absence of a key member of staff), across 11 outreach visits.

Total participants in our education programme was a total of 4,354 beneficiaries a 5.7% increase on 2024 figures (4,617).

We engaged with a total of 84 education groups from Early Years through to postgraduate level study. Within this, 11% were specifically special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) groups.

Inclusivity is a core value of HOCP and so we were pleased to be able to facilitate learning to 89 people visiting as part of 9 SEND groups, 31% decrease from 2024 (128). We also aim to engage with schools located in deprived areas. In 2025, approximately 85% of schools that we worked with were in the top 30% more deprived areas in the UK (decile 1, 2, or 3).

We have seen an increase in groups coming just for half-day visits this year. They account for 43% of all formal educational groups. Full-day visits account for 45% and self-guided 12%.

We continue to develop our educational programme both at Newcastle Castle and through outreach work, to reach an increasing audience, including seeking grants to support this work. In 2025, we worked on the following externally funded projects:

- £675 from Community Ward Funding to subsidise the cost of a visit for 6 school groups within monument ward.
- £1,950 from Gateshead FC Foundation for the development and implementation of a Halloween Spooky Science and Walking with Witches project. The project involved working with over 60 children and their families around the city and at the Castle.
- £344.82 from the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) granted by StreetGames for the provision of holiday activities and food for young people at the Castle in the summer of 2024.

In 2025 we hosted 13 student placements, covering educational levels from secondary school to university degrees (13 placements is inclusive of 2 longer term university placements), to vocational qualifications. This is a slight increase in numbers reported in 2024 (12). These placements are designed as a first step towards the individual's career and differ depending on course requirements (e.g. tourism, heritage, art and design).

Volunteering

Throughout 2025, we had a team of 19 volunteers helping with activities across the spectrum of deliverables and around 14 being very regularly active, especially in the delivery of education.

Around 9 volunteers came in regularly to deliver tours to schools, assist in workshops and carry out free family activities.

In 2025, HOCP had 1 volunteer assisting with the delivery of our events programme.

We also had onsite re-enactment groups, made up of 6 volunteers named the Newcastle Array. The Newcastle Array was disbanded at the end of 2025.

Looking to 2026, HOCP's team of volunteers is a significant growth opportunity for the charity. A new Communications and Volunteer Engagement Officer were recruited in early 2026 to set up new volunteering roles and undertake a mass recruitment campaign.

Retail and Food and Beverage (F&B)

Our retail offer provided further educational resources (books, toys, etc) relating to the layers of history throughout the Castle.

We have seen a change in spend per head (SPH) from £1.39 on average across 2024 to £1.63 on average in 2025. Revenue generated from the retail offer supported the overall sustainability of Newcastle Castle and the delivery of HOCP's charitable objectives.

In line with our new Spirit of Place: Castle Central, we promote local suppliers and crafters such as Clavis and Claustra, Photography North and Canny Candy Gadgies whose products are available on site.

Review of our retail offer commenced in 2024 and is ongoing with regular launches of new ranges and greater seasonal theming.

Projects to be delivered in early 2026 will support growth of retail and overall secondary spend through:

- Installation of a new Welcome Desk in the Welcome Hub and retail space
- Additions to the F&B offer including hot drinks and ice cream.
- Creation of a second-hand bookshop
- Creation of a tourist information hub within the retail space

Programme

Historically we ran alternative, out-of-hours cultural events with the aim of attracting a more diverse audience. However, following financial review in 2025 the decision was taken to scale this down and focus on free daytime activities to support our core offer. With this in mind, out of hours events delivered in 2025 were fewer than those delivered in 2024. We expect this trajectory to continue into 2026.

Events delivered included:

- 5 film nights attracting 170 participants (decrease from 22 events in 2024).
- 11 talks and lectures attracting 360 participants (decrease from 22 events in 2024).
- 1 tavern night attracting 568 participants (decrease from 2 events in 2024)
- 5 performances (workshops, theatre, music) attracting 313 participants (decrease from 7 events in 2024).
- 100 days of walking tours attracting 441 participants at an average of 4 participants per tour (increase from 84 days in 2024).

We continue to run a variety of free drop-in activities that run every single day during the school holidays. Some key examples of this include our Summer Tournament Day which attracted 166 visitors, Halloween Activities saw 1,469 visitors across the half term week, averaging 163 visitors per day. Our pop-up exhibition: By Brave Defence saw 546 visitors across 9 days in late November (61 daily average).

Accessibility

Further in line with our values of Inclusivity and Welcoming, we recognise there are inherent access challenges within the heritage buildings. To this regard there are a number of projects that are ongoing including:

- Install of 3D virtual scan of the Castle Keep
- Regularly updated access information available on our website
- Better facilitated street-level access
- Overhaul of onsite audio content

Most of these projects, specifically install of our 3D scan will require external investment and so access enhancements remains a key priority in securing external funding for 2026.

Fundraising

HOCP's principal source of income is admissions. Where appropriate, non-primary trading sources of income generate revenue that is used in future budget years to offset the costs of delivering primary purpose functions such as our education and outreach programmes, as well as investing staff and improving the visitor offer and experience.

Between 2016 and 2019 HOCP worked towards financial and self-sufficiency. 2019 saw HOCP generate a small surplus, one year ahead of plan, which, when measured against previous years indicated HOCP was on a path to a stable and self-sustaining operational model, enabling it to deliver significant public benefit from its core activities through admissions, events, learning and outreach.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 hit principal sources of funding hard. Over the last few years, we have seen a steady recovery with the results from 2023 being on a par with 2019.

In 2024, although the number of visitors was lower than target, the total admission fees including increased with gift aid held up and, taking into account grants received, HOCP generated a small surplus for the year.

With the context of stable and self-sustaining finances in the years previous, the decision was made to allocate a deficit budget for 2025, covering rising costs and aiming to invest in growth of the overall visitor experience. This was then to be supported by external fundraising.

In 2025 HOCP received the following grants:

- £15,000 from Garfield Weston in core funding.
- £1,950 from Gateshead FC Foundation to support our education programme.
- £675 from Community Ward Funding to support our education programme.
- £344.82 from the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) granted by StreetGames to support our education programme.

HOCP also received £781.32 in onsite donations from visitors.

We are very grateful to these organisations and individuals who have contributed to support our activities.

Staff

In 2025, HOCP had an average of 23 staff members (8 full time equivalent plus 13 casual staff).

Staff roles covered:

- Senior management,
- Supervisory management,
- Programming,
- Marketing and communications,
- Retail,
- Learning,
- Outreach,
- Finance,
- Front-of-house.

During 2025 we recruited one new member of staff to a newly created full-time Programming and Engagement Officer role, removed the vacant part-time Venue Hire Officer role and issued our part-time Events Officer with a new contract as part-time Learning Officer and did not backfill the role of Events Officer.

The whole team were supported by leadership through Management Team (made up of the CEO, General Manager, Learning Manager, and Team Supervisor) who are in turn supported by the Board of Trustees and a sub-committee of the Board, the Business Management Committee (BMC). Staff are further supported by our team of volunteers.

Reserves Policy Disclosure

The trustees have always agreed that they will endeavour to keep six months running costs of HOCP to be held in reserve, readily available, and within that amount to identify the costs (approximately £106,000 at the end of 2025) required to effect an orderly wind-down of HOCP in the event that it had to cease operating. The trustees have also agreed to endeavour to generate a sustainable, low risk return through investments with acceptable level of risk. Such returns to be drawn down to the trading account at the discretion of BMC or the board of trustees, to fund projects or business proceedings.

Financial Review

The results for the year are shown on the Statement of Financial Activities. Incoming resources totalled £523,805 (2024: £563,685) of which £521,510 is considered to be unrestricted in nature.

Resources expended totalled £622,431 (2024: £536,376) such that overall the charity accrued a deficit of £98,626 (2024: £27,309 surplus). At 31 December 2025, the charity has closing reserves totalling £163,153 (2024: £261,779) of which £158,910 (2024: £255,079) are unrestricted. Free reserves, being unrestricted reserves less that tied up in fixed assets, stood at £158,155 (2024: £253,638).

The overall deficit achieved in 2025 is disappointing and has had a significant impact on HOCP's reserves which are not currently at the planned level of 6 months running costs. The budget and strategy set for 2026 reflects this, calling for growth in key income areas, such as admissions, retail and new food and beverage components, whilst decreasing some areas of activity that do not present impactful financial return, such as venue hires and out of hours events.

Principle Risks and Uncertainties

HOCP takes a comprehensive and systematic approach to risk-management, identifying significant risks under 6 main headings: strategic/business, HR & resources, property, operational, governance, and financial. Procedures are in place to mitigate or otherwise manage the most significant risks identified and a Risk Register is in place. The Risk Register is regularly reviewed by BMC and the Board and updated. When new risks are identified, policies and/or procedures are developed to mitigate the risk.

The most significant risks currently identified are:

- **Cash flow** – Due to the seasonal nature of trading the first 3 months of 2026 are anticipated to be deficit months. Trustees have agreed to utilise unrestricted reserves for this period on the principle that HOCP will be generating a surplus from April 2026.
- **Rising costs** – As with many similar organisations, rising costs (utilities, employer costs, etc) present a significant challenge in maintaining the bottom line. This is a significant reason as to the underperformance in 2025. Looking to 2026, the Trustees and new Chief Executive Officer have developed a strategy for growth enabling the charity to keep up with rising costs.
- **Low visitor numbers** – The strategy for 2026 relies on HOCP achieving just below 38,000 visitors. KPIs relating to visitor numbers and associated financials will be monitored more frequently and in a more robust manner in 2026 to enable early intervention if necessary.

Future Plans and Sustainability

In light of the disappointing financial outcome of 2025, the Trustees have recognised that the development and delivery of a new Business Plan is vital. The plan will focus on growing our core income-generating activities, with primary focus on general admission. The new plan entitled "Everyday Excellence" focuses on three main objectives:

- Growth of our visitor components
- Growth of our service culture
- Growth of our capacity

These objectives will be delivered in line with our newly co-created Spirit of Place:

"Castle Central – connecting people to the city and inspiring discovery of the past".

Our approach to welcoming people and the visitor experience – we strive to support visitors in enjoying their visit via journey mapping and complementary information about the city of Newcastle. We speak to every visitor on arrival, at key prescribed visitor touchpoints and at any opportunities that present themselves, reflecting the spirit of Newcastle Central in everything we do. Our presentation standards are first class, and we will drive improvements to the Castle setting, taking a leading role as ambassadors for the city with an informed goodbye.

Our approach to programming and interpretation – our actively evolving programming makes every visit count. We strategically design our offer to complement and engage with the wider city programme and activities, adding creativity that fits with the Castle's story. We have a strong focus on our core offer and return value, prioritising a consistent and memorable experience.

Our approach to marketing and communications – we create our marketing strategy with our target audiences in mind. We avoid transactional messages and instead focus on emphasising the value of our site and its role as a living part of the greater city – past, present and future.

Our approach to volunteering and partnerships – we align our volunteering structure, and the roles within it, to fit with our charitable business needs. We seek out mutually beneficial links and partnerships as well as welcoming individual gifts of time to support our core visiting offer as well as our outreach and learning programmes. This enables us to expand our offer to as many people as possible and places the Castle as a key supporter of the wider city objectives.

Our approach to commercial activities – through direct delivery and through partnership operations, we develop a service that meets our visitors needs and supports the ongoing need for financial sustainability. We focus on the latter to ensure we can maintain the Castle and its setting as great space within a great city.

Our approach to conservation – we share our built and natural conservation progress in ways that non-specialists can see and relate to. We do this to aid wider understanding and to promote a caring attitude to our work across the city. We can't do this on our own, we do it alongside our core partner Newcastle City Council and we share the pride in both the actions and results.

In terms of deliverables, there are several key projects in the pipeline for 2026 aimed at boosting visitor numbers and encouraging commercial growth through diversified income streams to strengthen financial sustainability and allow for reinvestment into the charitable work that we deliver, such as our education programme. These include:

- Introduction of a new Tourist Information Hub, delivered in line with key strategic partners.
- Creation of new visitor components, including
  - Second-hand bookshop
  - Armoury
  - Welcome and orientation space within the Guard Rooms at street level.
  - External placemaking
- Implementation of a site-wide touchpoint mapping strategy, looking to enhance human activation of key spaces around the site
- Mass volunteer recruitment, focussing specifically on Visitor Experience volunteers to deliver the touchpoint mapping strategy.
- Creation of a new casual role – Programming Delivery Assistant – for which 4 candidates will be recruited early 2026.
- Development of new F&B offerings including hot drinks and ice cream
- A reviewed and focused team-wide approach to grant funding, corporate sponsorship and onsite giving
- A reviewed and cross-department seasonal programme to improve site cohesion and encourage repeat visits, specifically in relation to our local audiences.

2026 will also see a 9% increase in admission fees. This has been benchmarked against industry standards provided in VisitBritain reports, but also similar organisations within the region.

Governing Document
HOCP is a Private Company Limited by Guarantee incorporated under the Companies Act 2006 and is a registered Charity. The objects for which HOCP was incorporated and its powers are contained within its Articles of Association.

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Mr GM Black	
Mr J Grundy	
Mr P Wood	(Resigned 10 September 2025)
Mr E Jubb	(Resigned 21 March 2025)
Dr RM Pears	
Miss E MacRobert	
Miss K Mountain	
Mr I Ayris	
Mr A Serfontein	
Ms KL Kilgour	(Resigned 30 October 2025)
Mr A Hay	(Resigned 27 May 2026)
Very Rev'd LP Batson	(Appointed 17 July 2025)
Ms C Winfield	(Appointed 30 September 2025)
Ms P Allen	(Appointed 23 June 2026)

Recruitment of Trustees
Trustees are recruited as per the Articles of Association. Trustees recruited, but not from the appointing bodies, are recruited around the skills, knowledge and experience required to help steer the organisation.

Organisational Structure

The Articles of Association provide that; The business of HOCP shall be managed by the Trustees, being the Members of HOCP, who may exercise its powers. The number of Trustees to be appointed as Directors of HOCP shall not be less than 6 and not be more than 12 of whom:

- Up to 2 shall be appointed by Newcastle City Council
- Up to 2 shall be appointed by the Dean & Chapter of Newcastle Cathedral
- Up to 2 shall be appointed by the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle Upon Tyne

The most senior manager, the Chief Executive Officer, is appointed by the Trustees for the purpose of ensuring the future sustainability of Newcastle Castle and promoting and developing the wider objects of the charity. Trustee meetings are held quarterly with BMC meeting at minimum 6 times per year to specifically inform the direction of Newcastle Castle and to support the Chief Executive Officer.

Key Management Remuneration
Key management remuneration is determined by the Trustees.

Related Parties
There are no related parties.

Statement of trustees' responsibilities
The trustees (who are also the directors of HOCP for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice), including Financial Reporting Standard 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Auditor
If no general meeting is held to consider the appointment of auditors, the auditors, Robson Laidler Accountants Limited, will be deemed to be re-appointed unless the members prevent the deemed re-appointment or pass a resolution to remove them as auditors.

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each of the trustees has confirmed that there is no information of which they are aware which is relevant to the audit, but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the auditor is aware of such information.

The trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.
Signed on behalf of the Charity's trustees.

Mr GM Black
Trustee

Date: 09.09.2026

THE HEART OF THE CITY PARTNERSHIP

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE HEART OF THE CITY PARTNERSHIP

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of The Heart of the City Partnership (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 December 2025 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, the statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland* (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 December 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements* section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of our audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report included within the trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the trustees' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of trustees' responsibilities, the trustees, who are also the directors of the charity for the purpose of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is detailed below.

The risk of material misstatement due to error or fraud has been assessed in conjunction with how internal controls may mitigate any such risk. These controls are reviewed as part of the audit by performing systems walkthroughs to ensure they are operating effectively. Analytical review and substantive testing is also performed on all material balances and therefore any instances of non-compliance should be identified or considered as insignificant. In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud, the audit engagement team;

- obtained an understanding of the nature of the industry and sector, including the legal and regulatory framework, in which the company operates and how the company complies with that legal and regulatory framework
- inquired with management and those charged with governance about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, including any know actual, suspected or alleged instances of fraud
- discussed with management and those charged with governance any non-compliance with laws and regulations and how fraud might occur including assessments of how and where the financial statements may be susceptible to fraud.

The risk of management override of controls was also considered an area of potential misstatement due to fraud. Audit procedures performed included testing of manual journal entries and other adjustments and evaluating the business rationale in relation to significant, unusual transactions and transactions entered into outside the normal course of business.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED)
TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE HEART OF THE CITY PARTNERSHIP

There are inherent limitations in the audit procedures described above and the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of irregularities including fraud rests with management. As with any audit, there remained a risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations or the override of internal controls.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

NC

Nicholas Cunningham MSc BSc FCCA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
for and on behalf of Robson Laidler Accountants Limited

14-9-2026

Statutory Auditor

Fernwood House
Fernwood Road
Jesmond
Newcastle upon Tyne
Tyne and Wear
England
NE2 1TJ

THE HEART OF THE CITY PARTNERSHIP

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

Current financial year

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Income and endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	**2**	16,456	2,295	18,751	33,714
Charitable activities					
Ticket sales		369,077	-	369,077	370,374
Investments		5,274	-	5,274	2,324
Other trading activities	**3**	130,703	-	130,703	157,273
Total income		521,510	2,295	523,805	563,685
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds	**4**	35,205	4,752	39,957	55,954
Charitable activities	**5**	582,474	-	582,474	480,422
Total resources expended		617,679	4,752	622,431	536,376
Net (expenditure)/income for the year/ Net movement in funds		(96,169)	(2,457)	(98,626)	27,309
Fund balances at 1 January 2025		255,079	6,700	261,779	234,470
Fund balances at 31 December 2025		158,910	4,243	163,153	261,779

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities also complies with the requirements for an income and expenditure account under the Companies Act 2006.

THE HEART OF THE CITY PARTNERSHIP

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED) INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

Prior financial year

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Income and endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	2	25,373	8,341	33,714
Charitable activities				
Ticket sales		370,374	-	370,374
Investments		2,324	-	2,324
Other trading activities	3	157,273	-	157,273
Total income		555,344	8,341	563,685
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds	4	51,813	4,141	55,954
Charitable activities	5	480,422	-	480,422
Total resources expended		532,235	4,141	536,376
Net (expenditure)/income for the year/ Net movement in funds		23,109	4,200	27,309
Fund balances at 1 January 2024		231,970	2,500	234,470
Fund balances at 31 December 2024		255,079	6,700	261,779

THE HEART OF THE CITY PARTNERSHIP

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Notes	2025 £	£	2024 £	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	**10**		755		1,441
Current assets					
Stocks	**11**	3,872		8,043	
Debtors	**12**	8,862		14,143	
Cash at bank and in hand		182,652		280,772	
		195,386		302,958	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**13**	(32,988)		(42,620)	
Net current assets			162,398		260,338
Total assets less current liabilities			163,153		261,779
The funds of the charity					
Restricted income funds	**15**		4,243		6,700
Unrestricted funds			158,910		255,079
			163,153		261,779

The financial statements were approved by the trustees on 04.09.2026

Gavin Black

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Mr GM Black

Trustee

THE HEART OF THE CITY PARTNERSHIP

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2025 £	2024 £	2024 £
Cash flows from operating activities					
Cash (absorbed by)/generated from operations	18		(103,394)		29,804
Investing activities					
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		-		(1,399)	
Investment income received		5,274		2,324	
Net cash generated from investing activities			5,274		925
Net cash generated from financing activities			-		-
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents			(98,120)		30,729
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year			280,772		250,043
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year			182,652		280,772

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

The Heart of the City Partnership is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is Fernwood House, Fernwood Road, Jesmond, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE2 1TJ.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" ("FRS 102") and the Charities SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019). The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

Heart of the City Partnership meets the definition of a public benefit entity entry under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors or grantors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the charity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably, and it is probable that income will be received.

Cash donations are recognised on receipt. Other donations are recognised once the charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount. Income tax recoverable in relation to donations received under Gift Aid or deeds of covenant is recognised at the time of the donation.

Grants, where entitlement is not conditional on the delivery of a specific performance by the charity, are recognised when the charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the grant.

Incoming resources from grants, where related to performance and specific deliverables, are accounted for as the charity earns the right to consideration by its performance.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

1.5 Expenditure

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with use of the resources. Expenditure includes any VAT which cannot be fully recovered, and is reported as part of the expenditure to which it relates:

- Costs of generating funds comprise the costs associated with attracting voluntary income.

- Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Computers	33% on cost

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1.7 Impairment of fixed assets

At each reporting end date, the charity reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

1.8 Stocks

Stocks are valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value, after making due allowance for obsolete and slow moving items.

1.9 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.10 Taxation

As a charity, the company is exempt from tax on income and gains to the extent that these are applied to charitable objects. No tax charges have arisen in the charity.

1.11 Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

1.12 Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

2 Donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds general 2025 £	**Restricted funds 2025 £**	**Total 2025 £**	Unrestricted funds general 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Donations and gifts	781	-	781	373	1,542	1,915
Grants	15,675	2,295	17,970	25,000	6,799	31,799
	16,456	2,295	18,751	25,373	8,341	33,714

3 Other income

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	**Unrestricted funds 2024 £**
Other income	24,772	23,966
Event income	33,034	39,444
Venue income	17,539	48,613
Retail	55,358	45,250
	130,703	157,273

4 Raising funds

	Unrestricted funds general 2025 £	**Restricted funds 2025 £**	**Total 2025 £**	Unrestricted funds general 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Raising funds						
Operating gift shops	27,279	-	27,279	25,058	-	25,058
Other trading activities	7,926	4,752	12,678	26,755	4,141	30,896
	35,205	4,752	39,957	51,813	4,141	55,954

5 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Charitable activites 2025 £	Charitable activites 2024 £
Direct costs		
Staff costs	441,145	362,774
Depreciation and impairment	686	1,155
Rates and water	2,098	1,159
Insurance	9,402	9,026
Light and heat	21,538	19,263
Telephone	3,770	3,027
Postage and stationery	886	1,388
Marketing and publicity	32,810	25,905
Sundries	7,394	7,534
Travelling	19	304
Training	1,462	1,837
Repairs	25,930	28,600
Card machine charges	9,943	8,706
	557,083	470,678
Share of support and governance costs (see note 6)		
Support	18,131	4,188
Governance	7,260	5,556
	582,474	480,422
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	582,474	480,422

6 Support costs allocated to activities

	2025 £	2024 £
Payroll fees	2,639	2,122
Professional fees	15,492	2,066
Governance costs	7,260	5,556
	25,391	9,744
Analysed between:		
Charitable activites	25,391	9,744

7 Trustees' remuneration and benefits

None of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration or benefits from the charity during the year.

There were no trustee's expenses paid for the year ended 31 December 2025 nor for the year ended 31 December 2024.

8 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2025 Number	2024 Number
Management and administration	27	23

Employment costs	2025 £	2024 £
Wages and salaries	398,000	331,928
Social security costs	29,601	19,305
Other pension costs	13,544	11,541
	441,145	362,774

Key management remuneration totalled £68,360 (2024: £51,483)

There were no employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000.

9 Taxation

The charity is exempt from taxation on its activities because all its income is applied for charitable purposes.

10 Tangible fixed assets

	Computers
	£
Cost	
At 1 January 2025	35,435
At 31 December 2025	35,435
Depreciation and impairment	
At 1 January 2025	33,994
Depreciation charged in the year	686
At 31 December 2025	34,680
Carrying amount	
At 31 December 2025	755
At 31 December 2024	1,441

11 Stocks

	2025	2024
	£	£
Finished goods and goods for resale	3,872	8,043

12 Debtors

	2025	2024
Amounts falling due within one year:	£	£
Trade debtors	399	3,123
Other debtors	660	784
Prepayments and accrued income	7,803	10,236
	8,862	14,143

13 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2025	2024
	£	£
Other taxation and social security	6,768	5,622
Trade creditors	3,170	12,945
Other creditors	2,686	3,282
Accruals and deferred income	20,364	20,771
	32,988	42,620

16 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £
At 31 December 2025:			
Tangible assets	755	-	755
Current assets/(liabilities)	158,155	4,243	162,398
	158,910	4,243	163,153

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
At 31 December 2024:			
Tangible assets	1,441	-	1,441
Current assets/(liabilities)	253,638	6,700	260,338
	255,079	6,700	261,779

17 Related party transactions

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2024 - none).

18 Cash (absorbed by)/generated from operations

	2025 £	2024 £
(Deficit)/surplus for the year	(98,626)	27,309
Adjustments for:		
Investment income recognised in statement of financial activities	(5,274)	(2,324)
Depreciation and impairment of tangible fixed assets	686	1,155
Movements in working capital:		
Decrease/(increase) in stocks	4,171	(2,858)
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	5,281	(2,653)
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	(9,632)	9,175
Cash (absorbed by)/generated from operations	(103,394)	29,804

19 Analysis of changes in net funds

The charity had no material debt during the year.