

Trustees' Report

The Charity is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (a SCIO). It was registered in its current legal form on 13 October 2022. The charity was previously an unincorporated association but changed its legal form to a SCIO. The assets of the unincorporated association were transferred to the SCIO on 13 October 2022.

Appointment of trustees

The board of trustees, which normally meets once per quarter, are the charity's trustees. Membership of the board of trustees is open to all subscribing members of the choir. Trustees are elected at the annual general meeting which is typically held in January.

There must be a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 10 trustees. In 2024/5 we had trustees as follows: Sorcha O'Connor (Chair), Katie Lumsdaine (Secretary), Janice Thompson (Treasurer/Finance), Danny Fairlie (Trustee and Co Treasurer/finance support), Hannah Brown (Members' Rep), Hannah Roche (Trustee), Katie Howell (Trustee).

Charitable purposes

Pitchcraft's purpose is the advancement of the arts. In pursuit of this, the organisation will provide a public benefit, and in particular, will:

- deliver high quality, entertaining musical performances, consistently aiming for a higher standard;
- sing a wide variety of music, always aiming to surprise the audience with what a singing group can deliver;
- work as a cohesive and supportive team to mutually support members;
- support its community through performing to raise funds for local charities and causes; and
- challenge and develop members to deliver high quality performances in a wide variety of settings.

Activities

Pitchcraft was granted SCIO status in October 2022. During 2023 the trustees created a set of strategic objectives and built governance to meet the requirements of a charitable organisation. Work in 2024 built on this foundation and we addressed a number of areas of governance to strengthen the charity. 2025 was a year of consolidation with the addition of a number of important policies to support the ethical and inclusive running of the choir. It was also a year of investment planning and shifting to modern financial mgmt. software to strengthen financial governance and reduce manual tasks.

Trustee staggering

New trustees were recruited to the board in January 2025 to allow for continuity through staggered membership of the Board. Our previous secretary (Alison Seren) stood down and was replaced by Katie Bowel who - due to illness - was subsequently replaced by new trustee Katie Lumsdaine. It is hoped that we will continue to attract trustees to the board to allow for healthy turnover of roles and in injection of new ideas.

New policies

We finalised key new policies this year as the organisation matures.

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Reserves Policy
- Subscription and Breaks Policy

The addition of these policies adds strength to the governance and provides us with key pillars to guide our actions.

Increasing Volunteer engagement

The Board brought a number of volunteer opportunities to the members at the last AGM including requests for project based volunteer roles. Uptake on project-based support has been excellent this year with more balance of responsibilities across the key operational areas of the choir. Notable was the Fringe project team which stepped up to help the events lead on delivery of the sell out August run! The operational team leads completed a piece of work to map their key processes to allow easier handover of roles and easier onboarding of project based volunteer roles.

The Board is very grateful to the operational team members and project based volunteers which make the running of the charity possible. This has continued post the reporting period for other key projects (website projects team, legacy project team, charities team and a new social media team which will be reporting on in subsequent reporting period reports).

Musical Director Contract

Our Musical Director Lindsey Cotter has signed a new contract with us including a clarified approach to new arrangements and a simplified approach to invoicing. This new approach allows us to have a mix of pieces that are arranged just for us plus access to pieces that Lindsey has arranged but that she can also make available more widely. We are delighted to have this level of clarity and flexibility with our Musical Director.

Achievements and Performance

The choir had another year of strong performances over the reporting period (September 2024 to August 2025).

We finished 2024 strong with our candlelit, spooky concert at Greyfriars Kirk at the end of October where we demonstrated the range that we can now cover and stretched ourselves with what we think was the Scottish first performance of Mironczarnia. Bringing old repertoire and mash ups alongside dramatic new music and poetry aligned with our goals to surprise our audience. Acoustically Greyfriars was a great success and the events lead (Emily Hesketh) was fast to book for future events.

After a busy concert year we ended with an intimate Christmas concert 'at home' in Broughton St Mary's where we sang section specific pieces for Sops/Altos and Bass/Tenors, including an arrangement for Bass/Tenors from within the section. All members are always welcome to discuss developing their own arrangements for us to sing in conjunction with the Musical Director.

In response to requests from members from the members survey to additional skills classes we ran a Beat Boxing workshop at the beginning of 2025 exploring new ways to use our voices.

Our first 'Come and Sing' event in May brought c50 enthusiastic singers alongside the main choir for an afternoon of learning and performing in Broughton St Mary's. Old members and new singers spent the day with us learning and singing. Expanding access to group singing as an advancement of the arts aligned well with our objectives and gave us a new way of interacting with our audiences and community. The afternoon was also a lot of fun.

Fringe 25

Moving to August, we approached our Fringe concerts in an uncharacteristically hot summer making for some exhausting rehearsals in the heat but not dampening the choir's focus on delivering great shows. Thanks to the hard work of Emily and the volunteer Fringe project team, we sold out both concerts in Dynamic Earth and could make a charitable donation to the nominated charities of £1,800. Following the heavy year of learning in 23-24, our repertoire of current tracks expanded to allow for audience participation on choosing the tracks. End August marks the end of our reporting year and delivering both concerts successfully was a performance highlight. We tested using a small amount of external help on social media and some paid advertising for Fringe this year which will allow us to build for future years and performances.

Member survey – December 2024

Member satisfaction remains very high (tested at the mid-point), showing a high level of support for all key areas of the choir, particularly our Musical Director. Our members' surveys in December 2024 also gained input on key areas of performance and enjoyment of the choir, communications approach and investment plan for the choir to aim to keep members' needs as the key priority.

As the financial review will show, the charity continues to be well funded and revenues once again generated a small surplus over running costs while keeping our member subscription rate flat. Running costs reduced following the investment in musical arrangement in the previous year which is allowing us to consider further investment in the choir.

Financial review

The work carried out in 23/24 to strengthen our financial forecasting was further supported in 24/25 by moving our accounts from a manual approach to FreeAgent, accountancy software, which we have access to for free due to our charitable status and banking relationships.

Our main source of funding is fees which are charged to members of the choir. Receipts for the period amounts to £22,959 (£24,445 in the previous period).

Although it is not the focus of the choir to perform at a profit, we raised £5028 (v £6,943 in the previous period) through performances, which are included in the receipts noted above.

Investment

Our cash in bank actually increased over the period despite our stated goal of managing down the reserves amount as recommended by SCIO. The board of trustees is however actively looking at ways to reinvest in the quality of the choir and to assist in achieving our charitable objectives. 24/5 was a lower investment year as we considered options. Projects have been stood up since year end that will address this goal in the reporting period for 25/6.

The choir was gifted an amount of £5,000 which at the reporting period end remained deemed restricted funds. The terms of this restriction are that the money should be returned if the choir does not continue for 3 years post the donation. As such, this amount is being treated as fully restricted until the potential return date has passed. (January 2026).

Reserves policy

We developed and approved a new Reserves Policy for the charity following forecasting and scenario planning. The trustees' policy is now to retain c6 months' worth of normal running costs in order to meet commitments and to cover any unexpected expenditure. At present operating costs (which we don't see increasing significantly in current forecasting), we would require reserves of c£10,000 to cover that need.

Our Unrestricted reserves at end of year are in excess of this amount at £16,435. As mentioned previously, the board of trustees is actively working with the Musical Director and choir members to reinvest in the quality of the choir through better infrastructure to support the running of the choir and further professional training. Following the approval of the Reserves Policy, we remain committed to reducing the reserves to nearer the desired level by the end of the reporting period.

Plans for future period

We plan to:

1. Continue to develop and execute the investment plan for using funds to raise standards within the choir. The weekend scheduled for workshops in April 26 are a great example of that.
2. Continue to review and develop roles at board level. The current chair has been in role for 3 years and if elected at the Jan 26 AGM will be 4 years in role. Ensuring we have a healthy turnover of roles is important so that role will ideally change soon.
3. Further support for operational level roles via flexible project team volunteers.
4. Investment in our website infrastructure to both ease pressure on volunteers but also to support an enhanced member experience.
5. Enhance support (volunteer and financial) for marketing and social media promotion as we continue to seek to expand our audiences.
6. Our restricted funds will also become unrestricted (Jan 26) in the future period and a small team has been put in place to propose use of those funds to the choir.
7. Charities group, we will seek to mature our approach to supporting charities and are creating a small team to lead on the work for the choir.

Our new trustees on the board for the new period help with staggering roles over the coming years and have a breadth of experience and fresh thinking in the board. We are particularly pleased with the increasing numbers of our members who are donating their time, expertise and energy in a volunteering capacity on project teams or in operational roles.

The chair would like to express her thanks and appreciation to all the members of the charity for their contribution and dedication to the charity's objectives. As a volunteer-led organisation the sustainability of the charity depends heavily on our members and audiences. The Board is grateful for all our members, audiences and wider supporters.

Sorcha O'Connor
Chair, Pitchcraft 2025