

**Minutes of the 25th Annual General Meeting of
The National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies
(a company limited by guarantee)
Operating as "The Arts Society"**

**held at 14:00 on 25 June 2026 at
Yorkshire Museum, York**

**Company Registration No. 4307984
Registered Charity No. 1089743
OSCR: SC039240**

1. Chair's welcome

The Chair, Jeremy Thomas, welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

The attendance list and list of apologies is held by The Arts Society.

3. Report of the Chair

The report of the Chair (Jeremy Thomas) is attached in full under Appendix A.

4. Report of the CEO

The report of the CEO (Ian Arnold) is attached in full under Appendix B.

5. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 16 September 2025

There were no amendments to the minutes.

The Chair asked the meeting to vote on approval of the minutes. The minutes were approved with no votes against.

6. Presentation of the Annual Report and audited Financial Statements of The Arts Society for the year ended 31 December 2025

The introduction to this from the Treasurer (Trevor Walters) is included in full under Appendix C.

Questions were invited and are listed below:

Question 1: What will be the affiliation fee for next year?

Response: The affiliation fee for next year (2027) will be £17.

Question 2: If we lend some money to the PFMF from our reserves, what is the rate of interest?

Response: We aren't legally allowed to pay interest, as taking a deposit is regulated for charities.

Question 3: Have you considered an investment in a charity bank with some of the surplus?
Response: We do have investment portfolios with around a 3% return on our investments.

Question 4: For loans to the PFMF, if a society needs it back how quickly do you return the money?
Response: We have sufficient funds to pay it back within a week, as we have a float of cash.

Question 5: What checks do you have on your investments in terms of ethics?
Response: We rely on Rathbones policy for their charity funds. Generally, charities do not invest in certain markets and in certain fields, such as tobacco.

Question 6: You mentioned societies becoming charities. At the moment you collect Gift Aid on our members' fees. If we become a charity, are you happy for us to collect the full Gift Aid?
Response: Yes, that's very much the direction we're going in, that it should be the societies registered as charities which claim the full Gift Aid amount.

7. To receive and adopt the report of the Trustees and Audited Financial Statements of The Arts Society for the year ended 31 December 2025

The Chair asked the meeting to vote to adopt the Financial Statement for the year ended 31 December 2025. The meeting voted in favour to adopt the accounts with no votes against. The accounts for the year ended 31 December 2025 were duly adopted.

8. To appoint Moore Kingston Smith as Auditors for the ensuing year

The Chair asked the meeting to vote to appoint the auditors. The meeting voted in favour of appointing Moore Kingston Smith as auditors for the ensuing year with no votes against. Moore Kingston Smith (Chartered Accountants) were appointed as auditors for the ensuing year.

9. To change the name of the Charity to 'The Arts Society'

The Chair asked the meeting to vote on the Special Resolution to change the legal name of the Charity from NADFAS to 'The Arts Society' and called for a poll. The meeting voted in favour by 126 votes, with one vote against. The Chair declared the 75% required majority to be met, and the resolution passed.

10. To adopt the draft Articles of Association circulated with the AGM notice

The Chair asked the meeting to vote on the Special Resolution to adopt the draft Articles of Association circulated with the AGM notice and called for a poll. The meeting voted in favour by 125 votes with one abstention and one vote against. The Chair declared the 75% required majority to be met, and the resolution passed.

The Chair noted that both the OSCR and the Charity Commission must approve the changes to the objects. The OSCR has approved the changes, and we are awaiting approval from the Charity Commission.

11. General questions

Questions were taken from the floor.

The questions and responses are attached under Appendix D.

12. Give notice of Trustees for the year

The Chair confirmed those Trustees elected to the Board as Jo Ward and Steve Hughes.

The Chair confirmed the composition of the Trustee Board for 2026-2027 as of today: Jeremy Thomas (Chair), Jo Ward (Vice-Chair), Jack Leonard, Michael Shirley, Tony Callender, Lesley Jones, Geri Parlby, Trevor Walters (Treasurer), Lucy Harvey-Scholes, Steve Hughes

13. Farewells and welcomes

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the following:

- Felicity Sykes, Chair of Chiltern Hills Area
- Charles Harris, Chair of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Area
- Glenys King, Chair of West Midlands Area
- Jo Edna Corbyn, Chair of East Surrey Area
- Pauline Stewart, Chair of South West Area
- David Yates, Chair of The Arts Society Support Team

The Chair welcomed the following:

- Sue Gilbert, Chair of Chiltern Hills Area
- David Isherwood, Chair of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Area
- Chrissie Twigg, Chair of West Midlands Area
- Richard Seymour, Co-Chair of Surrey Area
- Jane Barrie, Chair of South West Area
- Ian Burgess, Chair of The Arts Society Support Team
- Helen Sisjling, Co-Chair of Mainland Europe Area
- Tony Cabban, Co-Chair of Mainland Europe Area

14. Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.

15. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held in 2027 – date and venue to be determined.

Appendix A: Report of the Chair (Jeremy Thomas)

Welcome to the formal Annual General Meeting.

I should like to begin by thanking everyone who contributes to the success of The Arts Society and has helped us grow and develop over the last year. My gratitude goes to my fellow trustees; our staff and volunteers at Central Office; the volunteers who serve in our Support Teams and volunteering disciplines; and the many people within our societies who dedicate their time and expertise to running them. This includes those who contribute to working groups, lecturer accreditation sessions, and area meetings. It is through this collective effort and shared commitment that we continue to thrive. Working together is what makes us who we are.

2025

Strategic Aim: Increase membership

In January 2025 we announced our new strategy which focussed our efforts under The Arts Society name, and committed us to supporting the society model. We set a strategic aim of increasing our overall membership. This is essential to enable us to fund the support that Central Office gives to Societies, and also at the Society level to provide you with the team members who are fundamental to success.

Sadly some Societies have closed, but we have through advertising increased the membership of others. This has enabled us to stabilise the membership numbers at around 63,500. We have seen a significant increase in the numbers of online and phone enquiries about joining a Society, and the resulting growth in visitor numbers is an important precursor to converting them to full members over time. That will be the responsibility of all of us.

This is a long-term project, and we described over 20 actions we needed to take to achieve this, grouped under 4 Strategic Priorities. Three of those were:

Strategic Priorities

- **Marketing**
- **Digital Support**
- **Prudent Governance and finance**

These are very much linked because we committed to investing some of our reserves in marketing and in a major overhaul of our digital estate, including the website and the membership database. The new website will be designed better to support our marketing programme. Ian will explain what we have been doing in these areas in his presentation.

But we committed to investing our reserves prudently and Trevor will be explaining the success we have had in managing the finances.

As to prudent governance, we formed a working group led by me and our in-house legal expert, trustee Jack Leonard but involving 19 members from societies. This was looking at the governance of The Arts Society, and specifically at our constitution. I will say more about that when we come to the resolutions.

What was the fourth of our strategic priorities?

1968 - The first NADFAS newsletter

Let me take you back to January 1968 when our very first newsletter announced that:

NADFAS was formed for the exchange of ideas and information, to issue a Directory of Lecturers and Handbook to stimulate the formulation of new societies with high standards and explore possibilities of helping in houses and museums. By pooling our resource, we can tackle any number of projects.

The purpose and function of The Arts Society has evolved from that mission statement, but there are three points I want to draw out from it.

First, that even in those early days volunteering was seen as an important role for the societies - initially what we now call Heritage Volunteering but quickly extending into Church Recording, Trails of Discovery and Arts Volunteering. That is part of our ethos which continues today.

Second, that The Arts Society was formed by the first half-dozen societies. It is important to emphasise that the societies came first and they themselves recognised the need to form an association. Now The Arts Society is a charity in its own right and we need to deliver our charitable objects. The trustees are clear that we can and should deliver our charitable objects primarily through the societies which have the same charitable objects. In simple words, we are here to support the societies. However, that is not just passive and reactive support. We do have a responsibility to lead the overall organisation, whether it is in areas of regulatory compliance, in encouraging volunteering, and in developing how we bring in new members.

And third, that we are here because those original societies saw the benefit of exchanging ideas and pooling resources.

Fourth Strategic Priority - Co-Operation

Our fourth strategic priority was fostering cooperation.

This means

- The Arts Society working with the societies.
- Society members helping The Arts Society with their expertise, and
- Societies sharing their ideas and resources with each other.

We are stronger when we work together. We are funding Area activities centrally because we believe it is vital that societies attend the biannual Area meetings. These are an opportunity to share and learn about best practice, to be updated on developments that affect you and even, if you are especially lucky, to meet a trustee.

The Area teams are manned by volunteers and I would encourage society team members to join these teams, particularly when you complete your society roles. You never know, you might end up with an invitation to a garden party!

I mentioned last year how grateful we Trustees have been to have professional assistance from a number of our members, and in a similar vein we have had many members volunteering to join our various working groups. I have already mentioned our Governance Working Group, and we formed two other groups.

The Website Working Group led by trustee Tony Callender has been working with Central Office to provide feedback on the ambitious website development project which is being undertaken, and which you'll hear more about shortly.

Trustee Lesley Jones led our membership working group, formed to identify the key factors that make a society flourish, to identify the barriers to success, and make recommendations to overcome them.

Membership Group

The membership group published its report in April this year, and I commend it as essential reading for any society wishing to grow and prosper. I won't try to summarise it but I will emphasise three of the points it made:

First, the importance of engaging with **visitors** and making them welcome in order to encourage them to come back and become members. This is part of what we mean by "joined-up marketing". It is not enough for central marketing - or your local marketing - to encourage people to ask about The Arts Society and even to visit. The whole journey to actually becoming a member must be made frictionless and needs to be facilitated by societies.

Second, the working group saw a need to clarify **the relationship between societies and The Arts Society** and to improve the flow of information so that Central Office knows and can respond to what is happening in the network.

And the third is to do with team recruitment. Where societies close this is usually not because of finance, but because of a lack of members willing to join the team. The working group has recommended the creation of a **mentorship scheme** to provide advice and give confidence to members to take on unfamiliar roles in their society teams. We will be testing this out in one area, and if successful will seek to roll this out across the network.

Other 2025 Highlights

There has been a lot of work going on in Central Office to make our systems more robust but I will just remind you of a couple of the more visible developments:

A highlight of our push to raise our profile was the very popular appointment of **Hilary Kay** as our President and you heard from Hilary this morning;

The reintegration of **Church Recording** completed this year after a lot of hard work from David Medcalf and his team;

And the production of our digital **Art Takes** and **Artfully Said podcast**, which are primarily a marketing tool but are being enjoyed by increasing numbers of members. If you haven't done so already, please find these on our YouTube channel.

The Future

What of the future? Ian will be telling you about his exciting plans to build on the marketing initiatives, to provide more of our high-quality digital output, and to develop new income streams. In addition, we continue to develop our support for societies with a number of plans for the months ahead.

First, we will be issuing new guidance on **copyright** issues in the next few weeks.

Second, we are preparing advice for societies on **registration as a charity**. Now, this is a complex area. There are substantial benefits from registering as a charity, but we know that some societies are put off by the perceived disadvantages. Our belief is these disadvantages are more perceived than real. But we do want to ensure that our advice is clear, comprehensive, gives societies a simple guide to the process of registration and explains what are, in reality, the fairly light ongoing requirements.

And I'm pleased to say treasurers from a number of societies that have recently registered as charities have come forward to volunteer to share their experience. So you'll be receiving that guidance in the next couple of months.

Third, in response to the recommendation of the Membership Working Group, we will be consulting on **a new agreement** between The Arts Society and the societies.

Societies are independent entities and there is no desire to take away or centralise your rights to choose your own programmes, to arrange your other activities, to decide on your own voluntary work, to make your own grants, to appoint your own teams, and to decide what works best for your members. But we will be considering aspects on which we think societies should commit to common standards - not least to avoid reputational risk to each other from any failure to comply with modern regulatory requirements.

Unlike many national associations, we currently have very limited central reporting. This hampers our ability to understand what is going on in societies, to respond to your needs and to identify, on a timely basis, societies facing particular challenges where early assistance from the Centre or our National or Area support teams would help. So, we will be proposing a standardised system for reporting to Central Office. Simplicity and ease of completion will be key to this being successful.

As I said we will be consulting fully on this before asking societies to agree to anything.

These developments are necessary, but Ian will have more exciting things to tell you in a moment. On a subject dear to my own heart, you will have seen we have restyled our A-level art competition as the **Arts Society Prize** for all students aged 16 to 18.

This opens the competition to students in Scotland, Northern Ireland and throughout our European network. And we do intend to make this a more significant competition with an awards event next April. This will be an opportunity to generate positive PR for The Arts Society as well as, more important, provide a real incentive for students to continue with art in their final years at school. As we build the profile of this competition, I do hope to see more societies working with schools to take part.

Concluding remarks

Disraeli said, "Change is inevitable. In a progressive country, change is constant."

The Arts Society is no different. We have achieved much together in recent years, but our work is far from finished. As we continue to evolve, we will stay true to the society model that has served us well and to the values that define us: service through volunteering, courtesy, openness and cooperation.

Thank you.

Appendix B: Report of the CEO (Ian Arnold)

The current Board of Trustees have remained steadfast in their commitment to the Society model. In support, at the last AGM, I pledged to put Societies front and centre. This included returning our Society to its rightful place as an organisation we can all be proud of and actively promoting The Arts Society nationally to potential members. We would no longer remain the best kept secret.

Today I would like to update you on our progress and tell you a little of what is planned for the future including the latest on the extensive overhaul of our website and the support services provided to Societies.

But first let me take you back to the time of our last AGM. I was still relatively new in post and in the months preceding the meeting, the Central Office team had undergone a major reorganisation that necessitated a reduction in the number of staff to align with changing operational needs. Despite being a difficult period, at the AGM I could point to, what might be described as, a few "seedlings of success". Examples of which included the rejuvenation of a couple of struggling Societies, undertaking the first steps to rebuilding trust across the organisation and the development of new methodologies designed to generate renewed interest in becoming a member of The Arts Society.

Since then, Central Office has adopted a systematic approach to development and implementation, a period where we have been nurturing those initial seedlings, if you like, whilst adding new initiatives across the organisation. To determine which areas we should prioritise, I have been speaking with you, our members, your committees, our lecturers, and our Area Chairs as well as working closely with the Trustee Board to ensure we remain aligned with their strategic direction.

I view opportunities to speak directly with committee members as particularly valuable. I am always delighted to hear that newly developed initiatives are working but saying that, it is not uncommon for me to be challenged quite robustly on areas that remain to be addressed.

At one such opportunity, I was kindly invited to speak at an Area meeting for Societies in the North West. It was held at a beautiful wildlife sanctuary. In fact, our conference room was surrounded on three sides, by water. Hopeful that I would be received positively by those attending, I became somewhat concerned, when I glanced at the day's timetable only to read:

"12 O'clock Q&A with the CEO
1 O'clock Lunch / Hopefully Ian can float."

There has been a physical limit to the number of Societies we have been able to assist over the past year. So, Area Chairs have played a vital role in helping us determine where our resources should be concentrated for maximum impact. Their local knowledge coupled with their personal relationships with individual Societies has enabled us to implement a number of initiatives and save several Societies that were destined for closure.

I am also delighted to say, we have been able to start a couple of new Societies in the UK and abroad. You will remember Private Fraser from Dad's Army, well I can tell you the Society model at least, is certainly not doomed. Far from it. Indeed, some Societies continue to have waiting lists, and we see new Societies starting up such as The Arts Society Flitwick thanks to the work of Area Chair for Beds & Herts Ian Burgess and The Arts Society Madrid thanks to our Joint Chair of Mainland Europe, Tony Cabban. There are more new Societies in the pipeline too.

We have seen the dramatic turnaround of fortunes for several Societies including The Arts Society New Milton whose outlook went from certain closure to now investing in new audio-visual equipment and planning lectures well into the future. In addition, I have had committee members tell me their Societies are being contacted by considerably more people interested in finding out about membership. Perhaps this sounds familiar to you for your Society. I hope so.

To support everything Societies are doing to promote themselves, we have at Central Office, invested in locally targeted Society-centric advertising plus national campaigns designed to raise awareness of The Arts Society right across the UK.

The national advertising has been delivered both online and via radio - in particular, we have been airing our commercials on Boom Radio.

As the name suggests, the music and conversation appeal especially to Baby Boomers – a cohort traditionally likely to join and contribute to their local Society. Since the campaign started, our commercials have been heard by a Boom Radio listener over twenty million times.

To minimise our costs, Boom Radio is also paying to advertise their station within our online content including our very popular *Artfully Said* video podcasts which can be viewed by anyone on our YouTube Channel. We plan to grow our use of radio still further within a test campaign in the Southwest using Classic FM, starting around September. Central to this plan has been the assistance of Area Chair Jane Barrie who has worked tirelessly to coordinate activities across the Southwest Societies.

I am especially delighted to announce that, this week, the Trustee Board have approved our new National Sponsor – Success Tours.

They will be known to many of you who have already enjoyed their tours and their national sponsorship, is their way of thanking us, supporting our work and represents their desire to build a closer relationship with our membership.

With an eye to the future of the Society, we will continue to promote ourselves online. At the last AGM I announced the launch of *Art Takes* and *Artfully Said*. Produced by our talented in-house Creative and Strategy Team both content formats have proved very popular with members and non-members alike. To date, *Artfully Said* and *Art Takes* has been watched by over 50,000 viewers and generated thousands of followers on social media. Not only does this online content align with our charitable aim to spread enjoyment and appreciation of the arts but it also tells a whole new audience what it means to belong to The Arts Society.

I am delighted to be able to tell you today that we will be adding to our available resources by creating a series of high-quality online lectures to be delivered by some of our finest accredited lecturers. Building a relationship with a new virtual membership will generate income to fund Society marketing initiatives and act as a way to promote our in-person Societies and special interest days. We will be letting the membership know of the launch date in due course. I am sure that many of you will want to supplement your local Society membership with access to these completely different lectures that can be viewed on demand.

Less apparent but equally important have been the significant upgrades to our online security, this year. We have also invested heavily in developing our new website. To be clear, this is not simply a cosmetic update to the existing site. That has had its day and is no longer fit for purpose. Instead, we are creating a wholly new site with up-to-date resources and functionality, a site that will permit our

Societies to store and use their data securely and in a manner that is GDPR compliant. This is a site for the Arts Society of the future. It will play a vital role in attracting new members and will offer Societies improved ways to operate including a reduction in the administrative burden on committee members.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committees at The Arts Societies Henley, Ballinger and Madrid who have been testing out the new site functionality and providing invaluable feedback to our team of developers. This is the perfect point to introduce you to Dan Ward, our Head of Digital at Central Office who will tell you a little more about what's in store.

Daniel Ward: Our ancient IT infrastructure does need repair and, as Ian has said, in parts it needs total rebuilding. While my colleagues did a good job of building the various iterations of our database and website, what's been somewhat missing is a sense of maintenance. Digital IT, all this infrastructure, needs constant updating and maintenance. And when you build a new product like a database or website, you must have that front and centre in your mind, which I will.

Our web estate is vast. We are a small charity, we should have a single house as our digital estate, but it is vast. When I joined, we had 8 primary domains and 48 subdomains which I've since been closing down. Alongside this, we had 14,000 user accounts on our main website, 1,000 Google accounts, and on top of all of this, 65,000 membership accounts and the various accounts for lecturers. This is not sustainable. For an organisation of our size, we must reduce, we must have a modest offering that we can continue to look after as time goes on.

Coupled with that, we're facing security risks from hackers and malevolent actors. So we must not only update our web estate, we must make it secure. Together, the vast sprawling estate, the lack of ability to properly maintain it, and the increasingly hostile territory in which we operate digitally is a liability for the business. Our web estate should not be a liability but should serve the needs of the business.

In our digital strategy we're going to do 3 things.

Security is top of our priorities. The first thing we're doing is to make it safe.

The second is efficiency. The website and database absolutely has to underpin the business that we do on a day-to-day basis, and it has to allow us to do it efficiently.

And the third objective is growth. Without a web presence in 2026, we don't stand a chance of delivering our marketing objectives, and it won't allow my colleagues to do what they want to do: use the website and other digital estates as a platform to position TAS as a nexus for connection, fellowship, and community building.

In summary, where I want to get to by the end of 2027 is to have achieved these three objectives with a safe, efficient, modern, and modest digital estate that's appropriate for the size of the organisation and serves the needs of the business.

We are going to grow what we can offer to societies. We're going to grow what we can offer to new members, and most importantly, we'll focus on doing the things we do best in the arts.

Ian Arnold: Thank you Dan.

(IA continues): But not everything has been as I would prefer. As I mentioned, we did experience a significant reorganisation at Central Office that necessitated some staff redundancies and the

repurposing of other team members. It has also taken time to recruit new, suitably qualified, colleagues for those emerging roles necessary to match our organisational structure with the future needs of The Arts Society. As a consequence, we have been short-handed at Central Office over this period and it would be fair to say that our response times to member enquiries have suffered. I would like to thank you all for your patience and also for the many emails of appreciation my team members have received, over this period.

We have taken on three additional members of staff across membership, education, grants and society support to enhance our service delivery. In addition, should a member call us out-of-hours or when we are busy dealing with other members, their voicemail message is physically logged to ensure they receive a response.

So, this has been a year of both preparation and consolidation. At the end of last year our Education Director Katherine Sutton was promoted to Deputy Chief Executive. Katherine has been with The Arts Society for over twenty years and her appointment to the role has been a very popular decision with the membership, lecturers, Trustees and her colleagues at Central Office.

We have sought to strengthen the relationship with lecturers and enhanced the role of the Area Chairs. We have reviewed Area function and funding, improved the flow of information between Society Committees and Central Office and most importantly put in place a plan for growth based on supporting Societies within the Society model.

I am also delighted that this year we saw the return of Church Recording which will provide a much valued fourth arm within our outstanding Volunteering programme, along with Heritage, Arts and Trails of Discovery.

I trust you will agree that our 'seedlings of success' are taking root. We are seeing a measurable increase in the level of engagement to our advertising, activity on our website and through people contacting their local Society, directly. It is important that we all remain focused on growth and Societies remain open to participating in collective initiatives designed to help multiple Societies at the same time. Most importantly, Societies must continue to make a real effort to be as welcoming of potential members, as possible and then encourage those visitors, to become members.

Since the central membership database is the only way we, at Central Office, can measure the membership growth against marketing activity, it is vitally important that visitors are converted to members as soon as they express interest to join and also recorded as such, on the central database, without delay. By societies being diligent in this respect we can objectively justify further investment in advertising campaigns which will ultimately provide Societies with more of the members and committee members that are so important for our future.

Appendix C: Introduction to the Annual Report from the Treasurer (Trevor Walters)

We now present to you our report and accounts for the year ended 31 December 2025.

The basic story is that we are back on an even keel. For those of you who have looked at the 2025 numbers, you will see here, for example, the deficit was £178,000 and it was £516,000 in 2024. There was exceptional expenditure in the 2024 numbers which was related to the events of August 2024 and these include staff termination costs.

The investment gains have been favourable. But of course, these can't be relied upon in the future. We have an investment portfolio of over £2 million, and in the last 2 years, it's done extremely well. I asked our fund managers, Rathbones, what our position was last week expecting, given the problems in the Middle East, that we would be down quite substantially. I'm pleased to say we're up. Funds have increased by £50,000 since the end of December, which is itself encouraging, but you can't rely on it for the long term. Our closing net fund, which I would describe as healthy, is £3.4 million, which is roughly in line with the previous years.

There is no room for complacency. The subscriptions and fees from member societies paid to the central office have fallen by 10% to £940,000 in 2025. Hence the important point that Ian was making in growing our membership numbers. If we get our numbers up, we're in a much better financial position. We need to focus on revenue growth by helping societies and converting visitors to membership, as Ian has indicated. This is one area where societies can really help increase our revenues. We need to return to the £1 million mark, in my view, as soon as possible, and that's why we've increased, in part, the affiliation/membership fee by 4.8% starting in January 2027.

I would just like to say a word on the affiliation/membership fee, because I know it causes a considerable amount of angst amongst our societies. Over the last 10 years, the Retail Price Index, a measure of inflation, has gone up by 50%. The actual fee has gone up by 35% in the same period, and of course we have lost a considerable number of members who were contributing. So overall, one can conclude that costs have been stripped out of central office over the last few years.

We need to make sure we are cost-effective, and Ian's already talked about the need to employ people who have the right level of skills. We are very conscious of having lost three "big hitters" in the operational management team in 2024. James Wilkins was a good example of lost corporate knowledge and it will take time to re-build that again.

If you have reviewed the accounts, you will see there are five different components. The General Fund, the Strategic Development Fund, the Patricia Fay Memorial Fund, Zena Walker Fund, and Areas.

The General Fund shows a net surplus of £23,000 with closing reserves of £763,000, an increase of £70,000 on 2024.

The Strategic Development Fund was created in 2019 for special projects and in 2023 received the £2 million surplus from the sale of Guilford Street. We spent £136,000 in 2025 and £566,000 in 2024. We saw investment gains again in 2025 of some £64,000 and the balance was £2.1 million at year end. Strict budgetary controls over this fund are being made by the trustees to ensure it is wisely spent and closely managed. The two key projects from this fund are the digital transformation and the marketing activities.

The Patricia Fay Memorial Fund is built from funds lent by societies to Central Office which are used for good causes. So many of the donations and grants which societies or external charities receive will come from the income generated from this fund. The total awarded in the past year is £125,000, a 15% increase on 2024. The closing balance at the end of 2025 was £232,000, based on assets of £573,000 against liabilities of deposits that societies have made of £341,000.

These funds sadly have reduced by about 50% over the last few years and I would encourage societies with surpluses to consider lending the money to this fund. These loans are repayable on demand and the funds are safe. Societies can provide a loan as low as £1,000 or as high as they want it to be.

Two further funds are the Zena Walker Fund and Areas fund, which have in excess of £100,000 each.

Our key finance goals for 2026 are diversifying revenues, maintaining simplicity and sharing knowledge.

One point I wanted to raise is about increasing revenues. We talked about converting visitors to members, but we should also look at the value of our product. I'm conscious that we undersell what we're offering. On average, you can buy a cappuccino or a pint of beer for a similar price to a lecture.

One of the last things we did in Woking when I was chairman was to put up our fees by £5. We got resistance from some committee members who were concerned we would lose people. In fact, the society membership went up by 10% in the last year. So if you are considering putting your membership fees up, this will help not only your society but also the amount you can give as part of donations.

In terms of future income needs we recommend societies maintain reserves equivalent to 6 months cost of outgoings as a minimum, and ideally 12 months.

I'm reviewing where we put our deposits, which are currently generating less than 1% interest. From July, I'm going to be managing the funds to generate interest nearer to 4%.

A further source of income for societies is Gift Aid. Jeremy touched on the issue of registering to be a charity. If a society registers as a charity, they can register for Gift Aid.

Simplicity is one of my watchwords. Complexity adds cost, in my experience.

A few weeks ago I hosted a Finance and Governance Workshop - the recording can be found on the website in Resources/Finance and Governance. Some of you already attended this, but others may find it useful. One of the things we discussed at the workshop was the idea for treasurers to have a "buddy". The aim would be to buddy up, for example, with a society treasurer somebody who wanted to register as a charity and for Gift Aid with a treasurer who has already been through the process.

Sharing knowledge is key. Given the recent loss of corporate knowledge we have, I think, made a remarkable recovery. There's considerable knowledge in the societies, so please try and share it, whether that be through a mentoring programme or buddying up on different issues.

This completes my Treasurer's Report for 2025.

Appendix D: Questions from the floor

Question 1: When will the new website be launched? Will it run in parallel with the current one, and will you be running workshops for us to learn how to navigate it?

Response (DW): We don't "launch" websites anymore. I put the website "live" about nine months ago, and we have continued to add content to it. When we have enough content on it we'll redirect the URL (www.theartssociety.org) from the old to the new site. But at the moment and for foreseeable future, we'll run both websites in parallel. Training will be offered and we've already onboarded Henley and Ballinger.

Question 2: In the annual report you talked about developing a digital front door which would allow members to join and pay their fees online. If they pay their fees to you, how does it affect our charitable status? Because as a society we're going for a CIO and I understand we will be able to claim gift aid. So how would that affect us if people are paying their fees to you and not to us?

Response (JT): The proposal is that whilst they'll be paying through the payment portal, those funds will still be attributed to the charity concerned and will be channelled through to the society. Those people will still be your members, and you will be able to claim Gift Aid on the full amount.

Response (DW): It's common practice to have online payment systems and we can act as merchant of record on your behalf. We will collect the fees on your behalf and have a legal agreement in place to allow us to do that.

Question 2 (continued): Is there an option not to participate in this system? What would happen if a society chose not to?

Response (JT): The new membership database will replace our existing membership database, so you will need to use the new membership database rather than the old one. Whether you want that database to have the payment facility associated with your society so that members can pay directly will be a choice for the society.

Question 3: Who will be responsible for updating the new database with society membership data? You mentioned that members would be able to update their own accounts.

Response (DW): Yes, there will be a facility for individual members to update their records; for example, if they change address, they will be able to input their new address rather than asking the Membership Secretary to do it for them. Obviously, they will not be recorded as having paid unless either the Membership Secretary says they have paid or they pay online through the payment portal.

Question 3 (continued): Some members are not particularly computer literate. How will they be able to manage and update their own records?

Response (DW): The membership secretary will probably have to input the details for people who need help, as they currently do for all members. Over time we'd expect the proportion of members who want to manage their own records to grow.

We'll be onboarding societies one by one. We will pick a day with you when we migrate you to the new database, and from that day on your members will be on the new website. But I should say we're not going to press the button on activating individual member accounts on the website until we've got

enough understanding of how that's going to work and agreement from the individual society that that's how they want to proceed.

Response (JG): We regularly get new members who have recently joined contacting us because they are not able to log in to see their own accounts. This is becoming more common, where new joiners expect to receive an email about their membership account with log-in details. And we have new members trying to log in and finding they aren't able to because we don't currently offer that function.

Question 4: We are now officially "The Arts Society". We're about 10 minutes old. Can we actually claim that we're 50 years old or 60 years old if we become a different legal entity?

Response (JT): If we become a different legal entity, we would not perhaps be able to say we were 58 years old. But we remain the same legal entity, a company limited by guarantee, which is also a charity.

Question 5: It's good to hear about the ambitions that The Arts Society has of working in much closer harmony with the individual societies. However, societies come in different sizes so how do you take this into account? Some of the changes may disproportionately affect the smaller societies

Response (IA): You raise a very good point there, and I think this illustrates the importance of the area chairs, because we'd love to know about every single society but it is clearly not possible. And that's why the relationship societies have with their area chairs is so important, because the area chairs are equally a voice for the societies. We work with the area chairs to make sure that our plans affect societies positively.

To note, of the 300 or so societies in the UK, around 30 societies have less than 100 members. However, we also run society-centric campaigns for societies who are particularly struggling, but where the committees are enthusiastic and want to get new members. My colleague Joe Little, Head of Society Development, has run a number of very successful campaigns where we have added a significant number of new members to smaller societies.

Question 6: What thinking is going on around disability, inclusion and broadening the membership?

Response (JT): Our policy is very much to be inclusive. While we do not have any specific targets on, for example, diversity, we are trying to increase our membership and make the best use of our resources where our marketing will have the most impact.

Question 7: Many of the ethnic minorities in this country have their own cultural organisation. What steps are you taking to build bridges with these different cultural organisations?

Response (IA): At the moment we are relatively short staffed with a huge amount to do. As a result, we're focusing on the centre first and then over a period of time we're moving gradually out. We haven't reached the point yet where we're fully engaged with other arts organisations of whatever variety is out there. Our focus is very much on getting what we're doing right, and once everything is in place, including the new website, we will be able to engage with other arts organisations.

Question 8: Is the expectation that Society websites will be linked to the new website?

Response (DW): We do want to offer something centrally which will satisfy society's needs and importantly will be robust. We're designing society webpages based on input and feedback from the website working group and other societies.

Question 9: Is there national guidance around safeguarding vulnerable adults?

Response (JT): We are currently reviewing all our policies, and safeguarding is one of the first ones we have been working on. We are planning to have a safeguarding policy nationally which we will share with all societies. We are aware there is not likely to be significant expertise at society level, so our policy will cover this so that if any issues do arise, they get referred to us centrally and we can guide the process in dealing with that.

Question 10: Does the new website integrate with platforms like Mailchimp and social media?

Response (DW): Yes, the integration with MailChimp is built and already works on the new site. Note that if you want to use Mailchimp, it best to have a proprietary email domain and these are not expensive to purchase. Social media is more complex so we will link off to social media channels rather than embedding them. Payment gateway integration with Stripe will be the next element we build.

Question 11: Can we still apply for funding or support projects related to Art Bytes?

Response (IA): Yes, you can. Our relationship with Art Bytes has not changed, and certainly you can support their activity or make good use of them and their connections.

Question 12: For the Art Prize competition, could the deadline for submission be at the end of the school year rather than in September?

Response (JT): You don't have to wait till September to submit, you can do it earlier in the year and we will try to ensure societies are given more notice for next year.