

Company registration number: 3909555

Charity registration number: 1081199

The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society Limited

(A company limited by guarantee)

Annual Report and Financial Statements

for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

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The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society Limited

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Reference and Administrative Details

Chair	Ms V M Button
Trustees	Dr J Browse (resigned 6 March 2026) Ms H Boex (appointed 16 April 2026) Ms V M Button Mr R W Clarke Ms A L Fannin (appointed 24 June 2026) Mr T Ingate Ms S S Lue Mr J Paget Mr T Parnell Ms C L Peate (resigned 24 March 2026) Ms S P Radmore Ms A K Rundle Mr L M Turner Mr M J Woodbridge
Secretary	Mr R W Clarke
Charity Registration Number	1081199
Company Registration Number	3909555
Registered Office	24 Church Street Falmouth Cornwall TR11 3EG
Independent Examiner	Harland Accountants Ground Floor, Unit 3 Southview House, St Austell Enterprise Park St Austell Cornwall PL25 4EJ
Bankers	HSBC 17 Boscawen Street Truro TR1 2QZ

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Trustees Report

The trustees, who are directors for the purposes of company law, have pleasure in presenting their annual report in compliance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006 together with the financial statements of the charitable company for the year ended 31 March 2026.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's governing documents the Companies Act 2006 and "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).

Objectives and activities

Objects and aims

The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society (The Poly) is a Falmouth based charity, which promotes engagement in the arts, sciences and Cornish history through film, live events, exhibitions, lectures and workshops. The Poly's roots are in artistic and technological innovation and local industry. Based in an iconic Grade II* listed building in the heart of the community, we are the proud guardian of locally, nationally and internationally significant collections of heritage archives and art works by Henry Scott Tuke (1858-1929).

Objectives, strategies and activities

Objects

The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society Limited's stated objects are to "educate and encourage the public in all aspects of the Arts, Sciences, Crafts and History with particular reference to the County of Cornwall"

Mission

As a key cultural and community venue in Cornwall, to provide inspiring, inclusive and innovative entertainment, learning and development opportunities across the arts, sciences and history.

Vision

To be a place where everyone feels welcome to be entertained, engage with culture, and be creative.

Values

- Connecting heritage, art and science
- Supporting innovation
- Community-centered
- Environmentally and socially responsible

We believe that: opportunities for creativity flow from connecting heritage, art and science and that creativity across these areas can make our community and our world a better place; innovation should be encouraged and supported; there should be no barriers to accessing culture and creativity; environmental and social responsibility should inform all our actions.

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Public benefit

In planning our activities for the year and the future, the trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements of section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

The trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the charity should undertake.

Achievements and performance

During this reporting year (2025-26) our achievements included: delivering a vibrant, diverse and inclusive programme; investing in our business by taking on the Café/Bar in-house; successfully running a Crowdfunder to replace our IT equipment; attracting more people to support us as members, and widening participation through the appointment of a fixed-term Community Engagement Coordinator. Submission of a development stage bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for our Sustainable Access Project was a significant undertaking in 2025. Although the bid was unsuccessful, we are well-placed to pursue alternative funding routes.

We continued to make progress against goals agreed at the start of 2022 (for details see pp. 16-17), when a new staffing structure was established to restore our programme and income following the Covid-19 pandemic. With ongoing global economic uncertainty and the cost-of-living remaining stubbornly high, our main challenge has remained managing our long, post-pandemic recovery.

Our charitable income did not grow as fast as anticipated, requiring the continuation of subsidy and short-term loans from RCPS. However, our performance trends for 2025-26 indicate that we are still on an upward growth trajectory, with an overall 7% growth rate (on like for like income over the previous 12 months). This represents continued income growth despite a dip in attendance figures, and was achieved in the context of a UK inflation rate that hovered around 3.5%, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). While this was expected to fall below 2% by April 2026, the current war in the Middle East is likely to impact on inflation in the coming year.

In the period under review, more than 23,552 tickets were sold (excluding externally ticketed events). Although slightly below the previous year (23,740+), most likely due to fluctuations in programming and cost of living pressures, this figure still outperformed pre-pandemic numbers (22,782: 2019). We scheduled more events offering greater choice to audiences (618: 2025-26, 548: 2024, 536: 2019). However, our aim in the coming year will be to improve attendance levels rather than extending the number of events. Increasing attendance is one of the key objectives underpinning our business plan. With ongoing cost of living difficulties, this will be challenging, but we believe it can be achieved with improved programming.

As a charity receiving no core public or grant funding, we cannot rely on programme income alone. We continued to develop fundraising initiatives, taking steps to increase voluntary donations and promote awareness of our charitable status. While a transformational donation is always an aspiration, our umbrella fundraising campaign, Poly200, is intended to gather momentum, encouraging a wide range of fundraising activities that, accumulating over time, will contribute to our financial resilience as we approach our two-hundredth birthday in 2033. We are particularly grateful to everyone who contributed to our 'Keep It Going' Crowdfunder in summer 2025, which exceeded the £10K target (£13.9k incl. gift aid) needed to replace our ageing IT equipment, essential for all our operations.

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We also remain alert to business opportunities that can support our charitable aims. In March 2025 we took over the Café/Bar, which as an inviting, relaxed social space in the heart of the building, has become an integral part of our offer. Following initial investment, including three new staff appointments in April, the business consistently grew its profitability by the fourth quarter. We aim to develop this potential further through new Café/Bar-based activities, events and hires.

Growing and diversifying our membership remains a key business plan objective to 2028. Data suggest that members support us because they share our values and believe in our purpose. They are vital to the sustainability of our operations. Inevitably subscriptions fell during the pandemic, but since then have grown year on year. By the end of 2024 we exceeded our target of 600 subscriptions, the largest number ever recorded (603, representing a 175.7% increase since 2020). In 2025-26 memberships continued to rise, increasing by 15% from 637 to 732. Currently three Business members also support us, and we welcome their investment in our work.

Although our membership is growing, our purpose is to serve the whole community. To improve inclusion and participation, we continued to progress the recommendations of the 'Community Consultation for The Poly', a six-month outreach project delivered in 2024¹. In October 2025 we appointed a part-time fixed-term Community Engagement Coordinator (CEC) to drive this work forward, particularly with those who cannot access our building (Age UK; Falcare) and younger people, collaborating on projects with such partners as the Dracaena Centre, Pendennis Community Centre and the National Maritime Museum. This work, and the CEC post, have been generously funded by the Tanner Phoenix Trust through Cornwall Community Foundation.

The consultation produced compelling evidence that to be fully inclusive and sustainable we need to improve access to our Grade II* listed building. To this end, we submitted an application to the NLHF in November to support provision of disabled access and facilities at the rear of the building (bid £1,869,000; full cost c. £2,076,670). Disappointingly, although acknowledging the quality of our application, NLHF decided in March not to offer us development stage funding. Transforming access to our magnificent building continues to be our main priority.

Live performance is central to our offer, so we were delighted that Miracle Theatre chose to base Miracle Young Company, its new outreach programme for 13-19 yr olds, at The Poly, supporting formative experience and skills development for young people locally.

During the year we also promoted science, innovation and heritage with such events as The Annual Paul Smales' Lecture, 'Where are Cornwall's Mines Now', presented by Cornish mining historian Ben Sumpter. A new partnership with The Royal Geographical Society included a talk on Polar exploration by Anne Strathie, while in February we celebrated outstanding achievement in Arts, Sciences and Industry in Cornwall with the 2026 RCPS Medal Awards at a special presentation dinner, delivered thanks to a new partnership with The Falmouth Hotel and other sponsors.

In January 2026 staff and trustees agreed that 'Community' should continue as the overarching theme for our business plan over the next three years, working with our community to become 'a place where everyone feels welcome to be entertained, engage with culture, and be creative'. Our future plans, for example, include the launch of a programme strand in 2027 designed to share a different aspect of The Poly's story with the wider community every year in the lead up to our Bicentenary celebrations.

¹ Funded by a £10,400 grant from Cornwall Council's Community Capacity Fund (CCF), part of the Good Growth Programme, delivering the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly

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Events and Shows Programme

The table below (p.5) provides a summary of the main categories of events held during 2025-26, including figures for the pre-pandemic year of 2019 for comparison.

More than 23,552 tickets were sold (excluding externally ticketed events). Although slightly below the preceding year (23,740) most likely due to fluctuations in programming and cost of living pressures, this figure still outperformed pre-pandemic numbers (22,782: 2019). We scheduled more events than in previous years (618: 2025-26, 548: 2024, 536: 2019) offering greater choice to audiences. Our aim in the coming year will be to improve attendance levels rather than adding to the number of events.

Film attendances have yet to equal 2019 levels, but we exceeded pre-pandemic ticket sales for theatre, comedy and workshops, despite dipping below last year's figures, and continued to develop our programme of talks, increasing attendance by 96.4% since 2019. In 2024 we began monitoring Family activities, however some of these are still reported in other live events.

Alongside pure entertainment, our programme also features diverse, inclusive and challenging themes, such as drug addiction and homelessness (Urchin), disability (Deaf), gender identity (Small Time Boy), climate anxiety (Ackroyd & Harvey: The Art of Activism). We have yet to devise an effective methodology for reporting statistically on our programme content.

	No of Events					No of Tickets				
	2025/26	2025 Jan-Mar	2024	2023	2019 (pre covid)	2025/26	2025 Jan-Mar	2024	2023	2019 (pre covid)
Film	231	43	198	159	228	10,702	2,934	10,509	9,548	13,579
Theatre	42	11	44	48	48	3,862	1,053	4,249	3,995	3,418
Dance	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	203
Comedy	8	1	13	9	3	563	-	1,027	440	327
Music	28	4	23	24	32	1,452	421	2,150	1,329	1,967
Talks	75	3	64	53	35	4,610	52	4,145	3,512	2,347
Poetry Spoken Word & Workshops*	-	-	-	5	119	-	-	-	62	536
Pottery workshops	105	32	99	65	70	483	132	484	377	407
Non-Pottery workshops	82	24	81	96	NR	820	297	845	959	NR
Family**	36	-	17	NR	NR	960	-	335	NR	NR
Totals	618	118	549	459	536	23,552+	4,944+	23,744+	20,226+	22,782+

NOTES:

NR: Not recorded

*Poetry and spoken word events re-allocated to theatre and other categories

**Family category created in 2024

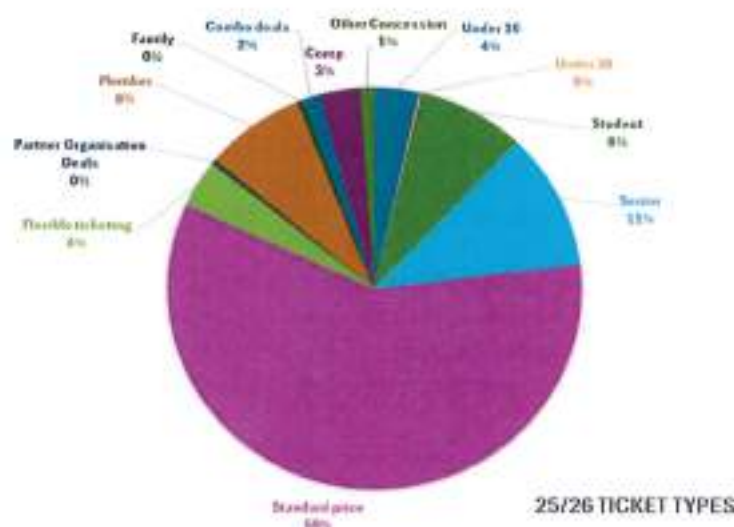
Above data excludes additional hires and externally ticketed events including festivals, true football is slightly higher

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Summary of Ticket types sold 2025-26 (NB: Not all shows offer concessions)

category	TOTAL
Under 16	829
Under 30	39
Student	1963
Senior	2613
Standard price	13922
Flexible ticketing	902
Partner Org Deals	91
Member	1875
Family	87
Combo deals	329
Comp	757
Other Concession	267
	23674



Film

Our data for 2025-26 show that independent, Cornwall-related, or environmental-themed films consistently perform well (e.g. Salt Path, Ballad of Wallis Island, We Came to Sing, The Lost Boys of Carbis Bay, all with Q&As), while Seven Samurai (screened as part of our Akira Kurasowa mini-series) was our highest grossing foreign language film. We successfully continued our surf film series with Morning of the Earth, Blue Juice plus Director Q&A, a sellout screening and UK premiere of Yi-Wo, and continued our partnership with Roma Surf Shop for a series of short films. New releases, such as Hamnet, with its Oscar-winning performance by Jessie Buckley, also drew large audiences, as did the documentary, It's Never Over, Jeff Buckley.

To promote engagement with film we offered unique Q&A events following screenings, such as Jo in the Water with Jo Bateman and director Pip Piper, and Gentle, Angry Women with director Barbara Santi. We collaborated with partners, notably the Falmouth Arts Society, and local business The Meat Counter, who continued to sponsor screenings of cult classics to encourage support for local art cinemas. Our new Craft Cinema series, with titles such as Pride and Prejudice and Mamma Mia, introduced a different type of cinema experience.

We remained an attractive venue and partner for film festivals and events including the mini-mountain film festival Kendal Mountain Tour, Wave, and Kernow Kino: a celebration of Cornish Films, presented by C Fylm and Screen Cornwall, funded by the BFI Film Audience Network and UK Shared Prosperity Fund. We also welcomed back the critically acclaimed Cornwall Film Festival (CCF). Produced by Louise Fox and Mor Media to support Cornwall's film and media industry, CCF introduces audiences to new films, many ahead of general release, such as Oscar-winning Sentimental Value (Joachim Trier), The Ice Tower (Lucile Hadžihalilović) and The Mastermind (Kelly Reichardt). CCF's Into Film programme for schools also enabled us to host free cinema visits for pupils from King Charles' Primary School in November and March.

Importantly, in 2025-26 we continued to be selected for Film Hub South West's Cinema Incentive Scheme (CIS). Film Hub South West is one of eight UK Film Hubs that are part of the British Film Institute's Film Audience Network (BFI FAN). The CIS encourages member venues in the region to take more risks

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within their programmes, to offer audiences a broader range of cinema beyond the mainstream, and develop the UK market for film. The Scheme awards a small amount of funding based upon the number of independent and British titles (in 2025-26 we were awarded £1,930). We also received a small grant (£375) towards our mini-film season celebrating Melodrama on screen. Membership of CIS helps us to further develop our reputation as a 'boutique' cinema, with screenings of experimental, independent local and global foreign language film, and increasing audience engagement through associated events.

Theatre and Dance

We offered a diverse range of entertaining and theatrical performances that raised our profile as a space for contemporary theatre, for example, the technically challenging one person show, *In Search of Goldini*, produced by Beyond Face with Royal Theatre Plymouth and imPOSSIBLE Producing. The subsidised *Carn to Cove* rural touring scheme enabled us to present *The Duke*, which raised money for child refugees.

We supported emerging companies and young performers, for example, Falmouth-based *Mirva Theatre*, set up in 2024, returned with a Halloween comedy, *An Audience with Yorick*, while *Starlite*, Falmouth and Penryn's community youth theatre (for performers aged eight to eighteen years old), made their annual appearance at The Poly with *The Little Mermaid*. We were also pleased to host the *Duchy Dance Academy's* summer showcase. During the school holidays entertainment for children included, for example, *Squashbox's* *Stones and Bones* and *Swashbuckling Cornwall's* *The Samhain Tournament*.

The *Vagina Monologues* was presented in November as part of 16 Days of Activism. Produced by a local team, including Creative Kernow Associates members, this sellout show raised funds for West Cornwall Women's Aid and Women's Centre Cornwall. We celebrated the festive season for our younger audiences with *Swashbuckling Cornwall's* *Sir Tristan and the Christmas Tree*, supported with funding from Cornwall Council's Community Capacity Fund, while Cornwall-based *The Lonely Clown Club Theatre* company brought fun-filled, family entertainment with *Hah! Bumhug*, alongside the ever popular *Near-Ta* theatre, with their astonishing 16th anniversary of *Christmas Time*, selling out most evening performances (grossing £14,096): Funding from Falmouth Council supported a BSL interpreted performance, which we are committed to continuing next year.

Theatrical performances dominated our programme in the new year: *COUGHS* (the amateur operatic society comprising staff from Treliske Hospital), performed *Appointment with MacDeath*, raising £4,000 for Cornwall Wildlife Trust and £2,000 for The Poly; amateur dramatic group *Touch Theatre* returned with *39 Steps*, and *Small Town Boy*, a queer testimonial written by local-born Brenda Callis, was also well-received by audiences, as Brenda commented: *"It meant a lot bringing this show to the Poly ... growing up in Cornwall there weren't any queer spaces ... and it was so special to have the Poly as that community space - a lot of audience members came up at the end to say how important and moving it was to have local, queer stories set in Cornwall ... - Thank you Poly!"*

In January we were delighted that *Miracle Theatre* chose us as the base for *Miracle Young Company*, its new outreach programme for 13-19 year olds, offering formative experience and skills development to young people

locally. In collaboration with *Miracle Theatre*, we also hosted *Made in Cornwall Scratch Nights*, a partnership project between *Hall for Cornwall*, *Miracle Theatre*, *Carn to Cove*, *intoBodmin*, *AMATA* and *imPOSSIBLE Producing*, designed to support grassroots talent.

Emerging performers were further supported in March with the return of *FIAFest* (Falmouth International Arts Festival), a fun-filled, adult and family programme of theatre, film, music, dance and workshops

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curated by imPOSSIBLE Producing, with some events also taking place at Princess Pavilion and The Cornish Bank.

Comedy

Falmouth's annual Falmouth Cringe, a fringe-style, four-day comedy festival for the South-west didn't run in 2025. However, The Poly continued to promote comedy, notably hosting Radio 4's Alfie Moore in April.

Music

In April 2025 we partnered again with The Cornish Bank for their 'Wanderful' music festival, along with other venues in the town, hosting acts in the theatre for two days, including Danny Inzani, Tryani collective, Essy Sparrow and Wake the River to name a few. Despite well-attended performances by Martha Tilston, Alan Fletcher's touring band, and the trailblazing Arlodhes A Shallott (The Lady of Shallott), a Cornish-language song cycle brought to us through Carn to Cove, the summer months proved difficult for music events with low ticket sales. Bucking this trend was a sellout event with the spectacular Aussie Men's Choir, presented by Seamus Carey.

Highlights later in the year included performances by English folk singer, guitarist and songwriter Martin Simpson, British singer songwriter Nerina Pallot, John Bramwell of I Am Kloot, and in November the launch of transgender, Cornwall-based songwriter and producer Tammy Adams' first album. Another first was our participation in Independent Venue Week with a showcase of such local artists as Gaskell & Gibson and Seamus McKenna. This national campaign highlights live venues across the UK – as a result we were pleased to be name-checked by the Guardian and BBC's One Show.

Talks

We offered talks across a range of disciplines and topics from Jane Austen to Cornish folklore. So much interest was generated by his talk 'Where Kea Plums Grow', that local historian Nigel Baker delivered it three times, while Cornish art history specialist, Catherine Wallace, continued to run her regular lecture series, and renowned conservator Sarah Cove explored the theme 'Fakes or Fortune (or have I discovered a Constable in my Attic?'. Falmouth History Archive also gave talks, notably 'Falmouth – the first 100 years of Tourism (1860-1960)', presented by volunteer Jill Harris. Our spring season was curtailed by the cancellation of the Wayward Book Festival, but we were pleased to host events with Falmouth Bookseller in our Library, such as the launch of Saints and Sinners introduced by its author, Nicholas St Aubyn.

Science, innovation and heritage themes were introduced through such talks as 'Kassiteros: Cornwall and the Ancient Tin trade' by Cornish mining historian Ben Sumpter. In November Ben subsequently filled the auditorium for The Annual Paul Smales' Lecture with 'Where are Cornwall's Mines Now?', generously raising funds for The Poly. Also in the autumn, a new partnership with The Royal Geographical Society delivered three talks, including Anne Strathie's 'A History of Polar Exploration in 50 Objects', while in March 2026, trustee Louis Turner invited representatives from the business community to take part in a discussion of his analysis of Cornwall's high-tech future.

Falmouth Book Festival

In October we were delighted to host the 5th edition of the Falmouth Book Festival (FBF) providing box office support, and working in partnership with organisers Colin Midson, Helen Waters and The Falmouth Bookseller, in association with the Falmouth Oyster Festival and St Michael's Resort.

Celebrating the joy of books and story-telling, the week-long programme featured, for example, Irvine Welsh in conversation with Miranda Sawyer, Alexander McCall Smith, Pam Ayres and Tim Key alongside younger authors such as Lally Macbeth. It was a particularly successful year for the FBF with

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over 2,000 admissions, representing a 38%+ increase on the previous year. We also continued to host FBF off-season events: Notably in July we welcomed the BBC's disinformation and social media correspondent, Marianna Spring, in conversation with Colin Midson to discuss her podcast series and new book about conspiracy theories.

The Pottery, Guild, Galleries and Cafe/Bar

The Pottery, Guild and Galleries are key areas that enable The Poly to fulfil its charitable objective of making culture and creativity accessible to all. They also make a significant contribution to our financial viability.

The Poly Pottery

The Poly Pottery was officially launched in February 2019 and has proved a great success, offering workspaces to potters and kiln-firing services. It runs a wide range of workshops for beginners and improvers, as well as sessions for children. In 2025 we continued to run 'Kids Pottery' sessions in the summer holidays, allowing children to experience hands-on clay-making activities, and Summer Taster sessions for adults.

With more pottery studios now operating locally we continued to develop our USP with the introduction of weekly specialist days, including glaze technology, crystalline glazing and Raku, in addition to our usual courses and Friday drop-in sessions. Running 105 events (99 in 2024; 65 in 2023; 70 in 2019), ongoing demand for our range of pottery classes indicates how much our facilities and staff skills are valued by our community.

Towards the end of the year, the Pottery's annual exhibition in The Spring Gallery enabled our students to display and sell their work, showcasing the development of their ceramic practice with expert guidance from Head Potter Karl Owen, and Pottery Assistant Manager Mawgan Dudding. Several of the Pottery students also sell work in our Guild shop, offering them further opportunities for career growth and development.

The Poly Guild

The Guild is an example of The Poly's commitment to supporting the local creative community and economy. In 2025-6 it provided a showcase for 70 local artists and crafts practitioners with some new faces in 2026 representing glassware, jewellery, woodwork, and stationery. Guild artists are selected through application to the Guild team and must be based in Cornwall, though many of our artists are local to the Falmouth/Penryn area.

We continued to produce our own range of ceramics from designs by local artists, for a limited edition of mugs, and the annual Christmas market offered customers a variety of gift-laden stalls over three floors of the building. During the period under review the Guild artists made sales totalling approximately £56,090, of which over £29,447 was paid to our artists and makers.

In recent years, in consultation with members, Guild Manager Sarah Edom has developed a programme of professional and practice-based creative skills development workshops available for professional enhancement, or just for fun. Workshops include crocheting, lino-cutting, silk paper-making, wreath-making, eco-painting, natural dyeing, life drawing, stop-motion film and calligraphy. In January 2026 a new 'Slow Stich' textiles workshop was introduced, attracting first time visitors to The Poly, with strong demand warranting two sessions each month.

Together with the popular costumed life drawing and other sessions run by Henry Austwick, such as unarmed combat for screen and stage, in 2025-26 our workshops generated a profit of approximately £8.6k.

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We are proud to represent local talent, and appreciate the generosity of our Guild members, who regularly support our charitable work, for example, by donating desirable pieces to our fundraiser raffles (totalling £626). Members also supported our second 'Secret Postcard Exhibition,' fundraiser held in the Main Gallery in July. The exhibition

included 400 unique postcard-sized, affordable artworks exhibited for sale anonymously, raising £2,500 for Poly200 (2024: 281 postcards; £2,000). Our newly-launched Postcard Calendar, sold in our shop, also raised over £1,000.

Galleries

Our two main spaces, the Spring Gallery and the Main Gallery, are available either for hire or community use for exhibitions and events. A commission is paid to The Poly on exhibition sales. In 2025-26, artists' sales totalled over £70,000 (of which the Poly received more than £14,000), maintaining the previous year's strong performance and making a positive contribution to the creative economy.

The Spring Gallery was booked on a weekly basis throughout the period under review, hosting in the region of 60 exhibitions. In May 2025 our annual Spring Open attracted 165 applications (98 in 2024), comprising 400 individual submissions of which 103 were selected (compared with 75 artworks the previous year). Footfall totalled 864.

The Member's Summer show in the Main Gallery continues RCPS's tradition of an annual exhibition, allowing members to present their work in a professional setting free of charge. The exhibition was held in late August/September, overlapping with Falmouth's Form Festival to encourage footfall and sales, freeing up the Main Gallery for kid's activities in demand during the school holidays. More densely hung than the previous year, with 147 members exhibiting 265 works (2024: 96 members, 201 works, 2023: 80 members; 150 works), sales totalled £6,760 representing a remarkable 140% increase on the previous year (£2,816). Footfall was 1,240 (2024:1,010).

As well as offering an excellent hire space for sales, the Spring Gallery is ideal for small-scale group exhibitions and community-centered projects. For example, 'Prime Women Artists', representing a Cornwall-wide network, showed ninety art works, while 'Conversations Time & Tide' brought together ceramics, textiles and sculpture made by a group of women artists, who had connected through sea swimming at Gylly Beach. Other themed exhibitions celebrated diversity, for example, Poly volunteer Bernard Kyei Baffour curated a group show exploring ancestry, identity and movement through an Afrocentric lens.

The Main Gallery, suitable for larger exhibitions, was booked throughout May 2025 by Falmouth University's Foundation Year and 2nd Year BA Photography for their student end of year shows. These were followed by pop-up exhibitions showcasing work by 3rd Year BA Photography in February and Illustration students in March. All of these exhibitions were very much student led, giving them the opportunity to experience putting on an exhibition off- campus in a professional, public-facing setting.

In October 2025, the Main Gallery hosted The Ink Paper + Print Fair, a national platform for the best new makers, illustrators and designers working in contemporary graphic arts and design. This entry-free event celebrated the legacy of 20th century illustration and printmaking, and featured local artists. Falmouth University's MA Authorial Illustration students participated with a stand, and alongside the Fair we screened a documentary film about the much-loved British artist and book illustrator, Eric Ravilious.

The Café/Bar

For many years, The Poly ran the bar alongside events with limited professional assistance and with

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lower profits than might have been expected. Responding to consistent customer feedback, in December 2021 we entered into a 5-year lease with Solskinn HQ Ltd on commercial terms. In 2024 Solskinn was taken over by members of its staff and rebranded as Loft, which successfully developed the business over a 12-month period before deciding to withdraw from The Poly in April 2025. We are grateful to Loft and its staff for the care and attention they gave to expanding the business, and providing such an excellent service to our customers.

Following a business case analysis a decision was taken in March 2025 to run the Café/bar in-house. With initial investment, and the appointment of three new members of staff in April, the Café/Bar is now building up its profitability and offering our members and visitors an inviting, relaxed social space in the heart of the building, as well as adding greater flexibility for a range of new Café/Library based events and hires.

Heritage and Collections

The Poly is home to two significant Archive collections, namely the Falmouth History Archive (FHA) and The RCPS Archive (The Poly Archive), both of which are run entirely by dedicated volunteers, who work tirelessly sorting, indexing and digitising accumulated documents and photographs. Search facilities are normally provided to visitors during opening hours of the Chellean Room two mornings a week.

We are members of the Cornish Archives Network (CAN) which shares experience with community archives across Cornwall. This is mentored by staff at Kresen Kernow (the Cornwall Record Office), providing advice and training on standards and best practice and linking to The National Archives (TNA). In addition, trustee Tom Ingate coordinates an informal Archive Collective for locally-based archives in Falmouth and Penryn, including the Archives & Special Collections Service for Falmouth University and the University of Exeter in Cornwall, to share best practice, development and collaborative funding opportunities.

During the period under review, the first index of RCPS material held at The Poly was added to The National Archives Discovery database, making it more widely available for research. Other improvements included the introduction of an acquisition and disposal policy following TNA best practice guidelines. Notably, books, maps and documents from Tom Weller's collection were acquired by FHA, and a significant painting by Henry Scott Tuke was gifted to the RCPS Tuke collection (see below).

Falmouth History Archive

As well as responding to a range of enquiries from researchers and the general public our volunteers are finding ways to tell stories about Falmouth. For example, they curate exhibitions, post on The Poly's social media, give talks, and have, for the last seven years, regularly provided photos for Falmouth Packet's 'Step Back in Time' pages. Enquiries to the Archive range from a handful to around twenty in any given month, prompted by individual curiosity or civic interest. For example, volunteers selected and supplied historical photographs of the High Street requested by the Falmouth BID team to support their new marketing initiative.

The FHA took advantage of opportunities to share information offsite: over the summer, two three-fold display boards were made up in response to a request from King Charles Martyr to support their visitor experience; volunteers prepared a display board for The Poly's stand at the Cornish Heritage Trust event held at Enys, and were present on the day; they also provided historical insight on South West Coast Path Association (SWCPA) walks around the town.

In November volunteer Jill Harris presented a talk at The Poly on 'Falmouth – the first 100 years of Tourism (1860-1960)', while in January, following the popularity of FHA's exhibition in February 2025 'Falmouth Grows West', volunteer Eleanor Williams revisited the exhibition with a talk including new research.

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RCPS Archive

Much of The Poly's own archive is also held on site, but our significant collection of works by Henry Scott Tuke (1858-1929) comprising 263 works (plus 17 verso), is on long-loan by agreement to Falmouth Art Gallery. The collection is fully accessioned and available online or in-person by appointment.

We are grateful to longstanding Poly Archive volunteer, Michael Carver and the gallery's Director, Morwenna Lewis for their guardianship of our archives and collections. Trustee Henrietta Boex is now researching and managing The Poly Archive onsite, while Catherine Wallace is providing invaluable guidance and support in matters relating to the Tuke collection, such as updating and revising catalogue information.

The current agreement with Falmouth Art Gallery was renewed in May 2025 for at least another three years. In light of resource pressures and the gallery's need to continue to collect works for its own collection, the terms of the long loan of our collection remain under review. With this in mind, we continue to work closely in partnership with the gallery and in consultation with members, to develop a plan for the future safe keeping of the collection as a heritage asset, ensuring it remains accessible to local communities and other audiences.

At the end of 2025 the collection was augmented with the acquisition of Tuke's fine, early portrait of the elderly 'Mrs Dash' (1878), generously gifted by our Vice-President Anthony Phillips. Although the painting is in good condition, to meet display standards it needs some surface conservation work and frame restoration for which we will be seeking funding in the coming year.

The RCPS Medal

In November 2019, the Poly Board agreed to reinstate the prestigious RCPS Medal Awards in collaboration with a group of dedicated sponsors and supporters led by Professor Mike Jenks (Chair, Falmouth Civic Society) and Professor David Hosken (University of Exeter). Taking place every three years or so, the new Medal Awards aim to promote outstanding achievements in Sciences, Industry and the Arts of regional, national or international significance originating in Cornwall today, and to encourage connections across these sectors.

Following a hiatus due to the pandemic, the awards were successfully launched in April 2023. Since then, we have developed an exciting new partnership with The Falmouth Hotel, which enabled the delivery of the Awards in February 2026 at a special presentation dinner. Representatives from across the different sectors attended, with guests including Colonel Edward Bolitho OBE, Lord Lieutenant Cornwall & The Scilly Isles, and Lord Robin Teverson of Tregony. Nine award winners were presented with certificates with three in each category receiving the distinction of medals (Sciences: Prof Chris Bass; Industry: Pendennis Group; Arts: Ro Robertson). The evening was enlivened by high-quality, Oscar-style films produced by Falmouth-based filmmaker and editor Dave Peate, and live music from local artist Tammy Adams.

Alongside our main sponsor, The Falmouth Hotel, additional funds were raised through table sales to Pendennis and the Civic Society, events organised by trustees Claire Peate and Louis Turner, and donations from anonymous individuals. We would like to thank The Falmouth's Managing Director Ben Young and his team for their superb hospitality, our MC Kim Conchie DL, the Medals group, selection panel chairs and expert panelists, for their significant contributions to the success of this project, as well as Henrietta Boex and Ed Cartwright (Director, The Poly), for excellent technical and event management support.

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We are particularly grateful to Lucie Nottingham and the Tanner Phoenix Trust (through Cornwall Community Foundation) for kindly supporting a medals-related outreach programme, with partners the Dracaena Centre and Pendennis Community Centre, devised and delivered by Lauren Campbell, our part-time Community Engagement Coordinator (a fixed term post also generously funded by Tanner Phoenix Trust).

Members, Staff and Volunteers

Membership

We rely on the support of our members, not only because the membership subscription is a vital part of our income – in 2025-26 membership revenue was worth around £26.3k (plus Gift Aid) – but because our members are great advocates for The Poly.

As a charity receiving no core public or grant funding, we focused on developing our fundraising initiatives, taking steps to increase voluntary donations. Growing and diversifying our membership was a key objective, and underpins our business plan for the next two years. Data suggests that members support us because they share our values and believe in our purpose. They are vital to the sustainability of our operations. Inevitably subscriptions fell to a couple of hundred during the pandemic with its enforced lockdowns, but have progressively increased. By the end of 2024 we exceeded our target of 600 subscriptions, the largest number ever recorded (603 representing a 175.7% increase since 2020). In 2025-26 memberships continued to grow, increasing by 15% from 637 to 732.

During the period under review the following companies were members of our Business Supporter's scheme; Heather & Lay, Cornish Lithium, Cornish Metals, A&P and Allen & Heath (Cornish Lithium and A&P joined us for one year only as per their own policies). We welcome their investment in our work and their contribution to the benefits we bring to the life of the town and to the high street.

RCPS Presidents

The honorary role of President is elected on a three-year term at the Annual General Meeting, whilst Vice Presidents hold office for life. Our current President is Professor Alan Cummings, elected in 2023. David Peters and Anthony Phillips are our Vice Presidents.

Staff and Volunteers

The trustees acknowledge the commitment and skill shown by all our staff and volunteers in delivering our varied range of activities as we continue to develop and diversify our programme. The staffing structure introduced in January 2022 has proved successful, with staff reporting a high level of satisfaction. The team includes Edward Cartwright (Director); Karl Owen (Head Potter); Sarah Edom (Guild Manager); Michelle Doherty (Marketing & Communications Manager); Jasmin Ford (Galleries Manager); Beth Thomas (Operations & Programme Assistant Manager); Mawgan Dudding (Pottery Assistant Manager), and long-term freelance Duty Manager and technician, Henry Austwick. In April 2025 three new staff roles were created for the Café/bar: Chelsea Robinson (Café/bar Manager); Della Bason and Eloisa Fry (Café/bar Assistants)

Financial administration is covered by supplier Cheryl Truscott and members of the staff team, supported by the Finance Committee, including trustees and dedicated specialist volunteers Eleanor Williams and Robin McGregor. From March 2025, retired Chartered Management Accountant, Mark Woodbridge, joined the Board taking over the role of Finance Committee Chair from Louis Turner in September. Having capably steered The Poly through testing economic times for a number of years, we are delighted that Louis remains a member of Finance Committee

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Since April 2024, The Poly has been registered as a Real Living Wage employer, ensuring that our lowest paid staff receive the hourly rate recommended by the Living Wage Foundation. Our staff training and development plan is informed by an annual review process to meet individual needs alongside mandatory training. In 2025-26 we recruited two students on micro-internships thanks to new schemes offered by Falmouth and Exeter Universities.



THE POLY STAFFING STRUCTURE: APRIL 2026

3 x Full-time (3 FTE)	Director/ Ops & Programme/Café-Bar	permanent staffing = 7.33 FTE
6 x Part-time (4.33 FTE)	Marketing / Galleries / Pottery/ Café-Bar	
1 x Freelance hours (0.85 FTE)	Facilities/Tech support	total staffing = 8.18 FTE

An Equality & Diversity monitoring survey of our 7 staff members in March 2026 shows that as a group they are more diverse across most categories than the Cornish demographic, for example, women are well represented (71.43% female/ 14.29% male compared with ONS 2021:51% female/ 49% male) and 28.57 are bisexual (ONS 2021:1.3%). They represent a mix of age groups: The majority are aged 35-64, while the largest single group is now 20-34 (42.86 %) reflecting an increase in younger staff members in the last year (ONS 2021: 20-34 group represents only 15.5% in Cornwall and the average age in Cornwall increased to 47 years).

In terms of ethnic diversity 85.71% identified as White British, compared to 71.43% last year and 96.8% in Cornwall/ 81.7% in England & Wales, with 14.29% identifying as White European (ONS: 2.6%). Disability affects 21.8% of people in Cornwall. While none of our staff are registered disabled, 28.57% identify as d/deaf disabled or with a long-term health condition.

A report by the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (May 2024) examining inequalities in the UK's arts, culture and heritage workforce by background and region, revealed that fewer than one in 10 arts workers in UK have working-class roots. Just over half of our staff (57.14%) come from modern professional and senior management/administration socio-economic backgrounds, while over a quarter (28.56 %) come from technical & craft or mid-junior management backgrounds. For the most part our results show that our diversity and inclusion compare favourably with national and local statistics, however, we continue to strive to do better in terms of engaging diverse communities in every aspect of our organisation.

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Volunteers

The day-to-day activities of the charity are undertaken by the staff team, supported by volunteers. The Box Office/front of house is heavily staffed by volunteers, and every event in the theatre has two volunteers working as Fire Wardens and Ushers. There are currently 48 active volunteers serving as Box Office attendants and Fire Wardens (active = volunteered over 2 hours since 31 March 2025; 17 of them worked over 50 hours). During the period under review our volunteers worked a total of 2,030 hours, equivalent to slightly more than a full-time member of staff at The Poly. We take our volunteers' training seriously. All Fire Wardens and Box Office volunteers receive one-to-one training from staff and gain experience of behind-the-scenes operations, from event conception to realisation.

Our heritage archives are also run by a number of dedicated volunteers, who contributed more than 1,400 hours at The Poly during the year. Two students volunteered for shorter periods around their academic commitments; both are now engaged in graduate/postgraduate studies. At the year-end there were 16 Archive volunteers active.

Our volunteers are an essential part of our team, and we show our appreciation for their contributions in a number of ways. Fire Wardens have free admission to films they volunteer for, while Box Office volunteers can watch a film for every shift worked. In addition, all volunteers receive a 10% discount in the Café/bar. A total of 29 volunteers (17 Box Office/Fire Wardens; 12 Archive) worked over 50 hours each last year, entitling them to a Cornish Heritage Volunteer Scheme Card, that provides free entry to various Cornish Heritage properties. Volunteers also have access to exclusive private events and hires at The Poly.

Of the twenty-seven volunteer respondents to an Equality and Diversity survey in March 2026, about half were female and half male, with 3.7% non-binary and 14.81% with a gender identity different to their registered sex at birth. The majority are aged 65+ (48.15%) and 45-64 (33.33%) in line with Cornwall's voluntary sector, and reflecting Cornwall's "super-ageing" population (<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/>). Two are registered disabled (11.11%) while the socio-economic backgrounds of all respondents include the full range, from long term unemployed to senior managers.

The Poly Building

On-going upkeep of our historic Grade II* listed building continues to be the major challenge faced by the charity, day-to-day and longer term. In the past twelve months routine maintenance has included, for example, roof repair at the front, six-monthly gutter clearing, and annual PAT testing, while in early 2026, a grant of £1,000 from Falmouth BID's independent businesses Shopfront Improvement scheme enabled us to refresh the front façade.

We are grateful to retired architect and Archive volunteer Chris Smith, for stepping forward to support the Director with building maintenance planning and implementation. Having recently commissioned an updated Building Survey, we are developing a costed, long-term Maintenance Plan to address areas flagged in need of repair and improvement, such as the basement WCs, and to programme cyclical works to prevent future deterioration of the building. We will also be developing a Conservation Plan addressing the protection of, and investment in, our heritage building and archives, alongside reviewing our Sustainability Plan to reduce our environmental impact.

To be fully inclusive and sustainable we need to improve physical access. We intended to install a chairlift at the New Street entrance as part of the Main Gallery works (2021-2023), however this option was subsequently ruled out by building regulations. At the AGM in September 2025 members again approved in principle the release of reserves ensuring that we can access the required level of match-funding required for a major funding bid. Having successfully passed the first stage of an application to the National Lottery

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Heritage Fund (NLHF) in early 2025, we submitted a second stage (development) application in November for our Sustainable Access Project, a capital improvement plan to provide disabled access and facilities at the rear of the building. The total scheme costs were c. £2 million at 2025 prices.

Disappointingly, we learned in March that our application had been unsuccessful, although its quality was acknowledged. The application process was led by Poly trustee and former chair, Sue Radmore, supported by other trustees and a number of individuals who generously contributed their time and expertise, notably Michael Harris, Sarah Hertzog, Henrietta Boex and John Darbyshire (RTP Surveyors). Going forward we will be taking advice from NLHF on other funding routes to realising our plans as enabling access for all continues to be our priority.

Fundraising and Grant Aid

To be sustainable, alongside our programme income we need to actively seek donations and apply for grants to support essential developmental work. The sector as a whole continues to face high levels of competition for limited available grant funding in the current economic climate, but we continue to learn from making applications and to ensure that we diversify our sources of income.

Poly200 campaign

In 2024 we launched an umbrella fundraising campaign, Poly200, to raise awareness of our charitable status and need to attract philanthropic giving, with a target of raising £200,000 before our bicentenary in 2033 this has raised c.£20K to date. While a major donation is always an aspiration, this campaign is intended to gather momentum over time, encouraging a wide range of fundraising initiatives that will accumulate to help us reach our target.

Community Engagement Coordinator (part-time, fixed term role)

In the first six-months of 2024 we ran a significant grant-funded project, 'Community Consultation for The Poly', to help us identify and work with specific groups and individuals in the community who we currently underserve, to understand barriers to engagement and to help us address these in our future programme.² The consultation confirmed the four main barriers as: Physical access; Lack of awareness of The Poly or its programme; A feeling that the space and programme 'is not for them'; Not a priority for their time or money-being time poor for culture and leisure activities.

At the end of 2024 an additional £1,850 was awarded by Cornwall Council's Community Capacity Fund (CCF) to trial some outreach workshops and other activities. To continue driving this work forward, in October 2025 we were able to appoint a part-time, fixed-term Community Engagement Coordinator (CEC), generously funded with £10,000 from the Tanner Phoenix Trust through Cornwall Community Foundation. Initially exploring our heritage with community groups who cannot access our building (Age UK; Falcare), the CEC has also delivered projects to engage younger people, collaborating with such partners as the Dracaena Centre, Pendennis Community Centre and the National Maritime Museum.

In 2025-26 we received support from various funders and through philanthropic giving (listed in no particular order):

- Tanner Phoenix Trust (through Cornwall Community Foundation)
- Falmouth BID
- All contributors to the 'Keep IT Going' crowdfunder
- Many other individuals who generously donated funds or waived their fees to support our work

² The project was realised with £10,400 grant funding allocated from Cornwall Council's Community Capacity Fund (CCF), part of the Good Growth Programme, which is delivering the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly.

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Key partners

We are indebted to key partners who have worked collaboratively with us, including:

Age UK; Beyond Face; BFI Film Hub; Carn to Cove; Cornish Archives Network; The Cornish Bank; Cornwall Community Foundation; Cornwall Film Festival (Mor Media); COUGHS Operatic Society; Duchy Dance Academy; Dracaena Centre; En Rapport (Jazz @ The Poly); Falcare; Falmouth Art Gallery; Falmouth Arts Society; Falmouth

Bookseller; Falmouth Book Festival; Falmouth Civic Society; Falmouth Town Council and Falmouth Bid Team; Falmouth Hotel; Falmouth University; FIAFest; Form Fest; Hine Downing Solicitors (now Nalders); imPOSSIBLE Producing; The Ink Paper + Print; Kresen Kernow; The Lonely Clown Club Theatre company; The Meat Counter; Mirva Theatre; Miracle Theatre; National Maritime Museum; Near-Ta Theatre; Penderennis Community Centre; Pentabus Theatre; Pottager Peas; Princess Pavilion; Roma Surf shop; SMT Associates; Starlite Theatre; Source FM; Touch Theatre; University of Exeter; West Cornwall Museums Group, and Young Generation.

Financial Review

Principal funding sources

These are derived from investment income, charitable, grant and trading income.

Reserves policy

The company holds funds as a result of donations and other income sources over the years. The company needs to retain these funds to generate income, which can be used to support its charitable activities and to meet its continuing financial obligations as they fall due. At the date of the balance sheet, these funds, (excluding designated funds) amounted to £65,799 (2025: £14,285 2023: £21,305; 2022: £77,664 2021: £139,941, 2020). The outcome of a detailed review of the funds we currently hold will determine how we allocate reserves from these funds as part of our reserves policy.

Investment Policy

Our investment policy is to hold any surplus funds on deposit to generate income and to help meet day-to-day expenditure.

In the case of the funds held within the subsidiary charity RCPS, arising from the disposal of the Boulton Watts papers in 2003, our policy is to invest the funds with professional advice from Bishop Fleming IFA. The income had been used to service the 15-year, £200,000 loan taken out in 2007 with HSBC plc until September 2021, when it was finally repaid. From October 2021 the income has been used to support the activities of the Poly.

Two trustees together with a longstanding finance volunteer have annual portfolio reviews with Bishop Fleming (IFA) stockbrokers. It is managed with diversified risk with the objectives of both income and growth by brokers, Brewin Dolphin. At the end of 2025, to protect our investments from the adverse effects of impending shocks to the global market, we took the precaution of switching them to cash, to be reinvested following expert advice.

From February 2021 we divested from oil and gas in line with our Sustainability Policy and asked our broker to gradually increase our ESG (Environment, Social & Governance) whilst protecting the value of our portfolio.

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We currently take an income of £2,500 per month (£30,000 pa) from the portfolio to fund regular Poly expenditure needs. Our advisers point out that this level of withdrawal is unsustainable as it represents 6.8% of the portfolio value and is likely to lead to a reduction in the capital value over the long term until the portfolio value is exhausted. During the third quarter of 2026/27, a Strategic Financial Review will be completed by the Trustees to assess the financial health and identify the actions required

On 31/3/26 our portfolio value was £438,603

On 31/3/25 the value was £447,675

On 11/12/23 the value was £458,688

On 5/12/22 the value was £479,407

On 31/12/21 the value was £585,853

This illustrates the impact of recent market turbulence but also a steady reduction of our investments' value over recent years partly due to our capital withdrawals.

The directors aim to slowly rebuild the value of our investments. The directors will continue to take professional advice on the management of our portfolio. The directors are of the view that continuing to take income from the investments is essential during our post-pandemic recovery but will monitor the impact on the level of reserves.

The directors have agreed to the principle of borrowing from restricted funds in-line with Charity Commission regulations and permissions to support any short-term shortfall in operational income. These borrowings would be repaid over a maximum period of five years, utilising the proceeds of our expanded fundraising programme, and membership growth strategy. The Board also considered the need in the future to draw upon designated funds currently invested.

At the AGM in September members again approved in principle the release of reserves ensuring that match funding can be accessed if needed to support long term essential expenditure, for example, to match fund a major capital grant from an awarding body. In line with best practice, we will in any case ensure that six months' worth /50% of operating costs (£150k) is available in the case of serious financial difficulty; which may require drawing on designated fund investments. The Board have committed to consulting with members before making any permanent drawing on designated funds.

Plans for future periods

The company plans to continue to deliver cultural and related events in furtherance of its charitable objectives. We have agreed goals with associated updated policies and action plans across all key areas of our activity. Our business plan remains a work in progress. However, our Vision, Mission and Values (sec p. 2) clearly articulate The Poly's potential for connecting art, science and history, and reflect a deeply-held commitment to serving all of our communities.

Since 2022, in the context of an exceptionally challenging economic environment, we have tested our new staffing model and successfully re-established our programme from scratch. But post-pandemic recovery is taking longer than expected. In the period under review, UK inflation, as measured by the Consumer

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Price Index (CPI), hovered around 3.5%, and while this was expected to fall below 2% by April 2026, the current war in the Middle East is likely to impact on inflation: We need to continue to focus on financial sustainability.

- **Increasing attendance** is one of the key objectives underpinning our business plan: In the coming year we aim to improve attendance levels rather than extending the number of events offered. With ongoing cost of living pressures this will be challenging, however, we believe it can be achieved with improved programming.
- **We also plan to continue growing and diversifying our membership** over the next three years as members are vital to the sustainability of our organisation and operations. In 2025-26 memberships continued to rise, increasing by 15% from 637 to 732. The introduction of new membership tiers in 2026-27 will help us sustain this momentum.

The Café/bar

After an initial settling in period, a performance review of the café/bar after 12 months of operating led to the implementation of a business development strategy in March 2026. With this in place we are confident that the Café/Bar will improve our profitability. Provision of an inviting, relaxed social space in the heart of the building has become an important part of our offer for members and visitors, and as an in-house operation the Café/Bar can be used with greater flexibility for a range of new smaller scale events and hires.

Sustainable Access Project (2025-28)

In 2024 our project 'Community Consultation for The Poly' produced compelling evidence that to be fully inclusive and sustainable we need to improve access to our Grade II* listed building. Enabling access for all remains a key goal. To this end, learning from the considerable work undertaken for our application to the NLHF in 2025, we will continue to pursue the funds required to make our magnificent building fit for purpose for the whole community.

Bicentenary programme – telling our story (2027-33)

In January 2026 staff and trustees agreed that 'Community' should continue as the overarching theme for our business plan over the next three years, working with our community to become 'a place where everyone feels welcome to be entertained, engage with culture, and be creative'. Our future plans include the launch of a programme strand in 2027 designed to share a different aspect of The Poly's story with the wider community every year, in the lead up to our Bicentenary celebrations in 2033.

Our Goals

Reflecting on our redefined Values, Vision and Mission statement in 2022 we established the following seven goals. These are monitored and our progress against them is reported to our Board, and to key funders and other stakeholders as and when appropriate. They are also reviewed annually by trustees and staff to ensure they remain relevant (most recently in January 2026):

- We are becoming a premier venue for entertainment, inspiration and education across the arts, sciences and local history
- We are supporting young and emerging talent onsite and offsite
- We are supporting collaboration across disciplines
- We are engaging more people
- We are improving access to our collections and archives
- We are improving our practice
- We are contributing to the local economy

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To help us achieve our goals we will:

- Engage with local and visiting populations to maximise participation and footfall
- Consult with existing and potential audiences, and seek to grow our membership to ensure our organization is representative of the communities it serves
- Collaborate with partners, community organisations and education providers, and establish and support local cultural networks
- Consistently gather data, and develop our use of technology to enable evidence-based decisions explore how we broaden our online reach
- Refit and develop our building to create a more sustainable, accessible and inspiring space
- Invest in our people (trustees/staff/volunteers)

Key objectives for us in the coming year will focus on developing our community and sustainability:

- To increase our membership and membership engagement
- To implement and learn from the outcomes of our project 'Community Consultation for The Poly'; encourage wider more diverse engagement through a range of consultation methods
- To increase philanthropic donations and unrestricted income
- To improve the sustainability of our building and operations (including seeking funding to make our building fit for purpose)
- Review our programme to increase attendance and ticket sales (over a 3-year cycle), while increasing audience diversity

Environmental responsibility and Sustainability

Our aims and objectives are aligned with our commitment to environmental responsibility, which informs all our activities, from investments to procurement and programming. We have a Sustainability Policy, and a Sustainability Plan for the building with an action plan in place to reduce our carbon footprint, including steps to lower carbon emissions, reduce waste and water consumption, increase levels of recycling and further cut the use of plastic. It also requires us to make our commitment to sustainability more visible, for example, by publishing our DEC, signing up to the Culture Declares Emergency Campaign (endorsed by the members at their AGM in October 2022), and engaging our members more fully in the debate through our programme.

In 2026-27 we aim to recruit a lead trustee with specialist knowledge and experience to help review our Sustainability Plan and to support driving this work forward.

Structure, governance and management

Nature of governing document

The company is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and is governed by its memorandum and articles of association dated 19th January 2000 and amended 10th October 2005, 3rd October 2006, 17th May 2017 and 23rd September 2025.

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Trustees Report

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:

Ms H Boex (appointed 16 April 2026)
Dr J Browse (resigned 6 March 2026)
Ms V M Button
Mr R W Clarke
Ms A L Fannin (appointed 24 June 2026)
Mr T Ingate
Ms S S Lue
Mr J Paget
Mr T Parnell
Ms C L Peate (resigned 24 March 2026)
Ms S P Radmore
Ms A K Rundle
Mr L M Turner
Mr M J Woodbridge

Recruitment and appointment of trustees

Trustees are normally appointed by the members at the annual general meeting and serve for three years. Trustees may also be co-opted during the year to fill vacancies but have to stand for re-appointment at the next annual general meeting. Candidates are invited to submit details of their background, their special interests relevant to the activities of the society and the areas where their expertise would be of benefit to the operation of the society.

Claire Peate and Jo Browse stepped down during this reporting period; we are very grateful for their service to The Poly. This prompted the need to recruit individuals with the skills and knowledge in the areas of Fundraising (Henrietta Boex from April 2026) and Environmental Responsibility/Sustainability (Aoife Fannin from June 2026).

Induction and training of trustees

New trustees are briefed on the activities, finances and policies of the society both before and after their appointment. Accounts and other relevant information are made available to them as part of the induction process, as well as details of the regulatory regime relevant to the society's structure.

Equality & Diversity monitoring of trustees

We are striving to diversify our Board, so that it better represents the communities we serve. An Equality & Diversity monitoring survey of 10 trustees at the end of March 2026 showed that, at 40% female/60% male, our Board under represents women in the Cornish population (ONS 2021: 51.5% female /48.5% male) and that 100% are heterosexual (Cornwall ONS 2021: 3% LGBT+), however, trustees come from a range of socio-backgrounds, with the largest groups, technical or craft occupations and traditional professional scoring 20% each.

Our Board represents all age groups offered in the survey (20-65+), with 30% aged 35-44 and the largest group now 65+ (60%) reflecting Cornwall's demographic (ONS 2021: average age in Cornwall increased to 47 years, with 65-74 increasing by 25.9%). We appreciate that the uncertainty of young people's lives often makes it difficult for them to offer the level of commitment required of directors, and we are seeking other ways of involving them in governance and programming.

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Representation of ethnic diversity at Board level compares favourably with Cornwall's 2021 ONS data, with 80% identifying as White British, 10% Cornish and 10% Black (ONS 2021: 96.8% identified their ethnic group within the "White" category which is significantly higher than the England and Wales average of 74.4%); 0.2% identified as "Black or Black British"; 7.5% within Cornwall identify as 'solely Cornish').

Disability affects 21.8% in Cornwall. Currently one of our trustees (10%) is unable to physically access our building and c.22% report a health condition. Improving access to the building remains our top priority, but is dependent on securing major grant funding. We continue to share opportunities with Black Voices Cornwall as part of our recruitment process, and are alert to the need for greater diversity across our governance.

The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society

The company controls the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society, founded in 1833 and given royal patronage in 1835. The Society is now a subsidiary charity, which formerly carried out some of the charitable activities now assumed by the company. Under the amended constitution of the Society, the only members of the Society now are the directors/trustees of The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society Limited.

The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society holds the designated and endowment funds shown within the accounts, together with unrestricted funds. It also holds the majority of the assets (both tangible and heritage) shown in the accounts.

Major risks and management of those risks

Health and Safety

We take the health and safety of our staff and users extremely seriously and regularly review our policies and procedures. A review in 2021 suggested the need to improve the overall management of health and safety and this is being implemented. Further reviews recommended action on some areas such as asbestos and fire safety which we have responded to. There were no major issues or breaches of policy in 2025-26.

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees (who are also the directors of The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society Limited for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice), including FRS 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. Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they 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 its income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently.
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP.
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- state whether applicable accounting standards, comprising FRS 102 have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.