COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER: SC110186
CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER: SC003949

Lead Scotland

Company Limited by Guarantee

Financial Statements

31 March 2026

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Lead Scotland

Company Limited by Guarantee

Financial Statements

Year ended 31 March 2026

Lead Scotland

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

Year ended 31 March 2026

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name	Lead Scotland	
Charity registration number	SC003949	
Company registration number	SC110186	
Principal office and registered office	Studio 1.09, St Margarets House 151 London Road Edinburgh EH7 6AE	
The trustees	Paul Smith (Chair)	
	Kirsty Gemmell (Vice Chair)	
	Gillian Brown	
	Daniel Baigrie	
	Carolyne Smith	
	Christopher McKenzie	
	Nicola Moubray	
	Sarah Boath	(Appointed 19 August 2025)
	Jade O'Neil	(Resigned 17 February 2026)
	Rebecca Pierce (Treasurer)	(Resigned 23 June 2025)
	Senga Armstrong	(Resigned 1 May 2025)
Senior staff	Emma Whitelock, Chief Executive Officer (until 01 July 2025) Robert McKay, Chief Executive Officer (from 24 June 2025) Sarah Burton, Business Manager & Depute CEO Doreen O'Donnell, Finance & Operations Manager (until 28 July 2025) Gillian Alexander, Finance Manager (from 20 October 2025)	

Auditor	PB Audit Limited Statutory Auditors 18 North Street Glenrothes Fife KY7 5NA
Bankers	Co-operative Bank 1 Balloon Street Manchester M60 4EP
	Aldermore Forbury Road Reading RG1 1AX
	Virgin Money Gosforth Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 4PL
	Cambridge and Counties 5b New Walk Leicester LE1 6TE
	Redwood Bank Suite 101, The Nexus Building Broadway Letchworth Garden City Hertfordshire SG6 3TA
Solicitors	Lindsays WS Caledonian Exchange 19A Canning Street Edinburgh EH3 8HE

Structure, governance and management

Lead Scotland is a company limited by guarantee and a registered Scottish charity. The charity is governed by its Articles of Association, which were most recently amended by Special Resolution passed on 15 November 2022.

The Trustees are also Directors of the company for the purposes of company law and are responsible for the strategic leadership, governance and oversight of the organisation.

Appointment of Trustees

The Articles of Association provide that the Board shall consist of a minimum of four and a maximum of twelve Directors.

Trustees are elected by the Members of the charity at the Annual General Meeting. The Board may also appoint new Trustees during the year, with any such appointment subject to approval by the Members at the next Annual General Meeting. Trustees normally serve an initial term of three years and may be re-elected for a further three-year term in accordance with the Articles of Association.

The Board seeks to maintain an appropriate balance of skills, knowledge, experience and perspectives to provide effective governance and strategic oversight. Recruitment considers the needs of the organisation, including skills in areas such as finance, governance, risk management, digital development, education, fundraising, and lived experience relevant to Lead Scotland's charitable purposes.

Trustee induction and development

All new Trustees receive an induction to support them in understanding their legal duties, governance responsibilities and the work of Lead Scotland. This includes information on the charity's vision and mission, strategic priorities, services, financial management, risk management arrangements, safeguarding responsibilities, policies and governance framework.

Trustees are encouraged to undertake ongoing training and development relevant to their role.

Organisational structure and decision making

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for the governance, strategy and financial stewardship of Lead Scotland. The Board meets regularly throughout the year to review organisational performance, financial management, strategic delivery, risk and compliance.

The Board is supported in its work by the following committees:

- Finance and Risk Committee;
- Strategy and Futures Committee;
- Governance and Compliance Committee.

Structure, governance and management *(continued)*

These committees provide more detailed scrutiny, assurance and recommendations to the Board within their delegated areas of responsibility. Committee membership and terms of reference are reviewed periodically by the Board.

Management and delegation

The Board delegates responsibility for the day-to-day management and operation of the charity to the Chief Executive Officer, who is responsible for implementing the agreed strategy, leading the staff team, managing resources effectively and ensuring delivery of the charity's services.

The Chief Executive Officer is supported by the Senior Leadership Team and reports regularly to the Board and its committees.

Delegation arrangements are managed through agreed governance structures, policies and financial controls, with the Board retaining overall responsibility and accountability.

Trustee remuneration and expenses

Trustees receive no remuneration for carrying out their governance duties.

Reasonable expenses incurred in undertaking their responsibilities may be reimbursed in accordance with the charity's policies and the Articles of Association.

Risk Management

The Board of Trustees has responsibility for ensuring that Lead Scotland has appropriate arrangements in place to identify, assess and manage the principal risks facing the charity.

The Board, supported by the Finance and Risk Committee and Senior Management Team, maintains a strategic risk register which is reviewed regularly. Risks are assessed by considering their likelihood and potential impact, with mitigating actions identified, monitored and updated as circumstances change.

Risk management is embedded within Lead Scotland's governance arrangements and informs strategic planning, financial management, operational decision-making and organisational development.

During 2025-2026, the Board continued to recognise the challenging external environment facing charities, including financial pressures across public services, increasing demand for support, changing policy priorities and greater competition for funding.

Structure, governance and management *(continued)*

The principal risks identified and managed during the year included:

Financial sustainability and income generation

The most significant strategic risk facing Lead Scotland continues to be financial sustainability, including the potential loss of existing funding streams, reduced availability of public sector funding and increased competition for grants and contracts.

The Board recognises that, while restricted funding enables significant delivery of charitable activities, reliance on short-term and project-specific funding can create challenges in maintaining organisational capacity and long-term planning.

To manage this risk, Lead Scotland continues to:

- maintain active oversight of funding pipelines;
- strengthen relationships with existing funders and partners;
- identify new income opportunities;
- develop partnerships and collaborative approaches;
- improve evidence of impact and outcomes;
- review financial forecasts and scenario plans regularly.

The organisation continues to focus on developing a more diverse and sustainable income base while ensuring new opportunities remain aligned with Lead Scotland's charitable objectives.

Funding environment and strategic change

The wider policy and funding environment remains uncertain, with continuing pressures on public finances and changes in national and local priorities.

The Board recognises the potential impact of these changes on service continuity and the people who rely on Lead Scotland's support.

This risk is managed through:

- regular horizon scanning;
- engagement with policy developments;
- maintaining strong relationships with strategic partners;
- demonstrating the impact and value of Lead Scotland's work;
- adapting services in response to emerging needs and opportunities.

Lead Scotland continues to use evidence from frontline delivery to inform policy discussions and ensure the experiences of disabled people, carers and learners are represented.

Structure, governance and management *(continued)*

Organisational capacity and workforce resilience

As a specialist organisation, Lead Scotland's impact depends on the skills, knowledge and commitment of its staff and volunteers.

The Board recognises risks associated with workforce capacity, recruitment, retention and the impact of funding uncertainty on staffing structures.

Mitigating actions include:

- workforce planning;
- regular review of organisational capacity;
- clear management structures;
- staff support and development;
- prioritisation of resources towards agreed strategic objectives.

Digital, cyber and information security

Cyber security and information governance remain significant risks for all organisations.

Lead Scotland holds personal information relating to learners, volunteers, staff and stakeholders, and recognises the importance of maintaining secure, reliable and effective systems.

Risk management arrangements include:

- maintaining Cyber Essentials accreditation;
- managed IT security arrangements;
- multi-factor authentication and security controls;
- staff awareness and training;
- data protection policies and oversight;
- strengthening backup and recovery arrangements.

The organisation continues to review its digital infrastructure to improve security, resilience and effectiveness.

Safeguarding, quality and compliance

Lead Scotland works with disabled people, carers and others who may experience barriers or increased vulnerability. Safeguarding, quality and compliance therefore remain central responsibilities.

Structure, governance and management *(continued)*

The Board manages these risks through:

- safeguarding policies and procedures;
- PVG arrangements where required;
- staff and volunteer training;
- clear reporting processes;
- governance oversight;
- regular review of organisational policies.

The organisation also maintains arrangements to support compliance with charity regulation, company law, employment responsibilities, health and safety requirements and data protection legislation.

Business continuity and operational resilience

The Board recognises the importance of ensuring Lead Scotland can continue to deliver essential services during periods of disruption.

Risks relating to systems failure, operational disruption or unexpected events are managed through:

- business continuity planning;
- disaster recovery arrangements;
- review of key systems and processes;
- clear roles and responsibilities;
- investment in organisational improvement.

During the year, Lead Scotland continued work to strengthen internal systems, improve processes and increase organisational resilience.

Ongoing oversight

The Board considers that the risk management arrangements in place are appropriate to the size, complexity and activities of the charity.

While risks cannot be removed entirely, Trustees are satisfied that the organisation has effective systems to identify and manage risks and that appropriate actions are being taken to protect Lead Scotland's services, beneficiaries, assets and reputation.

Objectives and activities

Charitable purposes

Lead Scotland exists to advance education and promote inclusion by supporting disabled people, carers and others who experience barriers to learning and participation. The charitable object for which the organisation was established is:

"The Object for which the Company is established is to advance the education of the public in Scotland particularly in the area of working with people with disabilities and their carers and people disadvantaged by their social or educational exclusion."

In furthering this object, Lead Scotland works to remove barriers to learning, increase access to educational opportunities, provide information and support, and enable people to develop their skills, confidence and independence.

Vision

"Our vision is of a fair society where disabled people and carers have an equal opportunity to learn, participate and achieve their potential."

Mission

"Our mission is to influence change and provide personalised learning, befriending, advice, and information services."

Our activities

Lead Scotland delivers inclusive learning, advice and support services across Scotland. Our work focuses on reducing barriers, widening participation and supporting disabled people, carers and others who experience disadvantage to access opportunities and achieve their potential.

During the year, our main areas of activity included:

- providing personalised learning opportunities for disabled people, carers and others facing barriers;
- supporting learners to build confidence, skills and independence;
- providing one-to-one learning support through trained volunteers where appropriate;
- delivering befriending services to reduce isolation and increase social connection;
- improving digital inclusion by supporting people to access and use technology confidently;
- providing specialist information, advice and guidance, including support relating to education and learning opportunities;
- working with partners and other organisations to improve inclusion and awareness of the barriers faced by disabled people and carers.

Objectives and activities *(continued)*

How our activities deliver public benefit

The Trustees have considered Lead Scotland's charitable purposes when reviewing the organisation's activities and future plans.

Our services provide public benefit by advancing education, widening access to learning opportunities, reducing barriers experienced by disabled people, carers and others disadvantaged by social or educational exclusion, and supporting people to participate more fully in society.

Lead Scotland's approach recognises that individuals require flexible, accessible and personalised support. Through direct services, partnership working and influencing activity, the organisation seeks to create opportunities and improve inclusion across Scotland.

Strategic report

The following sections for achievements and performance and financial review form the strategic report of the charity.

Achievements and performance

Delivering our charitable objectives

Lead Scotland was established in 1979 to advance education and reduce barriers experienced by disabled people, carers and others facing social or educational exclusion. Throughout 2025-2026, we continued to work towards this purpose by supporting disabled people, carers and others experiencing barriers to access learning, develop skills, build confidence, reduce isolation and influence the systems and services that affect their lives.

Our work during the year continued to be guided by our 2023-2026 Strategic Goals, which were to:

- offer more local and remote learning opportunities which improve access, offer accreditation, build confidence and skills, and reduce educational exclusion;
- extend our Befriending Services to reduce social isolation and create new pathways to learning;
- extend our unique Disabled Students' Helpline and Information Services so more students understand their rights, entitlements and make informed choices about their options;
- enable more disabled people to influence policy makers, breaking down systemic barriers to improve access for future learners.

Achievements and performance *(continued)*

The year was one of both achievement and adaptation. The external environment remained challenging, with continued pressure on public finances, changing policy landscapes and increasing demand from people experiencing disadvantage. Against this backdrop, Lead Scotland continued to deliver high-quality, person-centred services across Scotland while strengthening our evidence, partnerships and organisational resilience.

Across 2025-2026, our services combined personalised one-to-one support, community-based learning, online resources, accredited learning opportunities, employability support, befriending, digital inclusion activity, advice services and national influencing work.

Our approach remained rooted in the belief that people's circumstances should not determine their opportunities. Many of the people we support face multiple barriers including disability, caring responsibilities, poverty, rural isolation, digital exclusion, low confidence or previous negative experiences of education. Our flexible model enables people to access support in ways that work for them, whether at home, online or within their own communities.

Our impact during 2025-2026

During the year Lead Scotland recorded:

- 2,359 direct engagements;
- 4,490 indirect engagements;
- a combined reach of 6,849 people.

This included:

- 1,790 adult learners supported directly;
- 430 young people supported directly;
- 159 parents and carers supported directly;
- 1,150 professionals reached directly through our work.

Our services included:

- 427 people supported through local learning and employability services;
- 298 contacts through the Disabled Students' Helpline;
- 301 people engaged through cyber learning and training activity;
- 136 people supported through targeted digital inclusion services;
- 81 engagements through befriending services;
- 103 learners achieving through SQA and Adult Achievement Award activity;
- 1,047 direct users accessing my.Lead and digital.Lead online learning resources.

Achievements and performance *(continued)*

These outcomes demonstrate progress towards Lead Scotland's charitable purposes by enabling people who experience barriers to increase independence, improve wellbeing, participate in learning and take steps towards future opportunities.

Behind these numbers are individuals who have developed confidence, reconnected with learning, gained qualifications, improved digital skills, progressed towards employment, accessed advice and taken greater control over their own futures.

Our success is not measured only by participation. For many learners, the first achievement is having the confidence to engage, leave the house, use technology independently, reconnect socially or believe that learning is possible again.

Increasing access to learning, skills and confidence

Lead Scotland continued to provide free, accessible and personalised learning opportunities across Scotland. Our learning model is designed around the needs, goals and circumstances of each individual, recognising that traditional education routes are not accessible for everyone.

We supported people through a combination of:

- one-to-one learning;
- small group activities;
- home-based learning;
- community delivery;
- online and blended learning;
- accredited learning pathways.

This flexibility remains one of Lead Scotland's greatest strengths. We are able to reach people who may not otherwise access education because of disability, health conditions, caring responsibilities, transport barriers, digital exclusion or lack of confidence.

During 2025-2026, we supported 427 local learners against a funded target of 333 learners. This included 295 learners through adult learning projects and 132 learners through employability activity.

Learners developed skills across a wide range of areas including:

- digital skills;
- literacy and numeracy;
- confidence building;
- independent living skills;
- employability skills;
- communication skills;
- preparation for further learning or volunteering.

Achievements and performance *(continued)*

The closure of UK Government-funded Multiply programmes affected overall learner numbers compared with the previous year, but Lead Scotland adapted by strengthening existing partnerships and securing new opportunities for delivery.

Our learner-centred approach continued to demonstrate that learning is often the first step towards wider change. Building confidence and self-belief creates pathways into volunteering, employment, community participation and greater independence.

Learners told us that Lead Scotland's support helped them overcome personal barriers, feel less isolated, use public services more confidently and recognise their own abilities.

Supporting progression into employment and opportunity

During 2025-2026, Lead Scotland continued to expand our employability activity, supporting disabled people and others facing barriers to develop the confidence, skills and experience needed to move closer to employment.

We secured additional employability contracts in Perth and Kinross and East Lothian, alongside our established service in Aberdeenshire. We also entered into framework agreements in additional local authority areas, creating opportunities to extend our reach.

Our employability support recognises that progress towards work is different for every person. For some people, success means securing employment. For others, important milestones include:

- developing confidence;
- understanding their strengths;
- preparing a CV;
- practising interviews;
- building routines;
- gaining qualifications;
- developing workplace skills.

Our staff worked alongside learners to provide personalised support based on their individual ambitions.

One learner in Perth and Kinross, who had caring responsibilities and wanted to move into customer service, communications or publishing, received tailored support with CV development, applications and interview preparation. He successfully secured full-time employment in banking.

Stories like this demonstrate the importance of personalised support that recognises people's potential rather than focusing only on barriers.

Achievements and performance *(continued)*

Developing accredited learning and achievement

Lead Scotland continued to strengthen opportunities for learners to gain recognised achievements.

As an approved centre, we supported learners to access qualifications that recognise their skills, increase confidence and create opportunities for progression.

During 2025-2026:

- 103 qualifications were assessed;
- 28 SCQF Level 4 joint awards were achieved in Cyber Security Fundamentals and Internet Safety.

This exceeded our target and demonstrated the value of connecting digital inclusion, cyber resilience and accredited learning.

For many learners, gaining a qualification represents much more than the certificate itself. It provides external recognition of their abilities, improves confidence and creates evidence of skills that can support future learning, volunteering or employment opportunities.

Building digital confidence and inclusion

Digital access continued to be a major theme across Lead Scotland's work during 2025-2026. Digital skills are increasingly essential for accessing learning, employment, healthcare, public services and social connection, yet many disabled people and carers continue to experience significant barriers to digital participation.

Lead Scotland's approach recognises that digital exclusion is rarely caused by a single issue. People may experience barriers linked to:

- affordability of devices and connectivity;
- lack of confidence;
- previous negative experiences;
- accessibility of digital services;
- limited opportunities for personalised support.

During the year, we provided targeted digital inclusion support, online learning resources and cyber resilience training to help people develop the skills and confidence needed to participate safely online.

Our digital inclusion activity included:

- 136 people supported through targeted digital inclusion services;
- 301 people engaged through cyber learning and cyber training;
- 1,047 direct users accessing my.Lead and digital.Lead online learning resources.

Achievements and performance *(continued)*

Through funding from the Scottish Government Cyber Resilience Unit, we continued to support disabled people, carers and practitioners to improve cyber awareness and online safety. This included accessible cyber learning resources, training sessions and practical support to help people feel safer and more confident online.

Our cyber learning programme exceeded expectations, with:

- 285 people attending cyber learning sessions against a target of 200;
- 98.5% of attendees reporting that they planned to share what they had learned;
- 100% saying they would recommend the training.

The reach of our online resources also continued to grow. Our online learning platform and digital health checker recorded 6,900 views against an original target of 1,600.

During the year, we completed our digital health research project funded through the SCVO Connecting to Care Fund. This explored the experiences of disabled people accessing digital health services and highlighted the continuing gap between digital policy ambitions and people's lived experiences.

The research identified that:

- many disabled adults continue to face barriers caused by poverty, rural isolation and limited digital skills;
- around 45% of respondents wanted support to improve their digital skills;
- around one third lacked confidence using digital healthcare tools;
- many people were unaware of available digital support services.

The findings highlighted that digital transformation must be inclusive and that people need genuine choice, accessible systems and ongoing support.

This evidence has strengthened our ability to influence wider conversations about digital inclusion and ensure disabled people's experiences are reflected in the design of future services.

Disabled Students' Helpline and Information Service

Lead Scotland continued to provide Scotland's only, national Disabled Students' Helpline and Information Service, offering independent advice and information to disabled learners, carers, families and professionals.

The Helpline plays an important role in supporting people to understand their rights, explore their options and make informed decisions about education.

Achievements and performance *(continued)*

During 2025-2026, the Helpline supported 298 contacts, providing specialist information on areas including:

- accessing further and higher education;
- reasonable adjustments;
- student support arrangements;
- funding and financial support;
- transitions into learning;
- overcoming barriers during study.

The service provides direct support to individuals while also giving Lead Scotland unique insight into the wider challenges experienced by disabled learners across Scotland.

Throughout the year, evidence from Helpline enquiries informed our policy and influencing activity, helping identify recurring barriers within education systems and ensuring lived experience was reflected in national discussions.

The Helpline remains a distinctive national service because it combines practical advice for individuals with wider learning about what needs to change to make education more accessible.

Looking ahead, Lead Scotland will continue to develop the Helpline by strengthening referral pathways, increasing awareness and improving how evidence from enquiries informs systems change.

Reducing isolation through befriending and connection

Reducing isolation remained a core part of Lead Scotland's work during 2025-2026.

For many disabled people and carers, isolation can create significant barriers to wellbeing, confidence and future opportunities. Befriending provides an important bridge by helping people rebuild confidence, develop relationships and reconnect with their communities.

During the year, our befriending services recorded 81 engagements.

Support was provided through trained volunteers and staff who created safe, supportive relationships based on trust, consistency and individual goals.

Befriending helped people:

- reduce loneliness;
- improve confidence;
- build social connections;
- explore interests;
- take steps towards learning or wider community involvement.

Achievements and performance *(continued)*

Our experience continues to show that social connection is often the foundation that enables people to consider new opportunities. Before someone feels ready to join a group, start learning, volunteer or look towards employment, they may first need someone who listens, encourages and believes in them.

We remain extremely grateful to the volunteers who supported our befriending work throughout the year. Although formal volunteer numbers remained challenging, reflecting wider trends across Scotland, committed volunteers continued to make a significant difference.

Volunteers also contributed in other ways across Lead Scotland, including providing specialist skills and practical support.

Influencing national policy and systems change

Lead Scotland's work extends beyond direct service delivery. A key part of our charitable purpose is ensuring disabled people and carers can influence the policies, systems and decisions that affect their lives.

During 2025-2026, we continued to use evidence from our services, engagement with learners and direct participation from disabled people to influence national discussions.

During the year:

- 20 disabled people were actively involved in influencing national policy, strategy and plans;
- The charity responded to national policy consultations;
- our influencing and partnership activity reached 5,973 people through 76 strategic engagements;
- a significant area of work focused on improving access and support for disabled students.

Through engagement around the Tertiary Education and Training Bill and wider discussions on student support, we worked to ensure the experiences of disabled learners were heard.

Following our engagement, four disabled people participated directly in discussions with Scottish Government representatives, sharing their experiences and making recommendations for change.

We also:

- contributed written and verbal evidence;
- participated in policy roundtables;
- developed briefing materials highlighting concerns around support arrangements;
- worked with partners and MSPs to raise awareness of barriers faced by disabled learners.

Although not every proposed policy change was achieved, this work contributed to stronger recognition of the need for ongoing discussion and reform.

Achievements and performance *(continued)*

During the year, we also helped establish the foundations for a new Disabled Students Advisory Group, creating a mechanism for disabled learners' voices to influence future policy development.

Ahead of the forthcoming Scottish Parliament election period, we developed our manifesto for change, informed by staff knowledge, consultation activity and direct engagement with disabled people and carers.

Our influencing work ensures Lead Scotland is not only responding to inequality but helping challenge and change the systems that create barriers.

Working in partnership across Scotland

Partnership working remained central to Lead Scotland's approach during 2025-2026. We recognise that improving access to learning, reducing isolation and tackling inequality cannot be achieved by any organisation working alone.

Throughout the year, we worked alongside national and local partners across education, employability, health and social care, digital inclusion, community learning and the wider third sector.

Our partnerships enabled us to:

- reach people who may not otherwise access support;
- provide specialist learning and advice;
- develop referral pathways;
- influence policy and practice;
- share learning and expertise across sectors.

At a local level, we continued to work closely with community partners, local authorities, Health and Social Care Partnerships, Community Learning and Development providers and employability networks. These relationships allowed us to provide flexible, accessible support that responded to local priorities while remaining connected to our national purpose.

At a national level, Lead Scotland contributed to strategic networks including:

- SQA Equality and Inclusion Key Partners Group;
- Scottish Transitions Forum;
- Cyber Scotland Partnership;
- Cyber Scotland Learning and Skills Network;
- SCVO digital inclusion advisory activity;
- Learning Link Scotland.

We also developed new relationships during the year, including engagement with The ALLIANCE Digital Citizens Panel and the National Association of Disabled Staff Networks.

Achievements and performance *(continued)*

These partnerships strengthened our reach and ensured the experiences of disabled people, carers and learners contributed to wider discussions about inclusion, accessibility and service improvement.

Our partnership activity demonstrates the value of Lead Scotland's position as both a direct delivery organisation and a national voice for change.

Volunteers and community contribution

Volunteers have always been an important part of Lead Scotland's history and impact.

During 2025-2026, volunteers continued to contribute their time, skills and experience to support our work and enhance the experience of learners and people receiving befriending support.

Although formal volunteering numbers remain lower than historic levels, reflecting wider changes in volunteering patterns across Scotland, we maintained a committed group of volunteers, particularly within our befriending services.

Volunteers supported people by:

- building confidence;
- reducing isolation;
- encouraging participation;
- sharing skills and knowledge;
- supporting people to reconnect with learning and community life.

The impact of volunteering is often seen in small but significant moments: a regular conversation, encouragement to try something new, support to overcome uncertainty or helping someone recognise their own strengths.

We are grateful to every volunteer who contributed during the year and recognise the important role they play in helping Lead Scotland deliver person-centred support.

Strengthening Lead Scotland for the future

Alongside delivering services, 2025-2026 was an important year for strengthening Lead Scotland as an organisation.

The external environment for charities remained challenging, with financial pressures across public services, increased competition for funding, changing policy priorities and increasing demand for support.

During the year, we continued to focus on organisational sustainability, quality improvement and ensuring we are well placed to meet future needs.

Achievements and performance *(continued)*

This included:

- strengthening strategic partnerships;
- developing new opportunities for sustainable services;
- improving our evidence and impact reporting;
- reviewing future service opportunities;
- maintaining strong governance arrangements;
- investing in digital security and organisational resilience.

Cyber resilience remained an organisational priority. We continued to maintain Cyber Essentials accreditation, work with specialist IT security support and provide cyber awareness training for staff and volunteers.

Our Board and Senior Management Team continued to review organisational risks, opportunities and external developments to ensure Lead Scotland remains responsive and sustainable.

Quality, learning and continuous improvement

We continued to monitor the quality and impact of our services using a range of evidence sources including:

- service performance information;
- learner outcomes;
- qualification data;
- digital analytics;
- participant feedback;
- case studies;
- partner feedback.

This evidence helps us understand not only how many people we support, but the difference our work makes.

Feedback from learners demonstrates that our support improves confidence, independence and wellbeing. People described being able to do things online they never thought they could do, feeling less isolated, becoming more confident travelling independently and recognising their own abilities.

We also used evidence from frontline delivery to identify wider barriers and influence improvements beyond individual services.

This connection between direct support and strategic influence remains one of Lead Scotland's greatest strengths.

Achievements and performance *(continued)*

Overall performance against our strategic objectives

During 2025-2026, Lead Scotland continued to make strong progress against our strategic objectives by increasing access to inclusive learning, reducing isolation, supporting disabled learners through specialist advice, and ensuring lived experience influenced policy and practice.

The year demonstrated the continued importance of Lead Scotland's flexible model of support, combining local delivery, national services and strategic influence. Through direct support, partnerships and evidence from the people we work alongside, we continued to reduce barriers and create opportunities for disabled people, carers and others experiencing disadvantage across Scotland.

The Board recognises and thanks our learners, volunteers, staff, funders and partners whose contribution made these achievements possible.

Financial review

Overview

The Board of Trustees has continued to maintain careful oversight of Lead Scotland's financial position during 2025-2026, ensuring resources were managed effectively in support of our charitable objectives.

The year was characterised by both stability and change. Demand for our services remained strong, while the wider funding environment for charities continued to be challenging, with increased competition for grants, pressure on public finances and uncertainty across many public sector funding streams.

Despite this environment, Lead Scotland remained financially resilient. The organisation continued to deliver its planned programme of services, maintained appropriate reserves and secured new opportunities aligned with our charitable purpose.

The Board confirms that resources were managed effectively during 2025-2026, enabling Lead Scotland to continue delivering its planned charitable activities.

Financial Performance Summary

During 2025-2026, Lead Scotland had total income of £745,438 and total expenditure of £767,142, resulting in a net deficit of £21,704.

The deficit was managed through available reserves and reflected continued investment in charitable delivery during a period of funding transition.

Financial review *(continued)*

Income reduced by 22% compared with the previous year, primarily reflecting the planned closure of the UK Government-funded Multiply programme. This reduction was partially offset by securing new employability contracts and continued support from key funding partners.

At 31 March 2026, total funds held by the charity were £504,341, comprising:

- Unrestricted funds of £334,572
- Restricted funds of £169,770

The organisation achieved and maintained unrestricted reserves in line with the level agreed within the reserves policy approved by the Board.

The Trustees consider this position appropriate given the current operating environment, including continued uncertainty across public sector funding, increasing demand for services and the importance of maintaining organisational resilience.

Income and Funding

Lead Scotland's income continued to come predominantly from restricted funding sources linked to specific charitable activities. This funding enabled us to deliver learning, employability, digital inclusion, befriending, advice and support services across Scotland.

Principal funding sources during 2025-2026 included:

- Scottish Government funding, including the Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund and Adult Learning and Empowering Communities Fund administered by Corra Foundation;
- Scottish Government Cyber Resilience Unit funding;
- Local authority and partnership funding across Scotland;
- Community Learning and Development partnerships;
- Local Employability Partnerships;
- Health and Social Care Partnerships;
- Other charitable trusts, foundations and donations.

The Scottish Government core funding administered through Corra Foundation remained a critical source of organisational stability, supporting our ability to maintain national infrastructure, develop partnerships and deliver impact across Scotland. The current funding arrangement runs until 31 March 2027.

During 2025-2026, total income reduced compared with the previous year. This was primarily due to the planned closure of five UK Government-funded Multiply projects following changes to the programme and wider policy direction.

The impact of this reduction was partially mitigated through successful development of new opportunities, including securing additional employability contracts in Perth and Kinross and East Lothian.

Financial review *(continued)*

This demonstrated Lead Scotland's ability to respond to changes in the funding environment while continuing to identify opportunities that align with our mission and expertise.

Use of charitable resources

The Board remains committed to ensuring that Lead Scotland's resources are used effectively to maximise benefit for disabled people, carers and others experiencing barriers.

Expenditure during the year focused on delivering our charitable objectives through:

- direct support to learners and service users;
- staff expertise and specialist delivery;
- volunteer-supported activity;
- digital inclusion and online learning;
- advice and information services;
- accredited learning opportunities;
- partnership development;
- policy and influencing work.

As a people-focused organisation, the majority of Lead Scotland's expenditure relates to the skilled staff required to provide high-quality, accessible and personalised support.

The Board recognises that investment in experienced staff, effective systems, safeguarding, quality assurance and organisational infrastructure is essential to delivering safe, sustainable and impactful services.

Financial Stability

The financial environment for charities remains challenging. Lead Scotland continues to monitor risks associated with:

- reliance on restricted funding;
- uncertainty around public sector budgets;
- short-term funding cycles;
- increased competition for charitable grants;
- pressure on local authority budgets;
- rising operational costs.

The Board and Senior Management Team continue to take a proactive approach to sustainability by:

- strengthening relationships with existing funders;
- identifying new funding opportunities;
- developing strategic partnerships;
- improving impact measurement and reporting;
- reviewing opportunities to diversify income.

Financial review *(continued)*

While Scottish Government and local authority funding remain important and valued sources of support, the organisation recognises the need to increase financial flexibility over time.

Developing a broader funding base, including increased unrestricted and flexible income, remains a strategic priority.

Reserves Policy

The Board regularly reviews the level of reserves required to protect the organisation and ensure Lead Scotland can continue delivering services during periods of uncertainty.

The reserves policy is designed to ensure that Lead Scotland:

- can maintain core activities during unforeseen financial difficulty;
- has sufficient time to respond if significant funding changes occur;
- can meet organisational commitments and liabilities;
- can invest appropriately in future sustainability.

The required level of reserves is considered as part of the annual planning, budgeting and forecasting cycle. Trustees take account of:

- the nature and security of income streams;
- funding risks;
- planned activity levels;
- contractual commitments;
- organisational risks and opportunities.

Lead Scotland aims to maintain unrestricted reserves equivalent to approximately six months' running costs.

At the end of 2025-2026, unrestricted reserves were £334,572, representing approximately six months of the relevant operating costs identified within the reserves policy.

The Board considers this level appropriate given the current funding environment, the organisation's reliance on restricted income and the need to manage potential changes in public sector funding.

Restricted funds

Restricted funds represent funding received for specific charitable purposes and are managed in accordance with funder requirements. During the year, restricted funds continued to support the delivery of services across Scotland.

Restricted funds decreased during 2025-2026 as planned funding was used to deliver agreed activities and outcomes. The Board continues to ensure that restricted funding is monitored carefully and used only for the purposes intended by funders.

Financial review *(continued)*

Going concern

The Board has reviewed Lead Scotland's financial position, future funding expectations, reserves and potential risks.

Following this review, trustees consider that the organisation has sufficient resources to continue operating and delivering its charitable activities for the foreseeable future.

The financial statements have therefore been prepared on a going concern basis.

Financial controls and stewardship

The Board recognises its responsibility to ensure strong financial management and appropriate stewardship of charitable resources.

Lead Scotland maintains financial controls designed to:

- safeguard charitable assets;
- maintain accurate accounting records;
- support effective decision making;
- ensure compliance with legal and funder requirements.

These controls include:

- an annual budget approved by the Board;
- regular financial reporting and monitoring;
- review of performance against budget;
- delegated authority arrangements;
- segregation of financial duties;
- oversight through Board and committee structures;
- regular review of organisational risks.

The Board will continue to ensure that Lead Scotland manages resources responsibly while investing appropriately to achieve its charitable objectives.

Plans for future periods

During 2025-2026, Lead Scotland continued to deliver against its existing strategic plan. The Board of Trustees agreed to extend the current strategy to 31 December 2026 to provide sufficient time for the new Chief Executive to undertake a comprehensive review of the charity's future direction and develop a new strategic plan.

This extension provides an opportunity to build on the progress made during the current strategy period while ensuring Lead Scotland's future priorities reflect the changing needs of disabled people, carers and others facing barriers to learning, participation and opportunity.

During 2026-2027, the Board is undertaking a programme of strategic development and governance review. This includes reviewing the charity's objects, vision and mission to consider whether they remain relevant, accessible and aligned with Lead Scotland's role as a national charity working across learning, digital inclusion, employability, advice and support.

The development of the new strategy will be informed by engagement with trustees, staff, volunteers, learners, partners and wider stakeholders. It will consider the external environment in which Lead Scotland operates, including changes in education and skills, public services, technology, funding and the needs of the people and communities we support.

The strategy development process will focus on ensuring Lead Scotland continues to be a trusted national organisation delivering inclusive learning, digital inclusion, advice and support services, backed by strong governance, measurable impact, specialist expertise and direct insight into unmet need.

Strengthening our national role and influence

Lead Scotland will continue to strengthen its role as a national organisation supporting disabled people, carers and others facing disadvantage.

We will build on our unique combination of direct delivery and policy influence, ensuring that evidence from our services informs wider discussions about inclusion, accessibility and system improvement.

We will continue to develop relationships with Scottish Government, local authorities, education providers, employability partners, third sector organisations and communities to ensure people's experiences influence the services and policies that affect them.

Developing the Disabled Students' Helpline and Information Service

The Disabled Students' Helpline remains the only national service in Scotland providing independent, specialist information and advice for disabled learners, their families, carers and professionals.

Plans for future periods *(continued)*

As part of our future planning, we will explore opportunities to strengthen and develop the Helpline by:

- increasing awareness and visibility across Scotland;
- improving referral pathways with schools, colleges, universities and partner organisations;
- developing digital access routes;
- improving systems to capture evidence, outcomes and emerging issues;
- using insight from enquiries to support wider policy development.

Our ambition is that more disabled learners can access timely information, understand their rights and make informed choices about their learning journey.

Building digital inclusion and cyber resilience

Digital inclusion will continue to be a significant area of development.

Lead Scotland will build on its experience delivering digital skills, digital health inclusion and cyber resilience programmes to support people who experience barriers to accessing technology. Future priorities include:

- helping people develop digital skills and confidence;
- supporting safe and secure participation online;
- promoting accessible digital services;
- developing partnerships that reduce digital exclusion;
- ensuring disabled people's experiences influence digital transformation.

We will continue to explore opportunities to support national priorities around digital participation and cyber resilience, particularly for people and communities who are most at risk of being excluded.

Growing inclusive learning and employability opportunities

Accessible learning remains central to Lead Scotland's purpose. We will continue to develop opportunities that enable people to:

- build confidence and independence;
- develop skills for life, learning and work;
- achieve recognised qualifications where appropriate;
- progress into further learning, volunteering or employment.

We will work with partners to identify opportunities for sustainable services that respond to individual and community needs.

Plans for future periods *(continued)*

Strengthening financial sustainability

The Board recognises that long-term sustainability is essential to achieving Lead Scotland's charitable objectives. As part of the new strategy development process, we will continue to review opportunities to:

- diversify income;
- increase flexible and unrestricted funding;
- strengthen fundraising activity;
- develop strategic partnerships;
- demonstrate the impact and value of our work.

Building greater financial resilience will enable Lead Scotland to continue responding effectively to the needs of disabled people, carers and others experiencing barriers.

Developing organisational capacity and resilience

To support our future ambitions, Lead Scotland will continue to strengthen the organisation itself. Priorities include:

- maintaining strong governance and assurance arrangements;
- improving systems, data and impact reporting;
- supporting staff and volunteers;
- strengthening digital infrastructure;
- maintaining effective safeguarding and quality arrangements;
- ensuring services remain accessible, inclusive and responsive.

Through this work, the Board aims to ensure that Lead Scotland enters its next strategic period with a clear direction, strong foundations and the ability to continue making a meaningful difference across Scotland.

Trustees' responsibilities statement

The trustees, who are also directors 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).

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

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

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

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Auditor

Each of the persons who is a trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees' annual report and the strategic report were approved on 05 August 2026 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:

Paul Smith (Chair)
Trustee

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Lead Scotland (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2026 which comprise the statement of financial activities (including income and expenditure account), statement of financial position, statement of cash flows and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2026 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and regulation 8 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

Basis for opinion

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

Conclusions relating to going concern

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

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

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

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

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

- the information given in the trustees' report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

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

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended) requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees (who are also the directors for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 44(1)(c) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and under the Companies Act 2006 and report in accordance with the Acts and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

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

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Based on our understanding of the charity and industry, we identified that the principal risks of non-compliance with laws and regulations related to breaches of UK regulations and prohibited business practices, and we considered that the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements. We also considered those laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the preparation of the financial statements such as the Companies Act 2006. We evaluated management's incentives and opportunities for fraudulent manipulation of the financial statements (including the risk of override controls), and determined that the principal risks were related to the potential posting of inappropriate journal entries to manipulate financial results and management bias in accounting estimates.

Audit procedures performed by the engagement team included:

- Enquiry of management and those charged with governance around actual and potential litigation and claims.
- Reviewing minutes of meetings of those charged with governance including the Board.
- Evaluation and testing of the operating effectiveness of management's controls designed to prevent and detect irregularities.
- Identifying and testing journal entries based on risk criteria.
- Designing audit procedures to incorporate unpredictability around the nature, timing or extent of our testing.
- Testing transactions entered into outside of normal course of business.
- Investigated the rationale behind significant or unusual transactions.
- Reviewed accounting estimates for evidence of bias.
- Performed analytical review and sample testing of income.
- Agreed financial statement disclosures to supporting documentation.

There are inherent limitations in the audit procedures described above. We are less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that are not closely related to events and transactions reflected in the financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

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

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with Regulation 10 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Linda Johnston

Linda Johnston F.C.C.A (Senior Statutory Auditor)

For and on behalf of
PB Audit Limited
Statutory Auditors
18 North Street
Glenrothes
Fife
KY7 5NA

PB Audit Limited are eligible to act as auditors under the terms of Section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

05 August 2026

Lead Scotland

Company Limited by Guarantee

Statement of Financial Activities
(including income and expenditure account)

Year ended 31 March 2026

	Note	2026 Unrestricted funds £	2026 Restricted funds £	2026 Total funds £	2025 Total funds £
Income and endowments					
Donations and legacies	5	6,619	8,192	14,811	16,212
Charitable activities	6	500	719,746	720,246	935,692
Investment income	7	10,381	–	10,381	5,181
Total income		17,500	727,938	745,438	957,085
Expenditure					
Expenditure on raising funds:					
Costs of raising donations and legacies	8	5,347	103	5,450	–
Expenditure on charitable activities	9,10	5,082	756,610	761,692	933,077
Total expenditure		10,429	756,713	767,142	933,077
Net (expenditure)/income		7,071	(28,775)	(21,704)	24,008
Transfers between funds		14,366	(14,366)	–	–
Net movement in funds		21,437	(43,141)	(21,704)	24,008
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		313,135	212,911	526,046	502,038
Total funds carried forward		334,572	169,770	504,342	526,046

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

Lead Scotland

Company Limited by Guarantee

Statement of Financial Position

31 March 2026

	Note	2026 £	2025 £
Current assets			
Debtors	17	68,025	82,992
Cash at bank and in hand		493,813	492,053
		561,838	575,045
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	18	50,295	41,798
Net current assets		511,543	533,247
Total assets less current liabilities		511,543	533,247
Provisions for liabilities and charges	20	7,201	7,201
Net assets		504,342	526,046
Funds of the charity			
Restricted funds		169,770	212,911
Unrestricted funds		334,572	313,135
Total charity funds	22	504,342	526,046

These financial statements were approved by the board of trustees and authorised for issue on 05 August 2026, and are signed on behalf of the board by:

Paul Smith

Paul Smith (Chair)
Trustee

The notes on pages 37 to 51 form part of these financial statements.

Lead Scotland

Company Limited by Guarantee

Statement of Cash Flows

Year ended 31 March 2026

	2026	2025
	£	£
Cash flows from operating activities		
Net (expenditure)/income	(21,704)	24,008
Adjustments for:		
Other interest receivable and similar income	(10,381)	(5,181)
Accrued expenses	1,601	8,504
Changes in:		
Trade and other debtors	14,967	(33,823)
Trade and other creditors	6,896	(100,437)
Provisions and employee benefits	–	4,114
Cash generated from operations	(8,621)	(102,815)
Interest received	10,381	5,181
Net cash from/(used in) operating activities	1,760	(97,634)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	1,760	(97,634)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	492,053	589,687
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year	493,813	492,053

The notes on pages 37 to 51 form part of these financial statements.

1. General information

The charity is a public benefit entity and a private company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland and a registered charity in Scotland. The address of the registered office is Studio 1.09, St Margarets House, 151 London Road, Edinburgh, EH7 6AE.

2. Statement of compliance

These financial statements have been prepared in compliance with FRS 102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland', the 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) (Charities SORP (FRS 102)) and the Companies Act 2006.

3. Accounting policies

Support costs

Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Support costs include back-office costs, finance, personnel, payroll and governance costs which support the charity's activities. These costs are allocated across charitable activities, fundraising and governance on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Senior leadership salaries are apportioned based on estimated time spent on each activity.

Basis of preparation

The financial statements comply with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended), the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, 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). They have also been prepared under historical cost accounting rules. The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the company. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest pound.

Donated services

In accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102), the general volunteer time of the volunteers is not recognised.

3. Accounting policies *(continued)*

Going concern

Having reviewed the secured funding contracts and the free reserves of the charity the trustees consider it is appropriate to draw up the accounts on a going concern basis. The Board consider it appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis of preparation for the reasons as set out in the Trustees' Report.

Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid after taking account of any trade discounts due.

Cash

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

Creditors and provisions

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

Operating leases

Rentals payable under operating leases are charged on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported for assets and liabilities as at the balance sheet date and the amounts reported for revenues and expenses during the year. However, the nature of estimation means that actual outcomes could differ from those estimates.

Taxation

The charitable company is registered with HMRC as a charity for tax purposes and is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505(1) of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 252 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that these are applied to its charitable purpose. It is considered that no liability to corporation tax will arise as all income is applied to the charitable purposes of the charitable company.

3. Accounting policies *(continued)*

Funds

The General Fund is an unrestricted fund which is available for use, at the discretion of the directors, in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and which has not been designated for other purposes. Restricted funds are funds to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors.

Incoming resources

Income consists principally of grants, including government grants, and donations. Income is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, when it is probable that the income will be received, and the amounts can be measured reliably. Income is deferred where there is insufficient evidence that the funding conditions are within the charity's control and therefore will be met. For legacies, entitlement is taken as the earlier of the date on which the charity is aware that confirmation or probate has been granted; the estate has been finalised and notification has been made by the executor(s) to the charity that a distribution will be made; or when a distribution is received from the estate. Receipt of a legacy, in whole or in part, is only considered probable when the amount can be measured reliably, and the charity has been notified by the executor's intention to make a distribution. Investment income relates wholly to interest received on bank deposits.

Resources expended

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure from restricted or designated funds is set against the appropriate fund. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds comprise the costs of research and consultancies carried out for the third parties.

- Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. This includes governance costs which comprise those costs associated with the governance of the charity. Governance costs include those costs associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the charity and include the audit fees and costs linked to the strategic management of the charity.

Where possible, expenditure has been charged directly to charitable expenditure or governance costs. Where this is not possible the expenditure has been allocated on the time spent by staff on each activity. The organisation is not registered for Value Added Tax (VAT). All VAT on incurred costs is included in the attributable expenditure.

3. Accounting policies *(continued)*

Tangible assets

Individual fixed assets costing £1,000 or more are capitalised. Where assets relate to a specific restricted fund these are expensed in the year of purchase.

Depreciation

Provision is made for the depreciation of fixed assets in order to write off the cost or valuation over their expected useful lives as follows:

Equipment	-	20% straight line
Computer equipment	-	33% straight line

Impairment of fixed assets

A review for indicators of impairment is carried out at each reporting date; with the recoverable amount being estimated where such indicators exist. Where the carrying value exceeds the recoverable amount, the asset is impaired accordingly. Prior impairments are also reviewed for possible reversal at each reporting date.

Financial instruments

The charity only enters into basic financial instruments. Financial assets are initially measured at transaction price and subsequently held at cost, less any impairment. Financial liabilities are initially measured at transaction price and subsequently held at amortised cost.

Defined contribution plans

The charity contributes to a pension scheme providing benefits based on contributions. Employer contributions charged to the statement of financial activities represents the contributions payable to the scheme in respect of the accounting period.

4. Limited by guarantee

The charity is a private company limited by guarantee and incorporated in Scotland, with its registered address as set out on page 1. The members of the company include the directors named on page 1 and other interested parties. In the event of the charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102.

5. Donations and legacies

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	**Total Funds 2026 £**
Donations			
Hugh and Mary Miller bequest	4,300	–	4,300
Sir Jules Thorn Trust	–	–	–
Keegan & Pennykidd	–	–	–
Fife Communities Trust	–	–	–
Capital Credit Union	–	–	–
Arnold Clark	–	–	–
Friends of Lead North Lanarkshire	–	–	–
Network ROI	–	–	–
Co-op Local Community Fund	–	250	250
Other smaller donations	1,142	892	2,034
Exxon	–	50	50
Forteviot	–	7,000	7,000
Benevity	1,177	–	1,177
	6,619	8,192	14,811

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2025 £
Donations			
Hugh and Mary Miller bequest	8,200	–	8,200
Sir Jules Thorn Trust	3,000	–	3,000
Keegan & Pennykidd	–	500	500
Fife Communities Trust	–	474	474
Capital Credit Union	–	500	500
Arnold Clark	–	1,000	1,000
Friends of Lead North Lanarkshire	–	779	779
Network ROI	–	500	500
Co-op Local Community Fund	–	250	250
Other smaller donations	1,009	–	1,009
Exxon	–	–	–
Forteviot	–	–	–
Benevity	–	–	–
	12,209	4,003	16,212

6. Charitable activities

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	**Total Funds 2026 £**
Core grant	–	149,625	149,625
Cyber Resilience Project	–	113,011	113,011
Parliamentary reception event	–	–	–
Aberdeenshire Council	–	–	–
Highlife Highland	–	5,000	5,000
Dundee Council	–	34,042	34,042
North Lanarkshire Council	–	13,202	13,202
Fife Council	–	178,706	178,706
Perth Council	–	77,802	77,802
Highland Council	–	–	–
Moray Council	–	–	–
East Lothian Council	–	42,401	42,401
SCVO	500	–	500
Enable (AiA)	–	103,707	103,707
Strathearn Arts	–	2,250	2,250
	500	719,746	720,246

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2025 £
Core grant	–	149,625	149,625
Cyber Resilience Project	–	69,717	69,717
Parliamentary reception event	–	1,500	1,500
Aberdeenshire Council	–	12,145	12,145
Highlife Highland	–	5,000	5,000
Dundee Council	–	30,396	30,396
North Lanarkshire Council	–	24,795	24,795
Fife Council	–	219,116	219,116
Perth Council	–	94,000	94,000
Highland Council	–	50,496	50,496
Moray Council	–	45,878	45,878
East Lothian Council	–	69,925	69,925
SCVO	–	79,024	79,024
Enable (AiA)	–	84,075	84,075
Strathearn Arts	–	–	–
	–	935,692	935,692

7. Investment income

	Unrestricted Funds	**Total Funds 2026**	Unrestricted Funds	Total Funds 2025
	£	**£**	£	£
Bank interest	10,381	10,381	5,181	5,181

8. Costs of raising donations and legacies

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	**Total Funds 2026**
	£	£	**£**
Costs of raising donations and legacies - Donations	5,347	103	5,450

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2025
	£	£	£
Costs of raising donations and legacies - Donations	–	–	–

9. Expenditure on charitable activities by fund type

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	**Total Funds 2026**
	£	£	**£**
Charitable activities	–	666,032	666,032
Support costs	5,082	90,578	95,660
	5,082	756,610	761,692

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2025
	£	£	£
Charitable activities	4,221	833,978	838,199
Support costs	–	94,878	94,878
	4,221	928,856	933,077

10. Expenditure on charitable activities by activity type

	Activities undertaken directly	Support costs	**Total funds 2026**	Total fund 2025
	£	£	**£**	£
Charitable activities	666,032	81,196	747,228	926,099
Governance costs	–	14,464	14,464	6,978
	666,032	95,660	761,692	933,077

11. Analysis of support costs

	Support costs	**Total 2026**	Total 2025
	£	**£**	£
Staff costs	69,788	69,788	77,205
General office	11,408	11,408	10,695
Governance costs	14,464	14,464	6,978
	95,660	95,660	94,878

12. Auditors remuneration

	2026	2025
	£	£
Fees payable for the audit of the financial statements	6,960	6,901

13. Staff costs

The total staff costs and employee benefits for the reporting period are analysed as follows:

	2026	2025
	£	£
Wages and salaries	592,027	689,990
Social security costs	51,641	55,709
Employer contributions to pension plans	27,354	30,529
	671,022	776,228

The average head count of employees during the year was 23 (2025: 26).

No employee received employee benefits of more than £60,000 during the year (2025: Nil).

13. Staff costs *(continued)*

Key Management Personnel

The remuneration and benefits paid (including employer's NI and employer's pension contributions) to the senior management team, consisting of the Chief Executive Officer, Business Development Manager and Depute CEO and Finance Manager were £152,715 (2025: £152,528). Pay is set in line with Scottish Joint Council pay scales and is agreed by the Board of Directors.

14. Trustee remuneration and expenses

During the year travel expenses of £57 (2025: £77) were reimbursed to 1 director (2025: 1). The directors received no remuneration in the current or previous year. Trustee indemnity insurance is provided as part of the overall insurance policy for the organisation.

15. Transfers between funds

Transfers have been made from unrestricted funds where deficits have arisen on restricted funds. Transfers have been made to unrestricted funds where surpluses have arisen on fixed price contracts.

16. Tangible fixed assets

	Office equipment £	Computer equipment £	**Total £**
Cost			
At 1 Apr 2025 and 31 Mar 2026	2,737	3,343	6,080
Depreciation			
At 1 Apr 2025 and 31 Mar 2026	2,737	3,343	6,080
Carrying amount			
At 31 Mar 2026	–	–	–
At 31 Mar 2025	–	–	–

17. Debtors

	2026 £	2025 £
Trade debtors	38,034	53,699
Prepayments and accrued income	29,991	29,293
	68,025	82,992

18. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2026	2025
	£	£
Trade creditors	3,966	14,247
Accruals and deferred income	30,105	8,504
Social security and other taxes	16,224	19,047
	50,295	41,798

19. Deferred income

	2026	2025
	£	£
Amount deferred in year	20,000	–

Deferred income relates to grant funding received in advance for the 2026/27 financial year.

20. Provisions for liabilities and charges

Defined benefits pension scheme net present value of deficit contributions payable:

		2026	2025
	£	£	£
Provision at start of period		7,201	3,087
Unwinding of the discount factor (interest expense)		-	81
Deficit contribution paid		-	(3,147)
Remeasurements - impact of any change in assumptions		-	46
Remeasurements - amendments to the contribution schedule		-	7,134
		7,201	7,201

The company participated in the scheme, a multi-employer scheme which provides benefits to some 521 non-associated participating employers. The scheme is a defined benefit scheme in the UK. It is not possible for the company to obtain sufficient information to enable it to account for the scheme as a defined benefit scheme. Therefore, it accounts for the scheme as a defined contribution scheme.

The scheme is subject to the funding legislation outlined in The Pensions Act 2004 which came into force on 30 December 2005. This, together with documents issued by The Pensions Regulator and Technical Actuarial Standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council, set out the framework for funding defined benefit occupational pension schemes in the UK.

20. Provisions for liabilities and charges *(continued)*

The scheme is classified as a 'last-man standing arrangement'. Therefore, the company is potentially liable for other participating employers' obligations if those employers are unable to meet their share of the scheme deficit following withdrawal from the scheme.

A full actuarial valuation for the scheme was carried out at 30 September 2023. This valuation showed assets of £514.9m, liabilities of £531.0m and a deficit of £16.1m. To eliminate this funding shortfall, the Trustees have asked the participating employers to pay additional contributions to the scheme.

After taking professional advice to review the pension scheme and a staff consultation the company decided to buy out of the TPT Growth Plan pension scheme. £25,232 was paid on account to The Pensions Trust which was a pre-estimated value of the amount of s75 debt due. This amount has been included as a prepayment seeing as the buy-out is currently going through the courts. A final decision was expected late summer 2025, where the final s75 debt figure was to be revealed, however there have been further delays. Any difference between the final settlement value and the prepayment will be adjusted in the accounts for the year ending 31 March 2027. At this time, no further information is available.

21. Pensions and other post retirement benefits

Defined contribution plans

The amount recognised in income or expenditure as an expense in relation to defined contribution plans was £27,354 (2025: £30,529).

22. Analysis of charitable funds

Unrestricted funds

	At 1 Apr 2025	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	**At 31 Mar 2026**
	£	£	£	£	£
General funds	313,135	17,500	(10,429)	14,366	334,572

	At 1 Apr 2024	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	At 31 Mar 2025
	£	£	£	£	£
General funds	300,987	17,390	(4,221)	(1,021)	313,135

22. Analysis of charitable funds *(continued)*

Restricted funds

	At 1 Apr 2025	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	**At 31 Mar 2026**
	£	£	£	£	£
Aberdeenshire (AiA)	1,123	103,707	(103,707)	24,341	25,464
Aberdeenshire Multiply	–	–	–	–	–
YPG Aberdeenshire	15,780	–	–	(15,780)	–
Aberdeenshire (AEA)	6,215	–	–	(6,215)	–
SCVO Connecting to Care	15,060	–	(15,060)	–	–
Scot Gov CYPFEI & ALEC	–	149,625	(149,625)	–	–
Scot Gov Cyber Project	929	113,011	(113,011)	–	929
Dundee Council	945	30,396	(30,396)	4,717	5,662
Dundee Multiply	220	–	–	(220)	–
East Lothian Multiply	–	42,401	(42,401)	–	–
Fife Adult Carers	13,327	32,918	(32,918)	–	13,327
Fife Adult Befriending	6,556	38,972	(38,972)	–	6,556
Fife Learning	–	21,357	(21,357)	–	–
Fife Multiply	1,076	–	–	(1,076)	–
Fife Young Carers	53,299	85,459	(85,459)	–	53,299
Highlife Highland	–	5,000	(5,000)	–	–
Highland Multiply	7,174	–	–	(7,174)	–
Moray Multiply	962	–	–	(962)	–
North Lanarkshire	11,146	13,202	(19,797)	2,566	7,117
Perth & Kinross Council	45,993	44,000	(44,043)	5,734	51,684
Perth Digital	1,552	–	–	(1,552)	–
P&K Tenants Programme	4,182	–	–	(4,182)	–
Restricted donations	27,372	1,192	(2,596)	(20,169)	5,799
Dundee Numeracy	–	3,646	(4,173)	527	–
Forteviot	–	7,000	(7,000)	–	–
P&K CMHWF	–	–	(67)	–	(67)
Perth Employability	–	33,802	(38,881)	5,079	–
Strathearn Arts	–	2,250	(2,250)	–	–
	212,911	727,938	(756,713)	(14,366)	169,770

22. Analysis of charitable funds *(continued)*

	At 1 Apr 2024	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	At 31 Mar 2025
	£	£	£	£	£
Aberdeenshire (AiA)	–	84,075	(82,952)	–	1,123
Aberdeenshire Multiply	–	12,145	(12,192)	47	–
YPG Aberdeenshire	15,780	–	–	–	15,780
Aberdeenshire (AEA)	6,215	–	–	–	6,215
SCVO Connecting to Care	–	79,024	(63,964)	–	15,060
Scot Gov CYPFEI & ALEC	–	149,625	(149,625)	–	–
Scot Gov Cyber Project	443	69,717	(69,231)	–	929
Dundee Council	1,016	30,396	(30,467)	–	945
Dundee Multiply	8,702	–	(8,482)	–	220
East Lothian Multiply	–	69,925	(69,925)	–	–
Fife Adult Carers	11,340	32,273	(30,286)	–	13,327
Fife Adult Befriending	8,178	37,072	(38,694)	–	6,556
Fife Learning	3,521	17,945	(22,440)	974	–
Fife Multiply	3,152	50,692	(52,768)	–	1,076
Fife Young Carers	46,700	81,134	(74,535)	–	53,299
Highlife Highland	–	5,000	(5,000)	–	–
Highland Multiply	10,819	50,496	(54,141)	–	7,174
Moray Multiply	6,834	45,878	(51,750)	–	962
North Lanarkshire	6,386	24,795	(20,035)	–	11,146
Perth & Kinross Council	36,176	44,000	(34,183)	–	45,993
Perth Digital	1,552	–	–	–	1,552
P&K Tenants Programme	4,464	50,000	(50,282)	–	4,182
Restricted donations	29,773	5,503	(7,904)	–	27,372
Dundee Numeracy	–	–	–	–	–
Forteviot	–	–	–	–	–
P&K CMHWF	–	–	–	–	–
Perth Employability	–	–	–	–	–
Strathearn Arts	–	–	–	–	–
	201,051	939,695	(928,856)	1,021	212,911

22. Analysis of charitable funds *(continued)*

Aberdeenshire AiA - partnership funding for an Employability Programme managed by Enable to support disabled people with learning and employability services.

SCVO Connecting to Care - funding for the delivery of Lead's digital health and wellbeing project in Aberdeenshire.

Scottish Government Children and Young People Early Intervention Adult Learning and Effective Communities (CYPFEI & ALEC) Fund administered by the Corra Foundation provides our core funding.

Scottish Government Cyber Project - funding for a national programme of strategic engagement activities and the delivery of a range of learning opportunities including courses and accessible resources.

Dundee Council - funding for the delivery of Lead's Adult Learning services in Dundee.

East Lothian Local Employability Partnership - funding for the delivery of an employability programme to support disabled people with learning and employability services.

Fife Council Health and Social Care Partnership - funding for the delivery of two Learning projects and two Befriending services in Fife serving disabled people and unpaid carers.

Highlife Highland - funding for the delivery of strategic work in Highland to support Adult Learning.

North Lanarkshire Council - funding for the delivery of Lead's Adult Learning services in North Lanarkshire.

Perth & Kinross Council (Adult Learning & Asylum Seeker support) - funding for the delivery of Lead's digital skills services in Perth & Kinross.

Perth & Kinross - funding for the delivery of an employability programme to support disabled people with learning and employability services.

Forteviot Charitable Trust - match funding for the delivery of Lead's digital skills services in Perth & Kinross, specifically Perth City, Aberdalgie, Bridge of Earn, and Scone. Strathearn Arts - commissioned work to deliver a 15-week digital skills programme to a defined community group at this third sector organisation.

Perth & Kinross Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund - funding to deliver our "Digital Wellbeing Pathways" project.

Co-op Local Community fund - donation to support our learning and befriending services in Fife.

ExxonMobil for Fife - donation in-kind to support our Fife Befriending Adult & Young Carer services.

23. Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	**Total Funds 2026**
	£	£	**£**
Current assets	392,068	169,770	561,838
Creditors less than 1 year	(50,295)	–	(50,295)
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(7,201)	–	(7,201)
Net assets	334,572	169,770	504,342

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2025
	£	£	£
Current assets	362,134	212,911	575,045
Creditors less than 1 year	(41,798)	–	(41,798)
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(7,201)	–	(7,201)
Net assets	313,135	212,911	526,046

24. Analysis of changes in net debt

	At 1 Apr 2025	Cash flows	**At 31 Mar 2026**
	£	£	**£**
Cash at bank and in hand	492,053	1,760	493,813

25. Operating lease commitments

The total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases are as follows:

	2026	2025
	£	£
Not later than 1 year	415	415