



HIGHLANDS ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Unaudited Statement of Receipts and Payments

28 February 2025

Charity Number: SC037209

Trustees (and members of the committee)

David Davidson	Chairman
Lisa Pattenden	Vice-Chairman
Kim Thain	Secretary
Babarba Hummel	Treasurer
Eric Walker	
Gary Fairlie	Membership Secretary
Charlotte Wallace	Website
Paul Moffett	Observatory Manager
Carl Frampton	Social Media

Independent Examiner

Neil Johnstone
26 Leys Drive
Inverness
IV2 3JA

Bankers

Bank of Scotland
2-6 Eastgate
Inverness
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Trustees' Annual Report

The trustees present their report and receipts and payments account for the year ended 28 February 2025.

Origins

The Society was formed in 1993 as the Inverness Astronomical Society, merging the next year with the Moray Astronomical Society to form the present society. A formal constitution was drafted in 1996.

Governing Document

The Society is a charitable unincorporated society, and the purposes and administration arrangements are set out in our constitution.

Objectives

The Highlands Astronomical Society aims to promote and extend the awareness of, and interest in, all branches of astronomy and cosmology. We host educational, practical and social activities in the Highlands of Scotland, within a friendly and stimulating environment, accessible to all ages and levels of knowledge.

The Society seeks to achieve its aims through a varied programme of meetings, activities and events, including talks, taking part in science festivals, observing sessions open to the public and social events and now focussing on active astronomy where we focus on practical observing.

The Highlands Astronomical Society also aims to contribute worthwhile observational data to national and international astronomical organisations where possible.

Astronomy is one of the few remaining sciences where valuable contributions and discoveries are still being made by amateurs. These facts are recognised and actively encouraged by professional astronomers and scientists.

Trustees

The trustees during the year were as listed on page 2. Where shown, some hold the title 'Office Bearer'. Any new appointments as trustee are made following approaches to suitably qualified people, who then agree to accept the appointment. New trustees are given the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator's booklet 'Guidance and good practice for Charity Trustees' to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities, and are asked to sign as having read it.

The Office Bearers are appointed or reappointed by the members at our annual general meeting which is held in April each year. Committee members are appointed by the Office Bearers when required. The trustees do not receive any remuneration for their services.

We have in place a child protection policy (CPP) that reflects current Scottish legislation. New trustees are given the link to our policy to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities, and are asked to sign as having read it.

Risk Management

The trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, including those at the Observatory, and in particular those related to the operations and finances of the trust, and are satisfied those systems are in place to mitigate such risks.

Reserves

The Society aims to have unrestricted funds of £2,500

The JSL Observatory.

The James Savage-Lowden Observatory dome houses the Adrian Liddell **160mm CFF (Coma Free Field) apochromatic tripley telescope** which sits on an **Astro Physics 1200GTO telescope and mount** within a Pulsar 9-foot dome. The telescope along with the other equipment was donated to the club by Adrian Liddell's widow.

We have a **Skywatcher MAK90 (with tripod)** for white light solar observing, a **4" Vixen refractor telescope (with tripod)**, a **6" Celestron telescope (with tripod)**, an **8" Vixen Astrograph telescope (with tripod)**, an **8" Meade LX90 telescope**, a **12" Dobsonian telescope** (which now has setting circles and better wheels making it more portable, thanks to Paul Moffett) and a **Lunt Ha solar telescope (with tripod)** for solar observing. We also have a list of other telescopes that will be listed in an attachment. These offer alternate views from our main telescope and are especially useful when we have a large number of people at the Observatory. We also have an **80mm refracting telescope** which sometimes piggybacks the main telescope as well as a computerised EQ3 mount to use with our smaller telescopes and an iOptron Skyguider Pro which can be used with the Club camera. We can also offer 4 pairs of 10 x 50 binoculars for society members and visitors to use. Our new shed has proved invaluable for freeing up room in the observing station.

We can send images from telescopes to the big screen in the warm room via video cameras or smart telescopes. This is beneficial for anyone with limited mobility, elderly people and children who have more difficulty using an eyepiece on a telescope.

The observing station (warm room) has disabled facilities which include a lavatory. As well as using the big screen to view live images from telescopes, we can also use it to view night sky planetarium software from a laptop. The facility also houses the club's library, and has room to allow us to hold small groups of visitors, including Youth groups.

This year we have hosted one Beaver group and supported a young member with the Duke of Edinburgh – Bronze at the Observatory. In addition, we provided 5 daytime school visits in March and attended the Strathpeffer Science Festival in September. Also a talk was given at the SIGMA club in October.

By holding opportunistic observing sessions when the weather has been favourable, more observing sessions for members and their guests have been able to take place, ably led by the enthusiastic night owls, former Chairman Dave Davidson and several members. By advertising our observing sessions on our website, WhatsApp Group and Facebook pages, this has also led to some members of the public coming along either as visitors with our members or new to the club attendees.

Altogether we have had a larger than usual number of visitors to the Observatory, however had a system that was not properly capturing the exact number of visitors for the year so cannot report exact numbers, a new process has been put in place to rectify that issue.

Over the summer, a number of astronomy based activities were held and a barbeque held with great success.

We have continued to give advice on buying and setting up telescopes and the Observatory is a perfect place to do this.

We would like to thank Trina Shaddick for leading our Young Stars meetings and would like to thank her for her years spent on this portion of the club. She is stepping down and we will greatly miss her.

We are most grateful to the National Trust for Scotland for allowing us to locate the observatory on their property at the Culloden Battlefield.

Activities and Achievements

We have held each Club meeting at our preferred venue of Smithton Church with great numbers in attendance.

Our active astronomy meetings have proved successful and is perhaps the reason for our younger demographic. We start the evening with a presentation of our Club News often including a constellation, targets/challenges as well as members astrophotographs. We have concentrated on deeper understanding of basic astronomy talks which are then followed by a member giving a short talk or practical session on any subject they want; this is known as the 'Spotlight'. After the tea break there is time for general discussion and chat amongst the members, as well as help and advice from more experienced members. The practical side of things can be followed up at the Observatory. Astrophotography has become extremely popular and the enthusiasm of members, whether beginners or experienced, knows no bounds.

We had one excellent external speaker secured by Lisa Pattenden and a Christmas quiz with a break during June and July. The meetings continue to be preceded with the half hour Youngstars sessions (aged 8 – 14) led by Pauline Macrae and Trina Shaddick.

Our talks and PowerPoint presentations without the audio can be seen on our YouTube channel after being uploaded by Eric Walker. See below under website and Social Media.

We are very grateful to the members who have volunteered for various roles during the meeting such as helping with the teas: Joyce Cruickshank, Kim Thain, Norma Duncan, Janine Cade; also, the AV equipment Peter Etheridge and Angus Trevelan; and the raffle: Linda Moncur and Mike Welham. Pat Escott has worked quietly in the background doing tasks that others haven't been able to do.

Our 2024 AGM took place at our venue with the members being sent the normal AGM papers by email. The required quorum numbers were reached and the report was passed without alterations. After final scrutiny by the Independent Examiner the Annual Report was submitted to OSCR.

The AllSky camera built by Eric Walker has proved very useful for all members, and we remain a 'community consultant' to Highland Council especially where dark skies are concerned.

We are hoping to form a collaboration with ORBEX, a local rocket company. Some of them have visited our Observatory and a short film by the Ground Segment Software Architect featured our Observatory.

Website & Social Media

Social media now plays a major part in our communications for existing & potential members and it also enables us to share our successes, including details of observing events & astrophotographs taken by our members, with both a local & global audience. One of our members, Carl Frampton, has recently agreed to come onto the Committee as our social media person to promote the Club as well as upload the astrophotographs.

Our modern, streamlined website is kept up to date by Charlotte Wallace and, along with Facebook, and Instagram accounts, it continues to attract increasing numbers of regular followers and this enables us to promote our Club activities as well as facilitate public outreach.

Our social media links are:

- **Website:** www.spacegazer.com
- **Facebook & Messenger:** Highlands Astronomical Society
- **Instagram:** highlands.astro
- **YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/@highlandsastronomicalsocie1119>
- Members only **WhatsApp group** is called **Nebulous News** and is used for event alerts – especially those that require short notice such as aurora and noctilucent cloud sightings, as well as ad hoc observing sessions. This was set up by our Membership Secretary, Lorraine Shepherd.

The Monthly Newsletter

This is written by Pauline Macrae and consists of Club News, what to look out for in the night sky for the month and a Sky Map for the month. This is sent to all members via email.

News Media

Our meetings are advertised in Astronomy Now Magazine as well as on our website and on Facebook.

External Educational Activities

We give talks to local societies and organisations to promote astronomy, our society and the Observatory.

During the year, seven classes in two schools, all the children in a small school and a Scout group were spoken to by Pauline Macrae. In addition, Pauline Macrae and Dave Davidson took the Lunt (solar telescope) and another telescope with a white light filter along to a school for all the pupils and staff (over 100) to view the Sun.

We took part in three external events this year: Doors Open Day, the Belladrum Festival and the Strathpeffer Science Festival. Once again, each event attracted large numbers of visitors and some new members. We would like to thank the many members who kindly gave up their time to help with these events: Eric Walker, Gerry Gaitens, Dave Davidson, Trina Shaddick, Pat Escott, Joyce Cruickshank, Stuart and Trish Fletcher, Norman Duncan and David Stephen. The Orkney International Science Festival was a hybrid affair and Eric Walker was again asked to become a member of the 2024 Online Technical Team & Presentation Team

Fund-raising Activities and grants

Due to current electricity costs, each Youth Group visiting the Observatory have been kind enough to donate a small amount of money and over the winter with the Observatory opened up, we have had donations from visitors. Each event we hold or attend (festivals) also attracts welcome donations

The raffle continues to contribute to our funds.

Membership

The Society's membership will not be increasing prices this year. At the end of February, we had a membership of approximately 120 – we are growing steadily and this all down to the efforts of all members collaborating and pushing for more workshops and observing help! Sadly, our Membership Secretary, Lorraine Shepherd passed away leaving a big gap in our hearts as she was so brilliant at her task of membership care. She is very much missed. At Committee meetings, we have continued to discuss ways of keeping our current members and gaining others and to keep our members engaged by listening to their suggestions of activities they wish to have implemented.

Other Astronomical Societies

We are in the process of redefining our collaborations and are excited to see what the future will bring for collaborations with clubs near and far

We have a 'twinning' relationship with the Dunedin astronomical society in New Zealand.

Governance

Monthly bank statements continue to be scrutinised by the Chairman and the Secretary during our Committee meetings, in person or held by Zoom. Banking transactions are carried out online as much as possible. The Society has three approved cheque signatories, with any two of the three to sign (as long as the cheque is not made out to one of them). Monthly bank statements and finances are discussed in full at our Monthly Committee Meetings.

Closing Remarks

"It has been an unusual last few months in the club and I feel it would be remiss in not mentioning the many things that our former Chairman Dave Davidson has done for the club in boosting engagement and spreading the word that astronomy is still cool! We thank him for his efforts and do hope he will continue to hold workshops and observing sessions in the years to come. I have been weighing out the idea of stepping as Chairman and at first was in a panic about the task required to run this club. Fortunately, I have worked with several of the members on what it would entail and had their support that helped steer my decision to step in. I do see the Club is in a very healthy financial position, we were able to handle this last minute crisis, and the main feeling that has come from this is the aim of the Club to one of an active astronomy club for the benefit of all of its members, to make astronomy greater in our lives is coming to fruition." - Lisa Pattenden Vice-Chairman

Financial results

Compared to the previous financial year the society has decreased donations (£578 less than the previous year), memberships payments have increased (£259 more than previous year) and raffle income has also increased (£42 more than the previous year).

The total cash reserves of the society at the end of the year stood at £4,817 (£509 less than the previous financial year).

The above does not include other assets owned by the Society, which have a current value of approximately £81,250.

On behalf of the trustees:



Signed: Lisa Pattenden, Vice-Chairman

Date: 30 June 2025



Signed: Kim Thain, Secretary

Date: 30 June 25

Highlands Astronomical Society – unrestricted funds

Statement of Receipts and Payments

for the year end	28-Feb-25	2024-25	2023-24
		£	£
Income			
Membership subs		2,105	1,846
Gift aid from subs and donations		0	0
Donations		113	691
Grant applications		0	0
Fundraising events		187	215
Outreach events		351	228
Raffle		399	357
Other income		0	0
HAS Events		0	0
Total Receipts:		<u>3,155</u>	<u>3,337</u>
Expenses			
Venue costs		1,153	1,017
Obs and equipment insurance		346	310
Obs ground rent NTS		587	0
Maintenance of obs buildings and ground		62	539
Obs electricity NTS		0	53
Website costs		520	78
HAS equipment i.e. obs equip, laptop, camera		600	200
Speaker expenses		157	79
General Admin		138	57
Expenses and travel		91	0
Sundry costs		110	0
HAS events		0	0
Total Expenditure:		<u>3,664</u>	<u>2,333</u>
Net (expenditure)/receipts for the period		(509)	1,004
Fund Balance brought forward		5,326	4,322
Fund Balance carried forward		4,817	5,326


Highlands Astronomical Society

Statement of Balances

As at 28-Feb-25

	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
Cash at Bank and on hand		
Cash at Bank	4,794	5,303
Cash on hand	23	23
Closing Balances	4,817	5,326
Reserves		
Unrestricted Funds	4,817	5,326
Closing Balances	4,817	5,326
Assets		
Observatory at estimated market value	64,000	64,000
Astronomical equipment at estimated market value	17,000	17,000
Computing equipment at estimated market value	250	250
Unclaimed Gift Aid	-	1,207
	81,250	82,457

Approved on behalf of the Trustees by the treasurer and authorised for issue on 3/6/2025


Signed Barbara Hummel Treasurer
Dated 3/6/25


Signed Lisa Pattenden Vice- Chairman
Dated 3 JUNE 2025

for the year ended **28 February 2025**

1. Accounting policies

Reserves

All funds are unrestricted funds which may be applied to any purposes as decided on by the trustees, so long as these are within the objects of the charity.

Income and expenditure

Income and expenditure are recognised at the time of receipt or payment.

2. Nature of funds

The Highlands Astronomical Society Fund is a general purpose fund into which all the ongoing income is placed and the operating costs of the Society are met.

3. Trustees' and other remuneration

No trustee receives any remuneration for their services. The Society has no paid employees.

4. Reserves

The Society has a policy of holding a reserve of £2,500 against unforeseen eventualities.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Highlands Astronomical Society

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year ended 28 February 2025 which are set out on pages 8 to 10.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (d) of the 2006 Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1) (c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

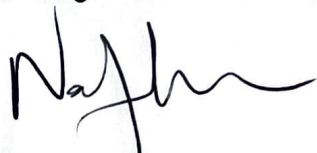
Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 9 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations

have not been met, or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Name: Neil Johnstone

Address: 26 Leys Drive
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Date: 3rd June 2025