

**battle of ideas  
charity  
annual report  
FY 2019–20**

**charity number 1178999**



# about the boi charity

The trustees present their report along with the financial statements of the charity for the financial year beginning 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

Battle of Ideas (“the boi charity”) is a charity registered with the Charity Commission under registration number 1178999 and a company limited by guarantee with registration number 11213433.

## **Trustees:**

Ferenc Furedi (full year, chair)

Phillip Roy Mullan (full year)

Luke Samuel Gittos (full year)

Sheila Frances Lewis (full year, treasurer)

## **Advisors:**

Jane Sandeman (independent examiner, member of the association of chartered accountants)

## **Key employees:**

Geoff Kidder (chief executive)

Alastair Donald (secretary)

## **Address and contact:**

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## **Structure, governance and management**

- The Battle of Ideas is governed by a memorandum and articles of company association
- The Battle of Ideas is a company charity
- The company directors are also the charity Trustees
- The company is limited by guarantee
- Registered charity number: 1178999
- Company registration number: 11213433

# objects and activities

**The boi charity was set up with two aims:**

1. **To advance education**, in particular but not exclusively by providing a forum for discussion and debate through the organisation of public debates, festivals and summer schools involving academics, thinkers and experts that deepen and enrich the knowledge and understanding of all participants
2. **To advance good citizenship**, in particular but not exclusively through the promotion of ideas of tolerance, open debate and participation in democracy through the organisation of live events, and in print and online

## **Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects**

The boi charity's overriding ambition is to encourage a culture of learning and discussion, in order to enhance public debate of the many questions that face society and citizens today. To that end, the organisation pursues projects that encourage both self-education and a willingness to debate people with other viewpoints. Our work is not aimed specifically at any one section of society but at the broader culture of intellectual engagement and participation. To that end, we work with adults and soon-to-be adults wherever the opportunity for debate arises.

The major activities undertaken include organising education and citizenship projects, specifically the projects Debating Matters, Living Freedom, and The Academy.

## **Debating Matters**

an innovative and engaging approach to schools debating, emphasising substance over style, and the importance of taking ideas seriously.



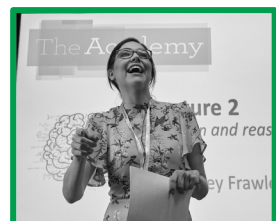
## **Living Freedom**

our annual residential school that allows 18- to 25-year-olds to explore ideas around the past, present and future of freedom by engaging with 'the best that is known and thought' and the provocations of contemporary intellectuals.



## **The Academy**

our annual summer school for all ages interested in studying ideas. Organised each year around a specially chosen theme, lectures on philosophy, history and culture demonstrate the value of scholarship in itself over instrumental approaches to knowledge.



**our work  
this year**



# Debating Matters

**DEBATING  
MATTERS**

**This period was a busy one** for the Debating Matters competition. Over the course of the last year, the competition has held five championship events, involving:

- Over **400** school pupils
- As many as **80** teachers
- **42** schools from around the UK and Germany
- Over **100** volunteer judges



**Bringing debate and ideas into schools is hugely important.** It gives students a chance to go beyond often crass media headlines, broadens their minds, and teaches pupils that there are always two sides to an argument. At a time when many worry about 'echo chambers', it's vitally important that young people are encouraged to break out of their intellectual silos and understand both sides of an argument. The Debating Matters format – emphasising substance over style, clear thinking, and good research instead of formal techniques and points of information – is designed to encourage young people to tackle the big issues facing society.

**In late June 2019, the competition returned to Oxfordshire** for a day of debate hosted at the Oxford Union, in partnership with the Oxford Festival of the Arts. The high quality and highly competitive day of debate was won by

Sir Henry Floyd Grammar school. The day concluded with a special public discussion, open to all members of the public, which included Jess Butcher MBE, the technology entrepreneur, and Victoria Nash, deputy director of the Oxford Internet Institute, on the panel. The panel, aided by the day's competition pupils, addressed the question of 'online harms'.



**Then, in July, the competition came to the North East**, where a championship for six schools was held in the city of Durham at Durham Sixth Form Centre. This was an excellent demonstration of the competition's ability to engage schools without a tradition of formal debating and public speaking, with Hartlepool Sixth Form College emerging victorious in front of a packed school hall.



# Debating Matters

**DEBATING  
MATTERS**

**The competition next travelled to the South West**, where a championship was held at Sherborne Girls' School featuring eight local schools. After a hard-fought day of argument, Sturminster Newton School were victorious, grappling with the issues surrounding repatriation of cultural artefacts. The judges for the day included many local artists, business people, former MP Sir Oliver Letwin, and former director of the Royal Collection Sir Jonathan Marsden



**In February, the competition returned for a second year to Southampton** where a championship was held at Solent University's Spark Building. The Burgate School and Sixth Form emerged the winners, beating King Edward VI School in a high-calibre final on whether museums should repatriate colonial-era cultural artefacts. The University setting inspired an excellent day of debate and encouraged schools from the region



to challenge each other to enrich their understanding of the world.

**The final Debating Matters event of the year was in February where it returned to Berlin, Germany.** Building on a successful partnership with UE (University of Applied Sciences Europe) and Freiblickinstitut, the competition held a twelve-school championship featuring schools around the city. Debating Matters is proud to be able to build bridges across the continent and inspire open and well-researched debate. The winning school, Humboldt Gymnasium, won a final on the issue of reparations for colonialism, using the model of Germany's post-war reparations to Jewish people to argue Germany has similar obligations to former colonies.



**In addition to the events and championships**, DM continued to support pupils and teachers by maintaining and updating its extensive list of resources for encouraging debate, such how-to guides, and its 'Topic Guides' which introduce student debaters to key issues. New Topic Guides were introduced this year, such as on the climate emergency and the issue of reparations. Debating Matters also continued to utilise its networks of judges, teachers and former competitors (alumni) to inspire debate and critical thinking about the key issues of our time.

# Living Freedom



**Living Freedom 2019 was an opportunity to explore contemporary issues related to liberty** and individual autonomy, using both the insights of 'the best that is known and thought' and the provocations of contemporary intellectuals, to get to grips with the complexities and contradictions of freedom in the twenty-first century.



Living Freedom is a space for discovering new ideas and people, and a real opportunity for discussion and open debate is sadly not available to many young people – even at universities which many feel are often 'echo chambers'

This year, Living Freedom attendees explored questions around two main themes:

- 1. The individual and society**
- 2. Universalism and particularism**



Expert-led lectures and seminars introduced participants to key questions and debates in these areas, showing the history and contemporary relevance of intellectual contributions to the question of freedom.

Participants had wide opportunities for debate and networking, and wrestled with practical questions including how to challenge censorship and promote tolerance.



Attendees were from a wide variety of backgrounds and from right across the UK and Europe, but united by a shared interest in the history and contemporary relevance of ideas.



The residential weekend provided an opportunity for free, diverse thinking, and offered a collegiate atmosphere for young adults to develop their ideas.

# The Academy

The Academy

**The Academy 2019, held on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> July, examined the 'culture wars'** to understand how and why culture becomes the object of political contestation. The weekend looked at why the culture wars continue to define Western life and seem to pit differing identities against each other in the friend or foe dynamic of contemporary debate.

The Academy has been running since 2011, bringing together a wide range of people of all ages and educational backgrounds. The Academy is a modest attempt to demonstrate the value of scholarship in itself in today's climate of instrumental approaches to knowledge.



This year, a series of expert lectures looked at the historical emergence of the culture wars and its effects on areas of life such as education, the family, and art, and looked at what the culture wars mean for radical politics, privacy, and the rise of emotions. Attendees were encouraged to read in advance from a book list including important philosophers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Adorno, and John Dewey.

The charity was pleased to be able to offer a number of scholarships for students and disadvantaged individuals to ensure the event had a broad appeal. Adults and university students from many backgrounds and nationalities

attended the event, contributing to a lively atmosphere of intellectual engagement and common sociability. The charity's focus on promoting tolerance and good citizenship was evidenced by lecturers and attendees who sought to understand how to improve the quality of contemporary debate and democracy. The event, as ever, was a social and intellectual highlight of the year.



The Academy also provides a lasting resource for those interested in learning more about the issues covered. This year, the lectures from the event were released as a special lecture course on the boi charity's podcast, *ideas matter*. This podcast can be found on the boi website.





**our public  
benefit**



# assessing our public benefit

*The charity has suggested using the following criteria to judge the effectiveness of its projects*

**The quality of debates: are the speakers well-informed, do they present their arguments well and have the topics and presentations engaged the audience?**

The quality of debate at events has been very high. Attendees, lecturers, judges and observers have reflected that the arguments and ideas presented at boi charity events are of a higher quality than those found in wider society. In the Debating Matters competition, the Topic Guides have encouraged students to avoid soundbites and reflect on issues beyond the headlines. The format of DM, with its focus on ‘substance over style’ helps the project deliver real public benefit in the form of a richer exploration of key issues. At Living Freedom, many attendees likewise noted that the lectures went deeply into history, sociology and ideas, often to a higher level than their university courses. Likewise, at 2019’s The Academy, expert lecturers delivered a programme that many commented ‘was not available elsewhere’. The charity’s contribution to intellectual rigour in public discussion enhances education and good citizenship.

**The size and mix of audiences: have the debates and other events attracted sizeable audiences that include a reasonable cross-section of society?**

This is an area of pride for the boi charity and this year’s work clearly meets this standard. The Debating Matters competition generally features a mix of state schools, specialist sixth-form colleges, and public schools – bringing together a genuine range of society. In particular, the North East event featured several schools without a history of public speaking or debating.

The format (substance over style) allows schools and students without a tradition of debate or public speaking to excel. The competitions in this period were therefore characterised by diversity of entrants, in terms of class, background, ethnicity, religion, etc. – but also intellectual diversity as well. The same can be said of Living Freedom and The Academy – a cross-section of society is represented at these events. Moreover, the charity’s increasing use of online media such as podcasts or YouTube videos has made content available to a truly diverse group.

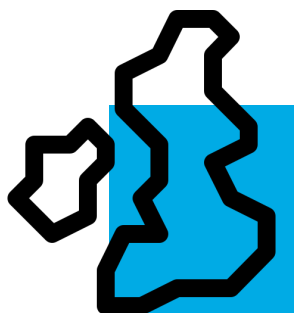
**Geographical spread: can the organisation successfully produce events beyond London, both in the UK regions and across Europe, broadening the experiences that inform the discussions?**

The Debating Matters competition has gone across the country to include often neglected areas, schools, and colleges – as well as returning to Berlin. Living Freedom featured attendees from around the country and the residential nature of the event is especially designed to allow young adults from around the country (and further) to gather for a period of time – for only a nominal fee. Many attendees of Living Freedom created new friendships stretching the length and breadth of the country. A very similar thing can be said with regards to The Academy – with adult attendees coming from even further afield. Once again, the online resources the charity produces help engage those who cannot travel.

# our year in numbers

700+

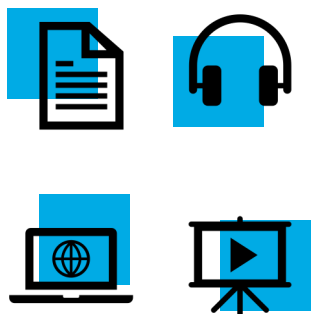
Individuals directly engaged during in-person debates, talks, seminars



Reached young people in every region of England and Wales

80%

Of all attendees from outside of London



Created website and archive spanning 250+ debate topic guides, 100+ lectures and dozens of pages of resources

70%

Of attendees at all events were between 16 and 25 years old

# our year in quotes

“Debating Matters is an extraordinary initiative and gives us hope for the future of quality public debate. The debaters are across their topics and deploy arguments that are both passionate and thought through. It’s a pleasure and a privilege to be asked to judge and contribute to the day. The participants’ ideas, enthusiasm and provocation are infectious.”

**Michael Baker, director, Eterna Group, Debating Matters judge**

“Debating Matters forced our team into some awkward positions, which they worked hard to support through thorough research and flexing some argumentative muscles. The opportunity to meet and argue with a group of switched-on and thoughtful peers was exciting to them. We are certainly looking forward to the next competition”

**Andrew Brown, teacher, Debating Matters**

“The Academy speakers are daring and invite scrutiny, a dynamic welcoming of debate I’ve rarely experienced in conventional education. These have informed my choices in organising an international student conference.”

**Mădălina Benderschi, Academy 2019 scholarship winner**

“Everyone is on an equal footing, whether they are from a great school or not. If you do your research, you’ve got an opportunity to win the debate. These are life skills, whether you’re at work or out in the street, everyone needs to learn how to use their voice.”

**Jack Harris, Debating Matters competitor, 2019 intern**

“There is nothing more uplifting than seeing young people discover they can draw on their intellect, think on their feet and win arguments. I learn from every debate!”

**Ann Furedi, chief Executive, BPAS, Debating Matters judge**

“I was particularly impressed this year by the depth of engagement with the topics – both in the debates I judged as well as one where I was in the audience. The standard of debating and the level of participation seem to get higher every year.”

**Michael Croasdale, British Council, Debating Matters judge**

# chief executive's comment



**Geoff Kidder,  
Chief Executive**

“Education and good citizenship. These are the two charitable purposes the boi charity was set up to advance. Our distinctive approach lies in that we believe ideas, debate, and tolerance are essential to both. The boi charity continues to be an essential voice in this regard. In a time where much is said about ‘echo chambers’ and ‘safe spaces’, it is especially encouraging to see young people practice the art of robust debate in the Debating Matters competition. When big debates about history and the legacy of ‘Western Civilisation’ are rarely out of the news, it is great to give, through Living Freedom, the opportunity to young people to explore and critique this intellectual and historical legacy. Last, but by no means least, I am always proud to bring together a truly diverse group from all walks of life to demonstrate the importance of a humanist, liberal education by organising The Academy. The boi charity has had a successful year and I look forward to continuing to execute our strategy – delivering our key projects whilst growing our funding streams – to enable us to expand our work in the challenging times ahead.”

**accounts**



# accounts – summary

## The charity's policy on reserves

- The charity has a Reserves Policy that has been agreed by the trustees. In short, it states that:
- The charity will hold reserves to protect itself against major risks identified in the Reserves Policy
- The charity will aim to accrue reserves of one-year operating expenditure
- Trustees will monitor progress in accruing reserves

## Accounts

Recommended categories by activity	Unrestricted funds	Total funds	Prior year funds
	£	£	£
<i>INCOME</i>			
Donations and legacies	78,382	78,382	14,161
Charitable activities	41,732	41,732	3,253
Other	36	36	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>120,150</b>	<b>120,150</b>	<b>17,415</b>
<i>EXPENDITURE</i>			
Raising funds	5,484	5,484	-
Charitable activities	65,829	65,829	2,220
Other	16,755	16,755	2,325
<b>Total</b>	<b>88,068</b>	<b>88,068</b>	<b>4,545</b>
Net income/(expenditure) before investment gains/(losses)	32,082	32,082	12,870
Net income/(expenditure)	32,082	32,082	12,870
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>32,082</b>	<b>32,082</b>	<b>12,870</b>
Reconciliation of funds:			
Total funds brought forward	12,870	12,870	
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>44,952</b>	<b>44,952</b>	<b>12,870</b>

# accounts – income & expenditure

Income		Unrestricted funds	Total funds	Prior year
Analysis		£	£	£
Donations and legacies:	Donations and gifts	73,345	73,345	14,161
	Gift Aid	5,037	5,037	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>78,382</b>	<b>78,382</b>	<b>14,161</b>
Charitable activities:	Debating Matters	8,277	8,277	62
	The Academy	27,955	27,955	2,150
	Living Freedom	1,250	1,250	1,041
	Question Time	3,400	3,400	-
	Other debates	850	850	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>41,732</b>	<b>41,732</b>	<b>3,253</b>
Other:	Other	36	36	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>120,150</b>	<b>120,150</b>	<b>17,415</b>

Expenditure		Unrestricted funds	Total funds	Prior year
Analysis		£	£	£
Expenditure on raising funds:	Incurred seeking donations	1,000	1,000	-
	Incurred seeking grants	2,400	2,400	-
	Staging fundraising events	917	917	-
	Advertising, marketing, direct mail and publicity	1,167	1,167	-
	<b>Total expenditure on raising funds</b>	<b>5,484</b>	<b>5,484</b>	<b>-</b>
Expenditure on charitable activities:	Debating Matters	35,226	35,226	2,220
	The Academy	10,743	10,743	-
	Living Freedom	18,453	18,453	-
	Question Time	1,407	1,407	-
	<b>Total expenditure on charitable activities</b>	<b>65,829</b>	<b>65,829</b>	<b>2,220</b>
	Support costs	11,984	11,984	-
	Legal Costs	1,500	1,500	-
	Other office costs	3,271	3,271	2,325
	<b>Total other expenditure</b>	<b>16,755</b>	<b>16,755</b>	<b>2,325</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>88,068</b>	<b>88,068</b>	<b>4,545</b>



# declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Full name:

SHALIP ROY MULLAN

Signature:

*SR Mullan*

Position:

TRUSTEE

Date:

25 August 2020