

**battle of ideas
charity
annual report
FY 2020-21**

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 2020 to 31 March 2021.

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)

Philip Roy Mullan (full year)

Luke Samuel Gittos (full year)

Sheila Frances Lewis (full year, treasurer)

Advisors:

Jane Sandeman (independent examiner, fellow member of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants)

Key employees:

Geoff Kidder (chief executive)

Alastair Donald (secretary)

Address and contact:

Battle of Ideas

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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.



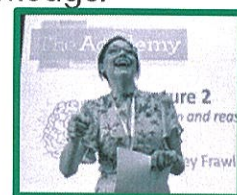
Living Freedom

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.



Free Speech Champions

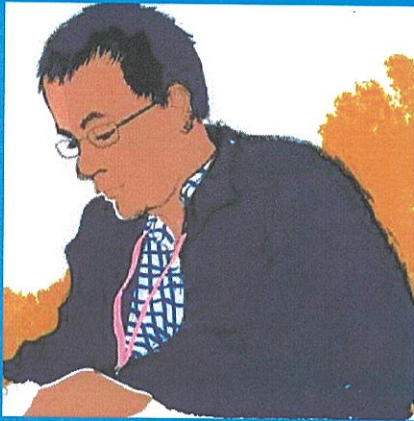
boi is a partner of Free Speech Champions, an initiative to encourage free speech and create a space for free thinking, particularly among the younger generation



**our work
this year**



chief executive's comment



**Geoff Kidder,
Chief Executive**

“For society, this has been a challenging year. It has also been a challenging year for charities of all shapes and sizes. For a small charity such as ours, whose work is so bound up with the cut and thrust of normal life, it has been especially challenging. It is undoubtedly more difficult to promote a rounded education and advance citizenship when society is subject to such sweeping restrictions on normal life. Nonetheless, I am proud of what the charity has achieved in this period. In the space of a few weeks, we adapted the Debating Matters competition to move it online – and saw a hugely encouraging response from teachers, judges and students. It really was a lifeline. When the pandemic was at its height, we were able to bring together a diverse group of people for a special half-day Living Freedom Online event. Critical thinking has been in short supply over the last year, and moving our Academy event online was a necessary decision that gave attendees some intellectual context to big events shaping society. What’s more, we partnered with a brand new initiative in Free Speech Champions. There are many big challenges facing society as we emerge from the pandemic period. I am confident that our activities, in a small way, will help people grapple with them.

Debating Matters

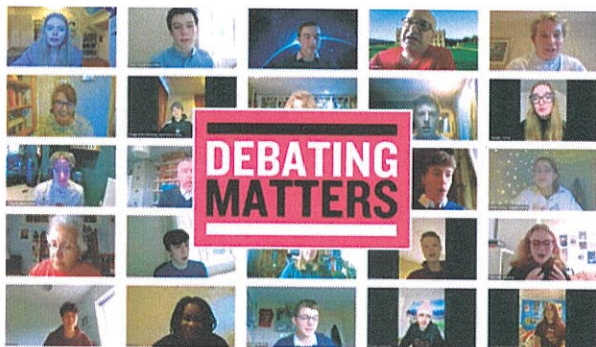
**DEBATING
MATTERS**

DM thrived in tough circumstances this year. With schools subject to sweeping restrictions, teachers and pupils had to adapt quickly to online lessons.

Debating Matters Online was rapidly conceived at the height of the pandemic by the Debating Matters national coordinator, Mo Lovatt, as an antidote to the restrictions on social and intellectual life. With schools restricted to bubbles, the online championships were a much needed opportunity for social interaction between schools across the country.

Equally, the championships were an opportunity to debate and discuss both sides of the argument on difficult contemporary dilemmas.

- Over **150** school pupils
- Featuring **25** schools from around the UK and Germany
- Over **50** volunteer judges
- Released **7** new topic guides



Our first set of online debates were something of an experiment. Featuring schools that had reached out to the competition as lockdown hit, we wanted to see if our renowned debating format would work online. We were hugely encouraged by the response, and our first batch of debates from April to May featured 12 schools across the country, including one memorable debate

between Thornhill College Derry and East London Science School – a real advert for how Debating Matters Online allowed schools to come together across the country.

With the online format tested and ready, we held our first ever online championships in November and December. In these, it was Maidstone Grammar and Barnard Castle schools who came out top, beating off some tough competition along the way. All the schools involved showed real spirit in adapting to the online format.



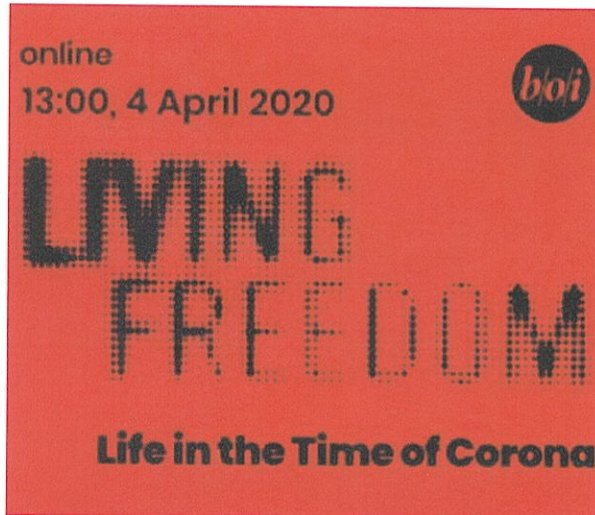
As we went into 2021, Debating Matters held two further online championships. The first, in January, saw The Ecclesbourne School come out top. Their teacher, Louise Dawson, reflected: *“It is no exaggeration to say that Debating Matters has literally changed their lives. This has been the best thing in a dark time.”*

In February, we travelled, albeit only virtually, to Berlin. Despite the restrictions on travel, we were delighted to be able to continue the longstanding partnership with the championship in Berlin. It was Humboldt Gymnasium who came out top, beating five other schools from around Berlin.

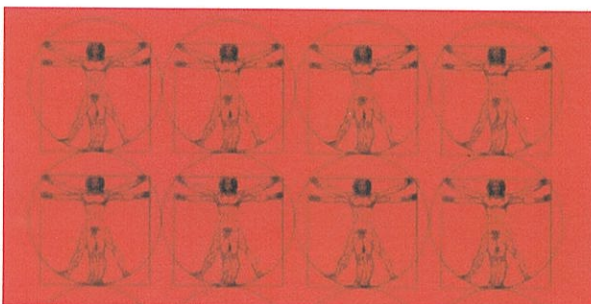
Living Freedom



Living Freedom was the first event the charity had to move online, and it proved to be especially useful. When society was facing so much uncertainty, the boi charity's Alastair Donald grasped the opportunity to probe the history of societal responses to adversity, and understand better the relationship between science and politics.



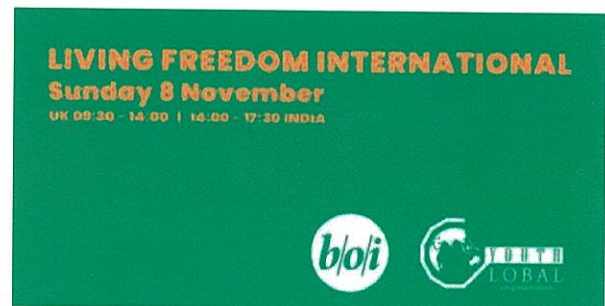
When lockdown orders were in place, it was a much-needed opportunity for people to meet minds across the country and get a handle on the momentous events shaping the response to the pandemic.



One of the opportunities opened up by the pandemic was to make events truly international. With things taking place on Zoom, it becomes easier to involve people no matter where they are.

It was in this context that a new partnership emerged between Living Freedom and Global Youth, an India-based network of young people.

Living Freedom International was a great event which brought together the two networks to frame a series of discussions on contemporary themes, but with a genuinely international twist.



All participants found that having this mixture of perspectives made the discussions that much richer.

Having attended and enjoyed Living Freedom International, many of the Indian attendees were attracted to Academy Online events that followed, adding a youthful presence and injection of energy to this established event.



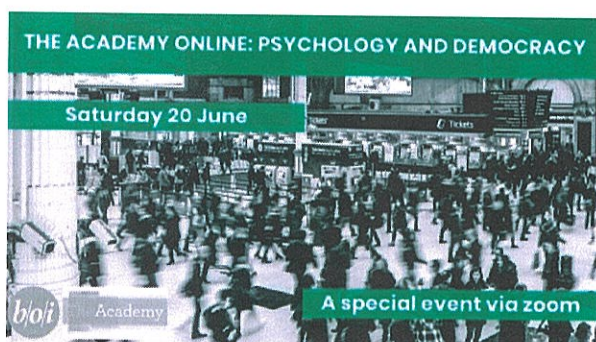
The Academy

The Academy

The Academy in this period was an exercise in intellectual flexibility.

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.

When the pandemic hit, old intellectual certainties seemed to have been upended overnight. Whilst our planned event – a weekend of in-person discussions and self-education – couldn't go ahead, we knew the ethos of The Academy was needed as never before.

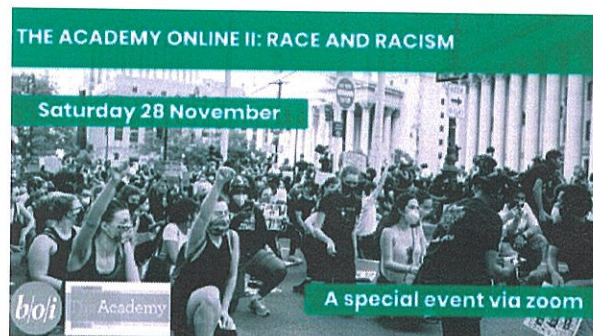


So this year, the boi charity's external affairs manager, Jacob Reynolds, quickly organised a new format for the event. We ran a series of Academy Online events, probing the intellectual history of important contemporary trends.

With the new prominence of modelling, nudging and behavioural science advice, our first-ever online event examined how psychological categories came to occupy such an important role in public life. We looked at why intellectuals and social planners become increasingly attracted by psychology as a way of explaining the decisions – and supposed deficiencies – of the general public.

Our second event was an attempt to understand the history and context of race, given the huge protests under the banner of Black Lives Matter.

We examined how race and racial thinking historically emerged in the wake of, and as justification for, colonialism, slavery, and imperialism. We explored how anti-racist intellectuals from WEB Du Bois to Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin to Ta-Nehisi Coates grappled with 'race' as a concept – sometimes accepting it as a grim reality, often arguing to overturn it.



One of the huge benefits of holding these events online was the wide variety of people we could involve. We had attendees from all over the world and every walk of life. This made for a genuinely open intellectual endeavour.

It also made it slightly easier for us to turn the lectures into podcasts, which will live on through Ideas Matter, the boi charity podcast.



Free Speech Champions



The boi charity worked with the Free Speech Union to support and help develop a new initiative, Free Speech Champions (FSC), which was initiated by Inaya Folarin Iman.

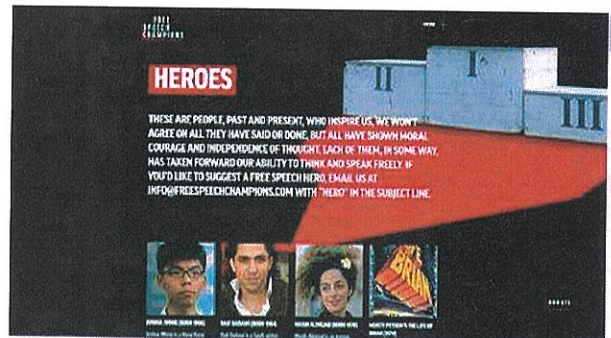
This two-year, non-partisan programme is aimed primarily at universities and schools and seeks to promote the importance of, and secure support for, pluralism, tolerance and the ability of citizens to express themselves freely and engage in open debate.



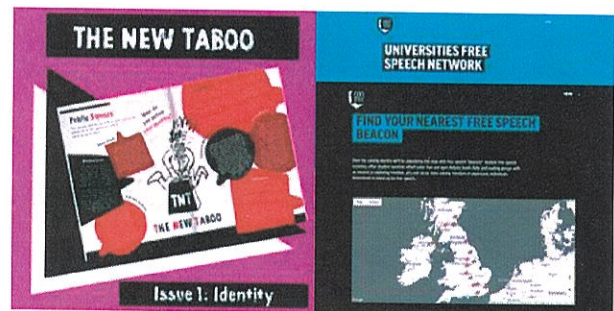
Every year brings new cohorts of young people into universities and sixth forms. While they may instinctively support values of free thinking and free expression, they often find themselves in environments which no longer consistently uphold these values. Free Speech Champions creates the forums, resources and networks that can help expand young people's knowledge of and understanding of free speech.



FSC launched on 1 February with an online public debate and website containing resources such as Free Speech Topic Guides, Free Speech Heroes and an ongoing series of events.



Amidst national press coverage and word of mouth, FSC has quickly garnered interest and developed its champions programme of young people taking responsibility for creating an on-going events programme, promotions, social-media work and writing comment pieces.



Notably, new plans emerged to finesse and develop FSC for the year ahead including developing an FSC magazine, *The New Taboo*, written by champions and supporters for a young audience interested in free speech and also developing arrangements for a network of free-speech societies across the UK.

**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?

Once again, the quality of debate at events has been very high. It is a regular feature of our events that attendees observe how the quality and variety of ideas presented are unlike any other events they attend. In the Debating Matters competition, new Topic Guides have encouraged students to avoid soundbites and reflect on important contemporary issues. Keeping the format of DM similar online helped preserve the 'substance over style' ethos, which delivers significant public benefit in the form of a richer exploration of key issues. The Academy Online events provided genuine intellectual background to contemporary issues such as the pandemic and Black Lives Matter, in a way unlikely to be found elsewhere.

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

The pandemic deprived the charity of its usual formats and some of our audiences. Nonetheless, our online events have attracted a genuinely large and varied audience, including up to 350 at one of the Academy Online events, and over 100 students. Some previous attendees made the switch easily to online, and along the way we have picked up new attendees from around the UK and beyond who may not have been able to attend in-person events in the past. People from all walks of life have been present at our events, and from all age ranges.

The Debating Matters Championships in this period saw a genuine mix of state and independent schools, and a range of social, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds. This broad mix was clearly apparent with Living Freedom and The Academy, too. In fact, working online helped make these events more open and accessible than ever. Our 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 competitions featured real geographical spread: schools ranged from the north of the country as well as Northern Ireland, to London and Dorset in the south. What's more, these groups were brought into a conversation in a way that has proven difficult in the past when travel prevents such schools mixing with each other. While online socialising is not the same as real life, students did get valuable exposure to peers across the country.

Similar things are true of Living Freedom, and indeed the partnership with India-based Global Youth, which forged bonds across continents. Likewise, at The Academy, attendees had a chance to engage in a genuinely national and international conversation at a time when social bonds were so restrained owing to lockdowns and international restrictions.

our year in brief

1,000+

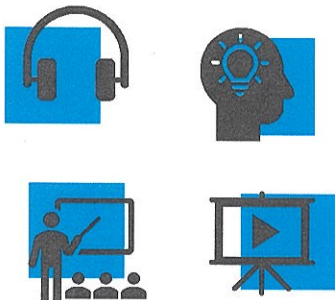
Individuals participated in online debates, talks, seminars and more



Online events joined up people from across the UK, Europe, India, America

25

Schools from around the UK and Germany engaged in online debates



Twenty high-quality lectures and discussions released as podcasts or YouTube videos

our year in quotes

“We are in a state of shock! Everyone in the team has been in touch to say how much they enjoyed the whole experience. They worked so hard and I am very proud of them. We entered the competition with no expectations of doing anything more than taking part. We never expected to get this far let alone win. The students have learned so much and greatly appreciated the respect the judges have shown through their tough questioning. The students keep asking me: what next? It is no exaggeration to say that Debating Matters has literally changed their lives. This has been the best thing in a dark time.”

Louise Dawson, teacher, The Ecclesbourne School

“I am a huge fan of Debating Matters competitions. They are a fantastic way to bring back these critical life skills into schools. I worry hugely about the decline of debate in society and the polarisation that has happened through short-form social media. What Debating Matters is doing is encouraging young people to think through these important questions and to have the discussions productively and positively.”

Jess Butcher MBE, Judge, Debating Matters

“With Free Speech Champions, I am surrounded by people who share a similar commitment to free inquiry and expression. Perhaps the only two fundamental values I carry with me and look for in others.”

Gabriele Sartoris, Free Speech Champion

“Involving myself in free-speech issues has been incredibly rewarding, it has given me a passion project and has allowed me to connect with like minded people.”

Euan Clayton, Free Speech Champion

“The Academy Online was a genuine intellectual lifeline during very dark times. It was invaluable to be able to meet minds from across the world as we all tried to make sense of what was happening to society. The intellectual rigour of The Academy Online really helped place things in a broad historical context. I loved it.”

Matthew Kruger, Academy Online Attendee

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

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Total funds	Prior year funds
	£	£	£	£
Income				
Donations and legacies	187,870	75,700	263,570	78,382
Charitable activities	2,846	11,930	14,776	41,732
Other	11	-	11	36
Total	190,727	87,630	278,357	120,150
Expenditure				
Raising funds	19,615	-	19,615	5,484
Charitable activities	55,874	77,200	133,074	65,829
Other	22,135	-	22,135	16,755
Total	97,624	77,200	174,824	88,068
Net income/(expenditure) before tax for the reporting period	93,103	10,430	103,533	32,082
Net income/(expenditure) after tax before investment gains/(losses)	93,103	10,430	103,533	32,082
Net income/(expenditure)	93,103	10,430	103,533	32,082
Net movement in funds	93,103	10,430	103,533	32,082
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	44,952	-	44,952	12,870
Total funds carried forward	138,055	10,430	148,485	44,952

accounts – income

Analysis of income	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Total funds	Prior year
	£	£	£	£
Donations and legacies				
Donations and gifts	180917	75700	256617	73345
Gift Aid	6953	-	6953	5037
Total	187870	75700	263570	78382
Charitable activities				
Debating Matters	201	11930	12131	8277
The Academy	313	-	313	27955
Free Speech Champions	2000	-	2000	1250
Living Freedom	294	-	294	3400
Other debates		-	-	850
Other	38	-	38	-
Total	2846	11930	14776	41732
Other				
Other	11	-	11	36
Total	11	0	11	36
TOTAL INCOME	190727	87630	278357	120150

accounts – expenditure

Analysis of expenditure	This year			Last year		
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Total funds	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Total funds
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Expenditure on raising funds						
Incurring seeking donations	2009	-	2009	1000	-	1000
Incurring seeking grants	15925	-	15925	2400	-	2400
Staging fundraising events	500	-	500	917	-	917
Advertising, marketing, direct mail and publicity	1181	-	1181	1167	-	1167
Total expenditure on raising funds	19615	-	19615	5484	-	5484
Expenditure on charitable activities						
Debating Matters	22665	1500	24165	35226	-	35226
The Academy	16358	-	16358	10743	-	10743
Living Freedom	6977	-	6977	18453	-	18453
Free Speech Champions	9874	75700	85574	-	-	-
Question Time	-	-	-	1407	-	1407
Total expenditure on charitable activities	55874	77200	133074	65829	-	65829
Other						
Support costs	19274	-	19274	11984	-	11984
Legal costs	-	-	0	1500	-	1500
Other office costs	2861	-	2861	3271	-	3271
Total other expenditure	22135	0	22135	16755	-	16755
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	97624	77200	174824	88068	-	88068

restricted funds

Restricted funds	Balance at 1 Apr 2020	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Balance 31 Mar 2021
	£	£	£	£
PERT	-	10,430	1,500	8,930
Thomas Howell	-	1,500	-	-
FSC	-	75,700	75,700	-
Total	-	87,630	77,200	8,930

The nature and the purpose of the restricted funds can be summarised as follows:

The Politics and Economics Research Trust (PERT) awarded the charity a grant to conduct three Debating Matters championships on topics of public policy and to produce a report examining the views of pupils on public policy issues as encountered through the championships.

Thomas Howell's Education Fund for North Wales have contributed a grant of £1500 to run a North Wales Debating Matters Championship with eight sixth-form schools and colleges across Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham.

Donations have been received for the Free Speech Champions Project, all of which have been transferred to the Project.

declaration

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

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Full name:

PHILIP ROY MULLAN

Signature:

Philip Roy Mullan

Position:

Trustee

Date:

9 December 2021