

battle of ideas annual report FY 2021-22

**charity number 1178999
company number 11213433**



about the Battle of Ideas

The trustees present their report along with the financial statements of the charity for the financial year beginning 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Battle of Ideas 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)

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Battle of Ideas

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Structure, governance and management

- Battle of Ideas is governed by a memorandum and articles of company association
- 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

Battle of Ideas 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 Battle of Ideas 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.



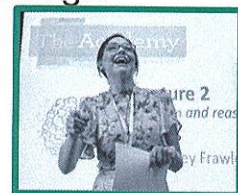
Living Freedom

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

Battle of Ideas 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**

"This year has seen the easing of Covid restrictions and the gradual resumption of normal life. While it might have felt like time stood still, public discussion has moved on and there have been many new questions to tackle. With the return to public life, we leapt at the chance to restart in-person events to discuss and debate the issues of the time we find ourselves in, while also reaping the benefits of continuing our online presence. We had a full house at the return of Living Freedom to the physical world. This was a fantastic event to return with as it explored the sense of self and identity. Debating Matters saw online success as it was able to have schools from opposite ends of the country compete, with judges remarking on how high the standard of debate and how dynamic the cut and thrust was, even over the online medium. We held two online editions of The Academy, each with between three and four hundred attendees tuning in from around the world. Again, keeping these events online allowed us to reach a wide and diverse audience and it was great to see the depth of discussion that resulted. Free Speech Champions has come into its stride and has become a haven for free thinkers in a world hostile to challenge. Now society has opened back up, the Battle of Ideas can continue to help create an atmosphere that is just as open to the debate and discussion of ideas."

Debating Matters

**DEBATING
MATTERS**

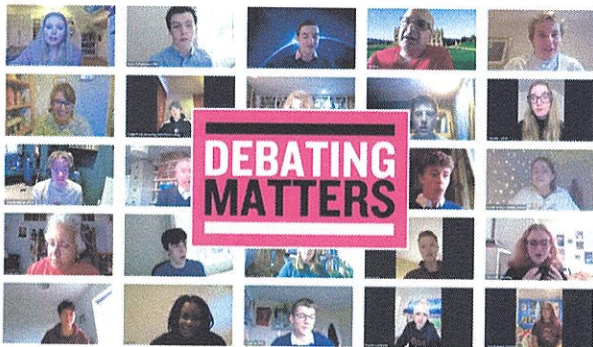
DM continued to flourish as lockdown restrictions eased. With life gradually getting back to normal, DM used the many lessons of lockdown to continue providing events.

In association with The Politics and Economics Research Trust (PERT), DM organised three Public Policy Championships. These championships carried the aim of getting students to debate issues of contemporary relevance to public policy issues in the UK today. These lasted a week, with group stages and a final for the winner of each of the two groups.

The first of these was won by Barnard Castle School, with all debates being hard fought and students coping well under the pressure of the judges and each others questions and challenges.

Maidstone Grammar won the second Public Policy Championship and the third championship was taken by Bacup & Rawtenstall Grammar School.

- Over **100** school pupils
- Featuring **18** schools from around the UK
- Over **50** volunteer judges
- Released **6** new or updated topic guides



After last year's success, we continued holding online championships. As well as the Public Policy Championships, we also held one stand alone Debating Matters Online championship. These were all a success, with students showing, as usual, their impressive abilities to adapt their arguments in response to their opponents and to prioritise substance over style.



We continued to update existing and release new topic guides for our debates. Our renowned topic guides are known for their style of framing debates and giving fuel to both sides of the argument. Topics are chosen to make students tackle contemporary controversies about political, social and technological questions that will be formative to society going forward.

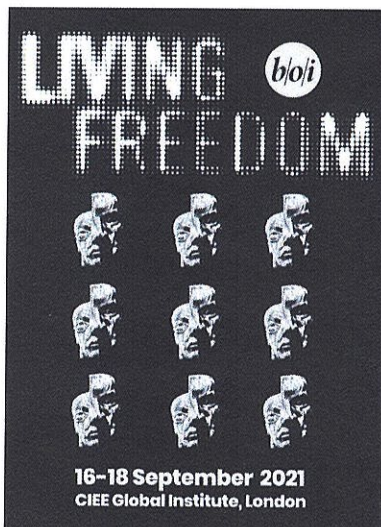
This year we updated topic guides on subjects including technology's ability to solve environmental problems, the acceptability of contact sports, whether controversial statues should remain and what tech companies should do to stop online misinformation.

Looking to the future, we also announced we would be returning to Berlin in June 2022. Having kept DM Berlin alive through the pandemic, via a shift to online competition, we are delighted to be going back to Berlin to keep in-person Debating Matters competitions going internationally.

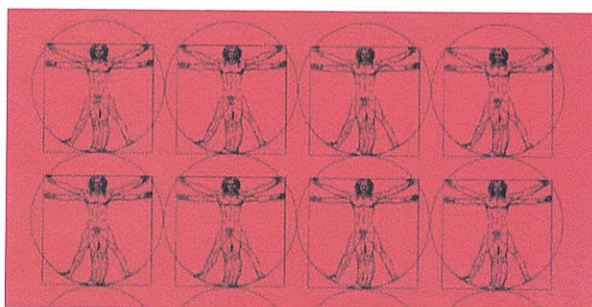
Living Freedom

LIVING
FREEDOM

Having been the first event the charity moved online last year, it was fantastic to be able to hold Living Freedom in-person again in 2021. Living Freedom returned to the CIEE Global Institute, London, to engage a group of young people in discussion about the individual and sense of self, the politicised sense of individual identity and what this does for freedom in the context of the culture wars.



Opening this year's event was a lecture on the history of the concept of 'identity crisis'. This set the scene for discussion around the politicisation of identity and how it can be harnessed to contradict liberal ideals and potentially divide society.



Next came a lecture on conscience and its implications for liberty. Participants were asked to engage with the ways the idea of conscience can be used to promote liberty - but also to shut down debate. Discussion also touched on the tensions between private feeling and public duty, and what other issues could benefit from the moral language of conscience.

After this came discussions of emotionality in contemporary debate - a hotbed topic in the aftermath of the pandemic and the heavy moralising around its associated arenas of debate. We also engaged in discussion over emotionality's relationship with art, identity and orthodoxy, free expression in a digital age and women's liberation vs contemporary feminism.

These topics were particularly apt as the first post-lockdown, in-person Living Freedom, as many contemporary debates had been moved further into the realm of identity politics by individuals, isolated by lockdown, becoming more insular in their analysis of freedom, identity and politics more generally.

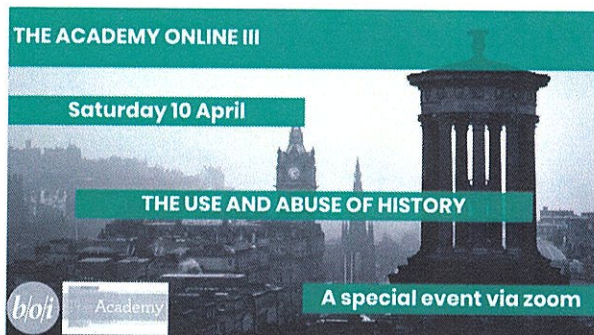


The Academy

The Academy

The Academy has continued its online format.

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.



Continuing on from the success of The Academy Online last year, we had two more online meetings this year. It has been great to see something born out of necessity during lockdown turn into a success in its own right as it has expanded the scope of the Academy.

The first of the events was titled, 'The Use and Abuse of History'. This was a day of lectures and discussion on the prevalence of historical comparisons in politics and how we relate to history today. This began with a lecture from Professor Frank Furedi on contemporary attempts to reframe or even conceal our history. This was a great lecture to set the scene for the commencing day of thought and discussion about our relationship with history, and its social and political consequences. Continuing the day, we held discussions titled, 'Relic or Spectre: what was Fascism?', and 'Sin of Freedom: what was the foundation of America?'

Our second online edition of The Academy was in November, in which we discussed the changing nature of the 'elite' who wield power. Topics within this theme included, the growth of 'the managerial class,' globalism and cultural elitism. Again, we started with a lecture framing the day's topic, titled 'The insecurity of the ruling class and the rise of the cultural elite'. After this, topics discussed were: 'The Stonewall Phenomenon: takeover of the institutions?'; 'Globalism and the challenge to the international elite'; 'Brideshead Revisited: World wars and the end of the old elite' and 'What's wrong with the Professional Managerial Class'.

Both events of The Academy this year had over three hundred participants from all over the world, giving a wide range of perspectives and the insightful discussion that came with it.



Free Speech Champions



The Battle of Ideas worked with the Free Speech Union to support and grow Free Speech Champions (FSC), which was initiated by Inaya Folarin Iman in 2021.

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.



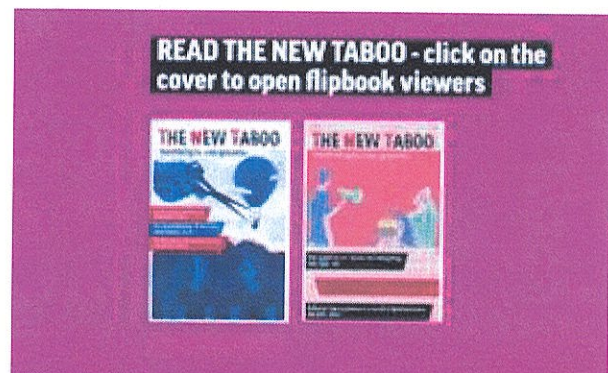
Every year brings new cohorts of young people into universities and sixth forms. Among the initiatives undertaken this year, Battle of Ideas worked with FSC to create 'Teaching Tolerance', a research initiative that gathers input and ideas as to how we can embed the virtues of tolerance and viewpoint diversity in schools. This will lay the basis for development in 2022/2023 for a new debating initiative in schools.



FSC developed their online public 'drop ins' debate series, regularly attracting a diverse audience interested in key free-speech issues. The FSC website provided a useful means to access resources, including Free Speech Topic Guides, Free Speech Heroes and a developing library of videos of events.



FSC has continued to garner interest, meeting young people including a Living Freedom school and integrating them into their network by taking advantage of new online tools such as Discord.



Meanwhile, as FSC's network has flourished, a growing pool of writers contributed to a new edition of *The New Taboo*, covering a diverse range of issues from Covid lockdowns to artistic freedom and abortion to cultural appropriation.

**our public
benefit**



assessing our public benefit

The Battle of Ideas 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?

As is often commented on by first-time participants, debate and discussion has continued to be of a high standard at our events. In line with our motto of 'substance over style', Debating Matters competitors have used the topic guides well to research and compose robust arguments without writing off the other side. Both The Academy and Living Freedom provided a forum for high-level discussion of ideas of contemporary importance. A rich diversity of opinion created challenging discussion that meant everyone left better informed and with a more nuanced opinion. Lecturers did well to frame complex and conceptual debates and provide direction for discussion.

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

Debating Matters gathered together a variety of private, grammar and comprehensive schools, promoting intellectual debate and interaction between school students from a variety of backgrounds. Both Debating Matters and The Academy held online events which meant a high level of accessibility for those for whom travel costs would make our events unavailable. Furthermore, the recording and sharing on social media of our events increases our audience by making events accessible to people who are not available at the time.

Living Freedom also saw a good attendance as it returned to in-person events. Living Freedom was the biggest it has ever been with 60 attendees and 30 speakers. While still online, The Academy had between 300 and 400 watching each online event. Both Living Freedom and The Academy had a wide range of social, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds in attendance.

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?

As with last year, the online component of our events has expanded our geographical spread. We have had not only UK-wide attendance but also international interest in our events, with insightful contributions coming from people in other countries and the perspectives their contexts bring.

Debating Matters had schools competing from all around the country. Again, the online format of the championships allowed for geographically distant students to interact and debate with each other.

our year in brief

25

Schools from around the UK engaged in online debates

1,000+

Individuals participated in online debates, talks, seminars and more



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



44 high-quality lectures and discussions, many of which were released as podcasts or YouTube videos

our year in quotes

'The Living Freedom school was excellent, as I've already said, for its intellectual curiosity and willingness to challenge orthodoxy, go beyond contemporary arguments and allow a space for shared debate.'

Noah Keate, Living Freedom Attendee

'The respectful approach taken by the chairs, the high-quality insights and questioning from the judges and a format which really does allow students to develop nuanced arguments and hone skills which cannot otherwise be taught in the classroom, ensure that even in its 20th or so year, Debating Matters remains fresh, relevant and undoubtedly one of the very best extracurricular opportunities offered to 6th form students.'

Chris Millington, teacher, Oldham Hulme Grammar School

'I hugely enjoyed my time at Living Freedom 2021. The guest speakers were all fascinating to listen to and the chance to meet a lot of interesting fellow free-speech supporters from a broad range of backgrounds and views was unmissable. The best part was the discussions we all had together, talking with the speakers and each other, disagreeing often but in a friendly and enlightening way. Roll on next year!'

Daniel Sharpe, Living Freedom Attendee

'A wonderful opportunity for bright students to engage with current issues. My students loved taking part.'

Veronica Denman, teacher, Farringtons School

'The Living Freedom school was a great opportunity to discuss the most important cultural issues of our time with people of different value systems. Although there were often stark disagreements, there was a charitable attitude underlying all discourse and a common commitment to the importance of being able to freely express opinions.'

Paul Sapper, Living Freedom Attendee

accounts



accounts - summary

The Battle of Ideas policy on reserves

- We have a Reserves Policy that has been agreed by the trustees. In short, it states that:
 - We will hold reserves to protect itself against major risks identified in the Reserves Policy
 - Battle of Ideas 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	73,554	35,201	108,755	263,570
Charitable activities	-	43,555	43,555	14,776
Other	17	-	17	11
Total	73,571	78,756	152,327	278,357
Expenditure				
Raising funds	16,708	-	16,708	19,615
Charitable activities	16,946	70,621	87,567	133,074
Other	18,747	-	18,747	22,135
Total	52,401	70,621	123,022	174,824
Net income/(expenditure) before tax for the reporting period	21,170	8,135	29,305	103,533
Net income/(expenditure) after tax before investment gains/(losses)	21,170	8,135	29,305	103,533
Net income/(expenditure)	21,170	8,135	29,305	103,533
Net movement in funds	21,170	8,135	29,305	103,533
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	148,485	-	148,485	44,952
Total funds carried forward	169,655	8,135	177,790	148,485

accounts – income

Analysis of income	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Total funds	Prior year
	£	£	£	£
Donations and legacies				
Donations and gifts	50,533	35,201	85,734	180,917
Gift Aid	13,021	-	13,021	6,953
General grants provided by government/other charities	10,000	-	10,000	-
Total	73,554	35,201	108,755	187,870
Charitable activities				
Debating Matters	-	17,405	17,405	201
The Academy	-	6,874	6,874	313
Living Freedom	-	19,276	19,276	294
Free Speech Champions	-	-	-	2,000
Other	-	-	-	38
Total	-	43,555	43,555	2,846
Other				
Other	17	-	17	11
Total	17	-	17	11
TOTAL INCOME	73,571	78,756	152,327	190,727

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						
Incurred seeking donations	3,000	-	3,000	2,009	-	2,009
Incurred seeking grants	12,695	-	12,695	15,925	-	15,925
Staging fundraising events	-	-	-	500	-	500
Advertising, marketing, direct mail and publicity	1,013	-	1,013	1,181	-	1,181
Total expenditure on raising funds	16,708	-	16,708	19,615	-	19,615
Expenditure on charitable activities						
Debating Matters	811	19,874	20,755	22,665	1,500	24,165
The Academy	1,000	-	1,000	16,358	-	16,358
Living Freedom	9,760	17,533	27,293	6,977	-	6,977
Free Speech Champions	5,305	33,214	38,519	9,874	75,700	85,574
Total expenditure on charitable activities	16,946	70,621	87,567	55,874	77,200	133,074
Other						
Support costs	14,590	-	14,590	19,274	-	19,274
Legal costs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other office costs	4,157	-	4,157	2,861	-	2,861
Total other expenditure	18,747	-	18,747	22,135	-	22,135
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	52,401	70,621	123,022	97,624	77,200	174,824

restricted funds

Restricted funds	Balance at 1 Apr 2021	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Balance 31 Mar 2022
	£	£	£	£
FSC Donations	-	33,214	33,214	-
Debating Matters Donations	-	1,987	290	1,698
The Academy Fees	-	6,874	-	6,874
Federation of Awarding Bodies	-	5,000	-	5,000
PERT	8,930	10,430	19,360	-
Debating Matters School Fees	-	224	224	-
FSC Charitable Activities	-	19,276	17,533	1,743
Barbour Foundation	-	1,000	-	1,000
Oakdale Trust	-	750	-	750
Thomas Howell Trust	1,500	-	-	1,500
Total	10,430	78,756	70,621	18,565

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

The Politics and Economics Research Trust (PERT) awarded Battle of Ideas 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.

Debating Matters received grants from the Federation of Awarding Bodies, the Barbour Foundation and the Oakdale Trust. Debating Matters also raised money in individual donations and school fees.

Donations have been received for the Free Speech Champions Project, all of which have been transferred to the Project. In addition, we received funding from Free Speech Champions to help with Living Freedom.

declaration

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

Signed on behalf of Battle of Ideas trustees:

Full name:

PHILIP ROY MULLAN

Signature:

Philip Roy Mullan

Position:

Trustee

Date:

24 January 2023