

ANNUAL REVIEW 2020





2020 was unprecedented: a rollercoaster ride for small charities such as KOAS.

The national lockdowns for COVID-19 forced us to close the observatory doors from mid March to 1st August, and again towards the end of the year. Thanks to support from the government and other funders, we reached our financial year-end on 31st August in far better shape than we might have anticipated back in March. We've had to use some of our limited reserves, but our team is intact, the observatory is in tip-top condition, we've launched several new initiatives, and we're well positioned to provide remote support to schools across the North of Tyne Combined Authority area.

We're optimistic and looking forward to being able to continue helping people to experience that very special "Kielder moment" in pioneering new ways. We owe this optimism to many people and organisations but especially to our amazing team of staff, volunteers and trustees, who have shown outstanding commitment and enthusiasm.

Most importantly, we're immensely grateful to everyone who managed to visit the observatory during the year, and to those who lit up our website with bookings as soon as we were allowed to reopen our doors. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Peter Standfield, Chair of Trustees



"At last I popped out above the tree tops to a wind swept hillside, it felt like the far side of nowhere. Kielder Observatory is stunning, a wooden ship sailing on the tree tops of the 150,000 acre forest. The views are even better."

Julia Barthram, ITV Tyne Tees

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

"Amazing location, excellent staff, really engaged with the children. Awesome!"

"Fantastic in place, felt like being on another planet- so dark and high up! The staff were brilliant- so friendly and professional, and with an infectious enthusiasm. They really know their stuff!"

"This place is excellent. I've been here four times now and it just keeps getting better."

"Absolutely superb. I thought it would be enjoyable but this exceeded my expectations. I can't speak highly enough of the knowledgeable staff."

"What a lovely antidote to lockdown - stargazing on a clear night. Lovely enthusiastic staff - so much positivity."

"A trip to Kielder Observatory is unforgettable. From the drive out to the remote location through glorious unspoilt countryside and up the winding track through beautiful pine forests to the hill top site above, you know you're in for a treat."

"We felt safe and happy with the COVID precautions that have been put in place, we felt we were lucky to be part of only 16 participants for the event."





MEET THE TEAM

- **Jesse Beaman**, Science Communication
- **Alison Booth**, Finance
- **Hayden Goodfellow**, Science Communication
- **Nazanin Jahanshahi**, Science Communication and Sustainability
- **Natasha Lund**, Science Communication and Arts
- **Ellie MacDonald**, Science Communication
- **Daniel Monk**, Senior Astronomer and Dark Sky Outreach
- **George Pattinson**, Science Communication and Science Development
- **Patti Purcell**, Office and Quality Management
- **Daniel Pye**, Science Communication and Visitor Experience
- **Liam Reid**, Science Communication
- **Adam Shore**, Science Communication and Education Outreach
- **Heather Woodfine**, Administration and Marketing





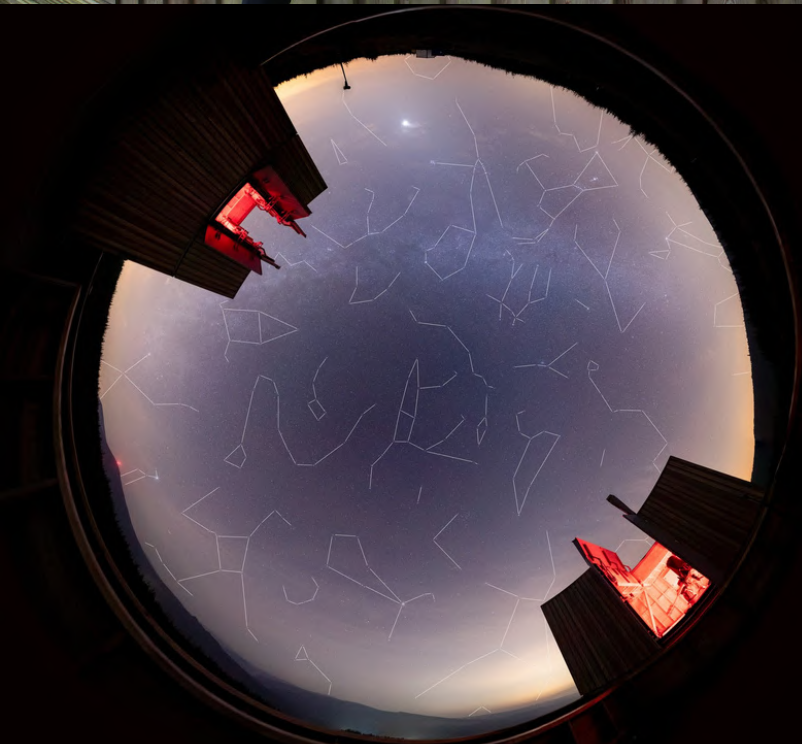
It is safe to say that I had not anticipated a global pandemic when I took on the role of CEO in September 2019. Our biggest problem then was accommodating the number of people wanting to visit, with events selling out months in advance.

What a different year it's turned out to be. Closing our doors in March 2020 for four months broke our hearts, yet gave us the opportunity to accelerate our thinking about how we deliver that transformative moment of Kielder hope differently, and to many more people. We have articulated this in our new strategic approach, Kielder Constellations (below).

Feedback from our visitors indicates how much experiences such as Kielder Observatory are needed to help people step away from everyday stresses and anxieties, and regain a sense of hope and peace.

Thank you to the amazing team, the trustees, our partners and supporters for making this possible.

Catherine Johns, CEO







HIGHLIGHTS

- A new SPIDER 500 radio telescope, courtesy of the Tanlaw Foundation
- North East Social Tech funding to start developing an augmented reality app
- Engaging with 5,000 schoolchildren, courtesy of the North of Tyne Combined Authority
- A new events calendar, including relaxed events for people of different needs
- Record ticket sales when we reopened after lockdown
- Positive visitor feedback about our COVID-secure procedures
- Emergency funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Launching "Paint the Sky", allowing artists to exhibit at the Observatory
- National coverage in The One Show, The Times, and The Guardian
- Launching "Escape Velocity", an astrophotography project for children, courtesy of Northumberland County Council
- Launching "From STEM to stars", to restore an original Herschel telescope, courtesy of the Reece Foundation
- Comet NEOWISE!

KIELDER CONSTELLATIONS

Kielder Constellations is our new approach to delivering our purpose: to create opportunities for people of all backgrounds and abilities to experience moments of inspiration, revelation, wonder and hope through observing the cosmos.

We recognise that not everyone can visit the Kielder Observatory site, yet through observing the stars, we can understand more about ourselves, and more about what our place on this Earth means. Everyone needs that moment of inspiration, everyone deserves to have that lightbulb moment. Kielder Constellations, therefore, is our way of bringing that Kielder Observatory moment to everyone.

Kielder Constellations has three overarching aims:

1. To put people at the heart of everything we do, extending our reach to more people and to a more diverse audience
2. To build our reputation as a gold standard in dark sky observation, imaging and outreach
3. To strengthen our organisation, building resilience and inspiring innovation.

These aims and approach form a strategic framework to guide our decision-making about projects, programmes and initiatives.

We know that we will be living with uncertainty for some time.

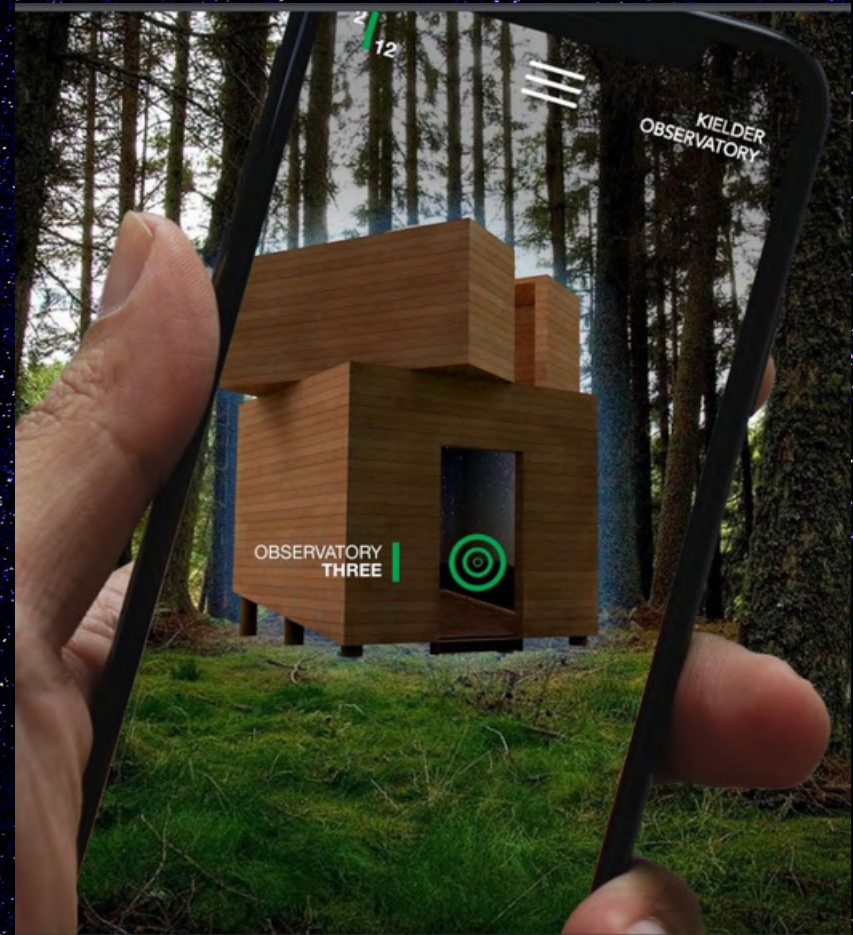
But we are excited by the possibilities of thinking differently about Kielder Observatory and how to maximise our positive impact.

In the next 12 months, we aim to:

- Commission our new radio telescope
- Launch a digital learning platform
- Launch our Augmented Reality app
- Launch Star Groups in schools across the North East
- Support young artists in Northumberland
- Protect and restore the heritage of observation in the North East
- Champion the preservation of dark skies

And much much more.

LOOKING FORWARD



WITH GRATEFUL THANKS TO



Advance Northumberland
Arts Council England
Digital Catapult North East and Tees Valley
Durham University
Forestry England
The Gillian Dickinson Trust
Helix Arts
International Dark Sky Association
The Joicey Trust
Kielder Parish Council
Kielder School
The Kielder Trust and Kielder partners
National Lottery Heritage Fund
Newcastle University
The North of Tyne Combined Authority
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland National Park Authority
Northumbrian Water
The Reece Foundation
Sunderland University
The Tanlaw Foundation
Visit Northumberland
The WISE Academies Trust

And all our fellow observatories - clear skies!



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