



## Chair's Report 2025-26

Thank you all for being here at the BCA's Annual General Meeting - our key formal gathering of the year. This meeting brings together committee members and the wider membership to reflect on the association's activities during the 2025 calendar year, adopt the 2025 annual accounts, and appoint officers for the year ahead.

Before we move on, I'd like to look back on what we've accomplished over the past twelve months and to share our focus and ambitions for the year ahead.

I'm pleased to report that the building was well utilised in 2025 hosting the BCA's 'Sections' other regular groups, member's private hire as well as non-member hirers. Around 51% of the BCA's income is from room hire and the facility plays an important role as the only community and recreational space in the local area. Thank you to all BCA sections, local groups, members and new hirers for making active use of the facility.

Another important aspect of the BCA's purpose comes from BCA led-social events. I'd particularly like to highlight the Wednesday Coffee Morning, which continues to offer a warm and welcoming space for people to meet to have a hot drink and delicious home-baked treats generously provided by volunteers. Their hard work is greatly appreciated. In 2025, Josie and team kindly and expertly organised two Sunday Lunch events and two Quiz evenings as well as the Christmas Show, all of which add value to our community. A big thank you to Josie and volunteers for all their hard-work. The income from all BCA led events makes a significant contribution to the BCA's finances.

The BCA Management Committee has also been working hard to keep the building in good repair. With thanks to Jo and Ian who continue to address the administrative workload associated with the building's licences, insurance, and charity compliance. Some key efforts this year have included:

- Continuing our energy-efficiency investment plan with further electrical upgrades, including installing PIR energy-saving light sensors in the Ladies' and Gents' toilets and the hallway.
- Repurposing the stage storage cupboard to provide much-needed space for BCA sections to store equipment.
- Improving the audio set-up by having the ability to link the fixed stage speaker to the mixing deck, removing the need for the heavy, outdated portable speakers.
- Hosting food-safety training and certification for BCA volunteers and other village groups and updating related procedures and documentation to reflect changing regulations.
- Provided a detailed response to the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan, highlighting the need for greater recognition and prioritisation of the Village Hall within the plan.
- Repairs to the chairlift and a replacement disabled handrail.
- Undertaking significant pruning and ivy removal in the Hall's copse area.
- Reviewing our energy contracts in response to rising costs and securing best-value charity rates.

During 2025, the Management Committee became increasingly aware of rising inflationary pressures on the Village Hall's operating costs. As mentioned, utility expenses have increased significantly following the expiry of pre-energy-crisis gas and electricity contracts. This prompted a review of the relationship between running costs and hire income to assess whether current charges cover essential expenses. Jo and Ian carried out a detailed fully absorbed cost analysis, allocating total operating costs across actual usage. The findings indicate that hire rates will need to increase. Further work will be undertaken in the coming months to benchmark rates against other community venues in Durham and to engage with regular hirers, ensuring any increases balance financial sustainability with fairness for users.

We are grateful to the Parish Council for its continued financial support. The Village Hall grant, which contributes towards core running costs, has been renewed for a further four years. It will increase from £3,000 per annum to £3,500 and then £4,000, reflecting inflationary pressures since the grant was first established in 2015.

Looking ahead, the Committee will continue to prioritise energy-efficiency improvements, with plans in development to obtain quotes for insulating the building's roof. Given the Hall's age—now over 100 years old—the current structure offers limited thermal efficiency, making this a key opportunity to reduce heat loss and manage rising energy costs. Over several years, the Committee has taken a financially prudent approach, setting aside funds for this project as part of its wider energy-efficiency programme. Grant opportunities and fundraising activities will also be explored. This is a significant project that remains in the pipeline and will be progressed as resources and circumstances allow.

In June of this year, we look forward to being involved in the Open Gardens Event, using the hall as a catering facility for visitors. The event in 2024 was a tremendous success, with thanks to Alison Young for leading on this initiative.

The BCA Management Committee is currently undergoing several changes. At the start of the year, we welcomed Karen Watts to the committee as the representative for associate members. She has since agreed to take the lead on annual membership record-keeping.

Gerry Jennings stepped back from the committee earlier in the year after countless years of service. I'd like to extend our sincere thanks to Gerry for the many years she was involved in the committee.

More recently, Peter Burdess has kindly joined the committee and will oversee hall bookings, helping to alleviate Jo's workload over the past year.

We would also like to welcome Karen Stodard, who is taking on responsibility for social events, stepping into the role from Josie, who will sadly be leaving us. I extend sincere thanks to Josie for the many events she has so superbly organised. Also thanks to Val for stepping in when it was most needed, managing the financial records for part of the year, and then generously exchanging roles with Jo to take on the position of Secretary, enabling Jo to resume the financial accounts using computerised systems.

Finally, a heartfelt thank-you to everyone who contributes to the running of the BCA and the up keep of the building ... your efforts and involvement make all the difference.

**Martyn Jones, BCA Chair**