

Chair's Report on WMVH 2024

AGM April 2025

There are currently eight Trustees for WMVH; I am the only new Trustee since last year's AGM. As the new Chair, I was delighted to find that under the leadership of the previous Chair (Chris Town) as well as the dedication and hard-work of the team of Trustees, WMVH is in fine health and growing its role as a real community resource.

2024 was WMVH's Diamond Jubilee. This 60 year anniversary was celebrated in September with a Jamboree with various activities and showcasing some of the regular activities in the hall. The day ending with a hugely successful barbeque followed by a classic Inspector Clouseau film (A Shot in the Dark, first released in 1964) coordinated by the Village Hall Community Cinema.

A number of initiatives were identified to maintain and upgrade the Hall so that it can continue to operate, hopefully for at least the next 60 years. Many of these were presented at last year's AGM:

The worn out and dangerous roof has now been replaced and additional insulation has been laid in the roof space. The roofing, being critical, was funded from internal resources, whilst the additional insulation above the main hall was funded by a generous donation of £1,000 from the West Meon Village Fete committee.

Other minor maintenance and kitchen equipment replacement costs were kindly funded by grants from the WM Parish Council.

We are still very keen to modernise the heating with a cheaper to run and easier to control system as well as install PhotoVoltaic Solar Panels. However, both of these are well beyond our financial resources and require significant grants. Our previous attempt in 2024, through the "National Lottery Awards for All" scheme was disappointingly unsuccessful, although we are now targeting a new grant from Winchester City Council for these developments.

Small but important improvements already actioned for 2025 include replacing the double-glazing on the south facing wall of the hall; acquiring some chairs with arms for "Gentle Fit" classes (WCC grant); and adding benches in the patio area to the west of the hall (WMT donation).

The other modernisation activities introduced relate to our digital presence. The online booking system has proved to be a great success; simplifying booking, managing availability and streamlining invoicing/payments. Linking directly from our website, which provides an accessible portal to our desirable facilities, we are receiving an ever-growing number of enquiries from the village and the wider local community.

The Community Cinema continues to provide a regular popular social event in the village hall, with a bar and often themed suppers. Cinema income more than doubled this year. The cinema has also recently launched its own new website where details of films, booking options and special features are clearly accessible.

Rental income for the hall was broadly similar to 2023. We have a core of regular users representing village organisations (including WI, WMT, WM School, WM Wine Society and WMPC) as well as many and varied exercise and dance classes. We are also pleased to see an increase in one-off bookings for parties and regional clubs who have been alerted to the full extent and quality of our facilities via our website.

Following a review of local village halls, and the fact that we did not adjust our rates last year, we have decided to increase our fees for 2025 by an average of just under 10%, effective 22nd April. To promote the VH as a community resource, going forward the hall will offer two hours free of charge once a month for non-profit making events to benefit the community. This would generally be during the afternoon of the 3rd Monday of the month.

This year our income totalled £21,542.87 and expenditure totalled £38,193.93. Excluding the “extraordinary cost” of the new roof of £18,420 (accounted for in Maintenance & Repairs) we achieved a small “operating surplus” of £1,768.94. Signed accounts for 2024 will be available via WMPC and WMVH websites.

Unfortunately, we have not reached a point where we can move to CIO status as we wait final agreement with respect to land ownership and leases with the PC. We really hope to complete this process in the coming months.

Everything that WMVH achieves is only possible through the continued dedication and hard-work of the volunteer trustees. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all as I continue to find my feet in this important community resource.

Jerry Berry

Chair – WMVH

24th April 2025