

## **St Bees Village Hall Management Committee Chair's report for year 2025.**

The theme of the year 2025 has been of change, for both the village hall and the committee.

We established collaborations with outside bodies to expand event deliveries, we regained full control over the entire building, we opened up new hire facilities, we continued a programme of significant repairs and refurbishments and we continued pursuing available grants to enhance both safety and service capability, as well as doing major repair works.

And we did this whilst also managing major change in a downsizing of the committee due to resignations and whilst also dealing with regulatory and procedural compliance pressures of being a vibrant charity.

### **Events**

We set up a collaboration with Ennerdale Promotions to provide excellent musical events which we trumpeted under the banner of "The Hive." Great musical evenings with well-known artists; and the events themselves were sell-outs and were live streamed around the globe to paid subscribers and were free to Ukrainian families here and in Ukraine to help provide a connection and solace between families separated by war. Alas this collaboration was short lived, and terminated upon the news of significant and life limiting illness within the promotions company. Our thoughts go out to those involved.

In the back half of the year we set up a second collaboration, with Rosehill Theater group to help bring art, music, culture and wellbeing out in to the community, and we delivered two of those events during the year. The Rosehill collaboration continues as well as our continuing collaboration with Arts out West. Both of these bring events out in the local community. Plus we have also had many events organised by the committee team themselves which all continue the growing use of the hall.

In all, we have had:-

- Well-being workshops,
- Flower arranging events
- Magic shows
- Local song writers presenting and performing,
- Many musical events,
- Plays
- Opera events,
- Storytelling events,
- Burns night supper,
- End of year celebrations
- Cheese and Wine evenings
- Talks and presentations
- Initiated a Babies and Toddlers group (Little Bees)

These things all help to improve our income and help us expand our maintenance on this historic and aged building, and of course it all enables us to continue to support you as parishioners of St Bees Parish to host and hold your many activities in the hall, for which we are forever grateful. And in the back half of the year we opened up a new hire facility at the back of the building – a small room presently being used by Jill Anderson and which is under discussion for other uses too.

Throughout 2025 we continued our dialogue with St Bega Lodge Masonic group; this culminated with the Lodge vacating the premises at the end of 2025 – as such the upper hall facilities, and the bar area returned into the control of the village hall committee. Since then, we have put considerable work into preparing the upper hall for hiring, and a bar licence was applied for by the committee in November 2025 - we can now report that the application was successful and we once again can provide a bar service for events in the building with a bar team lead by a trained and certified individual. Operating profits from the bar will now finally be going to support the running of the hall. So please enjoy your drinks from the bar.

**Looking ahead** we intend to continue the mix of events from the past year and to introduce some new event items:-

- Table top sales – sort of car boot sales in the main hall
- We have agreed with Mitchells Auctioneers to hold Antique valuation days and use proceeds to donate to a local charity.

### **Repairs and maintenance.**

An old hall such as the village hall requires constant maintenance. Built in 1882 this is certainly a challenge when operating on such tight margins. The major grant work during the year has been the Lottery and Copeland Community funded refurbishment of the rear toilet facilities along with renewal and repair of the roof structure there. When we invited a Lottery representative to attend and inspect we were commended on the work done. We now only have the gents toilets to finish off and that work will start shortly. In total over £30K of spends.

**Looking ahead** we have a number of projects and enhancements in action or planned to take place.

We submitted and have secured grant monies of over £36.5k to repair and enhance the external roadside front facade of the hall along with repairing all the damaged plaster work inside in the front vestibule, the stairs landing and in the front upper committee room. This funding has been provided from the Funding Communities Foundation (FCC) Land Fill Communities Fund. Work on this project started on the 20<sup>th</sup> Feb when we had an opening up project meeting with the Stone masons company and discussed the way ahead and program of work. The internal plaster work is due to be removed in April and left to dry out effectively before the external work begins in June. This work will be a significant uplift in appearance and roadside kerb appeal, as well as enhancing the internal looks and thermal efficiency of the building overall once the internal walls have been replastered and decorated. Access to, and usability of, the downstairs main hall will be maintained throughout this project.

We will continue with a host of smaller repairs and fixes to enhance safety and compliancy, as well as security of the building. You will perhaps already have noticed recent subtle changes:-

- A front door that sits correctly in its frame and which locks positively and securely.
- Internal escape doors that open in the correct direction for compliance with safety and building regulations.
- Redundant but live gas pipes in the kitchen removed and capped.

This sort of minor works will continue year upon year. And over the next 12 months we intend to pursue the following other pieces of project work:-

- Replacing all the hall chairs for modern spec, compliant and more comfortable ones. – a grant of £4250 for this is already approved from the Robin Rigg Community Fund and new chairs ordered. And very comfortable they are too. If anyone would like some of the old chairs then please contact Claire Hale to discuss.
- Replacing the kitchen door into the courtyard – the existing one is severely past its life expectancy.
- Seeking grant funding to install a digital projector and screen to enable a lot of new social and entertaining events to be offered. Grant application to Cumberland Council Community Investment Fund of over £3.6K has been submitted for this and has recently been awarded.
- Seeking grant funding to repair and enhance the west wall façade.
- Seek grant funding to install modern heritage double glazed windows to the upper floor committee room and the upper hall.
- Commence hiring arrangements for the upper hall
- Commence hiring arrangements for the upper committee room – with computer and large monitor facilities to enable – as an example - “workshop/study group” hirings.

### **Hirings and procedures**

A lot of work is going into procedural compliance and bringing the means of communicating in to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This means a lot of digital work and using the web and social media and special .org emails. It may not be everyone’s “cup of tea” but it is necessary to make us compliant and transparent. But don’t worry if you still like paper work and close dialogue and chatting with your usual contacts - we aren’t losing that, but we do hope that it makes our interactions easier and clearer. So please bear with us as this is not an easy or simple transition.

It means updating our procedures, our terms and conditions and simplifying our hire agreement form that you should have signed, or will need to sign. Plus we intend to start invoicing to request hire payments so that we can stabilise income flow to better match our routine outgoings. Again – don’t worry as we will manage this to be clear and painless.

We are simultaneously trying hard to reduce our outgoings too. Previous committees have used third party agents to establish utility contracts and insurance deals and these agents don’t come without cost. Sometimes they are necessary, but where we can we are directly negotiating with suppliers and this is proving successful. We have established potential savings of nearly £900 a year on our gas and electricity costs and over £100 a year on our water usage charges. We will continue this process of direct negotiation where we can, and use third party involvement only when is necessary or when it proves beneficial.

One direct simple impact you will see of some of the behind-the-scenes work is that we will be installing a signing-in book in the entrance corridor and we ask that lead hirers sign this with time in/time out and how many people attending. This is like many other halls and is a simple but important feature to feed into our review processes to record usage of the hall. This record keeping helps with many grant applications who ask for frequency and usage numbers – just to understand the vibrancy and support that a hall has.

Also after tonight’s AGM we will be changing the external key press tumbler code as part of a security change. If you use the hall that new number will be provided to you or you can contact the booking secretary Val on the usual number you have.

## **Thank you' s**

We operate on tight margins, and surprise maintenance and building corrections can place extreme stress on finances. During the year we had such a surprise where moisture and water ingress from the roof at the front of the building was causing plaster damage up on the first floor. We received an anonymous donation of £5k to assist in the roof repairs. This was both a surprise and extremely generous for which we send heartfelt thanks out to our benefactor.

Also in May we started our "Friends of the Village Hall" project, where you can donate directly either singularly or routinely to the village hall coffers. At the end of the year we had 62 "friends" who had collectively donated ~£1700. A magnificent and greatly appreciated sum for which we are extremely grateful and thankful.

There have been a number of committee members who had to stand down for various personal reasons. I don't wish to name them, but I do wish to pay them all our warm thanks for their support and contributions to the running of the committee, and to their organisation of events and their successful deployment. We are where we are today in an ever-improved position because of your work.

That said the committee is now just a team of five. We work hard as volunteers and I want to extend my own thanks to the current team for their support and their tireless energy that they give freely to the committee in order to help keep this hall functioning; and to thank them especially for their contributions during all the changes and transitions going on. If any of you good people here tonight feel you can assist and join the committee or become a volunteer helper behind the scenes then your support would be warmly welcomed. It can be busy, it can at times be tiring, but it is always rewarding.

Plus we must thank those many unsung helpers behind the scenes- individuals who come forward when asked to help out at events or in cleaning and preparing for events. You know who you are and you have our deepest thanks.

But I just wish to pull out a few for mentioning who helped out when things looked particularly tough and difficult.

- Stobbart Limited who undertook all the rear toilet block and roofing work.
- Darrell of DGC handyman services who supported us with long overdue corrective maintenance.
- Kevin Cole who has tirelessly undertook a myriad of jobs repairing and decorating the hall.
- Jack Hale for stepping forward to manage and lead on operating the bar for us.

And finally I want to thank you all here on the public side of the hall. To thank you for your continuing interest in your hall and for your support coming to events and for hiring out and using a real community-based asset. That support is the lifeblood of any community village hall.

**Thank You.**

John Benedic (VHMC Chairperson)

## St Bees Village Hall Accounts 2025

**Cash in hand  
at bank 1/1/25**

**12689.19**

**Current 9269.58  
Reserve 3419.61**

<b>Income</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>expenditur</b>	<b>2025</b>
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	Hires	8114.5	Utilities	-5469.41
	donations	8588.28	maintenance	-8039.65
events	profit	5192.2	event expenses	-1598.57
	raffles	1048.65		
	grant income	28154	grant expenses	-16051.2
admin	income	1668.14	admin expenses	-2873.4
	interest	199.32		
	<u>2025 income</u>	<u>52965.09</u>	<u>2025 expenditure</u>	<u>-34032.2</u>

B/Ffrom 2024 12689.19

**total income 65654.28**

**Account Balance for 2025 including B/F mone 31622.1 (total income - expenditure)**

**Cash in hand at Bank 31/12/25 9330.49 current ac 22291.6 reserve account**

This includes liabilities of grant money and donations for specific purposes

Grants	16,154	restricted funds	614.33
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These accounts have been checked against receipts, bank statements and are correct.

Karen James. Autumn House, Seamill Lane, St Bees.

*Karen James*  
K. JAMES  
04.05.2026

St Bees Village Hall Management Committee

Autumn House  
5 Sea View  
Seamill Lane  
ST BEES  
CA27 0BB

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2026

To whom it my concern,

**VILLAGE HALL ACCOUNTS - 1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2025 TO 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2025**

I can confirm that I have reviewed The Village Hall Management Committee's accounts for the 2025 and have had sight of the spreadsheet detailing income and expenditure, together with copies of bank statements. I have also checked invoices which tally with the figures in the accounts. I have not identified any matter of concern and I can confirm that, on the basis of the checks carried out, the Committee's accounts for 2025 were in order.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Karen James/