



Registered Charity 1167590

Annual Report 2025

Presented at the AGM on 18 January 2026

Wychavon Festival of Brass



Registered Charity 1167590

Annual Report and Accounts For the year ending 31 December 2025

President

Cllr Mrs D. Raphael

Trustees and Committee

Dr Val Trim (Chair/ Contest Sec)

Mr David Bolton (Treasurer)

Mrs Ali Bolton (Traders)

Mr Simon Dowdeswell (Logistics)

Mrs Annabelle Pattinson (Festival Sec)

Mr Martyn Pattinson (Stewarding)

Mr Oliver Wilson (Social Media)

Mr Iain Willis (Youth Project)

Miss Sarah Timms (Programme Advertisements)

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Festival Reports

Chairman's Report

The Wychavon Annual Entertainment Contest held on November 1st 2025 saw a reduction in the total number of bands entering the competition and playing on the day. The Championship Section was down by about half a dozen and the first section by about 4 bands. Other sections remained high. Speculation around the causes of this centred on the knowledge that several other competitions launched in 2024/5 had drawn entries away from WFB since their geographic locations were more convenient (and therefore cheaper to get to) than travelling to Evesham. Reports of the success of these contests were varied so hopefully WFB may yet regain some of the bands missing this year. The number of bands withdrawing from the competition was slightly higher than usual and, in every case (bar one) this was due to their inability to field a band on the day of the contest. All withdrawing bands expressed their disappointment and regret at not being able to compete at Wychavon.

The lower numbers meant that the organisation of the day was easier, and it was felt that the atmosphere was slightly more relaxed than usual. However, the lower numbers of entries result in a significant reduction in entry fees. Given the rising costs of equipment hire or replacement, rental charges and other oncosts and the future uncertainty of grant and sponsorship support then it is important that WFB maintains the highest level of entries it can reasonably cope with.

All the adjudicators, assistants, prize givers, percussion suppliers et al functioned well. All volunteers did well and worked efficiently once they were familiar with their roles. I commend Martyn's efforts here: he had big boots to fill and he did a first-rate job ably supported by Annabelle! Well done.

As in previous years, the links that WFB has established with numerous organisations has remained strong. Chief amongst these, is the relationship carefully established and curated with TDMS. Craig Pitcher, TDMS sports Centre Manager, masterminded car parking once more and provided much needed muscle (in the form of a team of sixth formers) both on contest day and the day before for setting up and taking down purposes. This help is invaluable.

Our long-term relationship with Events Revolution, who provide the acoustic drapes, remains effective. Cooperation between this company and the WFB setting up term, managed by Simon and Oli was highly effective as is now the norm. Thanks go to all concerned. The percussion supplier Eventz, too, turned up and set up with their usual efficiency.

Our especial thanks, too, go to those people from various bands who volunteered to help on one or both days. This help is now an essential part of the WFB contest arrangements, and I recommend that the Committee considers way in which these relationships can be both recognised and, perhaps, formalised.

The Vendor Village for 2025 was successful for the reduced number of traders that attended. Economic factors and the establishment of rival competitions have affected attendance by traders at WFB and this is an area that needs monitoring for 2026. Ali must be congratulated for successfully getting the traders she did. We all know it was an uphill task. One benefit of the reduction in the number of traders was the increase in space this created for socialising close to the bar area. This, together with modifications made to the band reception area, ensured a high level of congeniality and great good humour amongst players and audience members.

WFB thanks The Fleece for its continued support in helping to facilitate this success and WFB hopes to build on this in 2026. Of particular note was the huge improvement in the provision of catering, facilitated by the Fleece but executed by a local firm. Problem solved!

Catering for the volunteers was provided by Rob and Daina of Raphaels, Evesham. It was--- absolutely fantastic!!!! Thanks go to them unreservedly and not just for 2025 but for their constant support for many, many years.

A special thanks goes to Simon who, despite moving to Brixham, made several journeys to and from Evesham to ensure that the practical aspects of the contest were carried out--- executed in his usual quiet and self-effacing manner. Thank you.

Youth Project: the initiative to provide youth training and a fund-raising concert in conjunction with the Foden's Band was carried out very successfully in May by Iain as planned. It was entirely funded by WFB so the event was limited to tuition and a small concert held for parents after a very successful training day. Arts council funding for 2026 is still being sought. A second training day in May 2026 is currently at the planning stage.

Needless to say, WFB extends its thanks to all of our sponsors that have supported us unstintingly. Special thanks go to the Elmley Foundation without which this contest could not function, and to Nigel Smith of the Fleece. The constancy of Evesham Town Council's support over many years is both essential and greatly appreciated as is the renewed interest in our event that Worcestershire District Council has shown us recently. Such support gives us a limited degree of flexibility in acquiring equipment and services that enhance and sustain our event. In the brass band world at least, I am proud that the Wychavon Festival of Brass is held in high esteem. It is my fervent hope that all of these organisations continue to support our cause in the years ahead.

I would like to thank and compliment the WFB team for all that they do throughout the year in preparation for this contest. I would like to thank all members of the team--- Sarah for being persuaded to take on the role of selling advertising for our programme, Oli for keeping our profile cheerfully high and extending our reach and David for keeping his eye on the money! We wish Sarah every success as she sets out on her travels in the coming months and look forward to her return. We regard her absence from the WFB committee in 2026 as sabbatical only!

The WFB team is small but effective. Recruitment remains a key issue despite advertisements through social media and by direct appeal to bands and their membership both at the contest and via email and the press. My understanding is that several new recruits are waiting in the wings and will join the committee very soon. I wish them every success.

This my last report as Chair of the Wychavon Festival of Brass. I step aside to make way for Oli whom I know shall make a first-rate Chair and will introduce new ideas and a new energy to the team. I've enjoyed my time and the work I've done for the contest. May I take this opportunity to thank all past as well as present members of this committee for their work and personal support. It is all very much appreciated.

I wish you all every success in the future.

Dr Val Trim (retiring) Chair of Wychavon Festival of Brass

Contest Secretary's Report

In all 49 performances were given across all sections in 2025 given by 40 bands. This was significantly fewer than in the 2024 contest which saw the highest numbers ever recorded at Wychavon. However, the reduction of bands on the day does not reflect the actual entry figures as around a dozen bands entered and later withdrew (without a refund of fees). Had these bands competed then the contest overall numbers would have been comparable to previous years. In every case the reason given for withdrawal was the inability to field a band (rather than any inadequacy of the Wychavon contest).

Some concern remains however: entries to the First and Championship sections were down (even allowing for withdrawals) and this can be accounted for the instigation of rival competitions which, inevitably, have drawn away some members of our usual cohort. Also, the vagaries of the promotion /relegation system affects the distribution of the competing bands. A similar situation arose several years ago in the Second Section when some of our 'regulars' had been either promoted or demoted resulting in such a depleted section that the section was not run. Figures recovered in the following year.

Nearly every band gave an Audio/Visual presentation, sometimes combined with band choreography. These were sometimes of a variable standard. The rule change about the source material used for visual presentations was adhered to and WFB acknowledges the consideration of bands in recognising the dangers of using unauthorised and commercial filmic extracts.

Despite the lower numbers of bands, ticket sales held up well. The increase in the price of tickets did not seem to deter audience attendance.

There is no room for complacency however – our success depends on the maintenance of the high standards we have set ourselves and the deep respect we show all those that attend, support and play at our contest.

Val Trim (retiring) Contest Sec

Stewarding

I joined the Committee at the 2025 AGM and took over responsibility for the stewards from Mike Pawson who retired from the committee on the same day. I am very grateful to Mike for his support through the year and on the day of the contest. I emailed all of the people on Mike's volunteer 2025 list in July. That, and a second mail shot in August to the same list, garnered 34 volunteers. Needing to fill approximately 65 roles, I contacted some voluntary groups including the Salvation Army with limited success. Val's connection with a group called Evesham U3A did generate some interest. I also tried messaging brass band groups and friends on Facebook with little success and Whatsapp to my own band. In the end, many of the additional volunteers were identified by 1-2-1 contact. The learning points include:

1. The need for a more sophisticated approach to email - I have already started using Mailchimp, which will enable me to monitor readership and tailor correspondence more effectively.
2. Adopt a survey approach to the opening email next time to obtain a clearer picture on what people can and can't do. Mailchimp will also enable me to do that.

3. Seek volunteers expressly for the Friday set up and then to assist tidying up on the Saturday night. We were very grateful for the help of some of the volunteers and members of Langley Band members on the Saturday night.
4. Take active steps, probably by attending rehearsals, to seek greater involvement from the Wychavon based bands.
5. Review and update some of the volunteer guidance, particularly for the Registrars.

Our band of volunteers proved to be very enthusiastic, flexible and positive, which made last minute changes on the day much easier and I am very grateful to all of them.

Martyn Pattinson
Stewarding & Festival Secretary.

Social Media Report 2025

The year has again had considerable growth in our reach on Social Media. We have a long established and very active Facebook account and Instagram page. We made much better use of both Facebook and Instagram to build interest before the contest, with ticket sales boosted by advertisement on these platforms. We also made much more effective use of Social Media on the day of the contest itself, especially around results and photos of the prize winners to engage with the bands, spectators, supporters and those following the contest from afar.

Facebook: This was used again a great deal during the 2025 contest, to share news, updates, images and results. In the 90 day period either side of the contest day, we had 438.1k views to the Facebook page, over that time, peaking at 173k views on the contest day itself. There were 44.4k visits this year, a significant rise from the past (33.7k in 2024, 32.6k in 2023, 9.8k in 2022). We now have 2602 likes/followers to our Facebook page, of which 10% are outside the UK.

Instagram: This was used for the second year running. We used Instagram a great deal during the 2025 contest, mirroring the facebook posts to share news, updates, images and results. In the 90 day period either side of the contest day, we had 9.6k views, up from 3.7k views in 2024, to the Instagram page, over that time, peaking at 4796 views on the contest day itself. Instagram will continue to grow as a platform and fits a different demographic to Facebook - whilst still being managed from one platform: Meta Business Suite.

For the future: continue to develop and grow our Instagram account and social media communication. We have a range of photographs and information to share throughout the year and we will use the opportunities to keep engagement up year-round. This is linked to the new and improved website and the potential this has.

A positive year online for the Wychavon Festival of Brass this year!

Oli Wilson
Social Media Manager

Trade Stands/Vendor Village Report 2025

This year we welcomed five traders to the festival, with four located in the Vendor Village marquee, and one located in the foyer outside the first section stage. Feedback from vendors was overwhelmingly positive. They appreciated being able to park closer to the marquee this year, which allowed for easier set up and pack down, and were grateful for the arrangement with the food truck which enabled us to both take preorders, allowing them to skip queues limiting their time away from their stand, and provide food at a discounted price.

Changes in the banding calendar this year meant we struggled more to book vendors due to an increase in contests across the country, and in Europe, in the few weeks around our own. However, those who attended are keen to return next year, possibly with additional tables. Early reports also suggest that these calendar changes may not still be in place for 2026, allowing for a certain amount of cautious optimism regarding a possible increase in traders for next year.

This year the Vendor Village was located in a larger marquee, which it shared with the bar overflow tables and chairs. This worked a lot better than last year and appeared to increase foot flow for traders. Unfortunately Wi-Fi issues continued in the Vendor Village this year, however we trialled the use of a Wi-Fi dongle in the foyer area outside the first section stage, which worked well for both the vendor and the ticket sales located in that area, and we hope to utilise a similar set up in the Vendor Village marquee in 2026.

Ali Bolton
Traders' Manager

Logistics report 2025

The scheduling and planning prior to setting up on the Friday before the contest again was very successful.

- Programmes were to be collected on Thursday and ready in contest control for setup.
- Trophies and certificates had been ordered, collected and were already on-site
- Vacuum cleaners were collected and already on-site
- Following the successful rollout of two carpet laying teams the previous year, the same teams and tool kits were used again this year. Again, this year with the help of the hired sixth formers arranged by Craig (TDMS site manager).
- Oli's band of helpers were a fantastic support the whole weekend. They especially brought much needed help on Saturday night take-down and packing away. My personal thanks go to everyone, who helped me during the weekend due to my health issues.

Packing away after the contest:

- The introduction of the gazebos from Championship Band Registration to the Sports Hall also provided us with shelter to sort and pack away with ease.
- Enabling us to put things at the front of the on-site storage container facility for easy access for next year's preparations prior to the set-up day.
- Carpets now labelled for each hall and stored on separate levels of the rack. Therefore, less pressure applied to the rolls.
- Consideration needs to be given to the grant applications and fund raising for replacement carpets for the largest hall as part of our continuous investment programme.

- The traders' marquee and social area was successful and thanks to The Fleece for its continued support in helping to facilitate this.
- The supply of bins/bags needs to be considered for these areas and in the band changing rooms.
- New signs being laminated slowed the set-up process but was a worthwhile investment. Enabling us to create a visual plan of the signage placement needed each year.
- This year's layout in the gym reduced the performance area for the bands and resulted in the large WFB logo banner backdrop being knocked over. Craig assisted me with a quick fix between performances. A review of the carpet layout will eliminate this issue next year.

Digital progress

- Hours of work were put into creating and implementing the new online forms system (a few minor teething problems and operator errors, but nothing that we couldn't solve)
- Also, creating a new website to be ready for the 1 st January Opening for entries.

Another, enjoyable and successful contest.

The biggest logistical nightmare this year, was to arrange things for Val's presentation for her retirement as Chair, without her seeing what we were doing. She has eyes in the back of her head!! Val's leadership and attention to detail have been instrumental in the success of the contest over the last sixteen plus years, and she hands over a solid foundation to her remaining team.

Simon Dowdeswell
Logistics Manager

Wychavon Festival of Brass

Year ended 31 December 2025 – Treasurer's report

Having taken over the role as Treasurer of the Charity during September 2024, 2025 represented a year of continuity for me and allowed me to complete my first full annual cycle of the Charity's finances.

2025 Grant and Sponsorship Income

We are extremely grateful once again to our grant providers and sponsors who provide both cash and sponsorship-in-kind to allow the Festival to continue for the long term. Thanks to the effort of the Committee, some of our grant support is now committed over a multi-year period, allowing the Committee some visibility over the financial outlook of the Charity for the next few years.

2025 Festival performance

The 2025 Festival of Brass represented a financial success (in that it continues to cover its expenses without having to spend its reserves), but it continues to require grant and sponsorship income in order to operate. The number of band entries (and hence ticket sales) was lower in 2025 than it was in 2024, partly down to the number of other brass band events running across the country over the few weekends either side of the Festival.

The significant focus started in 2024 and continued into 2025 by two dedicated members of the Committee on trade stand and programme advertising sales paid off and we are an attractive event for exhibitors to attend. This is reflected in their commitments given to attending the 2026 event.

The ability of the Festival to take debit and credit card payments for on-the-day ticket sales is crucial to the successful running of the Festival. Lack of a dedicated payment terminal and/or access to TDMS's WiFi network created a 'near miss' for us in 2025. This will be addressed in time for the 2026 Festival to give assurance in advance that this does not become a problem in the future.

Charity reserves

One of our key partners has suggested that the Charity has a long-term aim of increasing its reserves to two times the annual cost of operating the Festival. This is to take into account unexpected events (such as the COVID pandemic) which could result in the unfortunate outcome of the Festival incurring all of its running costs but also having to refund entry fees to brass bands, for ticket sales, etc. In reality, such an extreme outcome is considered unlikely as many of the Festival's costs can be mitigated, at least in part.

At the 2025 AGM it was agreed that the Charity would adopt a reserves policy of building reserves to one times the annual gross cost of operating the Festival – i.e. based on the 2024 and 2025 Festivals this would result in a reserves requirement of around £24,000. Once this threshold is met, the reserves policy should be monitored and revisited as appropriate

Looking forward

Notwithstanding the desire to increase the Charity's reserves to ensure its long-term success, The Wychavon Festival of Brass is in a good position to continue to operate the Festival in 2026 and beyond.

The ever-present challenges for the Festival are both to maintain its pipeline of grant and sponsorship income, and to control its essential expenses as the cost base continues to rise. The

Committee is well aware of the need to make prudent financial decisions, reaching considered agreements with suppliers that allow the Festival to be both financially successful and attract brass bands from around the United Kingdom and beyond.

Independent examination of the charity's accounts

An independent examination is required if the Charity's gross income is over £25,000 but under £1 million. No independent examination is therefore required for 2025.

This threshold is expected to increase to £40,000 at some point in 2026 as a result of anticipated changes to legislation, and therefore no independent examination is expected in the foreseeable future.

David Bolton
Treasurer

Wychavon Festival of Brass

Registered charity 1167590

Year ended 31 December 2025 – Statement of Financial Affairs

Contest account

	2025 Actual £	2025 Budget £	2024 Actual £
Income			
Donations and grants	8,500	4,500	10,250
Ticket sales	3,729	4,000	4,385
Trade stands and adverts	1,110	1,000	1,340
Contest entry fees	10,765	12,000	13,615
2023 contest	-	-	835
Total	24,104	21,500	30,426
Expenditure			
Contest prizes	5,900	7,000	5,900
Premises hire	2,000	2,000	2,000
Percussion	4,740	4,700	4,440
Adjudicators	1,388	2,000	1,853
Carpets	186	500	108
Advertising	60	600	180
Programme booklets	330	500	455
Trophies	930	700	906
Signage	165	500	248
Roll up banners	-	200	215
Insurance premium	444	450	436
Hire of drapes/audio	2,965	3,000	2,911
Car parking expenses	415	-	-
First Aid cover	550	650	550
Uniform	157	-	631
Safeguarding	340	-	-
Other contest expenses	1,861	-	2,063
AGM expenses	305	-	-
Other admin expenses	776	2,000	930
Total	23,512	24,800	23,827
Surplus/deficit	592	(3,300)	6,599
Bank balance at 1 January 2025	16,353		
Bank balance at 31 December 2025	16,945		

Youth Project account

	2025 Actual £	2025 Budget £	2024 Actual £
2025 Youth event expenses	1,897	-	-
Surplus/deficit	(1,897)	-	-
Bank balance at 1 January 2025	4,018		
Bank balance at 31 December 2025	2,121		