

**Blindcrake Village Hall CIO**  
**Registered Charity no 1171226**  
**Trustees' Annual Report for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024**

Treasurer: Rosalind Berry  
Holm Farm, Blindcrake, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 0QP

## **1 Introduction: Chairman's report**

The Village Hall has continued to remain active over the last twelve months.

The successful renovation of the Hall has resulted in an increase in hirings. We have regular Pilates sessions, and the Bible Study Group continue to use the Hall on a regular basis. Private bookings for parties also seem to have increased.

All our usual events, such as the Garden Safari and the Evening Inns, are thriving, and it is hoped that in the coming year more one-off functions can be arranged for our local community. Perhaps we should be more proactive in promoting such events to try to achieve maximum interest.

Following the AGM we shall begin in earnest to formulate a document dealing with all aspects of running the Village Hall, which will be of great assistance as existing members retire and new members join.

Craig Oliver has joined the Committee during the last twelve months, and we hope that at least one further member can be elected or co-opted in the near future. The Committee needs as broad a range of ages and skills as possible.

I would like to thank all Committee members for all their hard work during the past year.

Neil Pilling, Chairman

## **2 Trustees**

Our CIO constitution requires at least three charity trustees (committee members), of whom up to six may be elected at an AGM; up to nine appointed following nomination by a user body; and up to three co-opted at any meeting of the charity trustees. During 2023-24 our Trustees were:

Neil Pilling	Appointed	Chairman
Ros Berry	Appointed	Treasurer
Rachel Hecht (McConkey)	Elected	Bookings Secretary
Cathy Keough	Elected	Secretary
Graeme Forrester	Appointed	
Marisa Soppitt	Elected	
Craig Oliver	Elected	From 9 May 2023

### **3 Meetings**

The Management Committee usually meets four to six times a year. We met on six occasions during 2023-24, with our AGM in May.

### **4 Sources of advice and support**

Banking: Cumberland Building Society, Station Road Cockermouth

Architects: Day Cummins, Cockermouth

Charity: Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT)

### **5 Objectives of the CIO**

The objects of the CIO are to establish and run a village hall and to promote for the benefit of the inhabitants of the civil Parish of Blindcrake ("area of benefit") without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, race or political, religious or other opinions the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances or for the public at large in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the conditions of life of the said inhabitants.

The Trustees consider these objectives to be consistent with Charity Commission guidance on providing for the public benefit, and these objectives have been pursued in the activities of the charity this year.

### **6 Structure, governance and lease**

The Hall was converted from a row of three cottages and given by the Rev Sharpe, Vicar of Isel, to the Church of England Carlisle Diocesan Trust and Finance Association (now Board of Finance) by deed of indenture dated 5 July 1897.

Blindcrake Village Hall was established as a charity by a Trust Deed and Lease on 1 December 1988. It was registered as an unincorporated charity with the Charity Commission on 20 September 1993. The Lease of 1 December 1988 expired on 30 November 2016, and a new 50 year lease was signed on 12 June 2018. Land Registration was also completed.

The charity was converted to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with a new Governing Document and registration with the Charity Commission on 20 January 2017 and a formal merger of the two charities at our 2017 AGM. This is the seventh annual report of the CIO.

The building was professionally valued in 2016 as a community building by R J Smeaton MRICS at £10,000. The lease is a full repairing lease which means that, although only a peppercorn rent of £1.00 per annum is payable on demand, the Management Committee is responsible for keeping the building in a good state of repair.

## **7 Principal activities**

The hall is normally in use most weeks for a variety of activities, including Pilates classes, meetings of the Parish Council, and local groups such as Isel Cricket Club, Wigton Motor Club and First Responders. It is used for coffee mornings, concerts, theatre performances, fundraising social events such as Burns' supper, Garden Safari, Christmas carol concert and prize draw, and the Evening Inn quiz, and private hires such as children's parties and funeral teas.

Usage and hires have continued at a much higher rate than pre-pandemic, helped by the Cumbria Bible Study Group which holds Saturday meetings.

## **8 Funding strategy**

Whilst our objectives are to provide a village hall for the purpose of recreation of our inhabitants, the revenue budget needs to be managed on a self-financing basis. The hire fees and other contributions made by users of the hall, in addition to fundraising by the Management Committee, are set to achieve this.

The lease allows the Church of England and the Binsey Team ministry to use the Hall free of charge for up to 21 days per annum. There has also been a long standing practice of not charging certain groups with a charitable purpose such as the First Responders for use of the hall.

Management costs are kept to a minimum by use of Trustees and volunteers to take bookings, ensure heating is set etc. However we do use the services of a self-employed cleaner, window cleaner and local tradespeople for repairs and maintenance.

The Hall incurs a number of ongoing costs such as insurance, heating fuel, regardless of the level of income. We keep a reserve of £5,000 to cover annual running costs in case of emergencies.

## **9 Policies**

The Village Hall has adopted a hiring policy. It has updated its Hiring Agreement, which is sent to the hirer by the Chairman when booking. The hiring agreement identifies the responsibilities of each party when booking the hall.

During 2019-20 we also adopted an Environmental Policy, an Equal Opportunities Statement of Intent and a Safeguarding Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults. The Safeguarding Policy has been reviewed and updated.

## **10 Licences**

The Hall has a Premises Licence for designated entertainments, including the sale of alcohol. The Hall is also licensed by the Performing Rights Society for live and recorded music. We continue to renew our lottery licence annually although we have not made use of it every year.

## **11 Insurance**

The Hall is insured by Allied Westminster, underwritten by Aviva. We agreed a five year term policy in July 2020; our annual premium in 2023-24 was £972, up from £874 in 2022-23.

## **12 Reserves policy**

Trustees have agreed to hold £5,000 in the bank as unrestricted reserves, this being equivalent to 100% average annual expenditure excluding cost of events. This cash is available for running costs in the event of being unable to raise income from our normal activities, and for unforeseen expenditure eg in relation to building maintenance or urgent furniture or equipment replacement.

## **13 Investments**

The M&G Charifund has yielded useful dividends including £658 in 2023-24. This is a small increase on last year's dividend of £639.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the value of our stocks reduced significantly, from £12,700 to £9,200. The valuation during 2021-22 recovered considerably to £12,094 but has since reduced, partly affected by the impact of the war in Ukraine, with the latest (December 2023) valuation standing at £10,986.

## **14 Bank accounts**

As advised by ACT, in 2017 we opened a new building society deposit account for the CIO. This is now our only account; signatories are Ros Berry, Neil Pilling, Marisa Soppitt and Graeme Forrester. There had been some confusion over bank account signatories and it transpired that recent changes had not been enacted, despite forms and required evidence being submitted. This has now been rectified.

An increasing number of payees request electronic payments, but the Cumberland Building Society only offer internet banking on business or personal accounts. It is possible to request the CBS branch to make electronic payments from our account. We are investigating options for opening an account with a bank which would offer us the facility to make internet payments with two signatories.

## **15 2023-24 activities**

The closing balance of our current account was £18,655.45, a fall of £198 from the previous year. However as we have now cleared the final retention payment to our main building contractor, this actually represents a good achievement in terms of excess of income over payments.

### **a) Building improvements**

We paid the 2.5% retention on the main contract of £3,206, which now completes all outstanding commitments relating to the building project.

We continue to experience intermittent issues with our LPG-powered central heating system. We commissioned A Muir to carry out an energy audit during last year and are considering his recommendations.

#### b) Hiring and fundraising

Our income excluding one-off grants totalled £7,580. Receipts from hires has reached its highest ever level at £2,079, making a quarter of total income. We increased our hire fees slightly from October 2022 to reflect increased fuel costs and the extra amenities we now offer; we will keep rates under review.

Around two-thirds of income came from fundraising events. We held a successful Garden Safari at the end of June, which netted a wonderful £2,144, not including a generous donation of £250 from Breedon quarries towards our expenses. Many thanks are due to numerous volunteers who helped in the planning and on the day.

One of our parishioners organised a Christmas market at the end of November, and £100 income from stallholders was generously donated to us over and above the hall hire. Although we were not currently able to host a local children's carol concert, our annual Christmas prize draw was successful in bringing parishioners together and made £225 on the raffle. The Burns supper was re-started this January and was a tremendous success, due in no small part to the culinary expertise of resident chef Alistair Coe; net income was £780.

We held four winter Evening Inn pub quiz nights, which raised £700. We collaborated with local charity Cumbria Overseas Aid Trust to hold a fundraising quiz, and the bar made £170 for Hall funds.

#### c) Payments

Our routine expenditure excluding the final contractor's bill and the energy audit totalled £4,722. We prepare our accounts as receipt and payment accounts, rather than accruals. Our biggest expense was the final instalment of our main contractor's bill at £3,206. Other expenses now reflect routine outgoings – insurance, electricity, heating. Our insurance annual premium rose by over 10% to £966. We have incurred £750 in gardening and maintenance costs but unfortunately our cheque did not clear before the financial year end.

Our 3 year contract for electricity expires in December 2024. Our current electricity charges are 16.39p per KWH and 52.3p per day standing charge. Our new charge will be considerably higher than the rate we have been paying. As the smart meter stopped working in late 2022 and was only replaced in the summer of 2023, our bills for 2023-24 were lower than expected.

Due to the settlement of our dispute with BT over our broadband installation and associated charges, we did not start to incur costs until the early part of the financial year. The actual cost has been just under £600; we have now agreed a new contract which will be somewhat better value.

We were able to again secure discretionary rate relief from Cumberland Council.

We agreed to increase our self-employed cleaner's hourly rate to £15 from January.

## 16 Conclusion

Without the one-off items of income and payments, but accounting for the bill for annual gardening and maintenance, we would have had a healthy surplus of over £2,000. We are in a sound financial position with a current balance of £18,655. The investment we have made in broadband and audio-visual equipment seems to be encouraging more hirers to use the hall, as well as meeting the expectations of local users.

Looking forward, we will be considering the options for updating our heating system and the funding implications. We have started to undertake a wide review of Village Hall functions, and document management committee roles and tasks, with the aim of developing an annual plan to support a more proactive approach to our work.

**Ros Berry, Treasurer**

9 April 2024


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### Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees

Signature



Full name

NEIL ROBERT PILLING

Position on Management Committee

CHAIRMAN

Date

10.4.24

Blindcrake Village Hall  
Blindcrake, Near Cockermouth  
Cumbria CA13 0QP  
Charity Commission Registered Number 1171226

**Receipts and Payments Account Year Ending 31st March 2024**

	2023-24	2022-23
<u>Receipts</u>	£	£
Donations	360.00	145.00
Room Hire	2079.00	2000.50
Interest received Charifund	658.42	639.28
Garden Safari	2433.10	1089.00
Burns Supper	970.50	0.00
Evening Inn	700.00	982.00
Special events	629.50	1216.50
Grant funding	500.00	2000.00
Sundry	0.00	0.00
Total Receipts	8330.52 ✓	8072.28
<u>Payments</u>		
Gas/heating	867.31	873.77
Electricity	321.91	294.96
Insurance	971.72	873.51
Repairs & maintenance	331.42	1441.65
Sundries	377.46	5958.86
Cleaning	454.69	746.75
Special events expenses	555.27	451.11
Deposits returned	80.00	0.00
Professional expenses	765.00	165.00
Contractor payments	3206.31	5556.00
Broadband	597.66	0.00
Total Payments	8528.75 ✓	16361.61
<b>Total Receipts less Payments</b>	<b>-198.23</b>	<b>-8289.33</b>
<u>Movement of Reserves</u>		
Balance brought forward	18853.68	27143.01
Total Receipts less payments for year ending 31/03/23	-198.23	-8289.33
Transfer from/to reserves	-	-
	18655.45	18853.68
<b>Statement as at year ending 31st March 2024</b>		
Balance at Cumberland Building Society / Bank	18655.45	18853.68
M&G Investment Account brought forward	11250.69	12094.31
Transfers to current Account	658.42	639.28
Closing Value of Investment 31/12/23*	10986.33	11250.69
<b>Accumulated Fund</b>	<b>29641.78</b>	<b>30104.37</b>

Ms R J Berry Treasurer  
Holm Farm, Blindcrake  
Cockermouth, CA13 0QP

Signed: *Rosalind Berry*  
Date: 10.04.2024

Examined and found correct:

A.Y. PURVIS  
BEECH FARM  
SUNDERLAND  
CA13 9SS

Auditor

Signed: *A.Y. Purvis*  
Date: 23/9/2024