



**Lowes Barn Community Project CIO
Trustees Report and Financial Review for the year ended 30th September
2025**

Charity Number 1192101

Company Number CEO23176

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1. Legal and Administrative Information

- 1.1 The organisation is a Community Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which was registered with the Charities Commission on 2nd November 2020.

Registered Charity Number: 1192101

Companies House Number: CEO23176

Address: Merryoaks Community Hall
Park House Road
Durham
DH1 3QF

2. Trustees Report

2.1 Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of Lowes Barn Community Project CIO (LBCP) are set out in the constitution as follows:

- 1) To further or benefit the INHABITANTS of DURHAM CITY SOUTH WEST (including NEVILLE'S CROSS, CROSSGATE MOOR, MERRYOAKS, SHERATON PARK, MOUNT OSWALD and STONEBRIDGE) and the neighbourhood THEREOF, without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or other opinions by associating together the said INHABITANTS and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure time occupation with the objective of improving the conditions of life for the INHABITANTS.
- 2) To establish or secure the establishment of a community centre and to maintain or manage or co-operate with any statutory authority in the maintenance and management of such a centre for activities promoted by the charity in furtherance of the above object.

In order to meet these objectives, the organisation has been committed to providing a community centre which opened in May 2023 and following a competition, local schoolchildren and the community chose the name and logo which is Merryoaks Community Hall, the People's Place.

We aim to improve the sense of community and emotional/mental health and wellbeing. Also to reduce social isolation and promote improved physical health and constructive activities for all local residents and those in nearby neighbourhoods.

At the start of this financial year we employed a full time Centre Manager who now oversees the smooth running of the Hall.

We also plan to provide a garden that can be visited and maintained by local residents.

2.2 Achievements

This year saw the continued popularity of Merryoaks Community Hall and growth in the number of users and groups frequenting the centre.

LBCP successfully applied for grants as follows:

- £20,000 from **Northern Power Grid** along with £2,500 from **The City of Durham Parish Council** for the installation of Solar Panels and Battery Storage which will allow the Hall to be used as a shelter for the community in the event of power outages etc.
- £4,249.50 from **Cllr Elizabeth Scott** towards setting up a Companionship Cafe, external lighting design, garden design, bench refurbishment and planning permission for garden sheds
- £3,000 from **Point North Funding** for children's activities during the school holidays
- £999 from **Cllrs Elizabeth Scott and Liz Brown** for the installation of a community notice board and leaflet holders in the Hall

A major milestone for the charity was the appointment of a Centre Manager to supervise the running of Merryoaks Community Hall which has helped to bring further structure to the operations. As well as maintaining the booking system including payments etc. the role also encompasses the management of volunteers.

The Centre Manager has worked to improve the operations, building up good relationships with Hall users and introducing a new cleaning company.

Among other achievements, having a Centre Manager means that the Hall is open to the public longer and the volunteers have improved supervision and support.

The terms and conditions for hiring the rooms within Merryoaks Community Hall have been reviewed and revised with the benefit of now having 2 years of experience of room hire.

Blinds have been installed on the windows in the Main Hall, Multi-Purpose Room and Office using grant money received in the previous year from The City of Durham Parish Council and money raised from a Burn's Night Supper and a talk on the Falklands War given at the Hall. The blinds provide privacy as well as helping with temperature control on hot days.

Adjacent to Merryoaks Community Hall is the Durham County Council owned Lowes Barn Recreation Ground. This has vehicular access via the car park and Hall users had at times driven vehicles through and on to the children's play area.

To prevent accidents, LBCP successfully lobbied for the installation of bollards on the access road meaning that vehicles can only enter the children's play area if approved and supervised by LBCP staff or volunteers.

LBCP also facilitated the installation of a community notice board on council land at the entrance to the adjoining recreation ground.

This year we reviewed and revised all of our policies and procedures. A not insignificant piece of work.

Following the building work which was completed in 2023, the builders went into administration leaving several items on a snagging list incomplete. After negotiation with the administrator, LBCP undertook to make the repairs and this has now been completed with the exception of an on-going investigation into leaks above some doors in severe weather.

Merryoaks Community Hall benefits from a large garden area which since the opening of the building has remained mostly grass. A new project has started to establish a community garden. The first step was a survey to establish what the local community want from such a project following which a design was commissioned from a local garden designer and fundraising has started to turn this into a reality.

One of the first actions was to remove an old path that was a relic from the bowling green that had been on the site before the Hall was built and had deteriorated and at some points become dangerous.

2.3 Public Benefit

Merryoaks Community Hall has a central Hub with a community library and tea and coffee making facilities which are available to all whenever the building is open, making it an ideal venue which the local community use as a drop in space.

There are two rooms available to hire for meetings and events; a Main Hall and a Multipurpose Room with a Kitchen adjacent to the Main Hall that is also available to hire.

The office space which had been available to hire is now dedicated to the Centre Manager and volunteers.

Over the course of the year several groups have used these facilities to benefit the community with a range of activities including;

- Exercise and dance classes
- Yoga
- Home education lessons
- Health and Wellbeing
- Cultural discussions
- Mother and toddler groups
- First Aid training
- Martial arts
- Crochet and knitting
- Religious services and celebrations
- Parties

The City of Durham Parish Council continue to hold their monthly meetings in Merryoaks Community Hall making them more accessible to residents.

Durham Merryoaks Women's Institute also hold their monthly meetings in the Hall.

As well as events and classes provided by external groups, LBCP has provided activities and facilities to benefit the community including;

- Christmas music and crafts afternoon
- Burn's Night Supper and Murder Mystery
- Solar Eclipse event
- Table top sales
- Local speakers
- Book club
- Community library
- Puzzle library
- Coffee mornings
- Afternoon teas
- Activities for children during the school holidays

Starting in September 2025, a monthly Companionship Cafe for elderly people and those suffering the effects of dementia is run by our volunteers every month.

The coffee morning which is held on the first Saturday of the month now includes an electrical testing and repair station supported by Durham County Council to reduce electrical waste and is regularly visited by a mobile Eco Van refill shop.

Merryoaks Community Hall is located adjacent to Lowes Barn Recreation Ground which is owned and maintained by Durham County Council and includes a children's play area as well as a multi-use games area (MUGA) and adult exercise facilities. The Community Hall has toilet and baby changing facilities as well as providing a warm, dry space for users of the recreation ground to shelter during periods of inclement weather.

It has been estimated that between 330 and 380 people use the building each week and the age range has been from 3 weeks old to over 90 years old.

We have also installed a defibrillator on the outside of Merryoaks Community Hall so that it is available for use by the public at all times.

3. Structure and Governance

3.1 Trustees: Appointments and Training

This year there were 9 Trustees:

- Glen Walker (Chair)
- Claire Murray-Kemp (Secretary)
- Suzanne McGoay (Treasurer)
- Jennifer Thompson
- Martin Ruerup
- Will Greeves
- Susan Walker
- Suzanne Whelan

- Alan Doig

At the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the year ending 30th September 2024, which was held on 29th January 2025, Alan Doig stood for and was duly elected as a trustee.

In accordance with the constitution, one third of the Trustees need to retire at the AGM but can stand for reappointment. This year Suzanne McGoay, Claire Murray-Kemp and Will Greeves retired and were duly re-elected by the members.

Glen Walker, who had been acting as chair and secretary since Jennifer Thompson had stood down from the role at the previous AGM leaving the role unfilled, has become chair and Claire Murray-Kemp has taken on the role of Secretary.

Trustees, on joining, are given a copy of the LBCP constitution, the latest annual report and the Charity Commission publication "The essential trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do"

Trustees are required to sign a Declaration of Eligibility form and abide by the Trustees Code of Conduct.

A register of Trustees interests is maintained to protect against conflicts of interests.

Merryoaks Community Hall is built on land leased from Durham County Council. The terms of the lease restrict what LBCP could do without permission from the Council. Sometimes such permission would take a long time to be obtained due to the workload within the relevant council departments. LBCP met with the Council and agreed what works could be carried out without permission being obtained, This should enable the charity to move quicker and more efficiently to implement improvements to the building and surrounding garden area.

3.2 Organisational Structure

Trustees continue to meet monthly and have organised themselves into 7 workstreams:

- Governance
- Building Management
- Merryoaks Community Hall Operations
- Volunteer Management and Recruitment
- Grant Applications
- Community and Stakeholder Engagement
- Events Organisation and Community Fundraising

Each workstream has a trustee as lead and may include other trustees and volunteers as appropriate.

A Finance Committee has been established comprising the Treasurer, the Chair and a volunteer with experience in accounting practices. Terms of reference for the Finance Committee were drawn up and agreed by the trustees.

A new Building Snagging and Remediation Committee was established with 2 of the trustees who had been instrumental during the construction of the Hall to focus on completion of outstanding building works.

A separate activity has also started to establish a Community Garden.

3.3 Policies and Procedures

When Merryoaks Community Hall was opened in May 2023, new policies and procedures were put in place, many with a review period of 2 years. In order to prevent all of these policies needing review at the same time, the reviews were spread out over several months.

New policies implemented this year included:

- Anti bullying and Harassment
- Social Media Policy

4. Future Plans

In the coming period, the trustees expect that the use of Merryoaks Community Hall will continue to grow.

It is expected that leaks which happen above several doors during severe weather will be remediated allowing the trustees to focus on new initiatives around Merryoaks Community Hall.

Extra solar panels and battery storage will be installed allowing the Hall to be used as a safe space or refuge in the event of a power outage.

Lighting will be installed in the car park areas to make it easier and safer for Hall users and the users of the adjacent Council owned recreation ground especially during the darker months.

Funding to establish a Community Garden is being sought and it is anticipated that progress towards achieving the design that was commissioned this year will be made.

Community events are expected to be held at holiday times as well as the regular coffee mornings, "tea, cake and chat" meetings, book club etc..

The trustees have agreed that donations will be used for presenting children's activities especially during the school holidays.

5. Financial Review

The Lowes Barn Community Project was financially active in the period 1st Oct 2023 - 31st Sept 2024.

During this financial year the primary bank account was switched from the Lloyds Bank to the Co-Operative Bank current account in the name of Lowes Barn Community Project CIO.

A savings account also with the Lloyds Bank was closed and two new savings accounts were opened with the Co-Operative Bank, an Easy Access Savings Account and a 95 Day Access account.

The trustees agreed a policy to reduce the amount in the current account from £8,000 (2 months expenditure) to £3,000 which is larger than the biggest regular invoice received (approx. £2,000). The reasoning is that monies can be easily transferred between the savings and the current account and can be done at the time that any extraordinary spend is happening.

It has also been agreed to hold reserves of 6 months to 2 years of budgeted expenditure.

The Finance Committee continues to meet monthly and advises on budgeting, financial planning, and the allocation of resources to support the LBCP's activities and

maintenance. The committee has been instrumental in improving the financial reporting for the trustees.

LBCP continues to use Xero™ accounting package.

The principal income source outside of grants is from room hire with £49,066 being received in FY24/25.

Grants totalling £64,374 were received this year. £30,749 as detailed in section 2.2 Achievements (page 3) and £33,625 from grants applied for successfully in previous years including £30,329 towards the cost of employing the Centre Manager. For the detail see the table in Notes to the Accounts, 3 Income (page 13).

The trustees are pleased to report that the financial position of LBCP CIO is robust and the strong start to the history of Merryoaks Community Hall which opened in May 2023 continues.

6. Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with the United Kingdom Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and applicable laws and regulations.

The law applicable to charities requires the trustees to prepare the financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently.
- observe the methods and principles of the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP).
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is appropriate to presume that the charity will not continue in business.

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on 13th July 2025 and signed by its order.

Approved by the trustees and signed on its behalf by:



Glen Walker

22 July 2026

Date:

Chair

7. Independent Examiners Report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Lowes Barn Community Project CIO (the charity) for the year ended 30 September 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As trustees of the charity you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act.

Independent examiners statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination give me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Charities Act 2011.
2. the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
3. the financial statements do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of financial statements set out in Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the financial statements give a true and fair view, which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.



David Holloway FCA DChA
Finchale House
Belmont Business Park
Durham
DH1 1TW

8. Accounts

Lowes Barn Community Project CIO

Registered Charity Number: 1192101

Year Ended 30 September 2025

Statement of Financial Activities

		2025			2024		
	Note	Unrestricted funds	Restricted Funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Restricted Funds	Total
Income	3						
Grants, donations and legacies		-	64,374	64,374	8,724	15,132	23,856
Other trading activities		50,219	-	50,219	51,953	-	51,953
Investments		1,158	-	1,158	408	-	408
Other		705	-	705	483	-	483
		<u>52,082</u>	<u>64,374</u>	<u>116,456</u>	<u>61,568</u>	<u>15,132</u>	<u>76,700</u>
Expenditure	4						
Raising funds		380	-	380	-	-	-
Charitable Activities							
Merryoaks Community Centre		28,579	73,872	102,451	31,164	17,087	48,251
Other		-	-	-	-	-	-
		<u>28,959</u>	<u>73,872</u>	<u>102,831</u>	<u>31,164</u>	<u>17,087</u>	<u>48,251</u>
Net movement in funds		<u>23,123</u>	<u>(9,498)</u>	<u>13,625</u>	<u>30,404</u>	<u>(1,955)</u>	<u>28,449</u>
Funds brought forward		<u>47,468</u>	<u>711,684</u>	<u>759,152</u>	<u>17,064</u>	<u>713,639</u>	<u>730,703</u>
Funds carried forward		<u>70,591</u>	<u>702,186</u>	<u>772,777</u>	<u>47,468</u>	<u>711,684</u>	<u>759,152</u>

Lowes Barn Community Project CIO
Registered Charity Number: 1192101

Year Ended 30 September 2025

Balance Sheet

	Note	funds	2025 Funds	Total	funds	2024 Funds	Total
Fixed Assets	7						
Building		-	664,431	664,431	-	702,797	702,797
Equipment		10,350	-	10,350	10,678	-	10,678
		<u>10,350</u>	<u>664,431</u>	<u>674,781</u>	<u>10,678</u>	<u>702,797</u>	<u>713,475</u>
Current Assets							
Current Account		52,600	37,755	90,355	5,501	2,306	7,807
Savings Account		33,254	-	33,254	61,793	-	61,793
Cash in hand		79	-	79	541	-	541
Accounts receivable	8	2,515	-	2,515	1,748	-	1,748
Sundry debtors	8	5,213	-	5,213	(200)	-	(200)
		<u>93,661</u>	<u>37,755</u>	<u>131,416</u>	<u>69,383</u>	<u>2,306</u>	<u>71,689</u>
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year							
Sundry creditors	9	30,151	-	30,151	25,136	-	25,139
Income in advance	9	3,267	-	3,267	873	-	873
		<u>33,418</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>33,418</u>	<u>26,009</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>26,012</u>
Net Current Assets		<u>60,243</u>	<u>37,755</u>	<u>97,998</u>	<u>43,374</u>	<u>2,306</u>	<u>45,677</u>
Net Assets		<u>70,593</u>	<u>702,186</u>	<u>772,779</u>	<u>54,052</u>	<u>705,103</u>	<u>759,152</u>
Funds	10	<u>70,593</u>	<u>702,186</u>	<u>772,779</u>	<u>47,468</u>	<u>711,684</u>	<u>759,152</u>

Lowes Barn Community Project CIO

Registered Charity Number: 1192101

Year Ended 30 September 2025

Notes

3. Income

Donations and Legacies

Donated assets

Grants

Durham Area Action Partnership - Start up
Durham Area Action Partnership - Garden
Durham Area Action Partnership - Fun and Food
City of Durham Parish Council - Blinds
National Lottery - Centre Manager
NXCA Winter Festival
NXCA - Burns night Supper
Defibrillator
Children's Activities
Community Activities
Garden and companionship café
Notice board
Solar panels and batteries

	Unrestricted funds	2025 Restricted Funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	2024 Restricted Funds	Total
Donated assets	-	-	-	7,000	-	7,000
Grants						
Durham Area Action Partnership - Start up	-	-	-	1,724	-	1,724
Durham Area Action Partnership - Garden	-	-	-	-	3,260	3,260
Durham Area Action Partnership - Fun and Food	-	-	-	-	2,300	2,300
City of Durham Parish Council - Blinds	-	972	972	-	2,197	2,197
National Lottery - Centre Manager	-	30,329	30,329	-	6,000	6,000
NXCA Winter Festival	-	-	-	-	119	119
NXCA - Burns night Supper	-	-	-	-	550	550
Defibrillator	-	-	-	-	221	221
Children's Activities	-	4,572	4,572	-	485	485
Community Activities	-	753	753	-	-	-
Garden and companionship café	-	4,249	4,249	-	-	-
Notice board	-	999	999	-	-	-
Solar panels and batteries	-	22,500	22,500	-	-	-
	-	64,374	64,374	8,724	15,132	23,856

Other Trading Activities

Fundraising events etc.

Room hire

Fundraising events etc.	1,153	-	1,153	8,317	-	8,317
Room hire	49,066	-	49,066	43,636	-	43,636
	50,219	-	50,219	51,953	-	51,953

Investments

Bank interest

Bank interest	1,158	-	1,158	408	-	408
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Other

Renewable Energy and EV Charging income

Renewable Energy and EV Charging income	705	-	705	483	-	483
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Total

	52,082	64,374	116,456	61,568	15,132	76,700
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4. Expenditure

Raising funds

Marketing / Promotions
Event hire costs
Event consumables
Doubtful debts

Marketing / Promotions	-	-	-	274	-	274
Event hire costs	-	-	-	150	-	150
Event consumables	380	-	380	46	-	46
Doubtful debts	-	-	-	200	-	200
	380	-	380	670	-	670

Charitable expenditure

National Lottery Recruitment costs
National Lottery HR Costs / inc payroll
National Lottery HR Marketing and Advertising
National Lottery office equipment
National Lottery admin costs
National Lottery Office supplies
Grants expenditure
Donations expenditure
Charitable donations
Repairs and renewals
Building operations
Building consumables
Building maintenance
Building project D3 costs
Cleaning
Grass cutting and grounds
Electricity
Water
BT
Waste services
Insurance
Property depreciation
Depreciation

National Lottery Recruitment costs	-	67	67	-	328	328
National Lottery HR Costs / inc payroll	-	22,225	22,225	-	152	152
National Lottery HR Marketing and Advertising	-	735	735	-	98	98
National Lottery office equipment	-	893	893	-	20	20
National Lottery admin costs	-	87	87	-	-	-
National Lottery Office supplies	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grants expenditure	-	8,675	8,675	-	6,070	6,070
Donations expenditure	-	807	807	33	627	660
Charitable donations	-	-	-	75	-	75
Repairs and renewals	6,961	2,217	9,178	658	-	658
Building operations	640	-	640	178	-	178
Building consumables	907	-	907	674	-	674
Building maintenance	2,821	-	2,821	3,513	-	3,513
Building project D3 costs	-	-	-	7,449	-	7,449
Cleaning	4,021	-	4,021	3,081	-	3,081
Grass cutting and grounds	235	-	235	513	-	513
Electricity	5,302	-	5,302	6,116	-	6,116
Water	776	-	776	915	-	915
BT	915	-	915	727	-	727
Waste services	410	-	410	589	-	589
Insurance	2,202	-	2,202	1,510	-	1,510
Property depreciation	-	38,366	38,366	-	9,792	9,792
Depreciation	2,545	-	2,545	1,884	-	1,884
	27,735	73,872	101,607	27,915	17,087	45,002

Lowes Barn Community Project CIO
Registered Charity Number: 1192101
Year Ended 30 September 2025

Notes

5. Trustee Remuneration and expenses

None of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration during the year for their duties as a trustee. However, certain trustees incurred expenditure on behalf of the Charity and were reimbursed for such costs. These reimbursements totalled £4,436 (2024: 3,717)

6. Employees

The average number of employees on the year was 1 (2024: nil)

7. Fixed Assets

	Equipment	Buildings	Total
Cost			
Balance brought forward	13,543	722,381	735,924
Additions	2,217	-	2,217
Disposals	-	-	-
Balance carried forward	<u>15,760</u>	<u>722,381</u>	<u>738,141</u>
Depreciation			
Balance brought forward	2,865	19,584	22,449
Charge for the year	2,545	38,366	40,911
Balance carried forward	<u>5,410</u>	<u>57,950</u>	<u>63,360</u>
Net book value			
At 30th September 2024	<u>10,678</u>	<u>702,797</u>	<u>713,475</u>
At 30th September 2025	<u>10,350</u>	<u>664,431</u>	<u>674,781</u>

8. Debtors

	2025	2024
Hire fees outstanding	2,515	1,548
Others	5,213	-
	<u>7,728</u>	<u>1,548</u>

9. Sundry creditors

Building retention	14,604	15,202
Other creditors	15,347	10,808
	<u>30,151</u>	<u>26,010</u>