

**(FINAL) Minutes of the 53rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Held on Thursday 25 September 2025 at 7.30 at Benslow Music Trust**

**1. Apologies:**

Marion Bradbury, Liz Sillars, Brian Holmes, Barbara James, Jess Peyton Jones, Sarah Martinelli, Gillian Hawkins, Martin Shreeves, Jeremy Goodwyn, Rita Beasley, Sue McKenzie, Rosemary Read, Becca Brear, Jill Butler, Anna Carter, Wendy Hazelwood, Sue Lemmon, Liz, Tyrrell, Ella-Kate Whitehead, Deborah Woods

**Number in attendance:** 81 members

**2. Minutes of the 52nd AGM held on Thursday 26 September 2024.**

The minutes were unanimously approved and signed by the Chair.

**3. Matters Arising**

None arising.

**4. Chair's Report**

In the 57<sup>th</sup> year of the Guild, the choir has performed four concerts and held a workshop, continuing our aims of providing high quality music for the North Hertfordshire area. The first concert of the season was held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at St Mary's, Hitchin, with a performance of CPE Bach's Magnificat and Handel's Dettingen Te Deum. The choir was accompanied by four soloists and Musica Donum Dei with Colin on the organ, with a good-sized audience in attendance. A medical emergency in the audience caused an interruption but eventually the performance was successfully concluded. The charity, On To It/Days for Girls, provided the refreshments, raising £321 for that charity.

The next concert included a performance of Oliver Tarney's Missa Media Nocte with traditional carols. This was held on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at Walsworth Road Baptist Church but without the accompaniment of the Garden House Hospice Christmas Tractor procession. Although a smaller audience than usual, a profit of £566 was made and the refreshments raised £154 for the church. Thanks to Deborah Dean, a grant of £200 was received from the County Councillor Richard Thake's Locality budget, which helped with the purchase of the Tarney music. Two pre-Christmas events took place, with the wearing of Christmas jumpers to the final rehearsal of 2024 raising £89 for the choir's funds, and on 14<sup>th</sup> December, a small group of choir members once again sang at the Lister hospital. We were unable to visit the wards due to a possible Covid scare but sang in the main entrance corridor where we raised £76 for the hospital charity, and received a very appreciative letter.

The major concert of the year saw the choir back on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at the Coptic Centre in Stevenage, a venue that we had not performed in for some years. The Beaufoy Sinfonia with four soloists accompanied the choir in a programme of Mozart's C Minor Mass, his Linz symphony no.36 and Hadyn's Insanae et Vanae Curae. More thanks go to Deborah Dean, who stepped in as the concert manager, assisted Frances Chamberlain with the refreshments for the orchestra and soloists, and obtained a grant of £2000 from the Williams Church Music Trust towards the running of the concert. Although audience numbers were lower than expected, the concert made a smaller loss than expected, but many appreciative comments were received and the Coptic Centre were very helpful with the running of the concert. We will be back at the Coptic Centre in March 2026 for a performance of Vaughan William's Sea Symphony.

Another very successful workshop was held at Christchurch on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2025, with work carried out on Faure's Requiem and the morning ended with a performance of it using choir members as soloists. The workshop was attended by 87, made up of 46 choir members and 41 non-choir members. Another cake sale, thanks to Sue Covington, and a music sale raised £109 for the choir's funds, with Christchurch providing refreshments.

The final concert of the year on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2025, held at Walsworth Road Baptist Church, featured a programme entitled "A Fancy of Folk". This moved away from the usual repertoire with arrangements of traditional folksongs from different parts of the British Isles, with the soloist accompanying herself on the guitar. The concert was very well attended, in spite of the very hot weather, and the church once again provided the refreshments.

A surplus of over £5000 has been achieved through increased membership, profits from the Christmas and Summer concerts, the workshop, Easyfundraising, pencil sales, thanks to Pam Blackburn, and assistance from the grants already mentioned. This may sound a good sum, but the costs of putting on big concerts must be noted, with next year being no exception with the spring concert of the Sea Symphony.

We should have had a social event of Pimms on the lawn after the rehearsal on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2025. However, this had to be cancelled due to Benslow not giving us a quote for the drinks in time to organise the event.

A choir tour to the Netherlands in the Autumn of 2026 is currently being explored, however more participants are needed to ensure that this tour takes place.

Current membership is about 127 with more new members this year. Please help to encourage anyone who is thinking of joining to do so, as membership and concert tickets sales are our main sources of income. Pat Salmon, our current membership secretary, is stepping down from this role which she has carried out for many years, so we are looking for a member to take on this position. Thank you, Pat, for your work in this position.

Once again, I am very grateful to the committee members, especially Chris Goodwin, Secretary, and Diane Richards, Treasurer, and everyone else involved in the weekly running of the choir and concert preparations throughout the year.

Thank you also for the work of our two excellent professionals, Harry and Colin, for bringing their commitment, enthusiasm and knowledge of music to the choir.

Let's hope we have another successful season as the North Herts Guild of Singers moves into its 58th year.

**Dave Tinney (Chair NHGS)**

## **5. Music Director's Report.**

The 2024-25 season was another very successful one for the North Herts Guild of Singers. As usual, we tackled a wide variety of repertoire and I have been so impressed by the way in which everyone has committed to the demands of each concert.

We began our season with CPE Bach's Magnificat, (a super piece and one which deserves credit in its own right and not only in comparison with JS Bach's piece of the same name) and Handel's Dettingen Te Deum. The Guild approached the fierce and challenging choruses, particularly in the CPE, without fear and gave an excellent performance at St Mary's Church alongside the period instrumental ensemble Musica Donum Dei and soloists Daisy Livesey, Helena Cooke, Zahid Siddiqui and Allyn Wu. Despite a potential medical emergency which was dealt with ably by our in-house medical team, and very welcome singing advice from a double bass player, the concert was a great success.

I've often wondered whether it might be time for me to write a piece for choir, organ and tractor ensemble for the Guild's Christmas concerts but strangely this year we managed to get lucky with our timing on this particular date. Perhaps another year, but we were in welcome contemporary company with Oliver Tarney's Missa Media Nocte based on traditional French Christmas carols alongside our usual potpourri of Carols for Choirs favourites. We were joined by guest organist Richard Leach and it was great to see a full Walsworth Road enjoying our festive offerings.

Our March concert saw us make a long-awaited return to the Coptic Centre in Stevenage, the venue of my first ever concert with the Guild back in 2019. We had a lot of fun preparing the choruses for the Mozart C Minor mass and Haydn's Insanae et Vanae Curae and I really enjoyed working on this in lots of detail. The concert was a real highlight of the season for me and it was great to be joined by the Beaufoy Sinfonia alongside soloists Natalka Pasciznyk, Maya Wheeler-Colwell, Louis Watkins and Henry Saywell, all of whom performed the roles with aplomb.

Summer saw us venture into the world of folk songs with Rutter's beautiful Sprig of Thyme, McDowall's deceptively tricky Fancy of Folksongs and some classic arrangements by Rutter,

Wilcocks and more. This repertoire was possibly the most challenging of the season, especially the rhythmic patterns of the McDowall and the huge a cappella arrangements that split into many parts in the OUP Folksongs book, but stretching us as a choir is a good thing and we really rose to the challenge in our concert at Walsworth Road. We were joined by Colin on piano and soprano Lottie Day who performed a wide variety of folk and folk-inspired songs, sometimes accompanying herself on the guitar. A suitably summery end to our season of music.

To sum up, another good season of music making. I'm extremely proud of all the concerts and events we put on. As always, I'd like to say a big thank you to our wonderful accompanist Colin we are so lucky to work with a musician of his quality every week. This season has seen him playing, conducting and also singing with the choir, is there no end to what I will ask this man to do!

Also a huge thank you to Dave, Chris, Diane and our wonderful committee for all their support. They have managed the year superbly and are a pleasure to deal with. Thank you also to everyone who does jobs for the choir on a regular basis, from putting the chairs out to giving orchestral players lifts to sourcing music stands to social media publicity – it all makes a huge difference and all these little cogs really make the NHGS machine work in the way it does. Thank you.

Lastly a thank you to you all for your continued support and trusting me with the musical direction of the choir. We've got a big season ahead of us, particularly with RVW Sea Symphony in the pipeline and I for one am really looking forward to it.

## **Harry Bradford (MD NHGS)**

### **6. Treasurer's report for the year 2023-2024**

The Treasurer presented her report, as follows, together with the financial statement for the year. Before doing so, Diane took the opportunity to thank Deborah Dean for grants secured during the year; Rita and Dave Beasley for all their work and time selling concert tickets and organising the team of stewards; Pam Blackburn for helping with ticket sales and Frances Chamberlain and her family for all the Front of House work at the concerts.

I attach the NHGS accounts for the year 2024-25 which are presented in the format expected by the Charity Commission

Thanks to the continued financial support of the Members and the hard work of our professionals we were able to hold four concerts, (two with a small orchestra), and a workshop this year. A surplus of £5,202 was made this year thanks to a few grants and donations, an increase in membership, and a successful workshop, Christmas and Summer concerts which all made surpluses.

The key differences in income and expenditure between the financial year 2024-25 and the previous year are:

1. **Grants** This year we have received an additional £400 in grants from the Herts County Council's Locality Budget Scheme which partially subsidised the cost of music for the Christmas concert and a generous £2000 from the Williams Church Music Trust towards the cost of the orchestra at the Autumn concert. These are shown in Note 5: Grants, legacies and general donations. My thanks go to Deborah Dean, former Chair, for obtaining these grants.
2. **Administrative costs** Performing rights fees have increased by 60% to £377. Formally fees were based on the number of concert attendees, but now they are based on 3.25% of gross ticket income. The general administrative costs doubled this year to include £441 covering 3-year refresher courses for our two first aiders.
3. **Concert** income has decreased by 6.3% to £9401, but costs decreased this year too by 4.8% to £21,782. The number of tickets sold this year has also decreased by 5.8%
4. **Accruals** –Debtors and payments in advance consist of £200 venue deposits for concerts in future years, £287 advance payments for 2025/6 music, £3 flyers for the Autumn 25 concert and £378 Summer concert ticket income from Hitchin Festival.
5. The total **reserves** has increased to £59,073. These are made up of three components, namely the unrestricted (free) reserves of £48,858, the tour reserve of £240, and £9975 set aside to cover the cost of depreciation of our staging. The readily available (cash) reserve is currently £54,027

Thanks to the generous support from Members and cost savings made by the Committee and the Music Director we are fortunate to be in a financially good position at the moment. My thanks go to Members who gave donations in addition to their membership fee and the 11 members who transferred from monthly payments to paying the fee on an annual basis which greatly helps our cash flow particularly during the Spring term. Membership numbers rose to 127 this year – the highest since the pandemic which has also contributed to this year's surplus. However Membership fees and ticket sales do not cover the entire cost of the music programmes planned for future years and we rely heavily on fundraising, grants and recently, bank interest to meet the shortfall. In addition we need to plan finances so that within 3 years we will have the resources to renew our staging whenever this becomes necessary. (See reserves policy). Thank you to our extremely talented professionals and to all Members, friends and relatives who have continued to support the Guild. You can be assured that the Trustees will endeavour to manage the finances as best we can to ensure the long-term future of the Guild.

Chris Blackman proposed that the financial report should be accepted, and this was seconded by Ed Twomey. All were in favour.

## **7. Annual subscription for the 2024-2025 season**

The Committee proposed that the subscription should be increased by £12 to £246 per annum. Diane explained that, in setting the budget for the forthcoming season, she has based the costings on a membership of 120, a 5% increase in costs and an unknown programme for the summer concert. The proposed increase is in line with the current RPI rate of inflation.

There was a query from the floor as to whether, given that there was a £5,202 surplus last year and the reserves are comparatively healthy, an increase was necessary. Diane explained that the surplus was largely made possible by the grants, a successful workshop and the Christmas and Summer concerts which both made a surplus. She also pointed out that there has been a general decline in audience numbers in recent years and that it is the ticket sales as well as membership fees that are largely responsible for the choir's income. Diane also explained that she is managing the reserves to take account of the depreciation of the choir's staging so that, when it needs replacing, there are sufficient funds to cover the cost.

Diane also reminded the members that we have a very expensive concert (c 15K) next Spring. Our November and Summer concerts have been planned accordingly and will not include an orchestra. She also reminded the meeting that there could be unforeseen costs and increases. The choir might wish to return to St Mary's for some of our concerts. Following the recent building work there, the hire charge could be significantly more than for our last visit.

There was some discussion concerning whether the level of subscription might deter some people from joining the choir. Diane pointed out that, as a large choir performing large works, we need large venues in which to rehearse and perform, which inevitably increases our costs. It was pointed out from the floor that a subscription level of £246 for a season of 39 weeks equates to a cost of c £6.30 per rehearsal. This also includes the concerts. An hourly rate of c £3.15 compares very favourably with other evening classes/leisure activities.

Dave and Diane reminded the meeting that the choir's cash flow was greatly improved by members paying the full amount at the beginning of the year as well as reducing the time-consuming work of logging the monthly payments.

The motion was put to the meeting that the annual subscription should be increased to £246 per annum.

Proposed by Bob Beasley and Seconded by John Stephenson

The motion was carried unanimously.

## **8. Appointment of an Independent Examiner**

Our current Independent Examiner is Mark Hjertzen BA FCA of HW Associates Limited, an accountancy firm experienced in handling Independent Examinations for small charities. Since taking over as our IE, Mark has been very helpful, carried out the work efficiently and, most importantly, has been able to meet our tight deadlines which involve work during August. The Treasurer therefore recommended that, subject to a satisfactory quote, we should appoint HW Associates to carry out our Independent Examination for the year 2025 – 2026.

Georgie Bennet proposed that the Treasurer's recommendation should be accepted. This was seconded by Eve Bedell. Approval was unanimous.

## 9. Election of Officers of NHGS.

**Hon. Chair:** Dave Tinney

Proposed by Bob Beasley and seconded by Barry Goodman

Although there were no other nominations, the approval of the meeting was sought.

Approval was unanimous.

**Hon. Secretary:** Christine Goodwin

Proposed by Angela Gould and seconded by Ruth Garrod

Although there were no other nominations, the approval of the meeting was sought.

Approval was unanimous.

**Hon. Treasurer:** Diane Richards:

Proposed by Karen Williams and seconded by Sarah Carrick

Although there were no other nominations, the approval of the meeting was sought.

Approval was unanimous.

### **Election of members to serve on the Committee from 25 September 2025**

The following Members were elected to serve on the Committee:

Anne Blackman, Susan Clark, Deborah Dean, Jane Kirk, Katharine Rowe, Phil Rowe

Proposed by Jenny Back and seconded by Karen Nurse.

Although all were standing unopposed, the approval of the meeting was sought.

Approval was unanimous.

## 10. Any other business

None

The meeting closed at 8 pm

Signed ..... (Chair)

Date.....

# North Herts Guild of Singers

## Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 July 2025

2023/24	2024/25
25,121 Members' Subscriptions	28,518
3,585 Gift Aid recoverable - for this year	4,168
28,706	<i>Sub-total</i> 32,686
492 Fund-raising activities ( Note 1)	422
10,036 Concert income (Note 2)	9,400
702 Hire of music/folders to Members	1,728
416 Administration and Other Income (Note 3)	70
1,086 Choral Workshop (Note 4)	1,283
1,113 Grants, legacies and donations (Note 5)	2,659
1,016 Bank Interest	996
<b>43,567 Total incoming resources</b>	<b>49,244</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>	
0 Costs of fundraising (Note 1)	0
22,870 Concert costs (Note 2)	21,782
14,873 Rehearsal costs	14,873
711 Music & folders hired/purchased	2,094
4,366 Administration and Other Expenses (Note 3)	4,493
687 Choral Workshop (Note 4)	718
94 Bank Charges	82
<b>43,601</b>	<b>44,042</b>
<b>(34) Surplus/Deficit of resources expended</b>	<b>5,202</b>

## Balance Sheet as at 31 July 2025

<b>Fixed assets</b>	
5,700 Staging (Note 6)	4,275
<b>Current assets</b>	
447 Debtors and other payments in advance	868
97 Cash in hand	97
47,525 Bank Deposit Account balance	53,821
102 Bank Current Account balance	109
53,871	59,170
<b>Less: Current liabilities</b>	
0 Creditors and accrued expenses	97
<b>53,871 Net current assets and net assets</b>	<b>59,073</b>
<b>Financed by:</b>	
53,665 General reserves at 1 August 2024	53,631
(34) Surplus /Deficit of resources expended in the year	5,202
<b>53,631 General reserves at 31 July 2025</b>	<b>58,833</b>
240 Tour Reserve (Note 7)	240
<b>53,871 Total reserves at 31 July 2025</b>	<b>59,073</b>

David Tinney (Chair)

Diane Richards (Treasurer)



# North Herts Guild Of Singers

## Notes to the Accounts 2024/45 - Page 1

### Note 1: Fund raising activities

	£	£	£	£
	Income	Costs	Net	23/24
Sale of Music	12	0	12	80
Easyfundraising	184	0	184	146
Pencil sale	40	0	40	0
Competitions (Xmas Jumper)	89	0	89	0
Advertising	0	0	0	60
Other (cake sale)	97	0	97	206
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>492</b>

### Note 2: Concerts

	Income	Costs	Net	23/24
Autumn (2024)	2,587	8,902	(6,315)	(4,560)
Christmas (2024)	1,847	1,280	567	(640)
Spring (2025)	2,561	9,934	(7,373)	(5,835)
Summer (2025)	2,405	1,666	739	(1,799)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>9,400</b>	<b>21,782</b>	<b>(12,382)</b>	<b>(12,834)</b>

### Note 3: Admin & Other Expenses

	Income	Costs	Net	23/24
Making Music Subscription	0	411	(411)	(392)
Insurance	0	155	(155)	(151)
Performing Rights fees	0	377	(377)	(236)
Website maintenance and operation	0	124	(124)	(103)
Equipment	0	41	(41)	(13)
Concert scarves	70	0	70	(188)
Staging storage rental	0	1,128	(1,128)	(1,028)
Staging Depreciation	0	1,425	(1,425)	(1,425)
Social Events- Pimms on Lawn	0	0	0	(1)
General Administration expenses	0	832	(832)	(413)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>4,493</b>	<b>(4,423)</b>	<b>(3,950)</b>

### Note 4 Workshop/Come and Sing

	Income	Costs	Net	23/24
Venue	0	185	(185)	(185)
Professionals	0	505	(505)	(490)
Entry charges for participants	1,223	0	1,223	947
Tickets	0	0	0	(3)
Refreshments	60	0	60	130
Music hire	0	28	(28)	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1,283</b>	<b>718</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>399</b>

### Note 5 Grants, legacies and other donations

	Income	Costs	Net	23/24
JBT grant for Bach concert soloists	0	0	0	330
Williams CMT grant for Mozart concert	2,000	0	2,000	500
Herts CC locality budget music subsidy	400	0	400	250
General donations	259	0	259	33
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,659</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,659</b>	<b>1,113</b>

# North Herts Guild Of Singers

## Notes to the Accounts 2024/25 - Page 2

### Note 6: Fixed Assets (Staging)

	Cost	Depre'cn 10% strt line	Net Book Value
Balance @ 1 August 2024	14,250	8,500	5,700
Charge for the year 24/25		1,425	(1,425)
Additions	0	0	0
Less disposals	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>14,250</b>	<b>9,975</b>	<b>4,275</b>

### Note 7: Tour

	Income	Costs	Net	23/24
<b>Tour reserve</b>				
Balance brought forward @1 August 2024	240	0	240	240
	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	
<b>Balance brought forward @ 31 July 25</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>240</b>

## **Independent examiner's report to the trustees of the North Herts Guild of Singers**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the North Herts Guild of Singers (the Trust) for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025.

### **Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

### **Independent examiner's statement**

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

1. Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. The accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. The accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts 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 with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Mark Hjertzen BA FCA  
HW Associates Limited  
Portmill House  
Portmill Lane  
Hitchin  
Herts  
SG5 1DJ

Dated 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2025