

Ballymena AGM – 16th September 2025

Agenda:

Welcome
Apologies for absence
Minutes of last AGM for approval
Matters arising from last AGM
Chairpersons Report
OiCs report
Treasurers Report & Adoption of Accounts
Election / Re-election of the UMT
AOB

INTRODUCTION

Good Evening Everyone and thank you for attending our AGM this evening.

The purpose of an AGM is to formalize what has happened financially, what the plans are, and try to highlight some positives, from the last charity year. But to us it's more than that. But I'll get to that in a minute.

Firstly, our unit President, Cllr Rodney Quigley had hoped to be out of another meeting in time to come to us this evening, but as he's not here he has passed on his apologies.

Last years minutes, involved my Chair report looking at how to increase our fundraising opportunities, and working with the uniformed side to ensure we offer as much as we can for your young people. Lewis's OiC report spoke of it being his first year in command, and that he was learning a lot. The accounts were provided, and I have them here if anyone wants to see them again.

Are we happy that the minutes reflected that year's AGM?

Propose: Lewis Allison

Second: John Taylor

There were no matters arising from last year's AGM.

Chairperson's Report

I mentioned earlier that the purpose of an AGM is to formalize what has happened in the last year, but it really is more than that. It's an opportunity for us to tell you how proud we are of all the young people that come to us each week.

You see, the problem with youth organisations is that there's a mindset that we're "youth clubs" and the young people just come in and out for a couple of hours once a week, and that's all there is to it. When I think of a youth club I think of PS5's, and pool tables, and tuck shops, and hanging out talking crap... lol and that's not what we are. On the other side, there's the mindset, and I have been told this, that we're too British, too military, too structured.... And actually that's not us either. Yes, we wear a uniform – because the Royal Navy gives us them for free.... And the most contentious thing we probably do is going to a church service on Remembrance Sunday and walking round to the cenotaph.

In this unit we have young people of different race, different religion, different culture, and I can honestly say I've never heard anyone, adult or cadet, act as if they've even noticed. Because here we are one. One team. One family. One unit.

Every adult involved in this unit is here because we want every young person that comes to us to achieve something because they've been here. Because maybe they wouldn't get the opportunity to do something anywhere else. Maybe that's a cultural thing, or maybe it is because of finances, it doesn't matter. We want everyone here to be able to say, "look what I did".

Lewis will be able to tell you shortly how much our young people have accomplished, and Pauline will be able to tell you how much money we've been able to fundraise through grants so that we can provide more opportunities for our young people. So, it's up to me to try to put a bit of fire in your belly so you can see why we do it.

Some Sea Cadet units are very much split in two, the uniform side do their thing, and the management team side do their thing, and maybe every few weeks they'll have a quick catchup. Ballymena isn't like that. I said earlier about the cadets here being in one team. Well, so are the adults. We have a WhatsApp group that both sides are in. Everyone knows what's going on with everything and everyone can make comment if they feel they've something to contribute. Because an open and transparent and respectful team accomplishes more.

Don't get me wrong. We have challenges. Though as a general rule they come because of HQ, not from within the unit! From my perspective, as Chairperson my role is to oversee the management team, and to have us all doing what we can to keep the doors open, the bills paid, the money coming in so we can spend it on things for the cadets, and to help provide that cadet experience. We are part of the MSSC yes, but we are an independently registered charity who has to adhere to charity law. That means that as a management team we have to have 3 mandatory positions filled. Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary. I'm here now 10 years, Pauline is Treasurer maybe 12? It's not because we're control freaks and won't let anyone else take over, ok there's maybe a little bit of control freak in us, but it is not easy getting support. We are in positions because no one else wants them. And that's ok. We quite like the roles most of the time. But it would be nice to always have a secretary, and someone who quite likes trying to get people to give us money and organize quizzes, or other events.

Every year at the AGM all UMT stand down and then get re-elected (if they're agreeable to being that is). And while we will carry on, it would be nice to have others to help bounce ideas off or share the load.

For those that don't know, I am Chairperson, and therefore fully responsible, for 5 sea cadet units. 3 in NI and 2 in Scotland. This is my home unit. The others are a mess, so I've been brought in to take over the management and fix them.... Some I've had for a couple of years. And Pauline, well I couldn't do all I do without Pauline either. So much so that only last week I recruited her into helping me with one of the other units in Scotland because their accounts are a mess and the bank is threatening to close their account.

If we didn't care about the young people, we wouldn't have spent a decade doing this.

We're not a youth club. We offer RYA and Paddle UK qualifications, we offer the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Level 1 & Level 2 Btecs, first aid, catering, engineering, and many others. They get the opportunity to go away on courses, or away on one of the offshore fleet. And we have a bursary scheme so that no young person loses out on an experience because of finances.

Lewis and his team of instructors come to ask asking for money so that they can get extra equipment, or pay for extra experiences for the cadets, because like us they're here to see them all get something out of it. Lewis joined us as a young cadet (and I have the old photos to prove it!) and now he's in command in the unit. When he was a cadet, and John was the Commanding Officer, he said he wanted to take over from John because he didn't want it going to someone outside Ballymena unit... So now we're looking to see which cadets we have now could be the next Lewis or John... An internal succession plan. Not many units could do it. But we're not like most units. I think we could do it.

As always we have to finish my report with a plug – we are always looking new member of UMT, and new instructors, so if anyone would like to come on board here's what you need to know:

There are I think now about 6 online training sessions to do in your own time – If you're up early on a Saturday morning and got stuck into them you'd be done before lunch. They cover the background to sea cadets, our safeguarding policy, health and safety policy, Equality, discrimination and inclusion policy, Responsible for Information policy.... We also get an enhanced Access NI done; mandatory as we need to make sure our children are safe, and there's a 2 hr zoom training session also about Safeguarding, which actually is interesting and you do get to participate if you want – it's not just a death by PowerPoint. Every adult you come across has to complete every one of these in order to volunteer, because all the children we come across need to know they're safe, they'll be protected, and there are adults they can talk to if they need to, because sometimes sea cadets is a child's safe haven from the outside world. We've seen it in our own unit, and we're not willing to let them down.

So to finish, I would just like to say thankyou to my UMT, to the uniformed staff in the unit, to all those working in the background to produce new training plans, or arranging courses, or organizing regatta's and the travel to them. There's a lot that people don't see, that keeps a lot of people busy. I want to put on record how grateful I am to all those, because it means our cadets in Ballymena get to experience great things. Thankyou.