

Horton and Little Sodbury Village Hall Committee

Chairman's Report for the AGM, 2025-26

This year's AGM comes 11 months after the last one, as we move back towards a summer slot, after things slipped during Covid when we couldn't meet. It makes sense to have the AGM quite soon after our financial year end.

The hall is still getting a steady flow of bookings for fitness classes, coffee mornings, parties and wedding receptions. However attendance at, and income from, 'events' is still much lower than pre-Covid. People seem reluctant to buy tickets in advance, and we also struggle to find people who might be able to help organise and run our events. Because attendance is so patchy we cannot afford to stage anything with high fixed costs.

Regular bookings at the hall include Pilates, Zumba and Boxercise. The school uses the hall every Tuesday for PE. The Scouts and the Sodbury Slog continue to rent storage space from us.

Our finances are still holding up, although as we'll hear from our treasurer Brian in a moment, income from fundraising events is very much less than last year. We haven't had much capital expenditure this year, though we are about to have to pay for our new windows and doors – more on that later. Income from hirings is holding up well, but is a bit down on last year.

Please do support village events that we put on at the hall – it needs your support to remain viable.

So what has been happening at the hall over the past 11 months?

A local artisan bakery, KNEAD, still visit us once or twice a month to sell cakes, bakes and coffee from their cleverly converted van. Their visits are very popular. The village hall gets a share of the profits – it works out at maybe £5 per visit.

In late August we had a Picnic in the Park which was a good opportunity for a chat and catch-up for the village.

In September a local author, Gareth Williams, came to tell us about his book on 'The Impossible Bomb', which describes the British contribution to Oppenheimer's Manhattan Project that developed the atomic bomb.

Our annual pre-Christmas event to launch the village Christmas card was accompanied by a cheese and wine evening and quiz. A good time was had by all.

We reprised our Quiz Duo in January and February. Sadly the February quiz was not at all well attended, but we will have a couple more quizzes early in 2027.

In February, Rockhampton Wind Quintet (including our very own Mike Lea-Wilson on French horn) performed a varied evening of music for us. We enjoyed it so much that they are coming back to play for us in the New Year.

In April we had our annual Bull Run, with an excellent turnout of over 160 runners. Because of the bad potholes on the old route, this year the run went down King Lane, Vinney Lane, across the edge of Lower Woods and back along Wood Lane. As in the past, the Bull Run was held on the same day as the London Marathon, which we showed on our big screen. This year Emma Barlow was running the London Marathon in aid of St Peter's Hospice, which has supported her mum Jenny, stepdad Nick and several other villagers over the years. Emma raised over £6000 for this excellent cause and we enjoyed watching the TV broadcast to see her cross the finishing line.

Feria Orchestra, a 12-piece chamber ensemble, were coming back to perform a programme of music from the films for us just a few days ago, but we had to postpone the event as only 6 tickets had been sold. The combination of the heatwave and the World Cup did not help either. Hopefully Feria will reschedule for early next year.

Continuing the musical theme, in September the award-winning folk duo Ninebarrow are coming back for what must be their 8th return visit. They are absolutely brilliant. Tickets for that event are already selling well.

We hope to hold a board game afternoon in November.

In December the multi-talented author Gareth Williams, who spoke to us about the Impossible Bomb earlier this year, is coming to talk to us about his book on the Loch Ness Monster and Peter Scott's involvement in Nessie's story. It's a fascinating tale.

The weekend after that, we will have our usual Christmas card launch event with a Christmas tippie or two.

Many thanks also to everyone who attended or helped organise our events. Without your support, the village hall will not survive.

We'd really appreciate any suggestions for events that you'd like to see in the future and hope you'll support any events that we do run. We are also very grateful for offers of help at events – perhaps behind the bar, in the kitchen, or baking a cake. The Village Hall committee is very small, so help is always needed.

Tony Wake has continued to do a sterling job editing our village newsletter to keep everyone abreast of what's going on at the hall and in the village. It is now 3-monthly with mini news sheets in the "in between" months. Many thanks to Tony for all his hard work on the newsletter and for his ample supply of jokes and puns.

We really appreciate the grants and support we get from the Parish Council and from South Glos Council. The Parish Council has kindly agreed to continue to pay a larger share of the cost of our grass cutting in the forthcoming year, for which we are very grateful.

You may have noticed our smart new doors and windows which were fitted earlier this week. These were necessary because the frame of one of the old fire doors was broken when it got caught in a gust of wind and smashed against the stonework. It was damaged beyond repair. The new set is made of aluminium so should be more sturdy than the UPVC ones we had before.

We had the separate electricity supply in the Pavilion disconnected so that the Pavilion now runs as a spur off the Village Hall supply. The Pavilion uses barely any electricity but we were paying a fairly hefty standing charge even when we used no electricity there.

We are keeping an eye on our elderly central heating boiler which we hope will continue to serve us for a few more years. That will be expensive when we do need to replace it. We are going to install some instant electric hot water heaters so that we can have hot water for washing up or hand washing without having to put the oil boiler on and waiting for it to heat up.

I would like to thank all the Village Hall Committee and other villagers for all their hard work over the past year. Special thanks to Brian Jarvis, Tony Wake and Mike Lea-Wilson for their work at the hall this year, keeping it maintained, doing odd jobs and manning the bar. Thanks also to Brian for keeping our finances in such good order, to Sue for keeping tabs on the regulatory and compliance minefield we have to navigate and to Judy for keeping on top of our paperwork such as meeting agendas, minutes and correspondence. And special thanks to Emma Cordy for keeping the hall running so smoothly and for taking all the bookings.

The committee continue to give their time, their commitment, their enthusiasm and their support to ensuring that the village has a facility that it can be really proud of.

Thank you.

Katharine Lea-Wilson
Chair, Horton and Little Sodbury Village Hall, July 2026