

Report of Chairperson of the Hellifield Institute Trustees for the Annual General Meeting - March 2026

The main project of the Trustees for 2025/26, was to renovate the toilets to make them more accessible to all. This was a huge enterprise and could only be achieved by obtaining a grant from York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority through the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which covered 80% of the planned cost. The remaining 20% was obtained via a contribution from NYC Councillor Simon Myers from his Locality Budget and from many villagers who gave donations and responded to various fund-raising activities. We are grateful to everyone for their support and generosity to make this project a success, including JD Mounsey Ltd of Settle who was the main contractor and Brian Hugill from Hellifield who undertook the electrical installation. The building had to be closed between 19th January and 17th February 2026 for the work to be undertaken, which meant no income was possible for a four week period. It is pleasing to report, however, that despite this closure our reserve remains compliant with our Financial Management Statement.

Another project completed during this past year, has been the introduction of a new website. We are grateful to Andy Leng, one of our trustees, for creating this much more presentable and accessible site and hope it is well utilised in the future.

We continue to look at ways of increasing the usage of our greatly improved Yorke Room. The storage space provided within this area has been invaluable but it is filled to capacity so more scrutiny is needed as to how this is utilised. Consideration must be given in 2026/27 concerning the storage of chairs, currently kept at Aherne's shop in the village, which is due to close during the year. The warm and welcoming meeting room area continues to be used by our regular groups such as HelliGames, HelliScribes, HelliArts, HelliCrafts, HelliReaders, Mothers' Union, the Hellifield Herald Magazine Management Committee, the Parish Council and Badger Group. A new group 'Baby Massage' is also now using this room.

The main hall keeps on being used to full advantage for our weekly sporting activities, i.e. table tennis, badminton and roll mat bowls. The Women's Institute and flower group still meet monthly and Helli-Linedancers hold weekly sessions. This year has seen the introduction of a twice a month, well attended Ladies Dancercise Group. The weekly coffee mornings are a valued social gathering for many of the elderly residents of the village, but we always welcome younger attendees as well. The Trustees have continued to fill any gaps by hosting additional coffee mornings through the year, when charities or local organisations are not forthcoming. This ensures continuity and has proved to be a financial bonus.

We could not operate so successfully without the support of many volunteers and group organisers. We are also extremely grateful to our cleaning team, The Lamberts, who go the extra mile to ensure the building is kept to a high standard of cleanliness. Janette Clarke has yet again dealt with our payroll and Andrew Crabtree has provided external scrutiny of our finances.

Sadly, in respect of our commercial hirers, we lost Messy Monkeys towards the end of the year who have moved to Long Preston for convenience of their users. We also lost the cardio-rehabilitation sessions due to inadequate attendance. There are, however, ad hoc companies such as Millercare Mobility Specialists who hire the hall from time to time. There have been no elections through the year, which has been a loss to our annual income.

The Beer Festival continues to utilise the whole of our building inside and out for its annual event. As well as benefiting from their hire fees, we were extremely grateful for their generosity of a donation towards the toilet renovation project. The annual charity musical festival, Stanfest, was once again held in the village hall. This is an occasion that brings the whole village together, showing the excellent creative talent that Hellifield has to offer. Both events bring people into the village hall that do not normally use the facilities.

When the Black Horse pub closed, we started to hold music nights at various times through the year. These have proved very successful, even bringing in visitors from as far away as Ribbleshead. We aim to continue with these during 2026/27. We introduced another new event, which also proved extremely popular with requests for it to continue, and this was an Afternoon Tea/Dance. As a means of bringing more entertainment diversity into the village hall, in September, we welcomed John Watterson who presented the Fake Thackray Show, providing Jake's unique comedic story telling style of music. Our annual Christmas Play 'The Pets A'Peel' was well attended and greatly enjoyed and is written and performed by our local HelliPlayers. At the time of writing this report the village choir, HelliSingers, are preparing to perform a Spring Concert over three days with songs from the show 'Salad Days'. An enormous amount of time and effort goes into such performances and The Trustees are extremely grateful to everyone who takes part both front and back stage, as these events help raise valuable funds for the Institute, as well as being a central entertainment focus for the village. Another annual event which is always well attended, is the Christmas Lights Switch On, organised by the Parish Council and assisted by the WI in providing refreshments in the Main Hall.

This has been my first year as Chair, ably assisted by our Treasurer, Michael Robinson. We have missed the expertise and work ethic from our retiring Chair Ann Taylor and also Dave Clements who was invaluable with building and maintenance aspects of the trustees' responsibilities. They are both greatly missed but we wish them well in their future in Lincolnshire. However, the village is fortunate to have a brilliant bunch of people who, as trustees of the Institute, do a sterling job. They work as an amazing team to ensure the village hall continues to thrive and they make mine and Michael's roles so much easier. As well as ensuring the ongoing functionality and financial management of the building, they ensure health and safety is a priority with subsequent relevant policies in place. I look forward to another year in which the village hall is well used and the central hub of the community.

Karen Dunwoodie
Chairperson
March 2026