

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Alford and Donside Heritage Association

Held at Alford Heritage Museum on Wednesday 20th May 2026 at 7.30pm

Present: R. and R. Aikey, K. Bruce, R. Campbell, J. and N. Christelow, S. Collett, K. Edmunds, P. Goodall, T. Jackson (Chairman), E. Law, S. Ligertwood, G. Mitchell, J. Mortimer, J. Noble, A. Rowe, K. Stewart, S. Taylor, M. and D. Watson, N. Watson, Mr and Mrs C Nichol

1. Apologies: Jenny Bursill, Frances Dorow, Paul Lawson, Val Lyons, Kevin McCormick, Isobel Milne, Alicia Murray, Simon Sawers, Ian Souter, Mike Watt,

2. Adoption of the Minutes of the AGM held on 16th May 2025 (previously circulated). Proposed by J. Christelow, Seconded by K. Edmunds

3. Report from the Chairman, Thomas Jackson is provided at the end of these Minutes. At the end of the Chairman's report P. Goodall asked if a meeting with Volunteers could be arranged to discuss the plans outlined in the report. T. Jackson replied there could be a meeting but now was not the time because the plans had not been finalized. PG asked if this could be discussed at the next Trustee meeting so that a date could be set.

4. Treasurer's report and adoption of the 2025 accounts (previously circulated and paper copies provided this evening for consultation). Due to the absence of the Treasurer, P. Lawson, the report was written and presented by P. Goodall, Assistant Treasurer. The report highlighted the main items of income and expenditure. Also, the retiral of Brenda Glass in 2025 as Treasurer, after many years of dedication to the Museum finances, P. Goodall commented it was very easy to take over as Brenda had a well-documented system. Gordon Gunn, Bridgeton Bookkeepers, was recently appointed as our Independent Examiner following the retiral of Frank Reid after many years in that role. There were no questions. The report is provided at the end of these Minutes. Proposed by P. Goodall, Seconded by John Christelow.

5. Election of Trustees. The following have agreed to stand for nomination as Trustees for 2026/2027: Kenneth Bruce, John Christelow, Keith Edmunds, Thomas Jackson, Paul Lawson and Jill Noble. Resolution: to elect the above as Trustees until the next AGM. Proposed by S. Taylor, Seconded by J. Mortimer. T. Jackson told attendees the Board of Trustees would welcome new Trustees and to contact him directly for further information.

A.O.C.B. Liz Law mentioned it was a pity Alford could not tap wind farm funds as she understood they were a good source of funds for many organizations such as the Cabrach Trust who benefit from the Dornoch Windfarm.

Jill Noble

25th May 2026

Chairmans Report 2026 AGM

Good evening it is now time for the Chairmans annual report.

Last year we had our usual round of events, started with a spring fair with some excellent stalls but unfortunately it was poorly supported. We then had our annual tractor run with a lunch stop kindly provided by Norvite at Wardhouse, this was the first time we had not used a village hall for the lunch stop but it worked extremely well. We held our usual concert with Allan Taylor and friends in July and then in September we held a very well supported (by both exhibitors and visitors) model exhibition, followed by an equally well-supported couple of Hamewith concerts, rounding off the year with the Stationary engine and steam event.

We again participated in the Alford Christmas festival, which brought in a huge number of visitors on the day but does not seem to be helping get us returning visitors.

Visitor figures were slightly up on the previous year once all the events and visitors during the week were added up, however we are still not getting anywhere near the number of visitors we should be getting.

We are trying to promote the museum to try and draw more visitors in, we have an advert in the main Aberdeenshire guidebook which goes into all the hotels in Aberdeenshire and are trying to get press releases in the local papers but without a lot of success, of the 6 press releases sent out to local press about the recent anniversary celebrations we got one published, in the Scottish Farmer with not even a mention in the P and J. We are continuing to push for better signage in Alford so visitors can not only find us but the other attractions as well.

Over the winter a team of volunteers have been busy researching the history of both the museum which is in its 35th year and the Alford Mart which has produced the exhibition we see around us today. To do an exhibition on this scale is a first for the museum and we are hoping it will help draw in more visitors for us.

Behind the scenes the trustees have been hard at work trying to sort out the repairs and improvements we need to undertake to both preserve the Mart building but to make it fit for purpose and bring it to the standard expected by visitors.

This process started several years ago as part of the planning for the business plan for our application for the CAT which incidentally we are told is getting nearer completion although we still have not got a date for the transfer of the mart to Alford and Donside Heritage Association.

These initial thoughts have now been refined and to a degree simplified and I can reveal tonight we can now take this forward to the next stage which will be the design stage and then planning and listed building consent.

Briefly these are our aspirations, and I use that word as we have got to convince both planning and HES that what we propose is in keeping with the building although we are trustees are sure it is.

Firstly we will undertake all the repairs which are identified in the report prepared by LDN architects to make the building wind and watertight which includes replacing the back shed roof and extensive repairs to the building frame, repair or replace the outside cladding, refurbish windows and skylights and undertake repairs to the frame of the front half of the building and sort out the roof to make it water tight and replace all the guttering and improve the rainwater drainage.

We would like to put a new building at the back of the yard to hold a purpose built archive and workshop, this building will also provide storage for all the exhibits which will have to be removed from the mart building when the repairs are carried out as well as storage for some of the larger exhibits currently housed in the museum as well as the full size Garvie road mill we have recently had donated, this is currently housed off site as we do not have a building large enough to fit it in. We intend to fit insulation into all the wall spaces throughout the museum when the repairs take place to improve the environment for visitors, volunteers and exhibits alike.

We will refurbish the existing toilets and kitchen to bring them up to a modern standard, rebuild the current entrance porch, tidy up the existing main office so it can be used as a meeting space for small groups and volunteers, it will also, once insulated become a more comfortable space to work in especially in the winter months. Once the archive is rehoused the current library archive structure will be removed, opening up the furniture hall and giving us bigger exhibition space so when we do exhibitions in the future they can go there, leaving the ring clear so visitors can see what it really looks like.

The space freed up by the relocation of the current museum workshop will be renovated as extra space for exhibits.

With the simplification of the original proposals we hope to have reduced the cost of the project down to about £3m, which will still be a very big ask for organisation of this size, but we are aware there are grants out there, we are just going to have to put a very good case up to get them.

As part of this we have been having a real push to increase numbers of not only community members which incidentally is free to join but also Friends of the Museum and if you currently are not signed up for both of these can I ask you to consider joining, I am sure Philip our assistant treasurer or I will be happy to explain about either of these schemes later this evening.

Can I thank the members for your support for the past year and look forward to your support as we move into an exciting and challenging time for the museum as we get the Mart building renovated and upto a standard required to meet people's expectations for the 21st century. I would also like to thank all the trustees and volunteers who put in a huge amount of work each year for the museum, we really could not do it without you.

While we are mentioning trustees I would especially like to thank Frances who is retiring as a trustee this evening, she has been here so long I am not sure anyone remembers when she first started and for many years organised the front desk volunteers, we will miss you as a trustee but hope you will continue to support us as an ordinary volunteer. If you would like to come up, I have a little gift to say thank you for all you have done for the museum.

Thank you, that is all from me, if anyone wants any more details on the plans to renovate the museum please do come up and ask once the meeting is finished but I will now hand over to Philip, our Assistant Treasurer, to give the Treasurer's report.

Treasurer's Report, AGM 20th May 2026

As reported at last year's AGM, Brenda Glass retired as Treasurer in April due to ill health. She gave many years of dedication to the museum finances, and it was very easy to take over from her well

documented system. Another change last year was that Frank Reid retired as our Independent Examiner of the accounts, It was Frank who developed the accounts spreadsheets we are still using today. As a result of these changes, Paul Lawson was appointed as Treasurer, and I volunteered to manage the bookkeeping and other day to day financial matters. Recently we appointed Gordon Gunn at Bridgeton Bookkeepers as the Independent Examiner and the 2025 accounts were signed off on 8th May 2026.

Turning to the 2025 accounts it was a very steady year. There are no exceptional items to report. Income was £23,405, down just over £2,000 from 2024, mainly due to 2024 including a grant of £2,000 from Aberdeenshire Council and a fall in the Events income. Donations continued to be a strong source of revenue and include £500 from the Alford Bistro Choir, £422 from the Christmas Festival (630 visitors) and £1,420 from a share of the funds raised by Simon Sawers on his walk from the Isles of Scilly to Shetland, shown under Just Giving. Gift Aid is blank because the claim for this was delayed to include Christmas Festival donations, and payment from HMRC was received in February this year (£374).

Expenditure was £17,077 which was £9,000 less than 2024. 2024 included two exceptional items which were the repair of a truss over the auction ring (£6,500) and architect's fees (£6,330). In 2025 there appears to be a substantial increase in Insurance cost. This is due to two separate years of Building Insurance being included in the same year (2024 costs were paid in early 2025).

Overall, a Profit of £6,327 was reported in 2025.

The Museum opened a savings account with Hampshire Trust Bank in August 2025 and around £35,000 is deposited there, with around £5,000 normally maintained in the Current Account. As of today, the savings account has accrued interest of £917.

Looking ahead we will consider changing to an online accounting package at the end of this financial year. Gordon Gunn has offered to assist with this. Due to Grants for our plans this will be essential for monitoring the significant increase in income and expenditure which will occur. As a small operation with limited operating income we must be mindful of the risks to financial viability. Unexpected occurrences, such as the truss failure at the end of 2023, are always possible so we maintain reserves which should enable us to respond to these events without a risk to the business.

Philip Goodall

Assistant Treasurer