

The Bellman (SCIO)
Trustees' Annual Report
August 2024 - 2025



Charity contact information

The Bellman (SCIO)

Scottish Charity Number: SC050368

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Charity Trustees

1. George Reid, Chair
2. Jane Cruickshank, Secretary
3. Mike Duncan, Treasurer



Objectives and activities

Launched in July 2019, the Bellman was established as a SCIO on the 10th August 2020 for the purpose of representing local news, interests and amenities of the community in Stonehaven and promoting community development in South Aberdeenshire by providing a free **digital news website**.

The Bellman (www.thebellman.co.uk) provides information from a community perspective in the areas of:

- Town news, events and activities
- Sport, health, wellbeing & lifestyle
- Science, environmental protection and improvement
- Arts, culture, heritage and religion
- Public interest journalism, covering the activities of the Community Council, Local Authority and its elected members.

The Bellman is a free to access site that also allows the community to comment on and submit items of news and general interest. It also provides a platform for local groups and associations to promote their activities and events, to encourage participation in events and community affairs and promotes a sense of community welfare and responsibility, enhancing social connections within the community.

Bellman Activity Overview

The Bellman website remains the only source of dedicated local news and community affairs in Stonehaven.

In our first year of operation site statistics demonstrated that the readership of the Bellman was already reaching beyond the population of Stonehaven (circa 12,000) and while readership isn't a specific target in itself, the monthly average for unique visits has increased by over 300% since we began in 2019.

it is encouraging that reader numbers continue to grow, reflecting the demand and interest for a local news service in the community.

Month	Unique Site visitors	Page reads
Jan-24	15463	85650
Feb-24	14618	75718
Mar-24	12996	52650
Apr-24	16997	73607
May-24	16265	67870
Jun-24	17237	69227
Jul-24	17839	74836
Aug-24	14628	61804
Sep-24	13052	53420
Oct-24	15957	63162
Nov-24	19089	61319
Dec-24	11491	45351
Total For Year	185632	784614
Monthly Average	15469	65385
Jan-25	11238	33864
Feb-25	12733	54559
Mar-25	17886	97065
Apr-25	13677	66000
May-25	13884	85964
Jun-25	17971	129701
Jul-25	17916	95814
Aug-25	20239	79668
Total For YTD	125544	642635
Monthly Average	15693	80329

Bellman Accounts - Nature & Purpose of Funds

The Bellman's sole purpose, as described above, is to provide and maintain a local news and community service within Stonehaven.

As in previous financial years the Bellman has been able to cover its annual operating costs through grant funding, supplemented by income from local interest advertising. During the financial year reported, the Bellman:

- Incurred no other expenses
- Was in receipt of income from a local business grant and advertising
- Did not support any other organisation via grant funding
- Paid no remuneration or expenses to any of the three SCIO Trustees (or anyone connected to a charity trustee)
- Recruited no staff paid or otherwise

Bellman income in 2024 - 2025 together with the funds held in our bank account was sufficient to cover our annual operating costs for the year, and leave a surplus in our bank account to be carried forward of £2,104.

Structure, governance and management

Type of governing document

The Bellman SCIO is governed under a single tier Constitution which sets out the organisation's purpose, structure and describes how it will operate. Governance is discussed as a regular agenda item at Business meetings and there were no issues arising during the period of this annual report.

Trustee recruitment and appointment

The Bellman operates under the guidance and direction of three Trustees and no additional trustees were recruited during the period of this annual report. The recruitment process is at the discretion of the existing Trustees and should the organisation require additional skills or experience, any new recruitment would be discussed and agreed at a Business meeting.

External organisations are not allowed to appoint charity trustees.

Achievements and performance

One of the primary aims of the Bellman has been to establish the site as the 'go to' trusted destination for local community news and interests.

The site stats show another year of strong growth in monthly unique site visits with the average now in excess of 15,500 a month (up from 14,000 in 2023/4).

The Bellman continues to report widely on local community news and interests in the areas of:

- Community news, events and activities
- Sport, health, wellbeing & lifestyle
- Science, environmental protection and improvement
- Arts, culture, heritage and religion
- Activities of the Community Council, Local Authority and elected members

The Bellman has also encouraged community development by enabling residents to comment on and submit items of news and general interest.

Financial review

Statement of the charity's policy on reserves

As reported in the Use of Funds section, above, the Bellman did not generate any income from business activity during the financial year and annual operating costs were met through a mix of grants secured and advertising on the site..

At the end of the financial year, the Bellman recorded a surplus of £2,104. The ongoing expenditures and costs of operating the Bellman site are readily identified and stable and the trustees do not envisage any unanticipated expenditure or operating costs.

The business is now supplementing funding from local sources with advertising on the site.

Should the Bellman generate a modest surplus at the end of any financial year, then these funds may be retained as a reserve to meet future contingencies, should they arise. With our key financial goal each year to cover our operating costs, it would not be our aim to create substantial reserves. Our reserve policy will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it continues to be relevant for the needs of the business.

Details of any deficit

The Bellman was able to meet its annual operating costs through advertising, donations and grant funding.

Donated facilities and services

No facilities or services were donated during the period of the annual report.

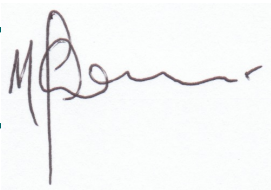
Future plans

Plans for 2024/5 include:

- Maintain &/or grow the Bellman readership
- Encourage greater participation in the site form local sporting, social and cultural groups to share news of the events and activities
- Continue to expand our network of volunteer authors
- Secure sustainable funding to cover the Bellman's operating costs

Declaration

Signed on behalf of the charity trustees:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mike Duncan', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Print name

Mike Duncan

Designation

Trustee & Treasurer

Date

10th May 2026