**Alford and District Men's Shed**

*CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2025/26*

The purpose of the organisation is to provide recreational facilities and advance the social needs, health and wellbeing of men of all ages and backgrounds living in Alford and surrounding areas.

by:

a. Creating, developing and maintaining a facility, namely a Men's Shed.

b. Offering opportunities for men in the Alford area to meet and undertake creative, physical, purposeful and recreational activities of their choice.

c. Reducing isolation of men in the area thus contributing to their physical and mental wellbeing.

d. Developing the capacity of men in the Alford area to share their skills and knowledge with others in the community.

I would like to start the years report in remembering a good friend of the Shed here in Alford, Jim Noe who passed away in November of last year. He has been greatly missed by us for his woodworking skills, general dry whit and political views of "across the pond".

Alford and District Men's Shed (ADMS) has continued to go through a phase of its development during the year which has led to greater impact and benefit for members and the local community.

ADMS continues with around 100 members of which between 20 and 30 are regular attendees on both days. In addition to this the commencement of the ladies run She Shed which commenced in February has a membership of 28 and averaging 11 attendees over their days they meet on a weekly basis. It has been very encouraging to see the interest of the ladies to further develop skills they would not normally have access to.

The building and grounds are now well established and we have undertaken major internal reorganisation to increase available workspace enabling more members to be able to undertake projects (shed, community or their own) at the same time. We have created more areas where larger projects can be undertaken by utilising the recently acquired garages for storage purposes. These garages have undergone some extensive reworking with new roofing fitted, plus new main door and rewiring of

the electrics. We do anticipate their use to be supported through the Footpaths and Planters Group. We have raised an application for off grid power supply and await the outcome of that process.

Projects undertaken and delivered in the period covered a wide range from door step hand rails, assembling of glass house and a garden shed, dining seat covering, planters for the village, Murray Park gate repairs, strips for vintage bus, Tullynessle Hall notice board and the largest project was the build of a 6.5m x 4.5m inside shed for a company in Kintore, Mcdonald Plumbing, of which was a sizeable donation of £3000. We continue to restore public benches as well as maintain those in the village.

Some further reorganisation has also involved the woodworking room, updating of some large pieces equipment, and additional wood lathe and planner and the newly purchased air extraction and purification systems are fully operational. This system required an external extension to the building which was carried out by a small group of core members to a very high standard. A recent purchase of a hydraulic press has been added to the metal work area with a 2 ton engine crane to be added to the inventory.

At the time of writing the MGA car donated by a member has been sold, initially advertised for sale on the MGA Owners Club supported by the historical document on the vehicle. It had then been made available to Morris Leslie Auctions and taken to their Errol facility. The auction price was less than expected and a private buyer came forward and was sold for £8200 (less costs for transport etc.). Additionally we received £2000 from the Aberdeenshire council for the new garage door.

Our café area is the hub of our shed. We have seen a marked increase in the use of these areas with chatting still being the favourite pastime. We will continue our collaboration with the school where students will/have been using the cafe to gain experience of planning, preparation and serving meals to shed members as part of their course work.

We have continued a programme of wider social events for members and partners. These have included themed meal evenings during the winter where attendees have enjoyed food, all prepared by members. Christmas lunch, Burns Supper and curry nights are the classic themes.

With support from SMSA we have continued the series of mens health workshops at the facility, recently covering oral hygiene and general mens health.

In late November the Shed was again important in ensuing the highly successful Alford Christmas Festival ran smoothly. The event brings several thousand visitors to the village and working with Rotary the Shed helped to manage crowd safety and manage the needs of both people and through traffic during the finale Santa parade.

The managing of the reindeer with the crowds at the road side adds a focus to the volunteers.

The ADMS building remains a focus for local community groups. Its 60 seater meeting room is ideal for medium to large groups and the space is currently used on a regular basis by the Community Council, Craft Groups, Bridge Club and a yoga club twice a week. We continue to seek other groups on an occasional basis.

With a growing membership and a wider range of activities, we ensure good communication is a key part of our day to day activities. This is not simply from trustees to members but from members and the community back to ADMS to ensure we meet changing needs and continue to successfully deliver on our wider mission. We have aimed at releasing a monthly news letter to our members detailing what has been happening and what is planned but content from sources has been lacking to make this a regular release. This means that even if members can't physically come to the shed, they can keep up to date with what is happening. In addition, all members receive a copy of the minutes from the last monthly Trustee meeting ensuring transparency and openness regarding the responsibilities and decision making entrusted by the members to the trustees. We have initiated a major re design of the ADMS website to ensure that it is an effective tool for members, for wider SMSA business and to the wider public; the project has been undertaking with IT Racoons who were instrumental in the Heritage Museum webpage and at the time of writing the page is due for release. We have an active social media presence and our number of followers is increasing. We have good levels of cross posting which help to widen our outreach and we are working to develop a programme of regular posts to increase this further. We are conscious that many interested people do not use the web or social media and through posters, leaflet drops and articles in the local free press we are working to increase awareness of ADMS.

We have seen a steady increase in applications for membership. As yet we have not changed our opening times and days other than the increased days for the She Shed which is one day per week currently.

We continue to take steps to improve on the general running of the charity with a our well documented and controlled policies / procedures written which are on file plus an extensive review continues of the Constitution. The Trustees are continuing to seek new recruits in preparation of replacing those that their time has run its course. Fresh faces and new ideas are always welcome.

Last calendar year we commenced a Goals and Objectives initiative which consisted of 8 key points which was given updates per quarter and year end summary. Once more this year we have listed 7 key points for 2026 and consists of points carried over from last year such as the sale of the MGA car and upgrade of the sensory garden. These Goals and Objectives are posted on the notice board and discussed at the Trustees Meetings to ensure we have focus on delivery.

ADMS is now not simply a place where men go to make or repair things; it is a living community, creating an environment where through companionship in undertaking physical activity together men are developing their own confidence and starting to address issues in their wider life that they have previously been unable to consider. Men generally internalise their worries and concerns; ADMS has created a place where for a few hours, amongst friendly faces and chat, men can take a break and are now feeling able to vocalise what is concerning them, whether its caring for a partner, their own health, loneliness or simply question "how is the weather".

Talking of the weather, at the start of the year with the weather conditions seen, severe lack of sun light ensured the solar panels fitted generated very little energy and as such we saw one of the highest electricity bills of over £900. in the last financial year we spent £2749 in electricity plus additional costs from EDF for the garages (excessive standing charges forced us to change providers) which equated to £722. Our FIT credits for solar generation came in at £1648. Heating oil for same period was £444. Last financial year of 2024-25 we spent £1994 on electricity costs with £1401 in credit from the pv panels and a total of £1033 in oil for heating. We remain focused on our cost base and another example of this being for our insurance coverage we added the additional premises, increased asset values for the asset inventory, with only a marginal increase in premiums.

The Shed continues to remains in a strong financial position and I will leave it to the Treasurer to go through the numbers. Donations continue from Community Groups and individuals for use of our facilities. This is a steady source of income coupled with our project deliverables.



Gary Sims
Chair