



2026 Annual General Meeting

***To be held at West Park United Reform Church, West Park, Harrogate
at 7.30pm on Tuesday 12 May 2026***

Refreshments from 7.00pm

The evening will commence at 7.30pm with the AGM

An illustrated talk by Peter Rix entitled Flying from the Stray will follow at about 8pm





2026 Annual General Meeting

***To be held at the West Park Centre, West Park URC, West Park/Victoria Avenue
at 7.30pm on Tuesday 12th May 2026***

Refreshments will be available from 7pm

AGM AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence from Committee and any members
2. Approval of minutes of the 2025 Annual General Meeting
3. Matters arising from the Minutes
4. Trustees' Annual Report - summary
5. Re-election of Committee Members and Officers, and election of any Committee members co-opted since the last AGM
6. Election of any Committee members nominated in accordance with the provision of the Constitution before this AGM
7. Any Other Business

Re-election of Committee Members and Officers

1. Mike Newby – Chair
2. Andrew Brown – Vice Chair
3. Paul Fennimore – Treasurer
4. Nick Brennan – Secretary
5. Henry Pankhurst
6. David Siddans
7. Tony Thorndike
8. Michael Laycock

Nominations received for new Committee Members: None received by the required date



**Minutes of 2025 Harrogate Civic Society
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held at 7.30 pm on 2nd April 2025
at West Park URC, West Park, Harrogate**

Present:

Committee: Mike Newby (Chair) Andrew Brown (Vice Chair), Angela Fahy (Secretary), Paul Fennimore (Treasurer), Nick Brennan, Chris Dicken, Michael Laycock, David Siddans, and Tony Thorndike.

Members: Approximately 40 members

Apologies: Apologies were received in advance from Liz and Paul Hatherley, Alan Gould, Beryl and Henry Pankhurst, Peter Bagnall, and Sheila Smith.

Welcome: Mike Newby welcomed the members to the meeting.

Presentation: Stuart Holland gave a presentation about the West Park Centre, its history as a church and the plans for its future development.

Minutes of 2024 Annual General Meeting: These were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

Matters arising: No matters arising were identified that were not otherwise covered by the agenda.

Trustees Annual Report: Mike Newby presented the annual report and highlighted the following:

The sudden death of Brian Dunsby who, together with his wife Beryl, had been doing excellent work as the Society's membership secretary.

Thanks to both Angela Fahy and Chris Dicken, who were stepping down from the committee. Also, thanks to Andrew Brown for his time as interim chair of the Society and to Paul Fennimore for taking over as treasurer.

The many successful events and trips that had been held during the past year. The Events sub-group had been co-ordinated by Angela Fahy for many years and, as she was now stepping down from the committee there was an urgent need for a new co-ordinator to work with the existing team of volunteers or the Society's programme of events was in jeopardy.

The work of Stella and Geoff Brown for their organisation of the Heritage Open Days that are supported by the Society.

Thanks to Chris Dicken for his leadership of the Plaques sub-group, which will continue although he is stepping down from the committee, to Henry Pankhurst and the team for their work on the regular monitoring of planning applications, and to all members who are



involved with the work on the Neighbourhood Plan, which the Society has led together with Zero Carbon Harrogate.

Thanks also to those involved with the History sub-group; the town's history being one of the key reasons why many new members join the Society. One future possibility is for there to be new opportunities to share in conversations about different aspects of the town's history.

The need for additional help to assist David Siddans with communications and to allow for succession planning.

In relation to the Finance section of the report, Paul Fennimore highlighted the substantial surplus income that had been received as a result of Harrogate on Film, which would be unlikely to reoccur. Also, some gifts that had been received for new plaques were currently being held by the Society until payment was due.

The Trustees Annual Report was approved by the meeting.

Re-election of officers and committee: The re-election was approved by the meeting.

Nominations for new committee members: No nominations had been received. Mike Newby reminded the meeting that the committee could co-opt new members during the year.

Any Other Business: Mike Newby made presentations to Angela Fahy and Chris Dicken with thanks for all the work they had done during their time as committee members. He also thanked Stuart Holland for his presentation at the start of the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.



TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

for the year ended 28th February 2026

Harrogate Civic Society (the Society) is a Registered Charity, number 501055.

The constitution provides for the Charity to protect, preserve and enhance the character, amenities and environment of Harrogate and its environs.

The Society is managed by a board of Trustees (the Committee), appointed in accordance with the constitution at the Annual General Meeting. The Committee is assisted by a number of sub-groups, each usually including a Committee member but with other Society members assisting.

The Committee 2025-2026:

The following are the current members of the Committee and hence Trustees:

Mike Newby (*Chair*)

Andrew Brown (*Vice Chair, Planning & Development Sub-group*)

Nick Brennan (*Secretary, Neighbourhood Planning Sub-group*)

Paul Fennimore (*Treasurer, Membership, Events Communications*)

Michael Laycock

Henry Pankhurst (*Chair of Planning & Development Sub-group*)

David Siddans (*Chair of Communications Sub-group*)

Tony Thorndike

The Committee meets bi-monthly with further meetings as required. The Committee shares responsibilities between sub-groups who meet separately but report back to the Committee. These are *Communications, Events Planning, History, Neighbourhood Planning, Planning & Development, Plaques*.

Public Benefit:

The Society aims to represent the views of its members on key matters affecting the town and its environs. Via its links, communication channels and external meetings, it is able to meet its objectives.



CHAIR'S REPORT:

I am pleased to present, on behalf of the Trustees, the following report which illustrates and records the extent of work undertaken on behalf of our members.

Our overriding aim has been to enhance the standing of the Society within our town by pursuing our strap line, *Celebrate our Past, Enhance our Present and Shape our Future*. All our activities have helped achieve that aim whilst providing interesting and informative events for our members to enjoy.

The past year has seen a period of growth as the rest of this report shows. There has been an increase in membership, increased attendance at our meetings, more heritage brown plaques unveiled, new Heritage Open Day venues introduced, more planning applications examined, more donations in furtherance of our aims, a first meeting of a potential Harrogate History Club, an expanded programme of meetings and a much greater social media presence. We have also forged new working relationships with other societies and groups in the town.

None of this growth happens by accident and I would like to thank all the members of the various groups within the Society who have made this possible.

Last year I looked forward to working closely with the new Harrogate Town Council. I am delighted that the Society is now one of the Council's four key stakeholders (along with the Chamber of Commerce, BID and Harrogate & District Community Action). The plan is to come together in quarterly meetings. In the meantime I am part of the Council's Harrogate Signage working group which is making good progress in creating new Welcome to Harrogate signs and improved information and wayfaring signage in the town centre.

Finally, much good work has been and is being done but I am concerned about how sustainable this is:

- We were on the verge of having no programme of events until a small handful of volunteers came forward. Their actions removed an incredible amount of stress from me as your Chair and once again I thank them for their work.
- The main committee is now small and needs new members.
- Help is needed in the production of the newsletter if it is to continue.
- Volunteers are needed to help co-ordinate the Heritage Open Days events.
- Administrative tasks (membership, finance, member email communications, events administration, and secretarial) need to be shared more widely to reduce the burden.

As the old adage goes, 'Many hands make light work'; the more volunteers we have the less work each individual has to do. Please do consider how you can help the Society and get in touch with me at chair@harrogatecivicsociety.org

Thank you, and I am looking forward to another busy year!

Michael Newby

1 May 2026



SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES, MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL POSITION

The Committee and sub-groups have worked hard in the last period to deliver a programme of activities to members and to keep them informed of issues affecting the town. The following is a summary of our activities.

Events:

Our events have been very popular with an increased attendance for talks since changing to the larger venue. The year to February 2026 included:

Talks (8 in total):

- Leonora Cohen - a Leeds suffragette who spent some time in Harrogate, by Nicola Pullan curator at Leeds Museums.
- The Harrogate Egyptian Collection - by Dr Ken Griffin who is the curator of the Egypt Centre at Swansea University, involved in researching and cataloguing the collection.
- The Walker Neesam archive – by Danielle Little, Curatorial Apprentice at Harrogate Museums, who is involved in cataloguing this treasure trove of Harrogate's history.
- Harrogate's 'Saviour': Edward Wilson Dixon - How Harrogate's water shortage was solved. Presented by historian Graham Seel.
- A Rubbish History of Yorkshire - how our approach to waste reflects two centuries of social and industrial change. Presented by Dr. Henry Irving of Leeds Beckett University.
- Ernest Farrar - Harrogate's Forgotten Composer – by Andrew Hitchen BEM, with recordings of Farrar's evocative orchestral music
- Harrogate Town Council - Councillor Chris Aldred (the current Mayor) and Councillor Mark Warr spoke on the opportunities and challenges facing the new authority.
- Caring for the River Nidd – David Clayden, Chair of the Nidd Action Group outlined the importance of the river for the town, its state of health, and what might be done.

Reports on all of our past talks can be found on our website, and we are very grateful to both members and guests for giving their time to present these talks.

Visits and other events:

- Visit to Undercliffe Cemetery in Bradford, with a guided tour led by Paul Jennings
- Breaking the Silence: the 'Talkie' Revolution. A joint meeting with Harrogate Film Society - an illustrated talk by Jonny Best, a leading silent film pianist, using clips from across the silent and early sound era. Also marking the inventions of Claude Verity regarding sound and film synchronisation.
- Coffee mornings at The Everyman.
- Christmas Social held at St Wilfrid's Church.

Many of our events at the beginning of the year had been organised by a sub-group comprising Liz Hatherley, Kevin Hales, Jenny Moore, and led by Angela Fahy. More recently, the future events programme is being set up by a panel including Nigel McClea, John Harris, Paul Jennings and others.



Heritage Open Days:

The national Heritage Open Days Festival ran from 12th to 21st September 2025, and was very well supported in Harrogate and the surrounding area. There were 23 local venues, and 52 events. As with previous years, there was a wide range of tours, talks, exhibitions, buildings, music and walks. All HODs events are free to attend.

Many of the regular events returned in 2025 – and to these were added new venues, walks and talks. The HODs festival is a wonderful opportunity for both residents and visitors to see some of the amazing heritage within the Harrogate area, with knowledgeable and enthusiastic experts to explain all. Many of the buildings and events are not normally available to the public.

The feedback was outstanding – it is clear that the Festival is very much appreciated locally.

The Civic Society helped by coordinating the programme and supporting events, but it was the individual event organisers and all of the volunteers who made the Festival such a success. The huge amount of preparation and research was obvious, and visitors were greeted by many cheerful helpers – and in some cases by tea and cakes!

New events (and volunteers!) are always welcome. If anyone has any suggestions for events, or would like to be involved in HODs for 2026, please contact hods@harrogatecivicsociety.org

HODs events were coordinated by Stella and Geoff Brown.

Plaques:

2025 has been a busy year for the plaques working group which is now well established and proving a good way for the Brown plaques scheme to continue.

After a lot of work over the last year, the final five months saw four new plaques being installed, all with the appropriate ceremonies and with appreciative audiences.

The plaques' subjects were Mary Fisher MBE, The Sun Pavilion, Claude Verity and Charles Taylor. These were the first plaques installed after a prolonged period without any.

The coming year should see two further plaques installed and this is the average that we are aiming for.

In addition the Chair of the group has given four talks to local groups about the plaques, and also one to the general public at the Library. Further talks have also been requested in the coming year. Two talks for the "Talking Newspaper" for the blind were also recorded and distributed.

Plaques Working Group : Chris Dicken (Chair), Graham Douglas, Brenda Grant, Dr Paul Jennings, Liz Hatherley, Stuart Holland, Erik Thompson.



Planning and Development:

Development Control

In the past year (March 2025 - February 2026) we selected and studied 111 planning applications. Of these, 32 were as a result of consultations from North Yorkshire Council. In addition, there were several pre-application consultations, either by the Council or the developer. As usual, not all consultation plans were felt to require a detailed response. The overall outcome this year was that we sent a formal response to 69 of the 111 applications that we studied - 62% compared to 66 out of 99 applications studied, or 67% last year.

Regarding the outcome of applications that were determined during the year, we have to bear in mind that it will never be the same list as those that we responded to. Decisions will come in for many that we saw the previous year and many will not be decided that we responded to during our year to the end of February. The way I have categorized decisions is not an exact science. Of the 67 applications decided, 18 (27%) may be regarded as good, 30 (45%) as unwelcome, 12 (18%) as fair, with 7 (10%) withdrawn.

Our responses can of course involve objections, comments, suggestions and support, overall or in part. If time and manpower allowed, no doubt we could offer support to a greater number of proposals!

The number of decisions that we regard as bad has grown over the past few years, in large measure due to domestic roof extensions (usually described in applications as 'dormers') that conform to the government's permitted development rules, but do not take good aesthetic design into consideration.

The Council has a House Extensions & Garages Design Guide (drawn up by the now superseded Harrogate District Council) that we entirely agree with, but generally cannot be used in respect of roof extensions which are often overlarge and with flat roofs. I have seen officers' comments which acknowledge that a particular roof extension is contrary to local policy or that it is regarded as regrettable.

In one officer's report, it was said that "The CLOPUD process does not allow considerations of planning merits, impact or public opinion". CLOPUD being a purely legal process by which a proposed roof extension has only to conform to a set of inflexible permitted development rules.

Unusually, shopfronts, signs and advertisements have not featured very much in our work this year, but I would mention three items. We received a consultation from the planning officer dealing with an application for a large illuminated digital display on the gable end of 79, Skipton Road in what was Jewsons Yard. This flickering intrusion in the street scene was refused. There were two repeat performances for digital display units, known as BT Hubs. One was on Cheltenham Parade at the top of Oxford Street, which is in the Harrogate conservation area and the other was in Starbeck High Street outside the Post Office. Both were refused, just as they were in 2022.

Regarding housing, the Harrogate area is in a serious planning situation. A few years ago the old Harrogate District Council was doing well in respect of the Governments' demand that a deliverable 5 year supply of housing land be provided. In fact, we had



over a 7 year supply, but now, with the Government's urgency to increase the delivery of new homes, the supply is only about 2 years. The result is that developers may (or will) come forward with applications for sites that are not allocations in the Local Plan.

Here are two sizeable examples. In the development report last year, I noted the extreme disappointment that 53 dwellings had been allowed on appeal at Knox Lane, just at the point where one enters Knox Village. This land was allocated in the Local Plan and so more difficult to refuse. Now, with the current shortage problem, there is an application for 59 dwellings on land beside Knox Saw Mills which is directly opposite the approved site. This land is not currently allocated for housing but due to its situation I am fearful that approval for housing is likely. Not so likely to be approved is a large site in open countryside opposite the Persimmon development on Penny Pot lane. This is for 320 dwellings etc. A proposal for 350 dwellings was rejected by the Council in 2018, but beware, the planning landscape has changed, as suggested above!

A new North Yorkshire Local Plan is in the pipeline to replace all the 7 District Local Plans but as is usual with such time-consuming projects the time table has slipped and the current estimate for adoption is 2029. Do we have confidence?

Planning and Development Sub-group: Aspects are handled by a number of members, including Henry Pankhurst (Chair), Barry Adams, Susan Amaku, Andrew Brown, Rebecca Haven.

Neighbourhood Planning:

Over the past year, we have continued to make good progress in shaping the Harrogate Neighbourhood Plan alongside Harrogate Town Council, as well as contributing to the development of the new North Yorkshire Local Plan.

The Harrogate Civic Society has played an active role by joining the Harrogate Town Plan Group and sharing our views with various North Yorkshire Council consultations. By working together, we're helping to shape our town for the future.

Here is a brief update on what has been happening.

Harrogate Town Neighbourhood Plan

Throughout 2025, our Society members worked closely with the Harrogate Town Plan Forum to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the unparished parts of Harrogate. We tackled important subjects like the local economy, transport, housing, heritage and architecture, nature, health and wellbeing, and sustainability – all things that matter to our community.

On 8th December 2025, the Harrogate Town Plan Forum officially handed over the project to Harrogate Town Council at a special event at West Park Centre, West Park United Reformed Church. Our thanks go to the Forum steering group, which included Civic Society members Paul Hatherley and Stuart Holland, Jemima Parker from Zero Carbon Harrogate, and Kathryn Jukes from Directions Planning.



Harrogate Town Council has now set up a Neighbourhood Planning sub-committee made up of councillors and community members, including the Civic Society. This group has met several times over the past year to discuss how we should connect with neighbouring parishes.

Three neighbouring parishes expressed interest to be included within the evolving Neighbourhood Plan - Killinghall, Haverah Park with Beckwithshaw and Follifoot. Pannal and Burn Bridge Parish Council were also consulted but decided against as they have developed their own neighbourhood plan. Now, the Town Council will work with the interested parishes to decide if the Neighbourhood Plan area should grow beyond Harrogate's unparished area. If this happens, North Yorkshire Council's agreement will be needed.

It is currently envisaged that the Neighbourhood Plan would not be formally adopted until 2031, but it also should be acknowledged that both local and national elections may have an impact upon the timetable.

In the meantime, the Harrogate Civic Society will continue to support the process of developing the Neighbourhood Plan that harmonises with the North Yorkshire Local Plan, as referenced below, and addresses specific planning concerns in Harrogate that may be overlooked by a county-wide plan.

North Yorkshire Local Plan

The existing Harrogate District Local Plan (2014–2035) remains in effect until a North Yorkshire Local Plan is adopted.

The intention is for the neighbourhood planning work undertaken by Harrogate Town Plan Forum and Harrogate Town Council Planning Group to inform the North Yorkshire Local Plan. The current timetable for the development of the North Yorkshire Plan can be seen below.

Current North Yorkshire Local Plan, Status and Timetable

- Call for Sites: Closed in November 2025; the council is currently assessing over 2,000 submitted land parcels for potential development.
- Issues and Options Consultation: The "First Conversation" stage is scheduled to take place in early 2026 (rescheduled from late 2025 to account for national planning reforms).
- Preferred Options Consultation: Expected in Autumn 2026.
- Submission and Examination: Slated for 2028.
- Final Adoption: Targeted for 2029

Once adopted, plans must be reviewed, and an update commenced, every five years.



The North Yorkshire Local Plan Call for Sites map has been updated on its website to show all submitted sites up to November 2025. Over two thousand have been submitted across the county.

While this process has now closed it may reopen after North Yorkshire Council has reviewed all submitted sites to date.

While the existing Harrogate District Local Plan (2014–2035) remains in effect until a North Yorkshire Local Plan is adopted, you may be aware that there are several speculative non-allocated housing sites beginning to test that Plan.

Unfortunately, this is due to a shortage of a five-year housing land supply within the district. When this occurs the National Planning Policy Framework triggers a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which could outweigh the spatial restriction of a defined allocation within the existing Local Plan.

Therefore, the next few months and years will be important for Harrogate and its residents as we see how our town evolves. The Harrogate Civic Society will continue to keep a close eye on new development proposals and welcomes all Society members' involvement with upcoming consultations.

Your input can help shape Harrogate's future!

Neighbourhood Planning Sub-group: Nick Brennan, Paul Hatherley, Stuart Holland and others.

History:

We have had another busy year researching, recording, communicating and celebrating the history of our town.

Highlights include:

- Responding to a substantial number of enquiries from the public;
- Contributing to the Society's events programme and newsletters;
- Supporting yet another successful year of Heritage Open Days, including talks and walks around the town;
- Supporting the Plaques Group and the town trails being developed by Chris Dicken;
- Restarting the monthly reprint in the Harrogate Advertiser of articles by the late Malcolm Neesam. A particular thanks to Simon Kent (supported by Paul Jennings) for all their hard work;
- Continuing the uploading to the website of historical articles, not least the Wikipedia articles on people and places in the town created by Linda O'Carroll; and
- Convening (hosted by Harrogate Library) a first meeting of a potential Harrogate History Club, the brainchild of Paul Jennings (more to follow).



Looking to the future:

- This summer should see the publication of Paul Jennings' latest book (supported by the Society) on Schools and Schooldays in 19th Century Harrogate (more details to follow);
- Terry Williams is looking to commemorate the town's pillar and post boxes (and their likely disappearance) with a special exhibition this autumn; and
- Work on a possible third and final part of Malcolm Neesam's monumental history of Harrogate (taking the story to 1974) has been delayed but we are hopeful of the coming year.

We are always keen to welcome new members with an active passion for history. Please do contact any existing member if you are interested.

Current members of the History Sub-group are Chris Dicken, Stuart Holland, Dr. Paul Jennings, Simon Kent, Lynne Mee, Mike Newby, Nigel McClea (our Chair), Linda O'Carroll, Huw Pritchard and Terry Williams.

Links:

Fostering connection between our Society and a multitude of other organisations in Harrogate (public, private and charitable) has been a material part of our strategy, designed to strengthen our involvement in the life of the town. With now over 40 organisations with whom we have forged a significant association, we have pledged to support, encourage and add value to their activities and ambitions wherever we can.

The past year has seen some significant achievements:

- July – the launch of “the Story of Harrogate” permanent exhibition by the West Park Centre with support from the History Group;
- September – jointly with the Harrogate Film Society, an exhibition, talk, booklet and plaque unveiling celebrating Claude Verity, the Man who Invented the Talkies;
- October – sponsoring the first award by Harrogate Town Council of the Freedom of the Town to Sheila Pantin, the first British service woman to enter Belsen concentration camp;
- November – talk by the Wesley Concert series (with a recorded concert of music) on the life of Harrogate composer Ernest Farrar;
- April - launch of Health in Harrogate 200 (the 200th anniversary of the Royal Bath Hospital) by Harrogate Medical Society at our request and with our support.

Looking to the future:

- We are working closely with the new Harrogate Town Council on a number of initiatives – not least on better signage and information boards and a town wide calendar of events;
- Working with the Film and Photographic Societies, we are preparing to launch a new initiative “Films in the Attic?” designed to recover moving images of our town that are stored away and before they are lost forever; and



- We are already looking to the “big one” - the 250th anniversary of the Great Award that created the Stray. This is due in 2028 and link organisations already involved or alerted include Harrogate Town Council, the Stray Defence Association, Harrogate Photographic, Dramatic and Film Societies, Brigantes Rotary, Wesley Concert Series, Harrogate BID, Library, Pump Room Museum, Chamber of Commerce and the West Park Centre.

Links, forged by many in the Society, are principally curated by Nigel McClea.

Communications:

We regard communicating with our wide membership and keeping everyone aware of what the Civic Society is doing as extremely important. We do this in several ways:

- via our website
- regular newsletters
- by email
- on Facebook and Instagram.

Our website www.harrogatecivicsociety.org was compiled and launched in 2021, and plays a central part in communicating our activities. It is maintained and constantly updated by Chris Dicken and is the source of up-to-date information on our events and activities. It also contains a number of articles written by the History sub-group. For many of our members, the website is the primary source of information about the Society, and is where new members usually go when applying to join.

The Plaques website www.harrogateplaques.org receives an increasing number of visitors, providing an instant source of historical information about the town. It is linked to an Android App which includes a map and details of plaques which can be used while walking around the town or following the trails.

Newsletters are issued four times a year to all members, largely by email downloads but with some printed copies being posted or delivered by hand which reduces postage costs.

We use an email messaging system (Mailer) which means we can communicate regularly to all members with information about activities and reminders of forthcoming events.

For communicating to a wider audience outside the membership, we have successfully trialled social media activity to publicise our work, and some new members have recorded that they first heard about the Society through social media. Joint meetings and partnering in activities have also raised the Society’s profile.

Statistics for Communications: (April 2025 to March 2026)

- Newsletters issued in the year **4**
 - To members - email 258
 - To members – hard copy 33
 - To external contacts - email 45

Total newsletter circulation 336 *per edition*
- Mailer communications issued **34**
(including newsletters and reminders)



- Websites - continually updated
 - Civic Society: Number of unique visits in the year: **7,986**
(up from 6,783 in the previous year)
Pages viewed: **19,227**
 - Plaques: Number of unique visits in the year: **2,229**
Pages viewed: **6,225**

- Social media
 - Facebook: Followers (at April 2026) **540**
(increased from 228 in May 2025)
Views (year to April 2026) **176,683**
 - Instagram Followers (at April 2026) **201**
Views (3 months to April 2026) **1,599**

- Displays
 - Roll-up banners - Plaques and Society banners
 - Easel and display board
 - Stall taken at the Allotment Show (17 August 2025)

Communications sub-group: David Siddans (Chair), Chris Dicken, Paul Fennimore, Margaret Siddans, Mike Newby.

Membership:

The role of Membership Secretary is to maintain a database of members, welcome new members, administer membership renewals, and deal with related member queries. It works closely with the Finance function regarding subscriptions received, and with the Mailer Communications function to keep the Mailer lists up to date, so there is a lot to do!

As at 28 February 2026 there were 318 members listed, including 7 Honorary Members. However some people will have left or let their membership lapse without informing the Society, which will become clearer once the current subscription renewal season is over, so the overall total may be nearer 280.

It is very encouraging that 44 new members have joined in the year to February 2026, compared to 36 in the previous year, replacing 33 whose membership ended for whatever reason.

This shows that the overall level of membership remains healthy and is renewing itself.

Finally, thanks to members for renewing their subscriptions recently, and thanks for enduring the blanket reminder emails which have to go to all members even though many do not need prompting.

Membership sub-group Co-ordinator: Paul Fennimore



Finance:

The Society's financial accounts to February 2026 are appended to this report.

The Society's finances are in a strong and resilient position with cash reserves of £30,000 of which £2,000 is held for specific projects.

At the AGM last year, we reported that the coming year was likely to use up funds rather than generate a further surplus, but this was planned to be well within the financial resources of the organisation. The reason was that reserves were peaking, as there had been two years with 'windfall' income from the Harrogate on Film showings, on top of previous accumulated surpluses. It is worth noting that charities are encouraged by the regulator, the Charity Commission, to be active in applying funds towards their objectives, putting them to good use rather than accumulating them.

The planned reduction in reserves has been achieved, with £6,000 of one-off donations made by the Trustees, which included the following which were judged as very worthy and relevant to the Society's objectives and enhancing and supporting the town:

- West Park Centre – support for funding exhibition boards: £2,500
- Women Winning – support to help this initiative which includes recognition of women who have had historical significance for the town: £500
- Harrogate Town Council – support for the newly formed Council to obtain approval for using the town crest: £500
- Dr Paul Jennings – support to help bring his latest significant publication into print, entitled "Schools and Schooldays in Nineteenth-Century Harrogate": £1,500
- Health in Harrogate 200 – helping the Harrogate Medical Society to support the programme of events commemorating the founding of the Royal Bath Hospital, an initiative identified by the late Malcolm Neesam as key for the town: £1,000

For the future, pressure on costs to maintain ongoing activities will inevitably continue, with recent or expected increases relating to IT website and domain licence costs, newsletter printing costs, using a larger venue for meetings and providing more talks, and no doubt more to come. On the positive side, the bank have exempted us from bank charges, and the cost of the very successful social media service is agreed at a manageable level after an initial trial period.

That said, the level of income is no longer likely to cover the ongoing routine expenditure, before making any one-off donations to support relevant projects or initiatives, so a further decrease in reserves is expected in the 2026-27 year.

Current subscription levels are £20 for an individual and £30 for joint membership, for which members receive the free newsletter and free talks, as well as helping to support the Society's wider activities.

The Trustees therefore **recommend an increase in subscriptions from 1 May 2027** to help address this, and will confirm the proposed details later in the year.

Nevertheless, the Society remains well placed to organise and financially support events and activities in line with its charitable aims and objectives.

Treasurer: Paul Fennimore



Appendix: Annual Accounts

Harrogate Civic Society					
Receipts and Payments Account					
Year ended 28th February 2026					
		2025-26			2024-25
		Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
		£	£	£	£
Receipts					
	Memberships received	4,651	-	4,651	4,926
	Bank interest	901	-	901	623
	Donations received	191	1,300	1,491	642
	Events receipts (gross)	1,057	-	1,057	447
	Film	-	-	-	1,935
	Total Receipts	6,800	1,300	8,100	8,573
Payments					
	Admin	549	-	549	1,109
	Insurance	296	-	296	286
	IT	443	-	443	478
	Newsletter	795	-	795	476
	Events payments (gross)	893	-	893	1,152
	Plaques	1,289	2,180	3,469	-
	Subscriptions	70	-	70	280
	Publicity	3,038	-	3,038	1,157
	Donations	6,000	-	6,000	1,124
	HODs	-	-	-	230
	Bank charges	-	-	-	115
	AGM	77	-	77	386
	Total Payments	13,450	2,180	15,630	6,793
	Net Payments (2025: Net Receipts)			- 7,530	1,780
	Bank balances at beginning of year			37,794	36,014
	Net Payments (2025: Net Receipts)			- 7,530	1,780
	Bank balances at year end			30,264	37,794
In 2025-26 all restricted receipts and payments related to donations received for plaques and related costs.					

Harrogate Civic Society		
Movements in Funds		
Year ended 28th February 2026		
	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds
	£	£
Balances at beginning of year	34,914	2,880
Receipts	6,800	1,300
Payments	-13,450	-2,180
Balances at 28th February 2026	28,264	2,000



Harrogate Civic Society			
Balance Sheet			
As at 28th February 2026			
		2026	2025
		£	£
Assets			
Cash at Bank			
	Current Account	7,387	15,818
	Savings Account	22,877	21,976
	Total assets	30,264	37,794
Represented by			
Restricted funds			
	HBC grant for Information Board	2,000	2,000
	Donations held for future Plaques	-	880
		2,000	2,880
	Unrestricted funds	28,264	34,914
	Total Funds	30,264	37,794
Approved by the Board of Trustees on 2 May 2026			
Checked by Chris Dicken (former Treasurer)			

Harrogate Civic Society			
Notes to the Accounts			
Year ended 28th February 2026			
Basis of preparation of the accounts			
The accounts have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis, as is required for small charities, simply showing the movements in bank accounts during the year.			
No adjustments have therefore been made for debtors or creditors at the year end or for accruing income and expenditure over time, for example relating to bank interest income, or administration and similar costs such as room hire, IT licences, postage or other expenses incurred.			
Funds received for specific purposes such as to contribute towards new plaques or for the information board, are accounted for as restricted funds as they can only be applied for those purposes.			
In addition, at the year end the Society was holding funds of £1,030 on behalf of the Harrogate Town Plan Forum, and £5,372 on behalf of the Harrogate Medical Society's "Health in Harrogate 200" celebration, as it has agreed to help administer bank transactions for those organisations. Those funds are not included in these accounts as they do not belong to the Society and are not under the Society's control.			