

THE LEAGUE OF FRIENDS OF THE HELSTON COMMUNITY HOSPITAL
Registered Charity Number: 285734

Minutes of the 68th Annual General Meeting

Held at Helston Community Hospital (Day Room)
Monday, 24th November 2025 at 2:15 p.m.

1. Welcome

President: Dr. Ken Whittle welcomed our guests, and a special welcome to:

- The Worshipful Lady Mayor of Helston, Cllr. Nicola Boase, and deputy major Paul Andrew.
 - Guest Speaker, Mr. Dave Turnbull
 - Andrew Hill from Degibna Prayer Chapel, Don Windsor from True and Faithful Lodge, and former president Dr Ian Wort
 - Trudy Addington, hospital sister and Yselka Hewson - hospital nurse and activities coordinator
 - Former Mayors - Ronnie Williams, Mike Thomas, as well as welcoming Baden Christophers, Barry Cornish and everyone else who is attending.
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2. Apologies for Absence and attendees

Apologies

- Andrew George MP
- David Nicholas - President Helston Fatstock Show
- Roger Benney
- Penny Truscott
- Penny Whittle
- Terry Broughal - wife Tracy is here to represent him
- Committee members
 - Penny Truscott
 - Maggie Wherry
 - Sandy Bartlett

Attendees

- Helen Nelson, Jo Parish, Ken Whittle, Sue Atkins, Heather Gilbert, Sally Robinson, Dr Ian Wort, Ann Ferris, Jenny Toy, Joy Michell, Moira Dixon, Linda Pascoe, Don Windsor, Dave Turnbull, Lynette Haycock, Tracy Broughal (representing Terry Broughal), Liz James, The Worshipful Lady Mayor of Helston, Cllr. Nicola Boase, Tim Gratton Kane,

Trudy Addington, Yselka Hewson, Baden Christophers, Paul Andrew, Andrew Will, Ronnie Williams, Brian Nelson, Mike Thomas, David Martin, Barry Cornish, Jo Coward, Brian Howard, Wendy Wallis, Jenny Mann

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Minutes of the 67th AGM, held on Monday, 25th November 2024, have been circulated to all members for approval and signature by the Chairman, Helen Nelson to be adopted.

- Proposed by: Wendy Wallis
 - Seconded by: Moira Dixon
 - Minutes approved
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4. Chairman's Report

- Presented by Helen Nelson, Chairman to be adopted. A copy of the report is attached to this document.
 - Proposed by: Ian Wort
 - Seconded by: Heather Gilbert
 - Adopted
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5. Treasurer's Report

- Presented by Sue Atkins, Treasurer. A copy of the report is attached to this document
 - Proposed by: Tim Gratton Kane
 - Seconded by: Wendy Wallis
 - Adopted
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6. Election of Committee Members

Presented by: Dr. Ken Whittle

New committee member:

- Mrs. Lynette Haycock
 - Proposed by: Wendy Wallis
 - Seconded by: Moira Dixon
 - Approved

Retiring by rotation and willing to be re-elected:

- Mrs. Heather Gilbert, Mrs Joy Mitchell and Mrs Sally Robinson

- There was a unanimous vote to approve them to be re-elected.
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7. Reappointment of officers

Presented by: Dr. Ken Whittle

The following officers were willing to serve for another year.

The appointments were all proposed, seconded and approved in one go.

- Chairman – Helen Nelson, Vice Chairman – Moira Dixon, Secretary – Joanne Parish, Assistant Secretary – Jenny Mann, Treasurer – Sue Atkins, Publicity Officer – Helen Nelson, Website Manager – Wendy Wallis
 - Proposed by: Tracy Broughal
 - Seconded by: Tim Gratton Kane
 - Approved unanimously
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8. Reappointment of the President for 2025–2026

- **President:** Dr. Ken Whittle
 - Proposed by: Heather Gilbert
 - Seconded by: Joy Michell
 - Approved
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9. Reappointment of Independent Financial Advisors

- **Presented by:** Ken Whittle - Sue Atkins recommends we continue with them
 - **Firm:** BK Plus Limited, The Old Cattle Market, Helston
 - Proposed by: Tim Gratton Kane
 - Seconded by: Dr Ian Wort
 - Agreed
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10. Reappointment of Bankers

- **Presented by:** Ken Whittle - Sue Atkins recommends we continue with them
 - **Bank:** Messrs Barclays Bank Plc
 - Proposed by: Wendy Wallis
 - Seconded by: Jenny Mann
 - Agreed
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11. Questions from the Floor

Facilitated by: Dr. Ken Whittle

- none
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12. Hospital Update

Presented by: Sister Trudy Addington

(Introduced by Dr. Ken Whittle, with mention of Matron Lynda McHale)

- Trudy said it was a privilege to work with the LoF and to be part of the work that we do. We are very approachable. We've had a couple of recliners this year and are currently waiting for a bariatric bed, which is going through procurement at the moment. We've also had a Taurus walker, which has been really helpful for patients who struggle to walk. In addition, we now have a bookcase for the Jack Johns Suite and some beautiful paintings. We are still waiting for the garden to be completed and are looking forward to that. There has been really good communication, everyone has been very kind, and we are a joy to work with. This was followed by a round of applause.
 - Ken mentioned that the funds we receive are a token of appreciation from people thanking the hospital for the care given to patients. Thank you to the nursing staff. Our matron recently retired; she carried a huge responsibility, including during Covid, when we were an end-of-life hospital. More than 50% of people who came here were able to leave after receiving Covid care. The hospital has received an award for end-of-life care, and Neil Wilson has made the hospital a Veteran Aware hospital. It is a vital part of our community, and the MIU is open 10 hours a day.
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13. Address by the Worshipful Lady Mayor of Helston

Cllr. Nicola Boase

(Introduced by Dr. Ken Whittle)

Lovely to see so many here - AGMs are not usually well supported. She spoke about remembering the hospital fete many years ago when it was in Meneage Hospital - her mother and mother in law used to make flower arrangements which were part of the raffle prizes. Helston Community Hospital has served our community for over 100 years. She wanted to thank the committee for all their hard work in supporting the hospital.

14. Guest Speaker

Mr. Dave Turnbull

(Introduced by Dr. Ken Whittle)

He talked about the creation of the Cober Valley Health Centre and various parts of the building. South Kerrier Alliance — a local group of GP volunteers — started in 2008. They built the Cattle Market building in 2012, took over Coronation Park from the council in 2018, and then became involved in the Helston Gateway project, located in the old Budgens supermarket.

They first showed Cornwall Council around the building in 2018. It had been empty for a year, and they were trying to persuade the council to invest in it for young people. There were a lot of hoops to jump through. They consulted with the local population, which identified three top priorities: (1) nothing for young people to do in Helston, (2) health and access to health services, and (3) the issue of a large, empty, deteriorating building in the centre of town attracting vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Helston has the highest proportion of young people of any town in Cornwall — 25% higher than the Cornwall average and 10% higher than the national average. It also ranks among the worst on the Community Needs Index in areas such as access to doctors and dentists: 71% worse than the rest of the UK, and 50% worse than the Cornwall average. Meanwhile, the number of older people has increased significantly: a 20% rise in residents aged over 65 in the last 10 years, while the working-age population has declined. The town therefore has many young and older people, but fewer working-age adults.

Tim carried out some statistical work using Freedom of Information requests. He found that across Cornwall, Cornwall Council spends an average of £870 per head on projects — but in Helston, the value per head over the last 15 years was only £16. They presented this disparity to the council. They submitted three major funding bids; two failed. In 2023, everything finally came together, and they secured £2.6 million from Cornwall Council to redevelop the building. At the same time, Meneage Street Surgery was closing, and the NHS recognised the need for more medical capacity in Helston. The old Budgens site was available and aligned well with NHS strategy to support local care and reduce the need to travel to Treliske. They also received strong local support and raised additional money from the community. It took five years to secure the funding and one year to build.

What is the Helston Gateway Project?

Over the years, funding and sustainability have always been challenging. They needed income to support the services they wanted to provide — such as the youth centre downstairs — so they needed secure tenancy for the upper floor. After discussions with Jim Tate and the NHS, Meneage Surgery agreed to rent two-thirds of the upstairs space for their medical practice. They will also have a training suite to help recruit new doctors. As part of the NHS local-care strategy, consultants will be able to visit from Treliske to carry out post-operative follow-up appointments. Jim also wanted space for social prescribing teams. There are now 19 flexible treatment rooms. South Kerrier Alliance wanted to provide community facilities too, so they built three small rooms for activities such as yoga and mental-health support. Eventually, Jim and the NHS rented the entire top floor, including the community rooms. Specsavers run a hearing clinic there, and even a choir uses the space. The target opening date was 1 April 2025, which was a challenge.

They built the medical centre but were also committed to creating a youth support facility. The first two months were spent demolishing and stripping the old building. They held an open day for young people, gathering 380 suggestions. The top requests were: (1) climbing, (2) skating and roller disco, (3) music and DJ practice, (4) a safe space, and (5) a café — with many saying “McDonald’s”, which they interpreted as a warm, safe, sociable place.

The Tide Centre in Wadebridge, known for its impressive climbing walls, got involved and helped design a climbing area. Young people can use an app to track their climbing progress, similar to Strava. There is also a climbing cave, and in the old loading dock they built a large, complex climbing wall. It is already very popular, especially evenings and weekends.

The rest of the building includes a big open venue space with a stage and lighting, designed so it can also be used for roller skating. Over recent weeks, they have trialled various events including roller discos, skateboarding coaching, concerts, and a games fair. They aim to engage young people who usually stay in their rooms and are reluctant to socialise, helping them discover new activities. There is also a recording studio, and they are buying second-hand guitars and drum kits so young people can practise. A resident DJ attends every week.

The whole idea is to bring together medical services (treating unwell people), social prescribing (supporting wellbeing), and physical activity — creating a comprehensive wellbeing centre. People receiving social-prescribing support can even get vouchers for climbing. Everything ties together. The centre is now up and running, and everyone is welcome to visit.

They also set out to make the building net-carbon-zero. To avoid generating carbon, they installed 12 boreholes, each 100m deep, to supply a ground-source heating system. Fluid is pumped down at -2°C and returns at $8-9^{\circ}\text{C}$, feeding a heat store. The upper floor has underfloor heating. They also installed 42 kW of solar panels on the roof, providing a large proportion of the electricity. The internal walls and insulation are very high-quality. NHS England representatives visited last week and were very impressed.

There was a round of applause

Questions from the floor:

Ken said they were extremely fortunate to have Dave with them and thanked him for speaking. Dave mentioned that Ken had helped with lobbying too.

Andrew Hill asked whether local firms were used for the build. Dave explained that the vast majority of the funding was spent locally; only one company was not Cornish. Most of the money stayed in the local economy. He added that one young person who had been involved in vandalising the derelict building ended up working as a labourer during the renovation, gained an apprenticeship, and is now a joiner — turning a negative into a positive.

Tracy Broughill said it was a very inspirational story that could be shared with friends and relatives.

Sally asked about advertising; there is now a new website: **Love Helston**.

David Martin congratulated the team and commented, based on his career in planning and building, that Dave must have the patience of a saint and exceptional determination.

Ken noted that the project was delivered on a much smaller budget than originally estimated. Cornwall Council had costed it at £6 million but allocated only £2.6 million.

15. Any Other Business

Yselka Hewson invited everyone to a Christmas quiz at the Godolphin Club on 19th December - 7.30pm - teams of 6. This is to raise money for the staff working on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Eve. All are welcome.

16. Closure of the Meeting

By: Dr. Ken Whittle

Refreshments were served following the meeting.