

**Minutes of the Annual Members Meeting of the
Anstruther Improvements Association on
Wednesday 16th July 2025 at 7pm at Dreel Halls, Anstruther**

Present

Ordinary Members: Angela Anderson, George Anderson, David Andrews, Kate Anstruther, Janet Bulloch, Felicity Chancellor, Lavinia Kilbride, Steve Liscoe, Mary and Trevor Money, John Myles, Christine Palmer, Sophie Palmer, David Priestley, Karen Porter, Elizabeth Riches, Alan Stewart

Ordinary Members who attended in part: Elizabeth Gordon

Observers: Julia Priestley, Isla Priestley, Mully Roberts, Yasmeen Roberts, Benjamin Roberts, Sheena Smith

Apologies: Arran Aird, Toby Anstruther, Richard Emanuel, Barbara Fotheringham, Jennifer Gordon, John and Catherine Kellett, James Kilbride, Kate MacLeod, Margaret McArthur, Chloe Milne, Lyn Rodger, Alex Rodger, Diana Sykes, Alan Waugh

1. CP opened the Annual Members Meeting (AMM), welcomed the members and observers from the AIA's youth volunteers and their families, and read the apologies.
2. The minutes of the 2024 AMM were proposed by David Andrews and seconded by Trevor Money. There were no corrections. There were two matters arising:
 - following a request to move the AGM to earlier in the year so that the report and accounts would be more recent and relevant, the date had been moved from October to July. CP invited members to feed back any thoughts on this change.
 - voting rights for under 18s: the constitution allows junior membership, but junior members cannot stand for Board election; they can attend meetings but cannot vote at them. Up to two 16+ can be co-opted by Trustees to the Board, where they remain until the subsequent AGM (unless removed by majority Board vote). At the subsequent AGM they can be re-co-opted. Once on the Board they **do** get to vote at Board meetings. **Following advice from Fife Voluntary Action, the Committee has only to put valuable AIA resources into changing the constitution to lower the age of Ordinary Membership to 16 when there is demonstrable demand from young people. In addition, a junior membership scheme will only be introduced when there is demonstrable demand.**

CP noted the success of the AIA's youth volunteer scheme and thanked the young volunteers and their families for attending the meeting. She advised that, after the meeting closed, they would be presented with Saltire Award certificates in recognition of the time they had spent volunteering.

3. CP presented the President's Report (see below).
4. CP outlined the Committee's proposal that the annual subscription for September 2025 to August 2026 should be set at £10. The proposal was

approved by the ordinary members unanimously.

5. The constitution requires that one-third of the Trustees retire each year and two of the existing Trustees had resigned in writing and were putting themselves forward for re-election. They had completed and submitted nomination forms within the deadline laid out in the constitution. Both nominees were voted in unanimously as Trustees by the ordinary members present at the AMM. They are: Christine Palmer and Elizabeth Riches. No other nomination forms had been received.
6. CP presented the independent financial examiner's report to the members. Janet Bulloch asked whether it was good practice for the IFE to prepare the annual accounts which they then also examine. CP and KA will discuss this with the IFE.
7. As Joint Treasurer, KA presented the annual accounts to the members, who received them. KA provided a headline summary of the income and expenditure for 2024. She explained the difference between unrestricted and restricted income and expenditure, and why it was most meaningful when judging performance and management of the AIA to focus on unrestricted financial activity. As indicated last year, 2024 had been a good year for the AIA, with the organisation's involvement in the Dreel Burn Investment Readiness Project providing a substantial unrestricted income stream that could be used in the future to fund maintenance of Dreel Halls and the Anster Community Development Project. CP invited questions from the members but there were none. ER thanked KA for her work on the annual accounts.
8. The AIA Committee proposed that Mark Robertson of Henderson Black be appointed as independent financial examiner (IFE) for the SCIO's accounts. The ordinary members approved the appointment of Mark Robertson pending a satisfactory response to Janet Bulloch's question (see item 6).
9. CP made a call for any other competent business but there was none.
10. CP closed the meeting and expressed thanks to the Trustees, Julia Priestley, the Honorary Patrons and the Members. Those present were invited to stay to enjoy cheese and wine and discuss ongoing AIA initiatives.

Above minutes accepted as a true record

Signed: CPalmer (Chair)

Date: 15/7/2026

2025 President's Report

2025 was another busy year for the AIA. The heart of our activities remains our long-standing Committee-led initiatives: Anster Nichts, Anster Cinema, our seasonal coffee mornings, the Duck Race, our AIA gardening, the membership programme and running Dreel Halls.

We are grateful to our Anster Nicht guest speakers in 2025: Neil McNair, Dr Anne-Marie Weijmans, Martin Gulbis, David Morland, Fiona Young and Professor Jon Rogers, who covered a wide range of topics including astronomy, furniture design, honey and the world wide web.

The highlight for Anster Cinema was a special, sell-out screening of *Venus Peter*, a beautiful 1989 film about a young boy growing up in a Scottish fishing village in the 1940s, based on Christopher Rush's semi-autobiographical novel. We were privileged to be joined for a post-screening Q&A by Christopher Rush (Writer), Ian Sellar (Director, Writer) and Chris Young (Producer). Our thanks go to our loyal audience and our dedicated cinema volunteer team of Andy, Kyung, Marie Louise, Alan and Kate.

The coffee morning team of Jen, me, Elizabeth, Chloe and Gill are also stalwarts, providing home baking, hot drinks and craft activities to all comers. Four seasonal coffee mornings were held in 2025 providing teas and home baking, a book swap and crafts table. A recent addition is a team of young volunteers, guided by Julia Priestley, our National Lottery Community Fund-ed Community Development Worker, providing more baking and help at the events and bringing down the average age of our volunteer base considerably!

On Doors Open Day in September, we threw open the parapet door once again and volunteers provided tours of the St Nicholas Tower for over 100 curious visitors. As well as the usual home baking, and a display about the AIA's activities, volunteers from the Shelled Wall project provided a project update in the Upper Hall, to promote volunteering opportunities and encourage more people to get involved.

We were once more blessed with good weather for the annual AIA Duck Race, and the crowds cheered on our 1,000 yella deuks, hoping for a winner. They stayed to hear the results from the terrace at the back of Dreel Halls, enjoying a cup of tea and admiring the creativity of the bonnet parade contestants and the Design a Duck competition winners. A heartfelt thank you to the team of volunteers and the local businesses – this much-loved community celebration wouldn't happen without you. Like Vintage Day, the Duck Race raises critical funds for the AIA's Anster Community Development Project and Dreel Halls.

Added to these favourites are the more recent activities, led by Julia and core to the Anster Community Development Project. These include regular events and activities, like Dreel Babies & Toddlers and Dreel Crafters, new initiatives, like Bookbug and The Poppy Project, and one-offs like the Beach of Dreams.

Dreel Babies & Toddlers entered its fourth year, providing a much-needed social group for local parents, carers and their children. Our thanks go to the new team of volunteer helpers: Gill, Shirley, Kylie, Katherine, Kerin, Shelley and Audrey, who jointly coordinated the group throughout 2025, enabling it to become more independent. Community volunteer, Emma, also supported crafts and Bookbug activities. The group participated in seasonal celebrations and a variety of craft activities and held a summer picnic at Dreelside Park.

In February the AIA supported valued volunteer Gill to complete Bookbug Training with the Scottish Book Trust. Gill has now established popular fortnightly Bookbug sessions for local families, both within Dreel Halls and the wider community. She has led exciting visits to

Anstruther Fire Station, Willow House Care Home, the Scottish Fisheries Museum and the local East Neuk Family Learning Roadshow at Waid Academy.

Dreel Crafters continued to grow in popularity, meeting twice weekly and providing opportunities for volunteering, skill sharing and connecting with like-minded crafters, as well as holding Summer and Christmas socials at Dreel Halls. In 2025 work began to organise a collection of knitting patterns to use as a shared resource library for Dreel Crafters and members of the community. The Crafters group attends regular AIA events, provides essential support to other AIA initiatives, like Vintage Day and the Poppy Project, and to one-off events such as Beach of Dreams. Our thanks go to: Claire, Carol, Fiona, Elma, Daruis and Alan for their dedication and support, volunteering with the group.

2025 was the year the Poppy Project really took off. Building on the exterior display in 2024, members of the group continued to make hand-knitted poppies and encouraged the wider community to contribute, with knitting received from as far afield as Wales. Iain and Catherine Gillon led a team of volunteers to plan and install the display, including sourcing a fishing net, representing the local fishing industry, to form the backdrop. This was kindly cut and shaped by Pittenweem Harbour Master Steven Middleton. The project culminated in October, with the striking and poignant Remembrance installation at Dreel Halls. This comprised of two drapes around the front entrance of Dreel Halls, cascading over a five metre drop from a window at the front of the tower, along with garlands wrapped around posts, poppy covered wreaths, and poppies in the graveyard and in new planters. These were bought for the AIA's volunteer gardeners, Elizabeth and Kate, who continue to manage the public space over the road bridge for the enjoyment of passers-by. The Poppy Project connected people in a new way, encouraging others to get involved and contribute with a shared aim.

Beach of Dreams was another project that brought people together in a wonderful celebration of our coastal community. Led by Artistic Director, Ali Pretty, the AIA invited representatives from the Dreel Burn volunteers, Dreel Crafters, St Ayles Rowing Club, Cellardyke Tidal Pool and Footprint East Neuk/Dreelside Woods to participate in creative workshops at Dreel Halls, each designing and creating a silk pennant to celebrate the beauty of the coastal environment where the Dreel Burn meets the sea. The pennants record each group's connection to this coastline and represent the hopes and dreams these six community groups have for our local area. These, and a pennant created by The Cellardyke Trust, joined the display of over 840 pennants collected from coastal communities all over the UK, and installed by community volunteers working with the Beach of Dreams team on Castle Street beach on 22nd May. Each group spoke about the meaning behind their pennant in a moving and joyful celebration of our coastal location. As part of the Beach of Dreams events, the AIA partnered with The Scottish Fisheries Museum, to display the Museum's collection of large signal flags at Dreel Halls, which was apt as the Dreel Halls logo comprises the signal flags for the letters of the name. The Beach of Dreams event connected with new members of the wider local community and provided an opportunity for the work of the AIA to be shared regionally and nationally.

AIA organised three well attended events with partners Fife Council, Gaelic in Fife, Fife Coast & Countryside Trust and Scottish Fisheries Museum for World Gaelic Awareness Week in February, including: Gaelic Bookbug by Kirsty Strachan, supported by volunteer Gill Fraser; a Gaelic walk exploring Anstruther Harbour; and a talk with participatory Gaelic songs of the herring gutters with Meg Hyland. The Scottish Fisheries Museum set up a family-friendly outreach activity in the kitchen area, with a display of items from the museum collection and a herring gutting activity, providing an interesting and engaging additional activity for people attending the Talk and Songs event at Dreel Halls.

AIA attended and contributed to three East Neuk Family Learning Roadshows held at Waid Community Campus and the Erskine Hall. AIA provided a range of art and craft activities, organised delivery of a Bookbug session and supported The Cellardyke Trust to deliver a Beach of Dreams pennant craft session, engaging with local families.

In 2025 the AIA added to the collection of shells for the Dreel Shelled Wall Restoration Project. A variety of activities were trialled to add more interest and encourage engagement in shell collection, including a combined litter pick and buckie treasure hunt event, a facilitated rockpool guddle and a shell hunt and identification session. Julia also brought the Shelled Wall project to the East Neuk Family Learning Roadshow with a Bookbug outreach activity. The project gained permission to place whelk shell collection buckets for use by regular beach visitors at Castle St Beach in Anstruther and Cambo Sands in Kingsbarns. From April to September the AIA led regular buckie treasure hunts to engage members of the community in shell collection, followed by the sorting and bagging of shells; volunteers have now collected over a third of the shells required to restore the wall.

October brought another successful Vintage Day, with piles of delicious home baking served on vintage crockery, and a range of fun things for our visitors. Started by Christine Keay, Vintage Day brings the community together in our beautiful halls to raise essential funds for the AIA's community projects and to keep the halls thriving. Volunteers donate handmade crafts and photographs to sell, bake delicious cakes, scones and biscuits, sell raffle tickets, serve teas, clear tables, do the dishes and all with a smile. This year we had a team of young volunteers supporting the event. Many local businesses and individuals generously donated raffle prizes or vouchers. It requires a huge community effort to deliver Vintage Day, and we thank everyone involved for their time, expertise and energy.

In 2024 we appointed our first Youth Leader, Sophie Palmer, who wanted to establish a youth volunteer programme. The aim was to provide more accessible volunteer opportunities, to encourage more young people to get involved in AIA activities and to offer Saltire Award accreditation for young people aged 12 - 25. Julia and Sophie developed the programme in 2025, recruiting and meeting regularly with youth volunteers, who supported a range of AIA activities, including community litter picks, shell collection and sorting for the Shelled Wall Restoration Project, Anster Cinema, helping out at coffee mornings and community events and baking or making crafts for AIA fundraising. 12 young people contributed 150 youth volunteer hours for the Saltire Awards, and an additional eight children and young people, not registered for the Saltire Awards, volunteered their time in 2025.

The third strand of our work is the Dreel Burn Project. In 2025, we continued our community engagement work as part of the Dreel Burn Investment Readiness Partnership, funded by the Facility for Investment Ready Nature in Scotland (FIRNS), delivered by NatureScot in collaboration with The Scottish Government and in partnership with the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This work was part of Julia's remit until June, when funding requirements meant she had to hand over to Heather Anderson, who joined us as Dreel Burn Project Worker. Among other things, Julia delivered monthly community science water monitoring, Fish in the Classroom, outreach work at Bowhouse, tree planting and litter picking. Heather has further developed the range of Dreel Burn community activities, adding moth monitoring, tree care, cyanotype printing and bulb planting, strengthening our ties with Footprint East Neuk and Dreelside Woods. We would like to acknowledge and thank the many dedicated volunteers who enable us to continue this important work and Fife Coast & Countryside Trust. Regular volunteers include George and Angela, Linda, David J, Kate F and Simon, Alice, David M, Iain, Ken and Kate A and Toby.

We were again lucky to have three opportunities to showcase the AIA's work at the popular Bowhouse Food Market in 2025, with over 5,000 visitors each weekend. In February we

took the Dreel Burn Project, working in partnership with Forth Rivers Trust, to promote their Balcaskie Wetland Project. In March we were back, selling Duck Race ducks and knitted creme egg cosies, promoting the Design a Duck competition and entertaining children with our hook-a-duck activity. In November we once again raised funds for the Anster Community Development Project and Dreel Halls through sales of our homemade fruit crumbles.

In 2025, Julia provided support to, participated in, and partnered with a wide range of community groups and individuals, including: Dreel Babies and Toddlers, Dreel Crafters, Dreel Burn Water Monitoring Group, Waid Community Use, Fife Council Community Learning and Development, Lighthouse East Neuk, The Scottish Fisheries Museum, Little Neuk Storytelling Centre, Youth First Scotland, Cambo Gardens, Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, Forth Rivers Trust, Balcaskie Estate, Dreelside Woods Community Asset Transfer, Footprint East Neuk, University of St Andrews, Buglife Scotland, Bowhouse Food Market, Kilrenny, Anstruther and Cellardyke Community Council, Kinetika, Beach of Dreams, Cellardyke Tidal Pool, Cellardyke Trust, Gallery 495, St Ayles Rowing Club, East Neuk Centre Trust, Scottish Book Trust (Bookbug), Gaelic In Fife, Pittenweem Harbour Masters, Anstruther Primary School and Colinsburgh Primary School.

Thanks to the AIA's purchase of Dreel Halls in 2014, the halls remain a much-loved and well-used community asset, the only public hall in Wester Anstruther. The halls are used for many other activities and events - tabletop games, yoga, early years storytelling, qi gong, art classes, creative writing workshops, pilates, talks and discussion groups, tai chi, public music events, quiz nights, fundraisers and many private celebrations. Our beautiful halls host celebrations for all stages of life, from birthday parties to weddings, anniversaries and funeral wakes. Together, these gatherings ensure that Dreel Halls continues to be a vibrant meeting place at the heart of Wester Anstruther, bringing people together and strengthening the life of our community.

In 2025 we received financial and in-kind support from, among others, The National Lottery Community Fund, the Facility for Investment Ready Nature in Scotland (FIRNS), delivered by NatureScot in collaboration with The Scottish Government and in partnership with the National Lottery Heritage Fund, East Neuk Tabletop Games, East Neuk Preservation Society, Fife Beekeepers Association, Loch Leven Church, Christine Keay, The Community Kist, Fife Council, Balcaskie Estate, Bowhouse Food Market, James Aird & Sons, Fife Coast & Countryside Trust and Anstruther's many local businesses, who support our events and activities. As ever, we would like to thank our members, the many volunteers who make things happen in our community and the users of Dreel Halls.

Finally, the AIA could not continue without the exceptional hard work of its Trustees, Honorary Patrons and Community Development Worker, Julia.

For readers who want to find out more about AIA events and what is happening at Dreel Halls, you can visit our [website](#), [Facebook pages](#) and [Instagram](#) account.