

Outgoing Chairman's Report - AGM 2026

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the Ems Valley u3a Annual General Meeting for 2026. This is the last time I shall be addressing you as your chairman, as our constitution dictates that I must stand down after three years. I do so happily, in the knowledge that Vice-chairman Rod is ready to assume the hot seat, with your permission of course. Thank you, Rod, for your excellent support during this time, and I look forward to serving under your leadership in the years to come.

We also, sadly, lose Dbee Robinson as our highly capable and supportive Business Secretary. Fortunately, we have a new committee member, Carolyn Joy, who has all the skills to take over the role. Dbee has very kindly been mentoring her in our ways. Thank you, Dbee, for all your work and the procedures and processes you have brought to our administration.

I would like to welcome Carolyn and her husband Steve as new trustees of the u3a.

I am sad to lose the services of our Minutes Secretary, Liz Rosoman, who has decided to retire from the committee. It is such an essential job in any committee to record the proceedings and actions. Thank you, Liz, for your faithful service to our u3a.

However, there has been a bit of a reshuffle. Karen Rodger is handing over the Beacon administration to Les Brokenshire and will be taking on the Minutes Secretary role. Les saw a fit between being Groups Coordinator and having full access to Beacon, so he will be doubling his workload. My grateful thanks are due to both Les and Karen for their vital work.

I think the only two committee members who are 'staying put' are Sue Kent, who puts in a lot of hard work keeping our membership database up to date, and Hilary Street, our treasurer, who keeps a keen eye on all our income and expenditure. Thank you both so much, Hilary and Sue, for all your years of loyal service.

With Rod taking over from me, that left a vacancy for the vice-chairmanship. I was delighted to hear that Andrea Brokenshire had volunteered to put herself forward for the role. I introduced Andrea and Les to you at last year's AGM and it has been gratifying to see them contributing a lot to our committee and u3a in just one year. Thank you both so much.

Of course, the Vice-chairman also becomes the Speakers Secretary. I think we should thank Rod very much for all the fascinating and interesting talks and after-tea events he has arranged for us. Our monthly meetings mean so much to me, as they are vital for our social cohesion as a u3a community. Good luck, Andrea, in carrying on this rewarding task.

Our Group Leaders are our pride and joy. Interest and activity groups do not run themselves and without the passion and motivation of our Group Leaders there would be no groups and no u3a. You are too numerous to mention and thank individually, but you all have our very grateful thanks. I hope as many of you as possible will be going to the Group Leaders Social evening that Les has arranged for tomorrow week on the 5th of June.

I shall finish this round of acknowledgements by paying tribute to Mal Sturgess, the indefatigable host of our meetings here and master of the sound desk. Thank you, Mal!

Over the last three years, the number of groups in Ems Valley has remained pretty well constant at around 53, although we have lost ten and gained nine. In fact, we are witnessing the formations of Wine Group 6 and Sunday Lunch on the Bus as I speak!

When I took over from Anne Powell in 2023, I was quite nervous of how I would cope with taking over the helm of this u3a. I was resolved to try and keep the organisation as vibrant as when Anne left it. I can only hope that I have succeeded in this aim. I now look forward to staying on the committee, looking after the website and our IT administration. It has been an honour and a pleasure to serve as your chairman.

I'll now hand you over to Dbee to conduct the further proceedings. Thank you.