



# Holybrook Parish Council

*Proudly serving the residents of Holybrook Parish since 2000*

## Annual Assembly Minutes 2025

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025</b>
<b>Location</b>	Beansheaf Community Centre
<b>Present</b>	<p>Cllrs Albanese (also representing Beansheaf Pre-school) Bedwell (Vice-Chair), Croal, Lenaghan, Littlewood, Mistry, Moore, Salau, Somner, and Tull (Chairman)</p> <p><b>Also present:</b> Caroline Booth (WBC Countryside Department), Vyv James (FoLP/resident), Angela McMahon (FoLP/resident), Dave Smith (FoLP/Resident) Ray Turner (Tilehurst Square Dance Club), Jim Tull (Kennet Valley Community Association), Beth Asbury (WBC), Gerard Rocks (HRR), James Sherley (TVP), Sue Nix (TVP), Susan Gray (Friends of the Earth) Joe Lally (Calcot School/FoLP), John Sharpe (Friends of the Earth, Nigel McClune (FoLP), Julia McClune (FoLP) and John Holt (West Berkshire Therapy Centre). <b>Plus 20 residents.</b></p> <p><b>Parish Staff</b> – Pam Kirkpatrick (Clerk), Caroline Lenaghan (Bookings Clerk) and Toyin Bayagbon (Office Support)</p>

No.	Notes
<b>AA/01/25</b>	<p><b>Apologies for absence</b></p> <p>The list of apologies was not presented at the meeting. However, apologies had been received from MP Olivia Bailey.</p>
<b>AA/02/25</b>	<p><b>Thames Valley Police Report – PCSOs Sherley and Nix</b></p> <p>The Police report was presented earlier than scheduled to accommodate the duty hours of attending PCSOs.</p> <p>Residents were informed that illegal electric and off-road bikes are a key concern in the Parish. While there is a plan to tackle this issue, logistical challenges have slowed progress. However, several bikes have been seized. Residents are encouraged to report any sightings; anonymity is guaranteed.</p> <p>Crime statistics for Holybrook showed a modest increase compared to the previous year. Drug offences were slightly higher, reflecting targeted Police efforts in this area.</p> <p>In response to a resident query, it was clarified that illegal electric/off-road bikes are typically those without pedals.</p> <p>A resident noted the absence of serious violence statistics; PCSOs explained that these are not included in community-level data but are available on the Thames Valley Police website:  <a href="#">Thames Valley Police Crime Statistics</a></p> <p>Another resident reported a suspected drug handover, involving a scooter, near Sainsbury's and the new estate off Dorking Way.</p> <p>When asked about walking patrols, PCSOs noted that limited resources; only two PCSOs cover 27 parishes, make regular foot patrols challenging. However, residents are encouraged to visit the Thames Valley Police website to contact PCSOs with information or questions.</p>

<b>AA/03/25</b>	<p><b>Approval and adoption of the minutes of the Annual Assembly held on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024</b></p> <p><b>APPROVED.</b> Proposed by Cllr Somner and seconded by Cllr Littlewood.</p>
<b>AA/04/25</b>	<p><b>Chairman's Report: Cllr Claire Tull</b></p> <p>Appendix 1.</p>
<b>AA/05/25</b>	<p><b>Community and Environmental Committee report: Cllr Charles Croal (committee chairman)</b></p> <p>Appendix 2.</p>
<b>AA/06/25</b>	<p><b>West Berkshire Council (WBC) Countryside Officer: Caroline Booth</b></p> <p>Appendix 3.</p>
<b>AA/07/25</b>	<p><b>Friends of Linear Park (FoLP): Angela McMahon (Chairman)</b></p> <p>A verbal report was provided. The main points:</p> <p>Global warming has been affecting the Park and it has been overwhelmed with flooding. However, the grass is recovering well and the daffodils survived.</p> <p>The Friends remain conscious of the environment and have installed bug hotels, and a dead hedge is being built behind the Beansheaf Centre.</p> <p>In January, the I Dig Trees programme donated 200 whips which have been planted in the east of the Park. The diversity will encourage birds and wildlife.</p> <p>In July Angela (as a representative of FoLP) and Caroline Booth (WBC) attended a Green Flag ceremony in London to receive the flag.</p> <p>The Tuesday Working Group has around 10 – 12 regular volunteers who work with enthusiasm.</p> <p>Angela stood down as Chairman of the Group in January. Thanks are extended to the volunteers of the FoLP for their hard work and to the Parish Council for its continued support of the Group.</p>
<b>AA/08/25</b>	<p><b>Beansheaf Pre-School: Karen Albanese (Manager)</b></p> <p>A verbal report was provided. The main points:</p> <p>The Beansheaf Pre-School is a registered charity which Karen has been running for 20 years. However, the group has been going for 32 years, first running as a playgroup and now offering up to 30-hours of free childcare.</p> <p>The children thrive at the pre-school, supported by a wonderful team of staff.</p> <p>The Pre-School loves being involved in community events such as D-Day, The King's Coronation and themed walks through the Park; another story will be laid out over the Easter holidays.</p> <p>A big thank you was extended to the Friends of Linear Park for the Sensory Garden and the bug houses which the children love to explore.</p>

AA/09/25	<p><b>West Berkshire Therapy Centre: John Holt (Trustee)</b></p> <p><b>A verbal report with associated PowerPoint presentation was given. Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Centre opened on 1st April 2014 with the support of 27 local charities. It provides power-assisted exercise for individuals with disabilities, aiming to improve health outcomes, slow physical decline, and promote independence.</li> <li>• Participants engage in 30–40 minutes of gentle, motorised, full-body exercises. These sessions use repetitive movement in a supervised and safe environment.</li> <li>• The equipment uses interactive technology to help re-establish connections between the brain and muscles, improving balance and walking, and reducing the risk of falls.</li> <li>• The Centre supports individuals who cannot safely use conventional exercise facilities. Clients include those recovering from strokes or living with Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis, and osteoporosis amongst other conditions.</li> <li>• Demand continues to grow, with an estimated 16,500 exercise sessions projected for the coming year. In response, two additional opening hours have been added.</li> <li>• Funding is sourced from clients (50%), local support groups (e.g., Parkinson's UK, MS Society, Fibro Action), grants and sponsorships.</li> <li>• The Centre is committed to accessibility and client care, offering features such as ample parking, level access, accessible toilets, affordable services, and a highly trained team of staff and volunteers. Services are designed to positively impact daily living activities.</li> </ul>
AA/10/25	<p><b>Hospital Radio Reading: Gerard Rocks (Chairman)</b></p> <p>Appendix 4.</p>
AA/11/25	<p><b>Development and Housing, West Berkshire Council: Beth Asbury (Assistant Archaeologist (HER and Outreach))</b></p> <p>Beth Asbury was invited to the Annual Assembly as a keynote speaker. Beth gave an interesting 45-minute presentation on the history of Holybrook. Key points:</p> <p><b>Introduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Archaeology Team Overview:</b> The team includes Principal Archaeologist Sarah Orr, Assistant Archaeologist Beth Asbury, and Finds Liaison Officer Philip Smither (Portable Antiquities Scheme).</li> <li>• <b>Team Purpose:</b> to oversee heritage planning advice, maintain the Historic Environment Record (HER), and engage with the public to promote awareness and stewardship of local archaeology.</li> </ul> <p><b>Historic Environment Record (HER)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Definition &amp; Function:</b> The HER is a database of known archaeological sites, monuments, historic buildings, and past investigations. It supports planning decisions and public research.</li> <li>• <b>Contents Include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Monument Records:</b> Individual sites and structures of interest.</li> <li>○ <b>Event Records:</b> Past excavations or surveys.</li> <li>○ <b>Designated Assets:</b> Includes nationally protected features like Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings.</li> <li>○ <b>Local Listings:</b> Heritage assets identified for local protection and interest, managed by West Berkshire Council.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p>AA/11/25 cont.</p>	<p><b>Holybrook Heritage Overview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Scheduled Monument:</b> The GAMA Cruise Missile Shelter at Greenham Common – a Cold War military structure, now nationally protected.</li> <li>• <b>Listed Buildings:</b> Examples include Holy Brook Cottage (Grade II*), Beansheaf Farmhouse, and Calcot Grange, reflecting the area's agricultural and residential heritage.</li> <li>• <b>Locally Listed Assets:</b> Include a historic pump at Beansheaf Community Centre, WWII pillboxes, and 19th-century barns—important for community character and local history.</li> </ul> <p><b>Archaeological Timeline of the Area</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prehistoric Periods:</b> Evidence from the Mesolithic to Iron Age, including flint tools and prehistoric field systems, indicate long-standing human presence.</li> <li>• <b>Roman to Medieval Periods:</b> Finds such as a mosaic worker's hammer from nearby Silchester and medieval harness pendants show continued settlement and trade.</li> <li>• <b>Post-Medieval to Modern Era:</b> Structures like Calcot Mill, 19th-century houses, and WWII defences (pillboxes, anti-tank ditch) reflect evolving use of the landscape through industrialisation and conflict.</li> </ul> <p><b>Policy Framework &amp; Protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Planning Policy:</b> The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) mandates that heritage assets must be considered in development plans.</li> <li>• <b>HER Role in Planning:</b> Developers must consult the HER when assessing impact on local heritage.</li> <li>• <b>Neighbourhood Planning:</b> Local communities can influence protection of heritage through Neighbourhood Plans.</li> </ul> <p><b>Public Involvement &amp; Community Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>HER Enhancement:</b> Residents are encouraged to share local knowledge and historical details to improve HER records.</li> <li>• <b>Local Listing Project:</b> Led by West Berkshire Heritage Forum, allowing the public to propose sites for local recognition.</li> <li>• <b>Upcoming Events:</b> Include family history activities at Greenham Commons, exhibitions like <i>Treasure Through Time</i>, and talks at West Berkshire Museum.</li> <li>• <b>Annual Festival of Archaeology (Jul–Aug 2025):</b> Will explore the link between archaeology and wellbeing.</li> </ul>
<p>AA/12/25</p>	<p><b>Matters Parishioners wish to raise</b></p> <p>Angela McMahon advised that the cobnuts from Holybrook went to Cadbury, otherwise no comments were made or questions asked from residents.</p>

<b>AA/13/25</b>	<p><b>Award Winners announced and prizes received</b></p> <p>Good Neighbour of the Year was awarded to Andrew Lenaghan.</p> <p>Service with a Smile was awarded to Caroline Booth – West Berkshire Council, Countryside Department.</p> <p>Unsung Hero was awarded to Jim Tull.</p> <p>The June Scott Award for Best Environment Champion was awarded to the Friends of Linear Park. Angela McMahon accepted the award on behalf of the Group.</p> <p>In addition, Councillors and staff received a pin badge in recognition of long service to the Council with Cllrs Tull and Bedwell accumulating 20 years each and the following councillors and staff serving for at least 10 years: Mary Bedwell, Claire Tull, Charles Croal, Clive Littlewood, Harish Mistry, Richard Somner, Andrew Lenaghan and the Clerk.</p>
	<b>There being no other business the meeting closed at 20:23</b>

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

Minutes prepared by	Pam Kirkpatrick (clerk)
Minutes dated	8 <sup>th</sup> April 2025

## APPENDIX 1

Welcome everyone to our parish annual assembly – an especially auspicious one as we enter our 25<sup>th</sup> year.

Thank you all for being here! It's always a pleasure to gather as a community and celebrate the progress we've made together and reflect on all the amazing things we've accomplished over the past year.

From sprucing up our environment with new bus shelters (coming soon) and beautiful bulb planting which I hope everyone is enjoying.

### **We have had many notable achievements since April 2024**

**The Community Payback Service work in and around the parish:** 1x per month for a whole day. This has become a very valuable service to our community carrying out a diverse range of activities which we would otherwise not be able to afford.

June saw us come together for a fantastic D-Day event; who could forget the Picnic in the Park and the unveiling of the Tommy statue? We also honoured Andy Alleyne with a special bench unveiling that drew well-deserved media attention.

**We have a rolling maintenance programme for the Beansheaf Centre** to ensure that it is a well-maintained facility for all users.

We have: installed acoustic panelling in the Beansheaf Room and new carpet in The Keep. New carpet in the lobby is due any day,

We also ensure that our playgrounds are safe and fun places for our children to play with regular inspections by ROSPA. The swing set at the Underwood Road playground has been refurbished. Upgrades and repairs to the toddler equipment at Holymead playground completed.

### **Next and Future Projects:**

Tomorrow, I'm thrilled to launch our Bio-diversity Citizen Science with Beansheaf Preschool. Hopefully, the project will encourage us all to get involved with nature and conservation.

**Solar Panels** to the Beansheaf Centre have long been desired. I'm delighted to announce that they are due to be installed in the coming months. Working with WBC, we have secured over £18k of funding towards this project bringing us a step closer to sustainability.

**The Linear Park footpath** link in the East of the Park is long overdue but on the horizon.

We've also provided vital financial support to local organisations to help them continue supporting our residents and awarded the following grants:

Hospital Radio Reading - £300.00

Beansheaf Pre-School - £500.00

West Berkshire Therapy Centre - £500

West Berkshire Heritage Forum - £50.00

Friends of Linear Park - £450.00

### **Other Financial support given:**

- WBC library service to ensure that the mobile library continued in 2024/25: £500.00

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- Donation to the Poppy Appeal: £100.00
- Annual Honorarium to Dave Prior for the gate unlocking at Underwood Road of £600
- Donated a stage to the Kennet Valley Community Association
- Provided the Beansheaf Room for free to enable some Community Wellbeing Outreach sessions

A huge thank you to all who joined in the festive spirit with Parish Councillors, staff and some hirers joining in for Save the Children's Christmas Jumper Day; proving that charity can be stylish too!

### **Finance General:**

Financially, we continue to manage resources carefully. Our precept demand for 2024/25 increased by only a modest amount, ensuring our council can continue its vital work without putting undue strain on residents. The Precept demand for 2024/25 was £137,870 (a rise of only £2,553 on the previous year). Precept is paid in two instalments April and October.

The precept pays for the day-to-day running costs of the Council (not including the Beansheaf Centre which now covers its own costs).

Meanwhile, the Beansheaf Centre continues to thrive, with strong usage and a steady income.

For the year 2025/26 the Council has made a precept demand of £143,357 (an increase of 3.98% on the previous year).

### **CIL monies this financial year:**

The Council has received no CIL monies this year to date.

### **Council:**

Currently four vacancies.

Claire Tull re-elected as Chairman of the Council and Mary Bedwell and Vice-Chairman.

We have had one resignation this year, Biyi Oloko, but have seen Karen Albanese co-opted. Keeping the Council numbers to 11.

We are fortunate that those that currently sit on the Council offer a wide range of skills and each member cares about the whole length and breadth of the Parish. However, the Council would benefit from new members, particularly women and younger members of the Parish who are less well represented in our current membership. If you're passionate about your community, we need you!

Councillors/staff have attended training courses such as co-production training, and ScribeFest. We have also attended engagement meetings with WBC, climate conferences and Remembrance Sunday parade.

Our council members and staff have been actively engaging in training, attending climate conferences, district conferences Remembrance Sunday, and various local initiatives. We also made the difficult decision to conclude the Neighbourhood Action Group this year and we thank Cllr Littlewood for his dedication to this group over the many years it ran, but we remain committed to serving the Parish in new and innovative ways.

### **Planning:**

The Council reviewed 26 planning applications during the year to date. With no major planning applications for Holybrook.

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**General:**

The beginning of this financial year was blighted by a WBC contractor verge cutting issue.

The Council has reported over 50 issues in the Parish via West Berkshire Council's Report a Problem Page over the last financial year. WBC's Report a Problem page can be used by everyone to report issues such as fly-tipping on council land, to dog fouls, over-grown foliage and out of order streetlights.

So, to everyone who has contributed, volunteered, and supported our community, thank you! Together, we are making Holybrook a fantastic place to live, work, and play. Here's to another year of progress and community spirit!

Thank you!

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## APPENDIX 2

### **Annual Assembly of Holybrook Parish 31 March 2025 Report from Chair of Community and Environment Committee**

The Community and Environment Committee is made up of parish councillors with input from parish residents and we have had a very busy year.

If you have any questions, please ask us this evening, check out our website [www.holybrook-pc.gov.uk](http://www.holybrook-pc.gov.uk) or contact the parish office on 0118-9454339.

#### **1) Looking after the facilities owned or managed by the parish council**

We have our two playparks in Underwood Road and at Holymead, the Beansheaf Centre, local bus shelters and park benches. We make a sure there are sufficient dog and litter bins and that the play equipment meets safety standards. Recently, we have awarded the contract for maintenance of these facilities to Tactical Facilities Management. We welcome feedback from residents and users.

Following a successful grant application, there will also be 5 new bus shelters along the 26 Reading Buses route, to be funded by West Berkshire Council and maintained by the parish council.

#### **2) Campaigning to raise awareness of the local environment.**

We are particularly concerned about the environment in our area, as Holybrook has the highest population density of any parish in West Berkshire. We hold regular Community Litter Picks to raise awareness of litter and to improve the local environment. We operate our own litter picking equipment and welcome residents to make use of this.

We have completed bulb planting events in several areas through the Parish including the junction of Mill Lane and the A4 Bath Road and at the COVID Memorial Trees in Underwood Road. It has been great seeing the bulbs spring up over the last month, including those which we planted in Autumn 2023.

Residents can report fly tipping and other issues to West Berkshire Council's Report a Problem (<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/reportaproblem>).

#### **3) The Holybrook Community Spirit Awards.**

This evening, we recognise some of our unsung local heroes. Congratulations to all the winners. Thanks also to all the nominees, as they too are working hard for the local community. This year, we are glad to give an award to a young person, who had helped in the local community, for the first time.

#### **4) Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

We have continued using CIL to make improvements within the Parish.

We are planning a new footpath in Linear Park to link a west entrance of Linear Park with the Linear Park playing fields and CIL money has helped fund the new Garage Kiosk, which we hope to open in due course.

**5) Community Speed Watch**

Many residents are concerned about speeding on local roads. We have joined Thames Valley Police's Community Speed Watch initiative. We held a session with the speed gun in local streets and we are considering ways of helping people become more aware of speeding and the risks that it brings. For further information about joining in with this important work, please ask us this evening or contact the council (see above).

**6) 80th Anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE Day)**

Join us on Bank Holiday Monday 05 May 2025 in Linear Park (RG31 7AW) from 14.00 until 17:00, when we will commemorate the victory of the Allies in the Second World War (1939-1945) and celebrate the Freedom that we enjoy as a result of their sacrifice. We are mindful that the war continued until Victory Over Japan (VJ Day) on 15 August 1945, with many more lives lost. Music, refreshments, fun and games for the whole family.

**Thanks to all**

A big thank you to all who have helped in the work of the Community and Environment Committee over the last year. My fellow committee members, parish council staff and the many residents who joined us for the litter picks or kept us informed about environmental issues within the Parish.

**Cllr Charlie Croal**

**Chair of the Community and Environment Committee**

## APPENDIX 3

Holybrook Parish Assembly – Monday 31 March 2025

### Part 1. WBC 2024 Review

#### 1. Green Flag

Starting in 2009, awarded the 16<sup>th</sup> successive Green Flag - made possible by the enormous contribution from Friends of Linear Park.

The green Flag award is similar to the Blue Flag award for beaches. There are 7 criteria:

- a) Welcoming and Accessible
- b) Healthy Safe and Secure
- c) Conservation and Heritage
- d) Infrastructure and other Facilities
- e) Resource Conservation, Management and Recycling
- f) Community Involvement
- g) Marketing Strategy

#### 2. Grounds Maintenance contract

We are 2 years into the 5-year contract with Continental Landscapes. Highway verges and general open spaces are now cut 5 times a year - which has been reduced from 7 times. The cutting season is between March and November as the growing season extends later into the year. Linear Park has various cutting regimes, the sports field is maintained as a close cut, whereas some wilder areas are cut once or twice, and other areas 5 times.

The maintenance of the pitches has been much improved, despite the wet winters recently. Continental Landscapes have now changed their name to Krinkels, which is the name of their parent company.

#### 3. Dog and litter bins

In order to make savings, there have been various attempts to reduce the number of dog and litter bins in the West Berks District as a whole, which included Linear Park, but when put to public consultation, this idea was not well received. The bins are popular it seems and so for the time being, will be staying. However, it's unlikely that any new bins will be installed in new locations, but any unserviceable bins will be replaced.

#### 4. Sponsored Benches

4 benches were installed last year. 2 in the woods at Beansheaf, one on the playing field and one in Fords Farm in memory of Andy Alleyne, the reading footballer who lived in Corsham Rd. Thank you to the sponsors of these benches.

### Part 2. WBC Projects for 2025

#### 1. Green Flag 2025-26

Judging took place today for the 2025-26 award. The FOLP and I walked around both parks with 2 judges.

#### 2. Albury Gardens Play area

We have some Capital funding for refurbishment and intend to commence the tender process as soon as we can this year. We will use wooden play equipment and keep to the adventure style theme.

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### **3. Pump Track**

This is still on our To-do list, but may not be until 2027-28. We require 140K for this project.

### **4. Skate Park**

This is starting to show signs of wear and tear, so we are looking to assess condition and determine what level of repairs are required. 2025-26.

### **5. Fairfields Link Path**

This path will lead from the car park towards Fairfields, beside the playing field. A shared project between Parish Council and WBC. The path will be 2m wide. I have received costings so can begin the next phase of discussions with the Parish Council. The agreements for the adoption of this site have been signed and we are just awaiting the legal formalities to be passed.

### **6. Bench sponsorship**

We are continuing with the bench sponsorship scheme. If a member of the public would like a memorial bench, we request a donation of £1500. The benches are all made from recycled plastic and the general design is the same, but donors can choose the colour of the slats and the inscription on the plaque, plus the location (subject to appropriateness). There is currently a bench being installed in Fords Farm by the river near the Burghfield Road.

### **7. Toddler Equipment at Beansheaf**

We have 30k from the Fairfields Development to put in some toddler equipment. Perhaps a scooter track, or a themed multi-play unit, or individual pieces of equipment?

Please note that these projects are subject to agreement at WBC budget approval meeting in April.

## APPENDIX 4

### Hospital Radio Reading (HRR)

I am pleased to present this report on behalf of the Reading Hospital Broadcasting Service, registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with the Charity Commission and which operates Hospital Radio Reading (HRR), the Royal Berkshire Hospital's very own radio station which has been keeping hospital patients company since 1957. From humble beginnings, when our founder, Les Warth, relayed football commentaries using borrowed army wireless sets to a few wards of the Battle and three other local hospitals, the organisation now boasts over 40 volunteers from all walks of life, aged between 17 and 70, providing a complete radio entertainment service 24 hours per day and including a minimum of four hours of interactive live programming daily.

HRR can be heard on the free cabled radio service, reaching around 650 bedside consoles in the Royal Berkshire Hospital, but since 2013 patients – and their family & friends at home – can also tune in online via our website [www.hrreading.org.uk](http://www.hrreading.org.uk), via other digital platforms such as the TuneIn Radio app and even by telling a smart speaker to "play Hospital Radio Reading."

The backbone of our service are the nine live "HRR Requests" shows, broadcast most evenings from 8–10pm (and repeated the following morning 8–10am) as well as on weekend afternoons. Patients' music choices are also featured in "Good Afternoon Royal Berks" on weekdays. Our volunteers visit most wards twice each week to meet patients, publicise the service and collect requests but patients can also make requests & dedications by calling a free number from their bedside telephone, by email or via our website and social media. Patient turnover within the RBH is such that we currently distribute around 12,000 pairs of headphones on the wards each year: two years ago, 4,736 music requests were played for patients (and occasionally members of staff) and in 2024 this increased to 5,750. Many long-term or returning patients made multiple requests but the number of beneficiaries in the past year is estimated at over 4,000. The most popular artistes were Queen, Abba, Elvis Presley, The Beatles and Ed Sheeran and the most-requested titles were Dancing Queen, 3 Little Birds, Hotel California and Simply the Best (the latter often dedicated with gratitude to the medical and nursing staff).

Specialist programmes at other times included comedy, short stories by local authors, interviews and programmes of old-time, jazz, blues, rock, songs from the shows and classical music. In recent years, as well as continuing to feature our very own commentaries on Reading FC home fixtures (which is, of course, how we started!), the organisation has expanded its sports coverage to feature other, non-league, games and outside broadcasts promoting the activities of many local sporting clubs & societies which encourage fitness and healthy lifestyles.

2024 also saw us embark upon a major upgrade to our computer hardware and software, designed to improve the content and technical quality of our service. When operational, our new computer playout system will enable us not only to store a vastly increased number of music tracks on the studio database for our live patient request programmes (records and cds now being a thing of the past !) but also to improve the sound quality of the various specialist programmes we record for automated playout at those times when our volunteers are at work.

While the major items for that project were financed by other means, the Trustees of Reading Hospital Broadcasting Service are indebted to Holybrook Council for additional funding received in the past year which enabled us to not only cover additional installation costs and provide some finishing touches (the "icing on the cake" so to speak) but will also make a valuable contribution towards the many and varied running costs which organisations such as ourselves face each year : insurance, music performance and playout licences, our subscription for the provision of Sky News to name but a few.

I can assure the council that your support is much appreciated - and we just hope that you will never be unfortunate enough to benefit from it yourselves during a hospital stay!