



16 January 2024

Dear Member

You are invited to the Annual General Meeting of the Victoria and Albert Halls (Ballater) Trust which will be held on Tuesday 30th January 2024 in the Albert Memorial Hall, Ballater at 7.30 pm.

AGENDA

1. Welcome and apologies
2. Minutes of the last AGM of 17 January 2023 **Note#1**
3. Trustees Report 2023 – Chairman **Note #2**
4. Financial Report and Annual Accounts for year ended June 2023 – Treasurer **Note #3**
5. Election/Re-election of Trustees
Those members that have indicated that they wish to be elected or re-elected are on the list accompanying this invitation **Note #4**
6. A.O.C.B.

The Trustees look forward to welcoming you to the AGM to hear of considerable progress, listen to your comments and ideas.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Riddler
Trustee and Chairman
On behalf of the Victoria and Albert Halls (Ballater) Trust



Note #1

Draft Minutes of Annual General Meeting of the Victoria & Albert Halls (Ballater) Trust, at 7.00pm on Tuesday 17th January 2023

Attendees:- Trustees – Lyndsey Boden, Bill Braid, Ed Bushnell, Doug Glass, Ian Hay, Cat Houston, Russell Hogg, Willie Meston, Wallis Riddell, Alan Ross, and Gordon Riddler (in the chair).

Trust Members and members of the community– Janet Riddler, Veronica Houston, Ade Scripps, Lizzie Scripps, Riah Scripps, Vicky Clark, Mike Forbes, Ron and Linda Drever, Jimmy Armstrong, Steve Johnson, Stan Tongue, Joan Anderson, Sue Whelan, John Bannerman, Catherine Mitchell, Allan Harrison, Athol Bowman, Dasha Mukhina, Iain Latta, Lesley and Frank Valentine, Vittoria Hancock.

Agenda:-

Welcome and Apologies

All attendees were made welcome by the Chairman of the Trust, Gordon Riddler. Apologies had been received from Paul Gibb, Aileen Longino, Jenny Macmillan and Cllr Sarah Brown.

1. Minutes of the last AGM of 27th January 2022

The Chairman asked whether there were any amendments necessary to these, and in the absence of any comment, sought approval of these, Proposed by Alan Ross and seconded by Ed Bushnell.

2. Trustees' Report 2022

The chairman summarised his report which had already been circulated to trust members and expressed thanks to former Aberdeenshire councillor Paul Gibb and Councillor Sarah Brown for their time and support for the trust during the previous 12 months. He explained that it has still been a difficult year in terms of income but that bookings were now increasing thanks in no small way to efforts of trustee Cat Houston.

Ian Hay spoke as the Refurbishment Group Convenor and briefly went over his written report. The principal improvement undertaken had been the installation of the new lift in the Albert Hall after many months of delay, mainly due to equipment supply problems.

Douglas Glass spoke as the Maintenance Group Convenor giving a summary of his report. He mentioned the continuous need for repairs in a very old building, and the fact that during the year some improvements and maintenance work had overlapped.

Ade Scripps (Hub Manager) summarised his written report, merely re-iterating that the Community Hub had been very busy over the past 6 months.

3. Annual Accounts and Financial Report for Year Ended 30th June 2022.

The Treasurer briefly summarised the Financial Report and Annual Accounts to June 2022 circulated with the AGM Invitation, expressing his thanks to the chairman for his efforts to obtain funding from numerous sources. There was one question on how much energy costs had increased. It was stated that they had doubled. As there were no further questions of the Treasurer, the chairman asked for a proposal accepting the report and this was proposed by Bill Braid and seconded by Russell Hogg.

4. Election/Re-election of Trustees



The Chairman referred to the names of the trustees who had agreed that their names could go forward as listed in the AGM Invitation, and asked for the agreement of the meeting that these names be taken en bloc. There being no objection, he asked for a proposal to this effect. Proposed by Stan Tongue and seconded by Ron Drever. As a consequence, the following were duly elected as trustees for the next 12 months:

Lyndsey Boden, Bill Braid, Ed Bushnell, Doug Glass, Ian Hay, Cat Houston, Russell Hogg, Willie Meston, Wallis Riddell, Gordon Riddler and Alan Ross.

5. A.O.C.B. The chairman made a plea for volunteers to help and support the running of the Halls over the next months and years. As a result of this, 4 people from those attending indicated that they were prepared to assist and contact details were obtained from them with a view to arranging further discussions with them about how they might help.

6. The AGM closed at 7.30pm.

Note #2 Trustees Report 2023

Chairman

It has been a busy year emerging from lockdown, completing major refurbishments, maintenance and building up the usage of the Halls. Clearly there has been necessary attention on how to manage the business of the Halls effectively with increasing usage. Related to this, the Ballater Community and Heritage Hub, which was created following the 2018 Community Action Plan, and has an expanding portfolio of activity, is now managed jointly by the Trust and Ballater (RD) Limited. The contribution to Hall usage by @ the Halls Events, governed by a general service agreement is now deferred and its support was much appreciated.

The 2023 Community Action Plan continues to emphasise the importance of the Halls for the community. Consequently, the delivery of an attractive, comfortable and compliant village facility is well on its way thanks to the hard work and attention of the Trustees, staff and volunteers on behalf of the Ballater community. The Aberdeenshire Council representative, Cllr Sarah Brown, has assisted the Trust through another year keeping it up to date with developments, regulations and funding opportunities. The assistance provided by Vicky Clark with Trust meeting minutes is greatly appreciated. On your behalf I thank them all sincerely.

Catriona Houston stood down as a Trustee during the year to set up @the Halls Events which received income from the Trust for services rendered and that support was most welcome. Two dedicated Trustees will not be seeking re-election at the AGM. Ed Bushnell, my predecessor as Chairman, who has since looked after Fire Safety and Dr Douglas Glass, Vice Chairman and Maintenance Convenor. On behalf of the Trustees and the membership, I thank them for their long, effective, and voluntary service through a period of change and refurbishment of our important village facility.

Looking ahead, in terms of refurbishment, the Trust will continue to improve on energy efficiency measures and heating, particularly the Albert Hall, as well as insulation. The roof will also be a focus of attention. An active Business Development Group is at work on attracting and broadening usage of the Halls.



There is a strong team of Trustees for 2024 available and emerging potential for dealing with the day-to day management of the Halls.

Ian Hay, **Improvement Group Convenor** reports that from the point of view of improvements carried out in the Halls during the past year, things have been somewhat quieter in 2023. This is in no way a reflection on the lack of desire of the group to undertake improvements, rather that availability of funds has somewhat reduced. In this connection, the valiant efforts of Gordon Riddler in constantly surveying possible sources and in appropriate cases, applying for funds is greatly appreciated.

The following is a review of the main areas in which matters have progressed – or not as the case may be during - the past 12 months:

Heating in the Halls: - It must be appreciated by everyone using these Halls that they are Victorian in origin, and granite built. They are extremely difficult to heat and insulation is a problem. Care must be taken that any insulation installed does not affect the integrity of the building. Endeavouring to maintain a comfortable ambient temperature for users is difficult, and expensive, and of course such costs must reflect in the charges levied on users. In times when all organisations have to consider costs, any increase in charges is unwelcome, but in turn, the Halls cannot run at a loss. However, Halls users can help by not leaving external doors wide open, allowing such heat as is built up to vanish into the cold of Station Square.

With a view to attempting to improve matters however, additional roof heaters have been installed in the Victoria Hall. These appear to make a considerable difference, but we do know that their running costs are high. Their use, and costs are being monitored.

An application for funding to allow installation of air source ducted warm air heaters and solar panels for the Albert Hall, and roof insulation for the entire complex was submitted during the year, and proved successful, only at the last minute to be stymied by a decision by Aberdeenshire Planning Department that until a bat survey had been carried out, they could not pass our plans. As the funding application had a requirement that work had to start by 31st March 2024, and a complete bat survey could not be undertaken until, at the earliest, May 2024 we had to reluctantly defer our application. Disappointment within the group was considerable, but nothing could be done. A new application under a later funding source is now under way. Meanwhile, the considerable time spent by Alan Ross in this connection is much appreciated.

Updating of Electrical Systems: The electrical distribution boards in both main halls have been updated, and hopefully occasions of high-power usage causing outages should now be a thing of the past. Here, Bill Braid's professional knowledge and assistance has been extremely useful.

Installation of New Lift: Eventually after many months when older and disabled users of the Albert Hall had no means of access to the upper hall other than to use the stairs, the new lift was installed in the spring, and is a considerable improvement on the previous one. Again, Bill's perseverance in chasing up this project was exemplary.

Bin Platform: With a view to tidying up the frontage of the halls, which are after all an iconic building on Deeside, a platform was created to house the various waste bins. The frontage is much improved as a result of this.

Sound Systems: During the year, a completely new sound system was installed in the Victoria Hall and has proved successful. In addition, a sound system is now available for use in the Albert Hall.



Notice Boards: a new, glass enclosed notice board was fixed on the external wall of the Victoria Hall, and in order to comply with current fire regulations, new internal notice boards were placed in the entrance areas of both halls.

Re-decoration of Victoria Hall: It has been the intention of the Improvement Group for some time to undertake re-decoration of the Victoria Hall to make it more acceptable as a venue for larger social events. Unfortunately, this has somewhat fallen by the wayside as other more important projects have been taken up. This is not entirely forgotten however, and possible sources of funding are being sought.

Storage within the Halls: A review of storage areas and items currently stored within these is under way. Some rationalisation of contents is necessary initially, followed by decisions about what altered form any storage should take to ensure a less cluttered appearance in some areas. One area of particular concern is the stage area in the Victoria Hall, but some currently rented out space in the basement is likely to become available within the next 6 months which may help to solve some of the problems.

Edna Mary Edwards Memorial Trust: Once again, I must express the appreciation of the Halls trustees to the late Mrs Edwards for the generous bequest paid annually through the Memorial Trust to the Victoria & Albert Halls (Ballater) Trust towards the costs of improvements to the Halls. The sums involved have for some years contributed greatly to our ability to carry out improvements and also to use the money as match funding for larger projects.

Overall, 2023 has been a successful year from an Improvement point of view. The small team has worked extremely well together for a number of years and I wish to thank them for their enthusiasm and input towards all that has been achieved.

Dr Douglas Glass, **Maintenance Group Convenor** reports that an extra handyman, Martin Grimmer, was engaged for 3 months in the Spring, starting on 27th April 2023. He did a grand job tidying up the outside of the Halls. The Trust now have 3 cleaners, 1 for each level, plus a young man who tidies up outside a few hours per week.

A cracked Caithness slab in the courtyard was repaired and around the window by the red telephone box was cemented and the downpipes cleared on the Albert Hall.

There have been some problems with drainage on the lane at the back of the Halls. Temporary drain covers were removed, and so now there is just a yellow warning cone.

Alan Milne cleaned the gutters in Spring 2023. On his retirement, Jack Lanigan and David Crawford are now maintaining the gutters and repairing the leaks. The excessive rainfall has caused issues in several areas. The age of the building, in particular its roof, is the main underlying cause of problems.

Electricity use was very high last year, so the Trust is taking several measures to reduce this. New meters have been installed and these give accurate readings of the usage by the Cairngorms National Park. Readings of the electricity usage are reviewed by the Trust each month. Up until now the heating has been controlled remotely by a Salus system, which has led to complaints by some users. Steve Johnston, a nominated Trustee, has volunteered to regularly attend and check the temperature at the meetings of all users and to inform them of how the system works. We also have a system to check the use in each circuit, to identify any areas of high use.

In co-operation with the Improvement Group, two 18KW Tansun infrared heaters have been installed in the Victoria Hall, to augment the existing heating there. These both have four settings and were



the only heating required in the Victoria Hall over the summer. The heating in the Albert and Victoria Halls is now all infrared and is by far the cheapest way to heat large areas.

Nearly all our lighting is now LED.

The Trust generally tries to use local contractors for our maintenance work. There were burst pipes in a couple of areas due to the severe frost last Winter. Two small, thermostatically controlled, heaters were installed under two sinks where frost problems occurred. These are safe for use in confined areas and were cheap to install and run. The Trust is also looking at how we can increase insulation in the Halls.

During the year the **Halls Administration, Fire Safety and Bookings Group** was set up led by Bill Braid. This group is also responsible for the Trust employees. Bill Braid reports:

In line with the Trust's Environmental & Sustainability Policy six new LED emergency light fittings were purchased to replace the existing fluorescent tube fittings within the Albert Hall facility. On checking the rest of the halls complex it was found that an additional eighteen (18) new LED emergency light fittings are required which will be installed when hall usage allows. The Emporia Energy App is now live, which will help to track energy usage within the Victoria Hall. Users are urged to turn off any manually switched heaters and lights at the end of their bookings and keep doors closed to save energy. It is still not happening.

On Fire Safety, the Trust is engaged in attending to updating requirements of the Fire Risk Assessment. Fire safety records are now lodged in the new Halls Office. Fire extinguishers are being regularly checked to ensure they are properly placed and not obscured, and new ones purchased as required. Testing & inspection of the fire protection system, emergency lighting and fire extinguishers is carried out by Aberdeen Alarm Company Ltd on an annual basis.

A bookings spreadsheet is now reviewed by the Trustees each month. Halls usage continues to increase.

Russell Hogg, the **Business Development Group Convenor**, reports as follows:

Wedding Fair: The trustees have been discussing the potential benefits of hosting a wedding fair at the Victoria and Albert Halls. This event aims to attract engaged couples and promote the halls as a prospective venue for weddings and related celebrations. Work is underway to send out a questionnaire to the already substantial list of recommended suppliers listed on the Trust website. The results will inform whether the marketing venture is a worthwhile one to pursue and, if so, when would the most beneficial time of year be to host this (with suppliers' availability in mind).

Website: A number of small updates to the website is currently taking place, adding newer, more attractive images where possible.

Collaboration with St Margarets, Braemar: The aim is to extend on initial links with St. Margaret's (Braemar) building on the success from sharing the "Legendary Deeside" performance and the hope is to replicate this going forward. The concept of sharing events and resources between the two venues would be mutually beneficial and can only help to strengthen community ties between our two villages.

Other Events: A number of other possible events and uses for the halls have been proposed over the past few months. These will continue to be explored as we head into the New Year. It is the aim to make the halls more self-sustaining and less reliant on funding and grant applications in the future.

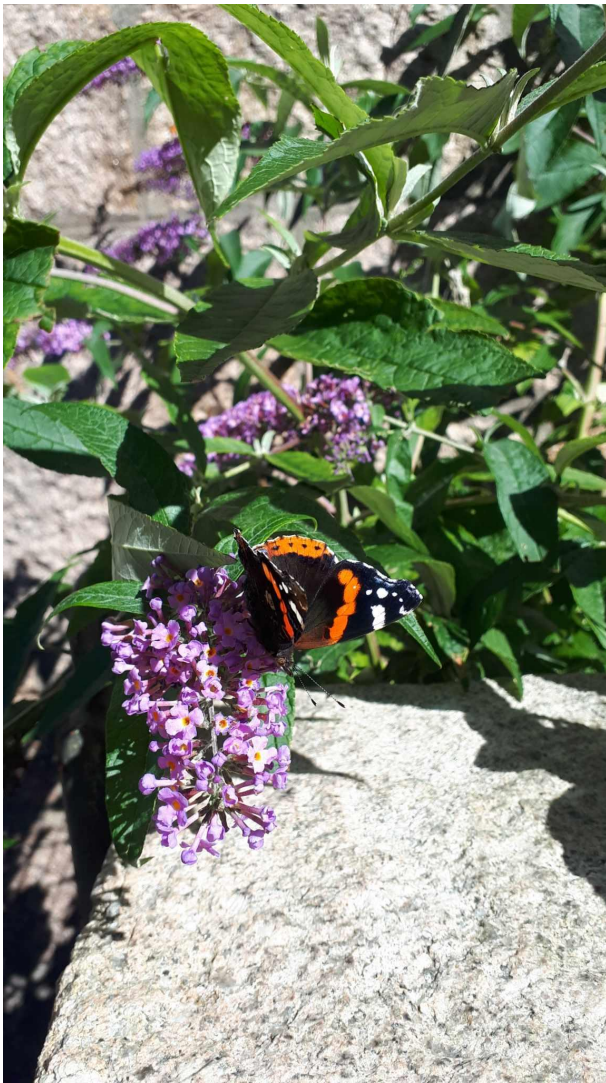
So with that in mind the Trust is looking to bring in a broad spectrum of larger events and work with local groups to make the Halls even more of a success.

Financial management: The Group will review detailed cash flow analysis to establish priorities to improve on the planning, management, resource allocation and sustainability of the Halls.

Social Media: A series of promotional posts regarding the halls and the trustees involved in making it work will be undertaken in the New Year. In addition to photos, these may also be in the form of videos to maximise engagement with viewers on our various social media platforms. This will enable people to see just who and what is involved with the Trust on a regular basis. This platform will also raise awareness of the 300+ club and other points that require communication.

Hall Manager: With increasing usage, the role of the hall manager has been under discussion. Having a designated person (or persons if job sharing is involved) in the halls overseeing day-to-day operations, event coordination, and ensuring optimal utilization of the facilities is now an essential step towards sustaining the halls as an efficient and profitable venue for the Ballater community. The Group is working on finding some possible candidates for this role and to explore sources of funding to allow for startup of the role.

Review of Storage: There are currently a few user groups who store items in the halls for their sessions. The review is aimed at liaising with representatives of user groups and Trust Convenors to optimize storage space. This would also improve the appearance of the halls, declutter public areas and provide a more attractive 'blank canvas' for prospective users and existing ones.



Fundraising. The Trustees wish to acknowledge the support of all donors, charities and organisations including the Cairngorm's Trust Nature Resilience Fund which have contributed throughout the year. Funding applications this year have met with considerable competition and applications are in progress to complete the energy efficiency aspect of the long-term refurbishment programme, redecoration and roof repairs.

The 300+ Club continues and has attracted several new members. And a special thank you to the community members (young and a little older) who raised funds for the Halls through local events and teas.

The **Environment and Sustainability Group Convenor**, Dr Steve Johnson, was engaged by the Trust early in 2023 to cover environment and sustainability and the following report covers the first twelve months work.

Initially it was necessary to develop an environmental policy for the Halls, something which had not been in place before. Several options were put to the Trustees ranging from "minimum compliance" to a more ambitious programme of improvements. Encouragingly the more ambitious alternative was preferred and the new policy was adopted in June
y Number: SC043209



2023.

Over the summer an informal collective of local people and organisations were formed to discuss possible options to improve sustainability at the Halls. Several of these ideas have been held over to 2024 and will be developed going forwards. It was decided for 2023 to focus on creating a wildlife garden to promote biodiversity. The strip of undeveloped land to the side of the Victoria Hall was identified and agreement with other Trustees gained not to use this land for other projects. An initial survey in the summer revealed various species of hoverflies, bumblebees, honey bees and butterflies (*for example the Red Admiral pictured feeding on Buddleja*) being observed in a short period, good numbers of moths and other invertebrates were inferred but disturbance to the land was minimised during the flowering season. Buddleja, Wall Lettuce, Purple Toadflax, Common Ragwort and Broad-leaved Willowherb were all obvious and in flower. House Sparrows (now a red list conservation species) were nesting in the shrubs bordering between the Hall and The Gordon Guest House.

A successful funding application to the Cairngorm's Trust Nature Resilience Fund has provided £660 to develop the garden further. The money will be used to install a large insect hotel similar to that at Loch Muick, along with several nesting boxes for Common Swifts (another red list species) to be installed on the Victoria Hall. Throughout the development of the garden our approach will be one of minimal disturbance and building on what is already present rather than replacing an established mini ecosystem. Once developed we hope to use the garden as an educational resource for the local community.

Ade Scripps, Manager of the **Ballater Community and Heritage Hub** reports that the Hub has had a very busy year, it has been involved in all the major events in the Village, from Walking Week, the Coronation and Duck Festival in the Spring, through the Summer Events right up to the Winter Festival. It has also supported many smaller events, weddings, gigs and Halls events.

In developing the Community Action Plan 2023 great feedback was received as to how best to use The Hub going forward. The Community Groups then discussed how best to manage and sustainably run the Hub for the benefit of the Community and we are striving to make The Hub an energetic catalyst for services and events in the community as well as providing a focus for local heritage.

Ballater (RD) Limited (BRD) and the Victoria & Albert Halls (Ballater) Trust have worked together to create a management structure and have signed a cooperation agreement to formalise this relationship. A Hub Management Committee has been created consisting of Gordon Riddler and Steve Johnson from the Trust, Kate Allum from BRD and Richard Frimston from BRD and the Community Council. This will provide support to the Hub Manager to run the Hub efficiently and effectively. Until such time as The Hub is financially self-sufficient, any cost deficit will be shared equally between the parties.

The Hub has and will provide services such as design, printing and ticket sales, promoted both remotely and directly the creation and delivery of attractive events in the community, as well as being a place for information to be centralised and given out. The aim is that the Hub will be an attractive place to visit and will use space available to display local heritage items. The Hub will also be used for fundraising sales, mainly books at the moment, alongside services such as recycling, repurposing and sharing of all kinds of stuff.

The quality of information available on the Web both for visitors and for residents will be significantly improved. The Hub Currently runs social media and webpages for Visit Ballater, the Ballater Highland Games, the Halls Trust and many more and hopes to develop this further going forward.

We very much thank you for your support.



Ballater Films

Ballater films has had a reasonably busy year showing a number of films at the different festivals, live streaming the Coronation, Big Screen quizzes and supporting various projects throughout the year. Local Hero for Crathie Opportunity Holidays during Ballater Victoria Week, The Duke for Glenmuick Church, the Santa Cruz Film Night during the Thrive Festival, Mission Impossible Dead Reckoning for the Winter Festival.

Ballater Films is in the process of getting a new committee together and some new exciting projects, such as a Film Club. We also hope to return to more regular screenings (monthly ideally) and working with local groups to raise funds for themselves, which directly or otherwise often come back to the Halls.

A new sound system has been set up in the Albert Halls, mostly using existing equipment, which has already had some exciting adventures, and met with approval from Boabby and Isa from Still Game.

We are re-establishing links with NEAT (who brought the Scottish National Theatre to the Halls this year) and Film Hub Scotland and hope to progress with some projects and events going forward.

Thank you to everyone who joined in this year and those who wish to join going forward. If anyone is interested in becoming involved with the running of Ballater Films please call in at the Hub in the first instance and we will be in touch.



Note #3

VICTORIA & ALBERT HALLS (BALLATER) TRUST.

SC043209

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 30th June,2023

	Receipts	
	2023	2022
Lets	58169	34062
Donations	5500	4966
Fund Raising	14054	4323
HMRC	-	2430
SSE	-	504
Legacy	20000	20000
Grants	30424	166060
Interest	18	
	<u>128165</u>	<u>232345</u>
	Payments	
Wages	45618	23216
Electricity	37160	31405
Repairs	7081	232
Insurance	6279	6897
Phone/Lift/Fire	2498	1621
Professional Fees	642	12030
Fund Raising Expenses	1745	890
Website/PPL	1211	1642
Misc/Cleaning Materials	2549	1455
Improvements	<u>31383</u>	<u>120116</u>
	<u>136166</u>	<u>200504</u>
Surplus	(8001)	31841

Balances

Operating Account	3615	4519
Refurbishment	<u>39130</u>	<u>46227</u>
	42745	50746



W. Meston, M.V.O.

Treasurer

18th November, 2023

I have examined all vouchers relative to the receipts and payments account set out herewith. I can certify the papers and records are in order and the total resources display a true reflection as at

30th June, 2022.



Mrs P. Downie. Hon. Auditor.

Dated *9th Dec 2023*

William Meston, **Treasurer** reports that the year ending June, 2023 was very busy and saw a great increase in hall lets and usage.

Fund-Raising also increased greatly mainly due to efforts by Cat Houston and the activities generated by the Hub and the trustees. We need to promote fund-raising with increased sales of the 300+ and other initiatives.

Expenditure:

Wages have doubled during the year due to the Hub and the employment of additional cleaning staff. Electricity costs have again risen rentals have had to increase. I would urge all users to support us in conserving energy wherever possible.

Cost of repairs have also increased due to water damage and upgrading to fire safety requirements. Maintenance and upkeep costs will continue to rise due to the age of the property and the continued need to upgrade facilities.

The improvement costs were largely covered by Grants obtained by the Chairman. He continues to look for grants and other monies to meet our needs.

I would like to thank all the Trustees for the efforts made during the year. I will be pleased to answer any questions raised.

The accounts have been audited and will be submitted for approval by OSCR.



Note #4

Members indicating that they wish to be re-elected for the coming year:

Lyndsey Boden
Bill Braid
Ian Hay
Russell Hogg
William Meston
Wallis Riddell
Gordon Riddler
Alan Ross

Members who have stated that they wish to be elected for the coming year:

Steve Johnson
Athol Bowman
Laura Hogg
Andoni Olascoaga

A maximum of 12 Trustees can serve in any one year.

If any further members wish to enter the election please respond by return to the Chairman by email to gordon.riddler@btinternet.com with a proposer and a seconder, background information about themselves, community involvement and what they could bring to the Trust.

Gordon Riddler
Trustee and Chairman
On behalf of the Victoria and Albert Halls (Ballater) Trust