

9th July 2026

Dear Shareholders and Members,

I am pleased to bring you an update summarising the BLCGL AGM (held on 26th May 2026), and our continuing progress since then.

I must apologise for the delay in sending this, but I went away on holiday shortly after the AGM, and my thoughts were otherwise occupied.

The AGM itself was straightforward. The accounts were approved and the lay auditors (Mike Clayton and Errol Freeman) appointments were similarly approved.

In line with our rules two committee members are required to stand down annually on a rotating basis. This year Richard Ellison and Ray Mumberson stood down, but were happy to seek re-election, and were subsequently unanimously re-elected. This and other comments made by members fully endorsed the measures taken by the Committee to save the Black Lion as a community pub/hub.

There were no motions for consideration by members submitted.

Questions from members followed.

A question was raised about change of use in planning terms given that the one of the holiday lets was now being used as a long-term tenancy covered by the Tenants' Rights Act 2026 and the impact that would have in terms of acquiring vacant possession. We undertook to look into this.

A further question asked that we ensure the Asset of Community Value (ACV) is renewed, and also that any further offer made should represent the "as is" dilapidated and non-trading status of the pub.

Subsequent work by your committee continues;

The ACV application has been submitted, and we have made a further reduced offer for the pub. We recognise the declining value of the premises and the fact that the value will continue to fall as the pub is no longer trading.

We continue to work with the County Council and other organisations to secure funding. The funding streams we can access are dependent upon the pub being registered as an Asset of Community Value, emphasising the importance of the question raised by members.

Sadly, we were recently turned down by the Heritage Revival Fund. Whilst recognising the importance of the pub as an asset of community value and its heritage, we are in a rural area and the focus this year is on support to urban communities.

In terms of the new measure to support community purchases of ACVs and the new legislation under the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act, the £61m of funding that comes with it are welcome. The Local Authority (Cumberland County Council)

will have a key role in identifying potential community purchasers, facilitating discussions to secure a sale, appointing and paying for an independent valuation on the "as is" state of the premises and monitoring progress to achieve a transfer of ownership. Under the previous Community Ownership Fund scheme, we were obliged to pay for an independent valuation every six months which determined the value of the pub around which funding was based. Under the new scheme the cost of the valuation will fall on the Local Authority. It is felt that shifting the financial burden to Local Authorities will encourage them to take a more proactive approach to secure the future of community assets, especially where a ready and willing to purchase community group exists. Requiring the valuation to be made on an "as is" basis is designed to deter owners from allowing their property to become delapidated.

The Cumberland Local Authority Plan confirms their commitment to do all in their power to help secure the future of a pub where it is the last in the area and where evidence of demand for one exists. A membership of 190 individuals who have made a financial commitment in the form of shares, the pledges from others and the continued recruitment of new supporters are clear evidence of a demand to ensure the sustainability of the pub/hub as an ACV. The new powers do not force an owner to sell, but they prevent a sale to a third party where the community group has agreed to pay a purchase price set by the valuer. The Local Authority also has powers of compulsory purchase. They are more likely to use their powers where the acquired asset may be readily sold on to a community group which is willing to buy and has the means to do so.

We would encourage members to seek to recruit additional like-minded folk who wish to secure the future of the Black Lion as a sustainable community hub. We have had two further members join in recent weeks, and membership can be had for as little as a £50 share investment (fully secure and ring-fenced for the purchase), pledges for larger amounts are obviously very welcome.

Our fundraising at present is "ticking over" with our annual Mountain Film Festival and regular amounts from easyfundraising cover our running expenses.

We remain open to discussions with the current owner to secure the purchase of the pub at a realistic price which represents the current condition of the building and the refurbishments required. We are confident that once we have agreed a purchase price that the funds to complete can readily be achieved, through access to funding support and drawing on the support of the many members who have made it clear that they will be happy to increase their investment.

Could I finally remind you that we have changed our registered address to;

Malcolm Boswell

Secretary BLCGL

Standingstones Cottage

Ireby

Wigton

Cumbria

CA7 1EA

We are aware that matters regarding the purchase of the Black Lion as a Community Pub and Hub are dragging on somewhat, but there is now a way forward to securing the acquisition of the pub.

I will end with a current picture of the state of the pub (taken today)



This is the view that greets visitors and the community arriving in Ireby from three directions

The owner maintains that the pub is not closed. Google reviews beg to differ!



Best wishes, and thanks for your ongoing support

Andrew and the Black Lion Community Group.