



Joseph Cowen Lifelong Learning Centre

A Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Annual General Meeting

Monday 14th May 2026 - 10.30am

Face-to-Face (Brunswick MC Hall) & Via Zoom

Unconfirmed Minutes

Present:

JCLLC CIO Trustees

Malcolm Grady (Chair), Dorothy Stainsby, Jo Campion, Louise Freeman, Rita Prabhu, Simon Pallett, Lesley Pringle, Trevor Buck, Karen Gammack

JCLLC CIO Members:

F2F: Anne Williams, Gloria Grice, Stephen Fry, Myra Bavidge, David Allen, Robert Campion, Kath Smith, Pat Fuller, Peter Fuller, Jan Widmer, Margaret Adams, Sue Lawson

Zoom: Barbara Buck, Anne Bundock, John Bundock, Elsie Denham, Pamela Denham, Helen Watson, Roger Reeve, Nick Johnson, Vivienne Johnson, Richard S.

In Attendance: Nancy Isherwood (minutes)

1	Apologies: Anthea Lang, Nova Brockbank
2	Welcome MG opens the AGM and welcomes all in attendance, both at Brunswick MC and via Zoom. Update on the board – the board meets every 6 weeks, usually 4.00 on a Friday and it's a friendly meeting, often followed by a drink to relax afterwards. We have certain fixed items on the agenda, such as GDPR, to ensure we are continually acting as a responsible board for the organisation. The board also discusses specific points such as special events and everything is coordinated by Lesley P as secretary of the board. We also have our programme team, the engine room of the organisation, and when we think about how much goes in to Explore by the programme team, the board, our volunteers such as David A who

	helps with our IT, it's a remarkable contribution to the work of Explore – the board wholeheartedly support all the work that our members do, our volunteers do, in order to ensure the organisation is a success. We have had a few 'Good News' items to celebrate this year. Largely thanks to DS our past co-chair, we have been successful in having our article on the history of our Explore Adult Education programme accepted by an international journal. We had a number of contributors including SP, MG, DS and IG our philosophy lecturer, The first journal we approached required about 8000 words, but peer reviews wanted extensive revision and, we didn't want to go down that route. DS then took on the challenge of reducing it down to 3000 words for submission to another journal which accepted it. DS explains the journal is called Concept and is under the auspices of Edinburgh University. It's an online journal and we're unsure whether it will be the summer or winter edition, but when we do know we'll send a link out to everyone. We're also thinking of doing something with the long version so that it can be accessible to members. MG thanks DS and notes that it is a remarkable achievement reflecting a voluntary organisation. The second Good News item is an emergent development, as we're trying to re-establish a link with the Newcastle Lit & Phil Society, initially exchanging programmes and events, but we hope to strengthen that as we move on. So that an insight into the work that the Board and the volunteer groups take on, so if anyone wants to find out more about the role of a Trustee please contact MG or AL as Co-Chairs, and we will endeavour to persuade you to join us.
3	Minutes of meeting 20th May 2025 MG talks the meeting through the pages of the previous minutes and requests any comments relating to accuracy or suggested amendments to the proposed minutes - none noted. Thanks to NI and her literary style for producing the minutes accurately. Vote to accept minutes of last meeting as a correct record. MG asks for those in attendance F2F to show agreement and to start voting process for Zoom attendees - minutes accepted.
4	Matters arising from minutes None.
5	Receipt and approval of the Report and Financial Statements for the period ended 31 August 2025 Treasurer SP presents the Accounts and Financial Reports, reminding attendees to bear in mind that these relate to the previous year as it

	feels a long time ago. The full accounts are available on the website and there's a paper copy with all the detail available in the room. Ultimately money does matter and it's what keeps us going. In terms of Income most things are about the same year and year, membership income is slightly up but the main difference is due to an increase in bank interest due to high interest rates. This is good for Explore as our reserves are invested with a good rate of return at the moment. Expenditure is slightly down than expected, partly because some tutors chose not to claim their fee – this is something we don't expect and can't predict, but it is of great financial benefit to us. At the end of the year we made a surplus, though we were expected to break even so we did better than expected. This is good, because it means subscriptions in the current year are lower than previously, as the board decided that we should share some of this surplus with the members. We also reviewed our reserves policy – reserves are important as any organisation can be struck by unexpected events, losing premises etc and without that cushion we're unable to make those adjustments to ensure survival. Reserves are important but the board decided they were higher than they needed to be, so some of those reserves were returned to members by reducing subscription level to £250. SP is hopeful to retain that rate for next year, although the board is yet to agree that formally. SP outlines the remainder of restricted funds (Palaeography, Midgley and S4 funds) and requests any questions from Zoom and in the room – no questions. Members requested to vote to accept financial statements – Zoom and F2F both accepted, passed without objection.
6	Reappointment of Essell Accountants Ltd as Independent Examiners of the Financial statements SP explains that the AGM needs to formally appoint our independent examiners. As a small charity we don't have to have our accounts audited, but the process still requires an external check which is good. Essells Accountants in North Shields have been our independent examiners and now they're nominated to continue for another year. Vote to accept independent examiners – Essells proposed for reappointment. F2F show of hands - approved. Zoom poll – approved Reappointment of Essell Accountants Ltd agreed. SP hands back to MG. MG thanks SP and notes SP's huge contribution over the year, and for keeping us financially solvent. One of the highlights of Trustees meeting is having SP's reassurance that things are in a favourable state, especially after the difficulties of the past few years, knowing many

	voluntary organisations went through a very challenging time and we have survived in a very positive way. That is a reflection of how well the organisation is run. Thanks to SP.
7	Appointment of Trustees This year three of our trustees are coming to the end of their term of office, LF, RP and TB, but all three have indicated that they would like to retain their role as a trustee for another period of office of 3 years. Request agreement for those three trustees for a further 3-year term – F2F show of hands - agreed. Zoom poll – agreed. Unanimous! Then we have the nomination of KG who for the past year has been a coopted member of the board. She has experienced the work of the board and enjoyed being a trustee she has put her name forward for an elected further term. Vote of confirmation for KG as Trustee – unanimous again.
8	JCLLC Legacy Lecture 2026 MG introduces TB to explain the legacy lecture. Explore runs the Legacy Lecture every year and we're delighted to announce that this year we have a real national treasure who is going to give a lecture on the 22nd September. Her name is Baroness Hale of Richmond, former president of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom. Comment from audience re the iconic spider brooch, and TB notes Lady Hale's biography 'Spider Woman'. She really is a national treasure, and the case that many might know her from is the Miller v Prime Minister case, the Prorogation case in 2019 where Johnson prorogued parliament over Brexit issues. Lady Hale and ten other Supreme Court justices as an expanded panel found the prorogation to be unlawful in terminating, the suspension of parliament. It was a profound constitutional law case. She's had a very distinguished career, not only a judge but also a law academic, appointed as a professor of law at the University of Manchester in 1986 then her appointment to the Law Commission. She is a woman of firsts, and breaking many glass ceilings; she was the first woman to be appointed by the Law Commission, and also the youngest. She oversaw a lot of key legislation in family law, the Children's Act of 1989 was a huge piece of legislation. She was the only woman to have been appointed as a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary in the House of Lords. She retired in 2020 due to the mandatory retirement age. She has had a very significant and distinguished career both as an academic and as a judge. She published the breakthrough 'Family Law in Society', breaking through the traditional formality of teaching law without reference to wider society. She recently published 'With the Law on Our Side; How the Law Works for Everyone and How We Can Make it Work Better' whereby Lady Hale visited courts as an observer and tells us what happened, and how the

	courts system should be taken more seriously by politicians. She's a very experienced speaker and it will be a really interesting and popular event. TB explains the capacity limitations and that the board are keen for members to get priority booking, so encourages members to look out for communications and book to come along as soon as available. TB explains that the Legacy Lecture exists due to a legacy donation left by a former member, Gordon Brown, and invites DS to talk further about legacies. DS hopes that members don't feel it insensitive. Similar to many other charities, Explore asks that members consider leaving a legacy or a gift. Gifts such as the Gordon Brown legacy really support our work and financial consolidation – it enables us to do things which are perhaps not our mainstream work but which benefit our profile and our organisation. If you do decide to leave a legacy it can either be for general purposes, giving the board authority to decide priorities or if you have a specific subject the legacy can be restricted to that. It can be incorporated into your will or as an addition, and there's a codicil available via the Legacy page online. We would encourage you to contact us before doing anything so that we can help ensure the correct steps are taken, and it may also mean taking independent legal advice to ensure things are done correctly. MG thanks DS and also recognises TB's contribution to the arrangements for the Legacy Lecture.
9	Open forum discussion MG invited comments and questions from the Hall. AB encourages comments from Zoom. SF uses the opportunity to show appreciation for all the efforts of the Explore team, the board and volunteers, and to acknowledge that they don't get enough thanks for all the work they do, to keep things going so well, and in profit after such a challenging time. JB adds special thanks to RP on the programming and coordinating side, to ensure everything goes smoothly, including the AGM. MG adds that she is the powerhouse of making things happen and keeping everyone right. JW asks to thank the programme team for all their work and express their support for them. MG adds that the programme committee really are the engine room of the organisation; they meet on a regular basis and continue to look at provision. They continue that work with

	individual speakers, to ensure we have a diverse curriculum spread and the right level of academic input for all our members. Comment that many people outside of the region might like to pay a reduced fee to access online lectures. MG explains that the board have discussed whether we're in a position to develop more access route for those who can't afford the membership fee. We have introduced and trialled options (eg JCLLC Bursaries) and this will be reviewed and evaluated, perhaps to consider accessibility and new programme further in future. But that is an issue that the board will be looking at actively. KS thanks Friends of Explore for their work, especially for the Monday morning coffee bar as it has made such a difference. Special thanks to Gloria and Jane for all their work. MG highlights S4 also and that after such a successful S4 last year we're looking forward to it this summer. Friendly comments from the audience and Zoom. No further comments on Zoom or in the room.
10	Any Other Business (Member Questions) (Combined with discussion above)
	MG notes that the sun is shining as we bring our AGM to an end, Thank you to all our colleagues in the hall and at home via Zoom, to AJ & JB for facilitating the Zoom and polls, and to RP & NI for additional work ahead of the AGM. We look forward to all your ongoing support through attendance. If you'd be interested in any volunteer roles please speak to a member of the team as that would be welcomed too. Thanks from AJ & JB to MG for chairing. LP suggests that the board members stand up to identify themselves to anyone who might like to speak to them. Final thanks to attendees, Goodbyes and close of meeting.
11	Date of next meeting – May 2027 Specific date TBC