Provincial Grand Charity Steward
Report for Provincial Grand Lodge – November 2026

As 2026 draws to a close, so too does our Festival, and I suspect that, like me, many of you are already looking forward to celebrating what has been a remarkable collective effort.

At the time of writing, we do not yet know the final amount raised through our Festival, but our latest figure, recorded in October 2026, stands at an incredible **£2,312,596**. I am now confident that we will surpass our £2.4 million target, which would be a fantastic achievement and a fitting reflection of the generosity and commitment shown by our brethren, their families and friends.

Of course, while the fundraising total is important, what matters most is the difference that every pound will ultimately make. These donations will support a range of extremely worthwhile charitable causes, helping organisations and individuals facing difficult circumstances and providing much-needed assistance to those in crisis. Knowing that our efforts genuinely make a difference is what drives us forward, strengthens our commitment to public service and makes our charitable work so rewarding.

A year of service and achievement

It has once again been both a pleasure and a privilege to serve as your Provincial Grand Charity Steward throughout 2026. I am truly honoured to have been entrusted with the role and have done my utmost to fulfil it to the best of my ability.

As with previous years, 2026 seems to have passed in the blink of an eye. I am still undecided whether that is because it has been exceptionally busy, thoroughly enjoyable, or perhaps simply a sign that I am getting older! I suspect the answer is a little of all three, although I shall resist spending too much time working out the proportions!

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all the brethren with whom I have had the pleasure of working. So many willingly give their time, freely and without expectation of reward, in support of others and for the benefit of our communities. I must also recognise our wonderful members of staff, who consistently go above and beyond, week in and week out, always with a smile and an unwavering commitment to what they do.

I see first-hand the hard work and dedication of those around me, but I am equally conscious that this commitment is replicated many times over throughout our Province. Together, we truly are **Team Charity**: a force for good, a force to be proud of and one I feel incredibly fortunate and humbled to be part of.

The difference our charity makes

You may be surprised to learn that, over the eleven-year Festival cycle, approximately two and a half times the amount we raise during a Festival for the Freemasons Charity is distributed in grants to charities within our own Province.

The figures speak for themselves. During 2025 alone, more than £421,000 was awarded to charities across East Lancashire. In addition, over £50,000 has already been made available to our Province through the new Dedicated Income Fund, giving us further opportunities to distribute support directly to deserving local causes.

These figures are a powerful reminder that our charitable contribution extends far beyond the Festival itself. The generosity of our members continues to have a lasting and meaningful impact on the communities in which we live and work.

Community engagement – making a difference together

Another important development this year has been the introduction of an engagement-focused Community Fund by the Freemasons Charity.

I am particularly pleased to report that we successfully submitted an application for more than £24,000 in support of the Water Adventure Centre (WAC) in Droylsden. We now have regular engagement opportunities with WAC, combining community involvement with practical volunteering and providing an excellent opportunity for our members to make a direct contribution.

If you would like to get involved in this project, or indeed any of our other community engagement activities, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Your involvement would be very welcome.

Engagement is, quite rightly, becoming an increasingly important part of what we do as Freemasons. It is about much more than simply providing financial support; it is about getting involved, building relationships and working alongside individuals and organisations within our communities. It gives us the opportunity to demonstrate, through our actions, the positive contribution Freemasonry makes every day.

Our APGM, Wes Marchant, is leading this important area of work, and I would strongly encourage all our brethren to consider how they might become more actively involved. Whether through volunteering, supporting a local project or simply giving a little of your time, every contribution can make a difference.

The Festival Finale

Later this month, we will come together at Old Trafford Cricket Ground for our official Festival Finale. It promises to be a fitting celebration of everything we have achieved through our collective efforts, and I am very much looking forward to sharing the occasion with you.

As we approach the end of the Festival, however, I would like to offer one final reminder: **it is not too late to donate!** Every additional contribution, however large or small, will make a difference, and all donations will be received with our sincere gratitude.

I hope as many of you as possible will join us in celebrating what has been an outstanding Festival and recognising the tremendous generosity that has brought us so close to our target.

Looking ahead – the relaunch of the ELMC

As the Festival draws to a close, my attention will increasingly turn to the relaunch and development of our own Provincial charity, the East Lancashire Masonic Charity (ELMC), as we all know it.

Our focus will be on ensuring that we make the very best use of the money entrusted to us. Fundraising is not simply about giving more; it is also about making every pound work as hard as possible.

Over recent years, I have regularly highlighted the considerable benefits of every Lodge and Chapter establishing a Relief Chest, and I remain convinced that this is an opportunity we should be making much greater use of.

In simple terms, a Relief Chest provides a straightforward and tax-efficient way of managing charitable giving. For eligible donations made by UK taxpayers, Gift Aid can provide an additional 25% at no extra cost to the donor. In effect, it allows us to make our charitable contributions go further and generate additional funds for the causes we support.

I have often referred to Relief Chests as our very own version of the 'magic money tree' – and while perhaps a little tongue-in-cheek, the benefits are very real!

To help raise awareness and encourage greater participation, we are developing a series of roadshows which will take place across the Province early in the New Year. These will provide an opportunity to explain how Relief Chests work, explore the benefits and answer any questions you may have.

Please look out for further details and, when we visit your area, do make every effort to come along. I would particularly encourage Lodge and Chapter Charity Stewards to attend.

A final word of thanks

Finally, I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to everyone who has supported Team Charity over the past twelve months. Whether you have organised an event, raised funds, volunteered your time, supported a charitable project or simply encouraged others to get involved, your contribution is genuinely appreciated.

I would also like to thank our Rulers for their continued confidence and for placing their trust in me for a further twelve months. It is a responsibility I do not take lightly, and one I look forward to continuing with the same enthusiasm and commitment.

The past year has been incredibly rewarding, both personally and professionally, and I feel immensely proud of what we have achieved together.

As one Festival comes to an end, another chapter in our charitable journey begins. There is still much to do, many more people to help and countless opportunities to make a positive difference.

Thank you for being part of it. I look forward to working alongside you all in the coming year.

Together, we are Team Charity – and together, we make a difference.

WBro John Taylor
Provincial Grand Charity Steward