

Hereford & Worcester Branch of the BCS

Annual General Meeting Minutes

Venue: The Hive, Sawmill Walk, The Butts, Worcester, WR1 3PD

Date: 24 September 2026

Time: 6:20pm – 6:40pm

Present

David Workman (Chair), Andrew Leeming (Treasurer), Neal Smyth, Phil Libell, Luke Marshall-Watkin, Josh Mizzi, Ellias Forsberg, Chris Farnath, Martin Farkas (Secretary), and members.

1. Apologies

Dr Derek Barnes FBCS and Mr Robert Aynsworth.

2. Welcome

David Workman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. Minutes of the 2025 AGM

The minutes of the 2025 AGM are available on the website:

<https://www.bcs.org/media/2czohokc/bcs-hw-agm-minutes-2025-11-13.pdf>

The minutes have been reviewed and confirmed as accurate.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

None.

5. Chairman's Report

- The Chair's report was circulated to members prior to the meeting. A copy is included in the appendix.
- Today's event marks the 27th consecutive monthly in-person presentation for the branch.
- Presentations during the 2025–2026 financial year included:
 - [Enhancing threat analysis using AI, Machine Learning & Quantum](#) (18 Sept 2025)
 - [AI: Convenience, Control, and the Hidden Risks of Data Exposure](#) (16 Oct 2025)
 - [The Fundamentals of Computing](#) (13 Nov 2025)
 - [Unmasking the Threat: Insights Into Modern Cybercrime](#) (4 Dec 2025)
 - [Insights into Software Development: A Story of Flight Simulation](#) (15 Jan 2026)
 - [Cracking Quality: Why Software Testing is Essential to Success!](#) (12 Feb 2026)
 - [Building the Future of Cryptography](#) (12 Mar 2026)
 - [Why Projects Get Stuck](#) (16 Apr 2026)
 - [AI Demystified: From Algorithms to Large Language Models](#) (14 May 2026)
 - [Project Management: How to Throw Away the Book](#) (11 Jun 2026)
 - [AI for Climate Action and Sustainable Supply Chains](#) (16 Jul 2026)
 - [Vibe Coding vs. System Architecture](#) (13 Aug 2026)

Event dates for the 2026–2027 financial year:

[AI Enabled Startups](#) (24 September 2026)

Speakers & topics to be confirmed:

15 October 2026, 12 November 2026, 17 December 2026,
21 January 2027, 18 February 2027 and 18 March 2027

6. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's report was circulated to members prior to the meeting. A copy is included in the appendix.

2025–2026 Budget:

Requested: £8,560 | Allocated: £2,425.

Actual spent: £2,100 | Remaining: £325.

[SFRs](#) requested: £2,195.60

SFR waiting on approval: £585.60 | SFR actual spent: £1,560.00

2026–2027 Budget:

Requested: £8,560 | Allocated: £600.

7. Election of Committee Officers

The committee stood down. The Secretary thanked David for his hard work and efforts in organising branch events during the previous term. The nomination was seconded by Josh and was carried unanimously.

The new committee was elected as follows:

- Chair: David Workman
- Treasurer: Andrew Leeming
- Business Student Ambassador: Ellias Forsberg
- Committee Members without Portfolio: Chris Farnath, Josh Mizzi & Neal Smyth
- Early Careers Advocate: Vacant
- Education Liaison Officer: Vacant
- Inclusion and Diversity Officer: Vacant
- Secretary: Martin Farkas
- Student Ambassadors: Luke Marshall-Watkin
- University Ambassador: Vacant

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Dissolution of branches

David reported that the proposed dissolution of branches has been cancelled (for now but the situation could change again) and that a further proposal or way forward is anticipated to be presented in October.

David advised that he has established contact with branch chairs across the Midlands region and beyond via email and telephone. Opportunities were identified for branches to share speakers and provide mutual support where appropriate.

It was also noted that a forthcoming meeting of chairs from 90 branches and specialist groups is scheduled to take place.

A funding formula for branches had been proposed and submitted to HQ. The formula was described as being based on factors including membership, geography and population density. It was suggested that the formula could return funds associated to branch membership and provide a fairer approach to branch funding. It was also suggested that branches be issued with a credit card with an appropriate credit limit to simplify purchasing and expenditure arrangements.

David reported that the Scotland Branch had requested an apology from HQ.

It was suggested to organise a separate committee meeting once further information becomes available.

8.2 Support from HQ for Inclusion and Diversity Officer

David advised that he had made three attempts to obtain onboarding support for Grace Ashmore from Head Office; however, no assistance had been received.

8.3 Thanks to Kathryn Gillham from BPIC

David expressed his appreciation to Kathryn Gillham of BPIC for her valued partnership and support in the delivery of our events.

8.4 Thanks to David Workman, BCS Chairperson Hereford & Worcester branch

Neal expressed his gratitude to David Workman for his efforts in organising these events, and those in attendance joined him in conveying their appreciation. Special recognition was given to the remarkable achievement of delivering 27 consecutive months of in-person presentations.

8.5 BCS Student prize

It was noted that Luke Harper has been awarded the British Computing Society Award for Best Computing Student for the 2025/26 academic year.

The University of Worcester is awaiting guidance from Head Office regarding the prize claim process. The required information remains outstanding despite ongoing follow-up (ticket #236997).

The branch would like to increase the associated cash prize to £500; however, this proposal was previously rejected as part of the budget submission process.

9. Meeting Close

The meeting closed at 6:45pm.

Presentation Following the AGM

[AI Enabled Startups](#)

Speaker: James Griffiths

Cyber Security Leader | Founder | CISO | CTO | IT Director | Strategic Technology Advisor

Appendices

- Chairperson's Report
- Treasurer's Report

Minutes prepared by Martin Farkas (Secretary).

AGM Chair's Report. BCS Herefordshire & Worcestershire Branch.

Hello all

It has once again been an extremely active year for the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Branch, and I would like to begin by thanking everyone who has contributed their time, knowledge, and enthusiasm to the work of the Branch during the past twelve months.

Our overriding objective continues to be to maintain a visible, active, and accessible BCS presence within our local community. We believe strongly in face-to-face communication and in creating opportunities for people to meet, exchange ideas, learn from one another and become part of the wider technology community. The presentation taking place following this AGM will be our 27th consecutive monthly presentation. I think this is an achievement of which the whole committee can be proud. Maintaining a programme of events every month requires a considerable amount of work behind the scenes: identifying speakers and subjects, arranging venues, organising publicity, communicating with attendees, providing refreshments and, ultimately, making sure somebody is there to welcome people through the door.

These presentations are not simply technical lectures. They provide an important focal point for BCS members in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, but they are deliberately open to a much wider audience. They provide networking opportunities for people who need an avenue into the local technology community. This is particularly important for students and those at the beginning of their careers, who may be taking their first steps towards establishing professional contacts outside their college or university. They also provide businesses and members of the general public with access to relevant and current information about developments in technology, artificial intelligence, software development, cyber security and the wider issues surrounding our increasingly digital world.

Over the past year our programme has continued to address these developing areas, including presentations such as AI Demystified, Vibe Coding versus System Architecture, Why Projects Get Stuck, and this month's AI Enabled Startups. None of

this would happen without the support we receive from Kathryn Gillham who runs BIPC at The Hive. Kathryn has provided unfailing support to the Branch, month after month, helping us to organise the venue and ensuring that our presentations can continue to take place in such an accessible and welcoming environment. On behalf of the Branch, I would like to record our utmost appreciation and thanks to Kathryn for everything she has done for us.

I would also particularly like to thank Josh Mizzi and Neal Smyth for their work supporting our social media activity. My thanks go to Martin Farkas, both for his work as Branch Secretary and for the wider support he has continued to provide to the committee. And, as always, I must give particular thanks to Andrew Leeming. Andrew has once again undertaken an enormous amount of work on our behalf, dealing with funding, providing support at events, and maintaining communication with BCS Head Office. Much of this work is unseen by those attending our events, but it is invaluable to the continued operation of the Branch. In addition, many thanks to William Cawdell (University of Worcester) and Zoe Gough (Committee early careers advocate) for their valued support at our STEM clubs. I would like to add my heartfelt congratulations to Zoe for achieving a first in her university degree studies this year.

Our activities have extended considerably beyond our monthly presentation programme. During the year we have attended careers and outreach events at RGS Worcester, the University of Worcester and Heart of Worcestershire College, providing students with an opportunity to talk directly to people working within the profession and to understand more about BCS and the opportunities available within technology. We have supported the Malvern Festival of Science and The Hive STEAMfest, helping to demonstrate that computing and technology can be accessible, interesting, and enjoyable to people of all ages.

We have also continued our work with younger children. During the spring term, William Cawdell, Zoe Gough, and I ran a STEM after-school club at Cranham Primary School. This work subsequently continued at The Hive during the school summer holiday. These sessions have involved practical activities designed to encourage children to experiment with technology, programming and problem solving. Zoe in particular has put a great deal of effort into working with the children and developing her knowledge of the LEGO Education SPIKE equipment that we have been using. This is an area of activity that I would very much like the Branch to expand. However, doing so depends upon volunteers.

We therefore need additional volunteers for the STEM club. You do not need to be an expert teacher or an expert programmer. Enthusiasm, patience, and a willingness to help young people discover technology are the most important qualifications. If any member would like to become involved, please speak to me or another member of the committee.

I believe this kind of activity illustrates what a local BCS Branch can achieve. A successful Branch is not simply an administrative unit within BCS. It is a network of people and relationships built up over many years: with schools, universities, colleges, libraries, local organisations, businesses, speakers, volunteers, and individual members.

That brings me to an issue that has inevitably occupied a considerable amount of my time over recent months. **The Future of BCS Branches.**

BCS Head Office has been pursuing what it describes as its Community Transformation programme, under which the existing branch structure is proposed to be replaced by a smaller number of regional or national Hubs. Published BCS material has described existing branches as ceasing to operate as separate governance entities, with branch committees being replaced by Hub structures and funding being administered at Hub level. I have made no secret of the fact that I strongly oppose the dissolution of established BCS branches and their elected committees. I am not opposed to change, nor am I opposed to regional cooperation. There may be considerable merit in regional structures providing additional support to branches, facilitating cooperation between neighbouring areas, and giving volunteers access to professional administrative, marketing, and organisational assistance.

What I cannot support is the destruction of an existing local structure before there is clear evidence that the proposed replacement will work better. Throughout this process I have repeatedly argued that Regional Hubs should support local branches, not replace them. My concerns have also been about the way in which this programme has been conducted. In my judgement, the process has suffered from a serious lack of effective member consultation and from communication that has too often been inconsistent or unclear. At different points we have been told that nothing has been decided and that the process is one of consultation. At the same time, published documentation has described a future structure in which existing branches cease as separate governance

entities and their committees are replaced. Those two messages are extremely difficult to reconcile.

I have spoken directly with senior members of BCS and have repeatedly pressed the case for proper consultation with the people who actually operate branches and Specialist Groups. I have argued that consultation cannot simply mean inviting one or two representatives to a meeting after the direction of travel has effectively been established. Branch committees and, ultimately, the wider BCS membership need to be given a genuine opportunity to consider the proposals, understand the evidence behind them and influence the outcome before irreversible decisions are made. I have also asked for the minutes of the Community Transformation Steering Group to be made available to members, with genuinely confidential or personal information redacted where necessary. If fundamental changes are being proposed to the democratic and organisational structure of BCS communities, then transparency is essential.

One of the most encouraging aspects of the last few months has been discovering that these concerns are by no means confined to Herefordshire & Worcestershire. I have been communicating with Chairs and committee members from branches across the country and have received very considerable support. A meeting involving almost twenty Branch Chairs and representatives demonstrated the strength of concern surrounding the proposals. I have subsequently attended meetings with other branches, including Merseyside, where there was extremely strong opposition to the proposal to abolish the existing branch structure. A network of Chairs has developed through these discussions, allowing branches to exchange information and ensure that concerns which might otherwise appear isolated are heard collectively.

This has also highlighted another issue: branches have not simply complained about change; they have proposed alternatives. Herefordshire & Worcestershire has developed and circulated an alternative funding model based upon transparent reinvestment of an agreed proportion of BCS subscription income into local community activity, taking account of membership, activity, geography, and the basic costs required to operate a branch. We have argued for better central administrative support, improved marketing assistance, help with universities and employers, clearer financial arrangements, and stronger regional coordination. Those are reforms I would welcome.

There is undoubtedly scope to improve the relationship between BCS Head Office and its communities. What I do not believe is necessary is the abolition of functioning

branches in order to achieve those improvements. Our own experience over the past twelve months demonstrates precisely why local branches matter. Twenty-seven consecutive monthly presentations do not happen because an organisational chart says they should happen. STEM clubs do not operate because somebody at Head Office creates a regional structure. Careers fairs, university relationships, library partnerships, and local networking opportunities exist because volunteers build relationships with people in their own communities and continue to maintain those relationships year after year. That social capital is extremely easy to destroy and extremely difficult to recreate. I therefore intend to continue making the case that BCS should build upon its existing volunteer network rather than dismantle it. My hope is that BCS will ultimately recognise the enormous resource represented by its Branch and Specialist Group volunteers and will work with them to develop a structure which combines strong local communities with better professional support and regional cooperation.

Looking Forward.

Despite the considerable amount of time that these issues have consumed, the most important work of the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Branch remains what happens here in our own community.

We will continue to provide opportunities for people to meet face to face.

We will continue to bring relevant and current technology subjects to our local audience.

We will continue to work with schools, colleges, and universities.

We will continue to encourage students and early-career professionals to become part of their local professional community.

And, subject to having enough people prepared to help us, I hope we will continue to expand our STEM work with younger children.

Finally, I want to thank every committee member, speaker, volunteer, partner organisation, and attendee who has supported the Branch during the past twelve months. The success of this Branch belongs to all of you.

I remain enormously grateful for the time that people give freely to BCS and to our local community, and I hope that the work we have carried out over the past year demonstrates that an active, locally organised BCS Branch continues to have both relevance and considerable value.

Best Regards to all and I hope to see you on the evening of the 24th for our AGM followed by our 27th consecutive monthly presentation.

Eventbrite details below.

[AI Enabled Startups Tickets, Thursday, September 24 • 6:30 PM - 9 PM | Eventbrite](#)

David Workman

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British Computer Society - Hereford and Worcester Branch AGM

24th September 2026 - Treasurer's Report - Andrew Leeming

For this current financial year (commencing September 2027) we submitted the same budget - £8560 – as the previous year, when – at that time - we were allocated a budget of £2425 (ten months of £242.50 each, to cover the “catering” [event organising] costs).

Our catering (*event-organising*) bill is now around £165 per meeting (last year it was around £300, when we had to use the internal catering in The Hive).

For the current financial year, rather than being allocated our requested £8560, or even the £2425 of the year just finished, we have been allocated just £600.

How much did we actually spend?

Around £2100 of our £2425 budget (David has yet to send me his August expense claim for the M&S sandwiches, so I have used round numbers to make the presentation of the figures clear).

SFRs – Supplementary Funding Requests

£430 to support the DBS-related costs for 20 student volunteers (for STEM/code club)

£240 to fund attendance at the University of Worcester Students' Union Welcome Fair, helping us recruit the additional volunteers

Total: £670 – approved by the Finance Committee

NB this SFR expires in December

£50 leaflet printing costs for the above event – approved by the Finance Committee, but not needed.

£890 approved by the Finance Committee for purchasing additional programmable Lego for the STEM/code clubs in primary schools and libraries.

£300 requested for exhibiting at the Malvern Festival of Innovation on Saturday 3rd October (helping hands very welcome!) – not yet approved.

£285.60 to renew our membership of the Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce

Proposal: The Branch Committee voting to approve this expense on 24th September

Treasurer's note:

the BCS budget submission spreadsheet is unhelpful in having so few categories of expenditure (items are easily overlooked);

writing an SFR is time-consuming and onerous, as is keeping track of any approvals

writing an SFR feedback report with supporting evidence that the money has been spent well is equally onerous