AEV Chair's Report - Delivered by Ian Taylor, AEV Chair

Welcome to the AEV's Annual General Meeting, 17 September 2026.

Thank you for joining us today. I am delighted to welcome you all back to the NEC once again.

I am pleased to report that the Association is in excellent shape. Membership and engagement are strong, and our finances are healthy. You'll hear more about these shortly from Jeremy our Treasurer.

At the beginning of the year, the team carried out a review of our strategy with the aim of condensing and strengthening our focus. In March, we approved the strategy priorities, which included:

- Continuing to be the voice of the sector, working with industry partners to ensure venues speak with a single, credible voice to government and policymakers
- Supporting talent, skills and inclusion, helping to shape the future workforce for venues through skills development, career pathways and inclusive practice
- Providing industry research to demonstrate the scale, value and impact of venues
- Enabling members to share best practice by giving them opportunities to connect and learn from each other
- Maintaining a strong and sustainable membership to ensure financial stability

By confirming this strategy, members can be reassured that the AEV team remains focused, credible and member-led, concentrating resources where they have the greatest impact and ensuring member value is at the heart of everything we do.

I am delighted to say that much progress has been made in all these areas.

Membership
Membership remains at 55. Despite a few losses at the beginning of the year, we welcomed the following new members: University of Sheffield Performance, V&A Dundee, Cheltenham Racecourse, Aintree Racecourse, Wembley Stadium, 1 Wimpole Street, Bayan Al Dana Amphitheatre, AO Arena, and Manchester United FC.
Our academic associates stand at 9, and we thank those members who have taken on the sponsorship of these memberships.

Focus Groups
Our working groups have been rebranded as focus groups to better reflect their purpose, and they continue to be one of the most valued services we offer. We currently run 23 groups, with one new group launched this year: Venue Production.
There have been 77 meetings (17 of which were face to face), 46 guest presenters, and 1,129 interactions over the past year, with participation and activity levels at a record high.
We also ran two training courses for the chairs and vice-chairs of the groups on how to chair a meeting effectively, hosted at Excel London and Manchester Central.

Partners
Our investment in partnerships with professional organisations continues to provide valuable expertise for members. Our technology partnership with Momentus Technologies has continued for a further year, and we maintain a strong relationship with nQ legal, who continue to offer legal support for members, including a webinar on employment law.

X2Consult Safeguarding are our new safeguarding partner, who helped create the new safeguarding section in the eGuide released in March. Voyage Control are now our Venue Logistics partner and headline sponsor for the conference; they will be running two roundtables later this month, hosted at Manchester Central and RCP London Events (Royal College of Physicians).

Advocacy

Our advocacy efforts have continued. Having gone out to tender, we started a new corporate affairs contract with Henham Strategy. Under their guidance, we reviewed our strategy and simplified our asks of government to three simple points:

- a standalone national business events strategy
- more structured ministerial attendance at events
- and for lead responsibility to move from DCMS to the Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade.

This comes against the backdrop of the EIA having been invited to give evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee in December on the role of business events. In July, their report was published echoing our asks and more. We now await the formal government response to this report.

Evidence and influence
We have continued to invest in research, with the 2025 SASIE Report and the 2025 Economic Impact Study highlighting the industry's resilience and recovery. The second salary survey, run in partnership with the NAA, is due to be released imminently.

With the new legislation of Martyn's Law on the horizon next year, it was pleasing for the Association and its members to input into the drafting of the guidance with both the Home Office and the SIA. We are seen as key stakeholders, helping to ensure the guidance is workable for all areas of the sector.

Events
We held a successful networking event 'My Chair's Event' over the summer, hosted at the Conduit Club, where members were invited to join us for an informal dinner in the heart of Soho, providing the opportunity to meet each other in a relaxed environment.

The CEO Summit held in partnership with the AEO, has now become a firm fixture in our annual calendar. This year's event was described as the best yet, with a great mix of constructive dialogue, valuable discussion and of course the opportunity to socialise with our customers and fellow venue members.

Finally, I would like to mention the highlight of our event calendar, the annual AEV Conference, the key event for the venue community and our members. Each year it gets bigger and better, and last year we saw 282 delegates at Excel London — thank you for supporting this event. We look forward to welcoming you to ICC Olympia on 26th November for another day of stimulating and engaging content.

Thank you
This is the third and final AGM that I will be chairing, and I am proud of the continued progress made by our small but dedicated team. On behalf of the entire membership, I'd like to thank them: Rachel, Alden, Dani, Kimmie and Kate, supported in the finance team by Dino and Sarra.

I am proud to be handing over the reins of Chair shortly to an association that is in excellent shape and does a much-needed job representing both our industry and the interests of our businesses.

Thank you.