British Independent Retailers Association

YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2025

President's report
John Jones



As my presidency comes to an end, now seems to be ideal opportunity to reflect on the last couple of years as President. Firstly I would like to thank my fellow directors for giving me their support. The Board reflects our membership with member directors from across the UK and from the many retail sectors that exist on our high streets. We meet 6 times per annum, and I have always found my fellow directors insightful, collaborative and incredibly passionate about BIRA and independent retail in general. I am sure they will all be equally supportive of Karen, our new President. I would like to welcome the two new directors (subject to them being elected at the AGM!)

As member directors of BIRA, it is our role to hold the executive team (lead by Andrew Goodacre) to account. I am pleased to say that we have dynamic, challenging and robust conversations about the way BIRA is working, and what we need to do in the future. The current economic conditions are as challenging as can be. It is vital that BIRA does all it can to ensure that hard-working independents succeed.

We have continued to focus on our strategy of attracting smaller retail groups to BIRA and finding new sources of income. Although there are no additions in 2025, we continue to have constructive discussions with a couple of organisations who see the benefit of becoming part of BIRA – more on this in the near future

Another key part of our strategy was to better engage with members. We no longer do a company magazine, so we have improved the weekly newsletter. I was also delighted to see BIRA launch its own on-line member forum. This is an important means of BIRA communicating with members. More importantly, it is a smart way of members sharing their ideas and frustrations with each other as well as with BIRA . Use of this forum has steadily grown, especially around the time of the 2025 budget and the mess it made of business rates! It was really great to see the passion of members, even if it was to vent frustration on this occasion. As I write this, I am aware the budget is the day after our AGM, and I only hope that it is better news for all of us (bit not holding my breath).

Finally, I have urged the executive team to invest in technology, especially the use of AI. I am using AI more and more in my business. I want my legacy to be for BIRA to help all members adopt this technology, as well as using it improve Bira's way of working. I will continue to push them after the AGM because it is so important.

CEO insights
Andrew Goodacre



I feel genuinely privileged to be the CEO of BIRA. Since 2018 (when I joined), we have had to deal with so much – COVID, cost of living crisis, and quite incredibly 6 Prime Ministers! Despite these challenges, I have been proud to lead a team that has focused on supporting the needs of members. 2025 was no different.

The fact we have had 6 Prime Ministers (and many more Chancellors) is not insignificant. This level of instability is not good for the economy in general. It is also not good for consumer confidence, and that then becomes a real problem for retail. Bira's response has been positive in offering more support and guidance to members. We have doubled down on obtaining better deals from suppliers with insurance and card processing now offering more value than ever through Ascott Insurance and Global Payments.

We have also worked even harder on lobbying all government departments for better deal for indie retailers. Sadly, due to internal issues, the decision makers failed to listen as much as we would have liked. We hope the new PM and his colleagues will.

One of the other privileges of my role is being invited to judge so many small business awards – from fashion to furniture. Someone recently asked me about the value of awards. The answer is easy – they are a great way of reminding us of how great independent retail can be. Awards always show us success and achievement, especially relevant when we know that market conditions are so challenging. Awards celebrate all that is good on high streets throughout the UK. That is why we do own 'Love Your High Street 'campaign. At the time of writing this, the latest winner is still be announced. However, we had a record number of entries and all of them are examples of brilliant retailing and community involvement.



Finally I would like to welcome Karen Forret as our new President. Karen will be the 6th President I have worked with. Unlike the frequent changes of PM, changing our President has not been an issue for BIRA, simply because I have found all Presidents incredibly supportive of me and my colleagues. The reason for this is simple – our single objective is the enable independent retailers to succeed



Trading in 2025

Throughout the year, whenever I spoke to an indie retailer, there was one phrase used every time – it is challenging. These challenges faced by members are also the same challenges faced by Bira. Recruiting members has been difficult. We have been hit by significantly higher costs, not least the increase in NICs which added £30,000 to our employment costs. Other income streams have found it difficult as consumers and retailers struggle with low levels of confidence. Yet, despite the difficult economic climate, ACT (our bicycle association) has had a great year and continues to fully justify our investment back in 2023.

Membership

Our strategy for membership growth continues to be focused on attracting other smaller retailer associations to Bira, either by merging or as a joint venture. We had success with this in 2023 and 2024, but not in 2025. That was frustrating, but there are active conversations with two retail groups and we hope that there is more positive news in 2026

On a positive note our retention of members was excellent and in financial terms, ahead of previous years. This is really positive and shows that members are more than happy with BIRA, and also a reflection of the fact that we have not increased our subscriptions since 2018. In fact the two main reasons for leaving are either retirement or closing business – both beyond our control!

Despite the lower-than-expected recruitment, we still ended the year with a little over 4,900 members and retaining our position as the largest retail specific association.

Services

Subscriptions will always be our largest single source of income. However, we are continuing to develop other income streams. These are important as we use these other incomes to help keep our subscription fees as low as possible. It is also therefore in our members best interest to use our recommended services. Not only are the prices competitive, but there is also a direct benefit in terms of membership. 2025 saw improvements with our insurance provider. Global Payments are going though a huge merger with Worldpay and that is now making our offer more competitive. Cytech, our training provider for cycle mechanics (operated through ACT) continues to grow with more opportunities on the horizon.

Finally, our most used service is the legal helpline and that was no different in 2025. We expect use of this to further increase in 2026 as we feel the full weight of change being placed upon employers by the Employee Rights Act.

Bira Direct

Unfortunately, Bira Direct was affected by a large debt in excess of £130,000 in the final quarter. This was caused by a long-standing member who until then had not had debt issues. It is a sad story for the business owners, and damaging to our own performance.

Bira Direct is an important service to our members. However, in order to obtain the best terms for our members, the debt risk

remains with Bira Direct, and this is the first large debt since 2019.

This makes the issue even more frustrating because we had improved our credit control in that time. Furthermore, we had seen progress being made by the new team in Direct in terms of new initiatives, marketing and sales. Retail businesses have to overcome these set backs and I am sure that we will enjoy a better year in 2026.

LPAC

(Legal and Parliamentary Affairs)

Our credibility in representing the views of independent retail continues to grow. Over the past few years, we have become an association with a 'larger voice', and one that ministers in all government departments want to speak to.

The main focus areas for LPAC have been similar to recent years – a difficult budget, high street closures, retail crime and employment costs. One of the most frustrating aspects of advocacy work is that there are very few quick wins – government decision making vary rarely works that way. This results in lots of repeat messaging and 'banging of the drum'. Frustrating, but if we stop, then nothing will get done! The main issues were:

- Another poor budget that increased the burden of business rates, despite promising the opposite. We have always said that tinkering with the rates system instead of wholesale reform will simply result in more issues. This was proven correct following the 2025 budget and resulted in the government having to provide more transitional relief for smaller retailers. Even then, the average independent had a 15% increase. We continue to campaign for wholesale reform.

- Retail crime now has third dimension with the increase in 'dodgy' shops. We have been working with police forces across the UK to improve the support given to indie retailers. The number of incidents has reduced nationally, but the figure is still too high.

- Bira continued to be involved with the longer-term strategy for high streets. We want to see a cohesive, joined-up approach to improving high streets. Yes, we want to see the business costs reduced. But we also want to see places made more accessible with cheaper car parking, places made safer and new reasons to visit created (e.g. medical centres).

- Whilst we focus a lot on business rates, we are well aware that the single biggest cost to most indie retailers is the cost of employment. Reversing some of the NICs increases is a priority. Equally, we want to ensure that the National Living Wage is restricted to no more than forecast inflation.

Finance

2025 resulted in a total loss of £144,000. The loss as per the management accounts was £91,000, and this was largely as a result of the £130,000 bad debt incurred by Bira Direct in the final quarter. Other income streams were as expected, with very strong contributions from the Association of Cycle Traders. Overheads were again well controlled, despite large increases in NICs.

The loss increased to the final total of £144,000 due to other auditor adjustments totalling £53,000. These adjustments were focused on writing off redundancy reserves, old shareholding and old inter-company adjustments

The balance sheet remained strong with net current assets of more than £4.1 million, including cash reserves of just over £1,000,000.

BIRA HOLDINGS LIMITED

GROUP BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2025 £	2024 £	2024 £
Fixed assets					
Goodwill	11		1,190,353		1,190,353
Other intangible assets	11		17,126		-
Total intangible assets			1,207,479		1,190,353
Tangible assets	12		1,125,564		1,177,338
Investment property	13		1,075,000		1,075,000
Investments	14		-		15,000
			3,408,043		3,457,691
Current assets					
Stocks	16	-		64,394	
Debtors	17	3,055,119		3,389,871	
Cash at bank and in hand		1,109,528		1,198,300	
		4,164,647		4,652,565	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	18	(3,441,738)		(3,833,663)	
Net current assets			722,909		818,902
Total assets less current liabilities			4,130,952		4,276,593
Provisions for liabilities					
Deferred tax liability	21	1,250		1,250	
			(1,250)		(1,250)
Net assets			4,129,702		4,275,343
Capital and reserves					
Called up share capital			-		-
Revaluation reserve			25,000		25,000
Other reserves			844,573		844,573
Profit and loss reserves			3,113,003		3,257,487
Equity attributable to owners of the parent company			3,982,576		4,127,060
Non-controlling interests			147,126		148,283
Total equity			4,129,702		4,275,343

BIRA HOLDINGS LIMITED

GROUP PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
Turnover	3	24,852,288	23,098,349
Cost of sales		(22,480,455)	(20,582,252)
Gross profit		2,371,833	2,516,097
Distribution costs		(36,687)	-
Administrative expenses		(2,817,457)	(2,721,265)
Other operating income		213,738	134,363
Operating loss	4	(268,573)	(70,805)
Interest receivable and similar income	6	22,497	52,870
Interest payable and similar expenses	7	(408)	(1,238)
Amounts written off investments	8	(15,000)	-
Loss before taxation		(261,484)	(19,173)
Tax on loss	9	-	(2,750)
Loss for the financial year		(261,484)	(21,923)
Other comprehensive income			
Actuarial gain/(loss) on defined benefit pension schemes		117,000	(265,000)
Cash flow hedges gain arising in the year		-	-
Tax relating to other comprehensive income		-	66,250
Other comprehensive income for the year		117,000	(198,750)
Total comprehensive income for the year		(144,484)	(220,673)
Total comprehensive income for the year is attributable to:			
- Owners of the parent company		(144,484)	(121,296)
- Non-controlling interests		-	(99,377)
		(144,484)	(220,673)