



opencountry
out there together

Registered Charity Number 1107331

IMPACT REPORT

2023/2024



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Find out more about our services and how you can support us at

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Charity Number: No 1107331



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About Open Country

Open Country started in 1990 as a project managed by a consortium of organisations, trusts and funders. Since then, we have developed into a small Yorkshire-wide charity with huge aspirations!

In an average week, we now run 26 countryside activities for people with disabilities, from tandem clubs and adventures activities to nature walks and online yoga.

Out there together!

Over the past 34 years, Open Country has enabled thousands of people with disabilities in Yorkshire to access and enjoy our beautiful countryside.

We do this with a packed and varied programme of accessible events - from bungee jumping and kayaking to tandem clubs, scooter socials and nature study, all designed to get our members out there together.

Every year brings fresh rewards and fresh challenges, however we face a very exciting future, as we continue to expand our services, our team and even our locations.

We produce countryside directories and information packs promoting accessible trails across Yorkshire. We also give high quality training and advice to organisations wanting to provide better access to their countryside sites.

Over the years, we have been recognised by many awards including the Queen's Award for voluntary service.



Chief Officer, David Shaftoe



Areas we cover

We currently have hubs in Harrogate and Wakefield, and activities running in Barnsley, Ripon, Selby, Wetherby and York.

Next year, we hope to have a new hub in Middlesbrough up and running.



Our Key Objectives

We are in the fourth year of our ambitious five year business plan. During this period, our key objectives are:

- Build a national profile and voice
- Deliver more activities to more customers
- Develop a national network of partners to support profile and delivery reach
- Recruit and develop the best staff, volunteers and trustees
- Increase fundraising capacity and income generation

Our partners

Like many charities, we rely on our key partners to help deliver our services:



Our vision and purpose

We enable people in Yorkshire with disabilities to access and enjoy the countryside. Our vision is to improve the physical and emotional wellbeing of our disabled community, by creating opportunities locally and nationally to access and enjoy our beautiful countryside.

Meet our Open Country team



Kate Leggett

David Shaftoe is our Chief Officer, superbly supported by his staff team. We have 9 full-time staff and 6 part-time staff members.

Harrogate Hub staff: Kate Leggett, Countryside Activities Officer and Volunteer Manager; Mark Kingston, Emilia Baran, Tom Marsh, Sharron Smith, Karen Place and Lizzie Hughes, Countryside Activities Officers; Netty Newell and Fiona Richardson, Fundraising Officers; Rachel Gregory, Communication Officer

Wakefield Hub staff: Ella Dixon, Wild About Wakefield Project Officer; Bob Mawson, Barnsley Countryside Activities Officer; Beth Atkin; Caitlin McCauley, Wakefield Countryside Activities Officers.



Ella Dixon



Tom Marsh



Beth Atkin



Emilia Baran



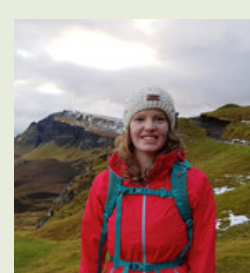
Mark Kingston



Netty Newell



Fiona Richardson



Caitlin McCauley



Sharron Smith



Karen Place



Rachel Gregory



Lizzie Hughes



Bob Mawson

Our volunteers

We are only able to run our services thanks to the amazing support of a small but dedicated army of volunteers.

We currently have 150 volunteers, who are involved in almost every aspect of our work, generously giving us their time and skills.

**“I enjoy every minute of my time with OC,
Here’s to the next five years!” - Sue, volunteer**

How we are governed

Our trustees

We are fortunate to have a board of seven trustees who generously volunteer their time and skills to oversee our work.

Our trustees meet regularly to discuss and advise on our performance, finances and marketing, as well as helping us to plan for the future.

Chair, Richard Firth;
Health & Safety, David Titchmarsh and Jayne Eyre;
Treasurer, David Robinson;
Fundraising & Marketing, Michelle Tempest-Mitchell;
HR, Tracey Jackson;
Jonty Warneken;

Our advisory groups

We also benefit from the lived experiences of advisory groups which comprise member representatives from each activity group, volunteers, staff and other interested parties.

They are a great opportunity for our members to feed back on activities, and help us decide which direction we should be going in.



Our Values

we are **Caring**

we are **Spirited**

we are **Adventurous**

we are **Open**

we are **Insightful**



Making a splash with our Bluespace project

We've been campaigning for better access to Bluespace (or places to enjoy being by, and in, the water) for everyone.

- We began by working with on a collaborative project with York St John University, which is available to read on our website, along with a project film reflecting the thoughts of many disabled people about Bluespace.
- We have also been promoting some of the good Bluespace access that does exist by highlighting it in all our activities.
- We have compiled a Yorkshire Directory of Bluespace Venues to find a place near you - see our website for details.
- We have created some Bluespace-themed audio walks which are available to download and enjoy on our website.



- We have created a York Breakfree Pack, which concentrates on the best water-based access trails near this historic city.

New scooter socials take off

In March 2023 we opened Open Country's first 'Scooter Social Group' backed with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund.

The Wakefield-based group meets once a month, aimed at people with various-sized mobility scooters, Trampers or electric wheelchairs.

The group has also utilised an electric-assist wheelchair bike, enjoying the environs of Thornes Park, and Newmillerdam Country Park. Other venues currently being explored include Anglers Country Park, Pugneys Country Park, and Safe Anchor Trust boat trips!



13 sessions run!



8 people on average attending each session

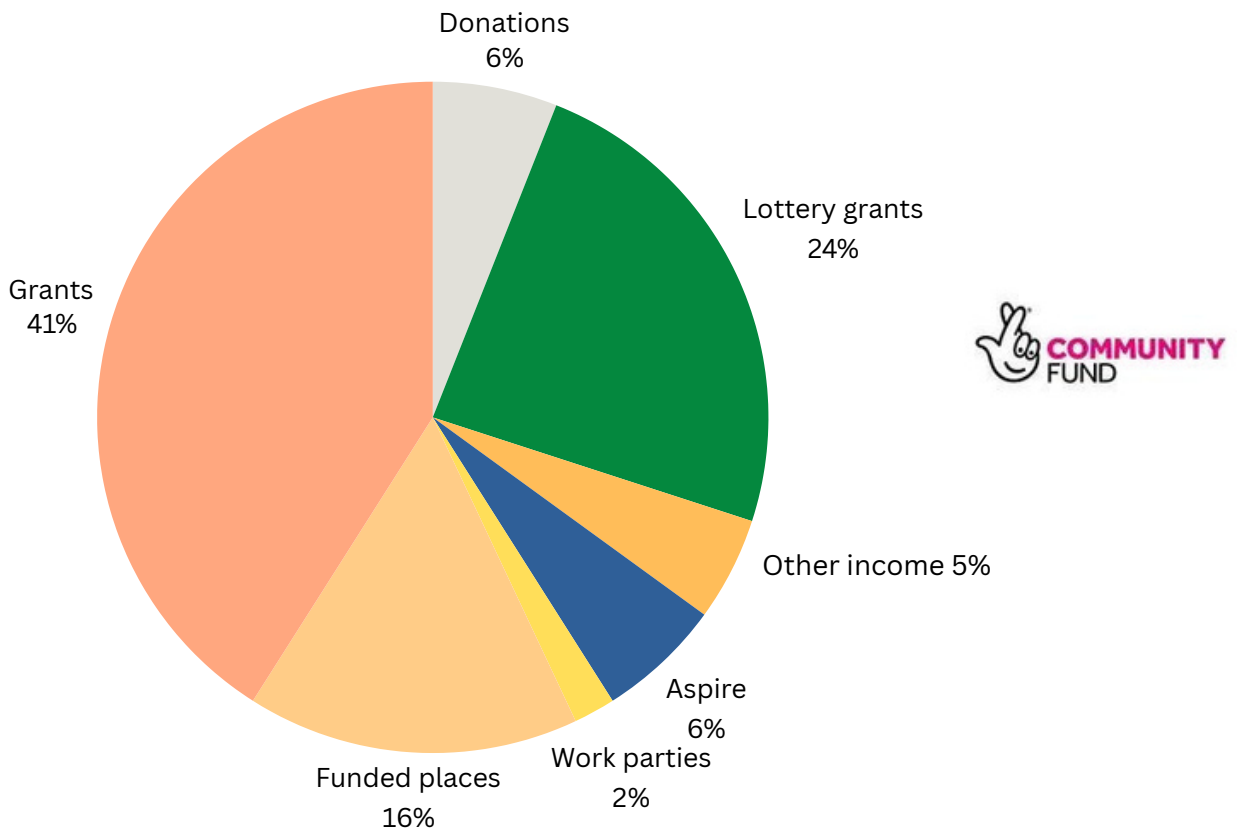


41 different people attending

How we are funded

Our main income sources in 2023-24 were funded places, donations, grants (including National Lottery) and contracting agencies.

We need to raise almost £700,000 in 2024/25 to deliver our services, which currently span Harrogate District, Wakefield, York, Selby, Wetherby, and Barnsley.



***All figures taken from March 2024 Management accounts**

		*2024	2023
Income			
	Charitable activities	533,352	387,325
	Donations and legacies	30,886	34,091
	Other income	16,310	8,992
	Investments	0	1,231
	Total income	580,548	461,639
Expenditure			
	Charitable activities	465,389	381,843
	Total expenditure	465,389	381,843



Our funders 2023 – 2024

During the year we received invaluable financial and in-kind support from the following organisations and individuals.

Thank you for helping us to make a difference



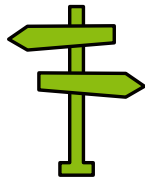
Alan Rayner, Anna Baldwin, Aspire, Baily Thomas Charitable Fund, Belmont Grosvenor School, Bettys and Taylors, Bruce Wake Charitable Trust, CANVA, City Connect/West Yorkshire Combined Authority, CLA Charitable Trust, Coca Cola European Partners, Co-operative Local Community Fund, David & Julie Turner, Department for Transport Efficiency North, Engage Interactive, Four Winds Trust, Friends and family of Nicky Serlin Friends of Oakwell Hall & Country Park, Friends of Parkinson's Park CIC, Green Hall Foundation, Groundwork/Tescos, Haribo, Harrogate Round Table, Harrogate Wheeleasy, High Sherriff of North Yorkshire, HMRC, HM Young Offenders Institution Wetherby, Huddersfield & Wakefield Rotary Clubs, Inca (Europe) Limited, Jack Brunton Charitable Trust, Jan & Mike Bartholomew, John Spedan Lewis Foundation, Jonty Warneken, Leeds City Council, Leeds Community Foundation, Linda Hoare, Mayor of Otley, Live Well Wakefield, Marketing Adventures, Microsoft, Morley Glass and Glazing, National Lottery Community Fund, NHS South West Yorkshire Partnership, Nidderdale High School, Norman Collinson Charitable Trust, North Doncaster Development Trust, North Yorkshire Council, North Yorkshire Councillors Matt Walker and Monika Slater, NOVA, Otley Town Council, Philip Robinson, Postcode Neighbourhood Trust, Primary Club, Prosper Wakefield, Quakers Harrogate, Sally Weatherill, Sandal MINI, Scotton Parish Council, Sharow PCC Sir George Martin Trust, SkyBet, Sport England, St. James's Place Charitable Foundation The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust, The Bernard Sunley Foundation, The Bostock Foundation, The Fitton Trust, The Friends of Parkinson's Park, The George A. Moore Foundation, The RS Brownless Charitable Trust, The Shears Foundation, The Woodroffe Benton Foundation, Tom & Julie Leggett, TransPennine Trail, Trustees of Chatsworth Settlement, Two Ridings Community Foundation/Local Fund for Harrogate, Wakefield Chantry Rotary Club, Wakefield Council, West Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum, Wharfedale Naturalist's Society, Woodland Trust, WWF-UK, YPO, York Common Good Trust, Yorkshire Water, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

Our year in numbers



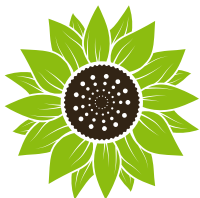
1192 activities held

577 people worked with



55 enquiries to our Countryside Advice Service

3 new Breakfree packs added to our library and 1000s distributed



247 conservation tasks completed

12 new audio walks recorded



2000 trees planted

6 overnight trips enjoyed



20,000 cups of tea drunk

Countless memories made



Members and volunteer survey 2023

Our annual survey reflected a strong sense of community, positive impact on wellbeing, and a desire for more diverse and challenging activities.

Members and Volunteers expressed satisfaction with the services provided by Open Country, and there is a clear indication of the organisation's positive influence on members' physical and mental wellbeing.

- **80%** strongly agreed that Open Country provides fun and a sense of belonging.
- **83%** enjoy visiting the countryside with Open Country.
- **81%** feel a real sense of belonging.
- **82%** say Open Country helps them make new friends and feel part of a team.

The feedback provides valuable insights for future planning, emphasising the importance of varied activities, clear communication, and continuous efforts to enhance the overall experience for members and volunteers.

Thank you to everyone who contributed – your feedback is very important to us!

You can read the full survey report on our website at www.opencountry.org.uk



“Open Country staff and volunteers go the extra mile to make us all welcome and help us all enjoy the outings. I always look forward to receiving the new programme every quarter.” - Alan, member.

A snapshot of our adventures in 2023-2024



Archery day for Harrogate Adventure Club



Tandem season in Selby



Getting stuck into conservation work



Climb every mountain on a weekend away



In training to the Peak District



In depth - Tropical World



Nidderdale Way day



Close encounters with feathered friends



“Coming out with Open Country, especially the residentials, helps me with my mental health, gives me something to look forward to and gives me a break from the stresses of everyday life whilst making it possible for me to access the countryside.” - **Mel, Member**

“I enjoy every minute of my time with OC, Here’s to the next five years! - **Sue, volunteer**

