

Open Country is a charitable organisation (1107331) which enables anyone with a disability to access and enjoy the countryside, through the provision of outdoor activities and information.

Autumn is a season of change and we are having a few changes on the staffing front. After over 7 years sterling service, Ella Dixon, our Wakefield Hub Manager, is moving on to pastures new.

Ella says: "It has been wonderful getting the Wakefield project up and running and getting to know lots of lovely people over the past few years. It has been a real adventure, and I look forward to seeing how the Wakefield and Barnsley work develops over the coming years."

We are so grateful for Ella's totally indefatigable energy and good-humour and thank her for her time with us. Her contribution to our work in developing the Wakefield Hub from scratch has been utterly incalculable. Ella leaves her current role on 11<sup>th</sup> November but, fortunately for us, has agreed to stay on in a part-time capacity to help us get our next National Lottery bid for the Wakefield area over the line.

Thanks for everything, Ella!



We are very proud of what we achieve each year and we want to share some of our recent highlights with you! Our new 'Impact' Report highlights some of our successes, adventures and stories from 2023-2024, much of which we could not have made happen without your help! Thanks to all our members, volunteers, supporters and funders. You can read the report on our website at <https://www.opencountry.org.uk/our-impact/> or ask us for a hard copy.

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** residential trips enjoyed
- **20,000** cups of tea drunk!
- Countless memories made...



## Listen up!

We know many of you enjoy Tom's fab audio walks, which are available on our website and on YouTube. There are now over 50 walks recorded, taking you on sensory journeys through some of Yorkshire's best loved and interesting trails from the comfort of your armchair.

We've even been contacted by an expat listener in Australia, who tells us how special it is to be transported back to a Yorkshire landscape. He said:

*"The walks take me back to my childhood, so many familiar places. Beautiful, soothing, refreshing and peaceful. Thank you."*

One of Tom's favourites is the Mosaics Trail in Nidderdale, which combines a stunning walk with a 'treasure hunt' as the walker discovers a series of mosaics depicting local wildlife and heritage.

So, if you can't get 'out there' in person, or maybe you're looking for inspiration for new places to visit, why not have a listen?

Walks are updated monthly on our website at [www.opencountry.org.uk](http://www.opencountry.org.uk) or subscribe to our YouTube channel [youtube.com/@opencountryyorkshire](https://youtube.com/@opencountryyorkshire)

## Making magical memories

It always gives us a lift when you tell us the difference Open Country makes to your life, and it doesn't get much more uplifting than this, from Jules Armitage, who joined Open Country around seven years ago after losing her sight.

"It sounds dramatic, but I couldn't live without Open Country. They've given me some of my very best memories, as well as a sense of achievement and pride. I love it all, it really enriches my life.

I love being outside, but it's one of the biggest hurdles for me, since losing my sight - especially as I no longer have a guide dog.

When I'm with Open Country, it takes all the stress and hassle away and I can just relax and enjoy a day out.

I have had so many amazing experiences – tandem riding, kayaking, paddleboarding, sailing, weekend residentials... I also enjoy the weekly zoom spin classes. In fact, I do more things now than when I could see!

Open Country gives me a much-needed sense of freedom and actually, it's given me confidence to do stuff by myself, such as going swimming. The staff and volunteers are all lovely and it is all so inclusive & supportive."

Thank you, Jules! We appreciate you sharing your experiences with us. If you would like to share your own experiences of Open Country, please get in touch - your stories help us raise awareness and valuable funds!

Email [community@opencountry.org.uk](mailto:community@opencountry.org.uk)



Jules (left) trying her hand at sailing

## Nominate your place for a Good Access Scheme award

We're calling for nominations for this year's 'Good Access Scheme', award, which recognises the best inclusive access project in Yorkshire each year - and we'd love to hear from you!

Have you come across a well thought-out park which encourages accessibility, or a considerably planned cycle-path network?

Maybe you've visited an attraction or business going the extra mile to make outdoor space as inclusive as possible?

Nominations close on **October 31<sup>st</sup>**. Get in touch with your thoughts; please email us at: [info@opencountry.org.uk](mailto:info@opencountry.org.uk) or give us a call on 01423 507227



Right: Volunteers enjoying a warm summer evening at the Open Country allotment.

## Volunteer News

Our Harrogate **Volunteer Christmas Meal** will be on **Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> December at 7pm**. Venue to be confirmed. We will be in touch nearer the time with more details, but put the date in your diary; we look forward to seeing you there!

Fancy refreshing your first aid skills? We've booked a volunteers' **Emergency First Aid at Work** course. It is on **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> November** at *Harrogate Community House* and is free to attend. It should take from 9am to 4pm. The course will cover, amongst other things: Emergency CPR and defibrillation, recovery position, choking, seizures, shock, wounds & bleeding and minor injuries. Please contact us to book your place.

A warm welcome to our newest volunteers Martin Bell (Ripon Tandems), Anne Scott (Wednesday walks), Paul Vickers (York Tandems) and Val Seddon and Victoria Higgins (York walks) Thanks for joining our merry band - we hope you enjoy your outdoor adventures!



## Fundraising News

### Helping our funds grow

Thanks to those who helped make our stall at Harrogate Allotment Show a success. Our tombola was very popular and we will also be receiving a donation from the *Harrogate District Allotment Federation*, which is great news. Our picture shows some of our Harrogate members enjoying a visit to the show.



### Festive fun at Harrogate Christmas Market

We're excited that we'll be part of the *Harrogate Christmas Market* this December! Be sure to stop by and see us on **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December**, in the afternoon. We've already started preparing and can't wait to meet everyone there.

We're reaching out to our wonderful community for support - our charity needs prize donations for our tombola! If you have any new or unused items that

could make a fantastic prize, we'd love to receive them. Every donation helps us raise essential funds for our vwork.

If you're able to help, please send us a message. Donations can be dropped off at Harrogate Community House reception, open Monday to Thursday, from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. Alternatively, drop us a line on [community@opencountry.org.uk](mailto:community@opencountry.org.uk) or call our Harrogate office to arrange a collection.

Thank you in advance for your kindness and generosity.

### Where there's a Will...

If you share the values and mission of Open Country and would like to support us, you might consider leaving a gift to our charity in your will. This is a meaningful way to ensure your memory lives on, helping local people with disabilities access and enjoy the beauty of our countryside.

We have partnered with one of the UK's largest Will-writing companies, Free Wills, to make this important step simple and stress-free. The process is straightforward, quick and easy to use.

We understand that including a charity in your Will is a deeply personal decision, and we would love the opportunity to share more about our impactful projects and how your support can make a lasting difference.

Please visit [www.freewills.co.uk](http://www.freewills.co.uk) for more information or contact us by phone at 01423 507227 or by email at [community@opencountry.org.uk](mailto:community@opencountry.org.uk) to reach our fundraising team.


## A gift in your Will means a lasting legacy for local people with disabilities

Leaving a gift to Open Country is a way of making your memory live on, helping local people with disabilities to access and enjoy our beautiful countryside.

We have teamed up with one of the UK's largest Will writing companies, Free Wills, to take this important step for peace of mind.

We understand that remembering our charity is a very personal gift and we would love the opportunity to tell you more about our worthwhile projects.



[www.opencountry.org.uk](http://www.opencountry.org.uk) E: [info@opencountry.org.uk](mailto:info@opencountry.org.uk) T: 01423 507 227 SCAN ME 

### Access for All News

Check out the great bit of new Harrogate cycle path that links the traffic lights at Bogs Lane with the back of Harrogate High School and then comes out at Claro Road via Sanders Walk. The downside is that it is only there because of the rampant house-building in the local area. The upside is that it does provide a really wide, smooth and convenient off-road link with the existing cycling network. In time a short spur will bring you out on Granby Stray via the former Granby Farm, which will be even nicer!

Well done to the *Yorkshire Wildlife Trust* for making the new extension to their North Cave reserve very accessible. They have also created this new screen next to the inaccessible Turret Hide. Good work, YWT!



## Wild about Wakefield News



### Welcome to Elspeth!

Welcome to Elspeth Robinson, who has recently joined our Wakefield team as a Countryside Activities Officer. Prior to joining us, Elspeth was a Reserves Officer with the *Yorkshire Wildlife Trust* for ten years.

Elspeth says: "I'm really excited to join Open Country and to be involved in all the fantastic work you do."

My background is in nature conservation and I love being outdoors, exploring the countryside and watching wildlife. I look forward to getting out and about with our Wakefield groups."

Simon Pedley will be taking the role of Wakefield Hub Manager from November onwards. Simon comes to us after a wealth of experience with organisations including *The Land Trust*.

### It's a grand path!

We have been working with *Wakefield Council* for the past two years, updating a 600m stretch of footpath between Grandstand Road and Potovens Lane in Outwood.

As part of this project the Trailblazer group removed a set of nasty, muddy steps leading down to the footpath, replacing them with a wide smooth ramp. We also cut back lots of overhanging branches and widened the paths to allow wheelchair users and people with prams to use this path too.

We are excited to welcome more people to the path in future years.

Let us know what you think!



## Wheel-y Good Times

We were recently donated a beautiful electric tandem from Des and Joyce Hampshire. They were nice enough to gift us the bike in July to allow us to help more people access the great outdoors on two wheels. Thank you very much - we've already taken it out on many rides!



## Barnsley News

Bob Mawson has been running the Barnsley satellite project for over a year now. Group members have enjoyed a range of countryside activities including kayaking, seaside outings and tandem tasters - to name a few.

We still need some new volunteers and members to join in with this South Yorkshire venture as we look forward to making the project a permanent fixture in 2025. Give us a bell on 07426 716677 to join the team.



## Trike Tasters

Thanks to the Climate Activity grant from *West Yorkshire Combined Authority* and *Wakefield Council* we have been able to purchase a new electric wheelchair trike. Let us know if you would like to try out the trike on one of our outings.

## New Directory on the way

We are currently working on a revised 'Wakefield and West Yorkshire Countryside Directory' and would appreciate any contributions to help compile it. Let us know if you would like to get involved.





batteries safely is a growing concern and we'd like to thank all the funders who helped us get storage cabinets for both our Wakefield and Harrogate Hubs. It's not an eye-catching story but it is a totally invaluable way of keeping our cyclists tandeming safely. Thank you!

### Brrrr! - it's getting chilly!

Don't be put off by the fact the colder weather is coming but please consider bringing the following with you to keep you comfy:

- woolly hat, gloves and scarf,
- warm clothes, waterproof jacket and trousers,
- a spare jumper or fleece,
- lots of food to keep you warm & a hot drink in an unbreakable flask,
- ...and don't forget to have a good nourishing breakfast beforehand!
- Finally, we have loads of outdoor gear we can lend you - just ask!

### Harrogate Advisory Group

Our next meeting will be on **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November**, from 6.30 - 8.30pm, in Meeting Room One. All regular members are very welcome to come. Our Special Item is 'Our 2024 GAS award'. Get your thinking hats on!

### Charging ahead!

Getting some electric tandems has allowed us to welcome a wider range of riders, front and back! Storing lithium

*Please email [info@opencountry.org.uk](mailto:info@opencountry.org.uk) if you would prefer to receive our newsletter electronically or if you want to be taken off our mailing list.*

## GET IN TOUCH...



Our Head Office address is:

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46 East Parade, Harrogate, HG1 5LT.**

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Complaint? Our confidential trustees' email address is [opencountrytrustees@gmail.com](mailto:opencountrytrustees@gmail.com)

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