



Trustees' Annual Report

Address

St Swithun's Hall, Downton Road, Leonard Stanley, Gloucestershire, GL10 3LT.

Introduction

The purpose of Scouting is to actively encourage and support young people in their personal development, empowering them to make a positive contribution to society. As a charity, the Stroud & Tetbury District Scout Council is managed by a District Executive Committee whose members are the charity trustees, details of whom are set out below.

Trustees

Ex Officio

Tony Dover, District Chairman
Steve Jackson, District Commissioner
Alex Chestnutt, District Commissioner
Ali Andrews, District Explorer Scout Commissioner
Alex Bingle, District Scout Network Commissioner

Elected

Keith Stanley
Paul Blanch
Andrew Leach
Keelan Tootell, District Youth Commissioner
Eloise Mei, Deputy District Youth Commissioner

Nominated

Chris Jones, Chairman Appointments Advisory Committee

Co-opted

Margaret-Mary McNeil, District Scout Active Support Manager

Summary

A year of two halves is probably the best way to describe the last 12 months with the latter half dominated by the impact of the global Coronavirus pandemic and the resulting effect on face to face scouting.

For the first 6 months of the year, scouting continued in the District and amongst the groups as normal. Chris Jones took over as the Chair of the District Appointments Committee from David Goldsmith and the team continued to meet with new adult volunteers on a monthly basis. Two Getting Started courses were held in September and December for new leaders and also gave some the opportunity to undertake their mandatory Safeguarding module. A number of successful District Activity events were held including: Athletics badge night for Cubs and Scouts at Thomas Keble School; a Beaver Sleepover at Leonard Stanley Scout Hut; Master at Arms badge for Scouts at Cranham over a 6 week period in the Autumn; a JOTI Sleepover experience at Eastcombe Scout HQ; and a Swimming Stage 1 badge session at Stratford Park Swimming Pool. We were also pleased to arrange the inaugural Young Leader training weekend in January with 17 Explorer scouts attending to undertake training in all the YL modules with the exception of Module A and First Aid.

Disappointingly, we were forced to close Whiteshill Scout Group as we were unable to generate any volunteers to take on the leadership roles despite support from the Pears Group. Fortunately, most of the young people were able to transfer to other Beaver colonies and Cub packs in the District.

On a positive note, the DC was able to present a host of Chief Scouts Gold awards at the St Roses Scout Group, which goes from strength to strength, and special mention to Nicki Elkins and Liz Barton for all that they do for this cohort of young people.

As we are all aware, from March, all face to face scouting ceased as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and the District and Groups were faced with various challenges around keeping adults and young people engaged, as well as maintaining the regulatory aspects of scouting and managing the finances. A number of Groups were able to maintain a virtual programme for their young people using Zoom or sending weekly/monthly challenges. Many were able to signpost their beavers, cubs, scouts and explorers to the County offerings and significant numbers took part in the We Will Survive camp and S&E, as well as completing the Carry on Scouting challenge badge. The District and those Groups that own their own properties were able to benefit from the £10,000 Government COVID grant and this should offset the loss of income for those Groups to some extent.

As the Scout Association gradually ease the Coronavirus restrictions, the District has been supporting Groups as they re-start Scouting under AMBER. A couple of Cub Sections re-started during the school summer holidays and other groups are planning September starts. Unfortunately, the Active Support Group has notified the District Executive that they will no longer be able to continue running the District Scout Shop.

Our priorities for 2020/21 will be to: support all Groups to re-start Scouting safely and in accordance with the direction set by the Scout Association; assist them to manage the financial impact of Coronavirus; consider options for the District Scout shop, including the provision of an online ordering service, recruit a District Treasurer and restart District activities and training when and where possible.

Census

The annual census showed a decrease in YP numbers across the District over the past year. This fall was largely attributable to: the transfer of Nailsworth Scout Group to Cotswold Vale District; the closure of Whiteshill Beaver Colony and Cub packs; and several Sections within Scout Groups that had declining numbers. A new Explorer Unit opened at Cranham and an additional Scout Troop started at Selsley.

Census of Membership in Stroud and Tetbury for the year ending 31 January 2020

	Male	Female	Total
YOUTH MEMBERSHIP			
Beaver Scouts	174	42	216
Cub Scouts	234	65	299
Scouts	187	76	263
Explorer Scouts	57	41	98
Network members	18	9	27
TOTAL YOUTH MEMBERSHIP	670	233	903
LEADERSHIP			
Sections leaders	77	47	124
Sectional Assistants & Skills Instructors	24	15	39
Group Scout Leaders	6	5	11
District Scouters	0	0	0
District Commissioners	4	1	5
TOTAL LEADERSHIP	111	68	179
ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT			
Group Exec	27	22	49
District Office Bearers/Exec	4	1	5
Active Support Members	7	14	21
TOTAL ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT	38	37	75
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP	819	338	1,157
UNITS			
Beaver Scout Colonies	14		

Cub Scout Packs	15
Scout Troops	16
Explorer Scout Units (incl. Young Leader Units)	6
Local Scout Networks	1
Active Support Units	1

Penn Wood Scouting Centre

Up until the impact of Coronavirus in March, Penn Wood had enjoyed a high occupancy rate during the year with Scouts, schools and others making use of the camping facilities, bunkhouse and main hut. The District has also used the facility for events such as the Stomp and Farriers Challenges. During the lockdown some work has been undertaken to improve one of the camping sites. As ever, enormous thanks are due to our volunteer warden Keith Stanley, ably assisted by Haggis and others.

St Swithuns Scout Centre

St Swithuns sees regular use by Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Explorers, Rainbows and Brownies, as well as a range of Community groups and private bookings. Maintaining the building and surrounds are a challenge without a volunteer warden and the District Executive are looking for volunteer/s to help out in this role. We were able to install a new heater for the building in January and this has addressed the heating problem. Again, St Swithuns was affected by the coronavirus pandemic and has been out of use for 6 months. Our grateful thanks to Jenny Percival for her work as Bookings Secretary.

Scout Shop

The Scout Shop continues to be a real asset for the District and thanks are due to Michelle Welsh and her team of volunteers, drawn from the Active Support Team, who manage this facility, opening during term times on Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings. The shop closed for business in March as a result of the pandemic and unfortunately, as reported earlier, the ASU have decided that they can no longer support the Shop so the District will have to look at alternative operating models, one of which is an online service.

District Appointments Committee

The District Appointments Advisory Committee underwent a change of leadership in November 2019 as Chris Jones took over the Chair role from David Goldsmith. Prior to lockdown, the team met on 5 occasions with a total of 16 new leaders. This year there have been no occasions when the team have recommended that an appointment should not be confirmed. We continue to be very grateful for the volunteers who take on this role and especially to our Appointments Secretary, Ann Greaves, who works tirelessly contacting new leaders, following up references and arranging the meetings.

District Activities



As ADC Activities (Theresa Mansbridge) has re-located to the Orkneys, we are looking for an individual or a team to take on responsibility for organising several District events per year. A number of events were organised pre-lockdown and we hope to re-start some activities, COVID permitting, in the near future.

District Training

Prior to lockdown, we were able to run a couple of Getting started modules, including Safeguarding; and in January 2020, the District ran a successful Young Leaders Training weekend. Throughout lockdown, the Scout Association have placed a great emphasis on the completion of online mandatory training courses and whilst the District has seen an improvement in completion rates for Safeguarding, Safety and Module 01E (Executive members) training there are still some adult volunteers who need to complete these mandatory elements.

Volunteers

As ever, vacancies exist for a number of District Executive posts, ADC and support roles. We are grateful to Rob Case for his support with the District finances; however, a permanent District Treasurer is still required. Additional support would be welcomed at Penn Wood, St Swithuns and the Scout Shop. Furthermore, we are always on the lookout for talent to join the District Team as ADCs or other supporting capacities. Please let us know if you are interested in any of these vacant roles.

Tony Dover Steve Jackson & Alex Chestnutt
District Chairman District Commissioners

On behalf of the District Executive