

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

Nominated

Chris Jones, Chairman Appointments Advisory Committee

Co-opted

Theresa Mansbridge, DHQ Manager

Summary

This report covers the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 and coincides with 12 months dominated by the impact of the global Coronavirus pandemic and the resulting effect on face to face scouting.

With the advent of the first lockdown in March 2020, all F2F scouting ceased 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 and S&E virtual camps, 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 various Government COVID grants and this has been able to offset the loss of income for those Groups to some extent.

As the Scout Association eased the Coronavirus restrictions in September 2020, the District supported Groups as they re-started Scouting under AMBER. This involved help with the Risk Assessments and approvals procedure, plus advice on running safe programmes. A reasonable number of Sections re-started with a blend of F2F and virtual (Zoom) programmes; however, the second lockdown in November 2020 curtailed F2F activities once again and despite a short re-start in December, a further 3 months of lockdown prevented F2F activity until April 2021.

As anticipated, the Annual census figures were adversely impacted by the impact of COVID with a decline of 27% in Young People numbers in the January 2021 figures. The significant reductions were predominantly in the Beaver Sections and Explorer units. Adult volunteer numbers also reduced, and it was evident that some volunteers had decided to leave Scouting at this challenging time.

At the time of writing (Summer 2021) almost all Sections within the District have returned to F2F scouting with the exception of Stonehouse Scout Group and several Troops and packs have enjoyed residential experiences in August 2021 under the mandated COVID-19 measures.

The District priorities for 2021/22 will be to: support all Groups and Sections as they continue to deliver F2F activities under COVID conditions; support recruitment of adult volunteers; increase our Young People numbers; re-start District activities; recognise our adult volunteers; and support adult volunteers with their training requirements.

Census

Census of Membership in Stroud and Tetbury for the year ending 31 January 2021

	Male	Female	Total
YOUTH MEMBERSHIP			
Beaver Scouts	113	45	158
Cub Scouts	169	42	211
Scouts	138	67	205
Explorer Scouts	35	25	60
Network members	10	6	16
TOTAL YOUTH MEMBERSHIP	465	185	650
LEADERSHIP			
Sections leaders	67	34	101
Sectional Assistants & Skills Instructors	15	12	27
Group Scout Leaders	5	4	9
District Scouters	0	0	0
District Commissioners	4	0	4
TOTAL LEADERSHIP	91	50	141
ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT			
Group Exec	25	22	47
District Office Bearers/Exec	4	1	5
Active Support Members	6	14	20
TOTAL ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT	35	37	72
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP	591	272	863
UNITS			
Beaver Scout Colonies	14		
Cub Scout Packs	15		
Scout Troops	16		
Explorer Scout Units (incl. Young Leader Units)	4		
Local Scout Networks	1		

Penn Wood Scouting Centre

For the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, Penn Wood were unable to offer any residential activities due to COVID-19; however, several Sections were able to use the facilities for day events when the country was not in lockdown. During the lockdown period, some work has been undertaken to improve one of the camping sites and the bunkhouse. As ever, enormous thanks are due to our volunteer warden Keith Stanley, ably assisted by Haggis and others.

St Swithuns Scout Centre

As with Penn Wood, St Swithuns has seen little activity as far as scouting and other hirers using the facilities are concerned over the last 12 months. However, on a positive note, Theresa Mansbridge volunteered to manage the building and has done a superb job in preparing it for the re-start of scouting and other activities. This has included ensuring the building meets all the regulatory requirements plus producing COVID safe procedures for the users. Our thanks to Theresa for her excellent contribution.

Scout Shop

The District Scout shop closed for business in March 2020 as a result of the pandemic and unfortunately, as reported in 2020, the Active Support Unit decided that they were no longer able to support the Shop moving forward. To ensure the shop remained viable, an online offer has been made available and has been working since September 2021. A big thanks to Ali Andrews in implementing the operation. It is hoped that the shop will open in the near future to allow for F2F shopping.

District Appointments Committee

The District Appointments Advisory Committee moved to virtual interviews utilising Zoom in late 2020 and have been operating on that platform ever since. There has been a total of 12 new leaders appointed. 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

Theresa Mansbridge has returned from the Orkneys and taken up the mantle of ADC Activities again; however, during this reporting period, activities have been very limited due to COVID. With COVID regulations easing, there are several events planned for later in 2021.

District Training



During the reporting period, there have been no F2F training sessions; however, a great deal of progress has been made with adult volunteers completing mandatory training. With a significant amount of time spent on hastening and in some cases, supporting individuals to complete their training, the District achieved 100% completion rates for Safeguarding, Safety and GDPR by 31 March 2021. The focus moving forward is supporting new volunteers, assisting those close to completing their Wood badges and encouraging Executive members to complete the mandated Trustee training. We also plan to run further Young Leader training later in the year.

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