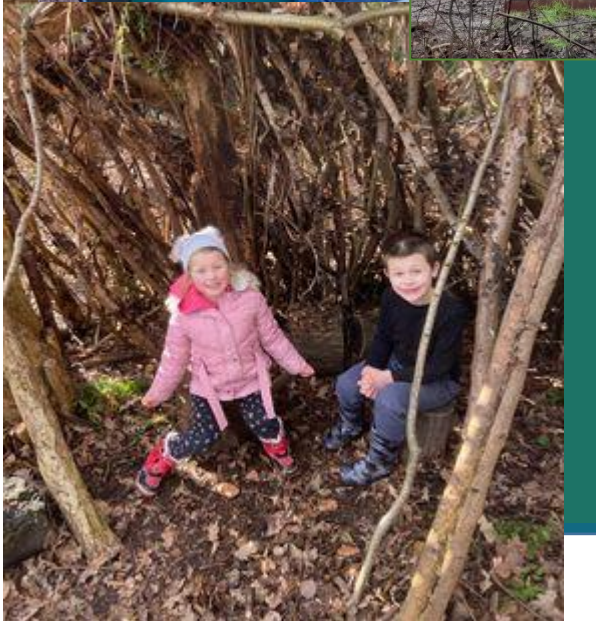




# Annual Report 2023-2024



*"No-one will care about what they have never experienced.  
That is why Wildside Activity Centre is so important"*

## Contents

A Word from Our President	p. 3
Chairs' Introduction	p. 4
Attendance Comparisons 23-24	p. 6
Attendance Outcomes 23-24	p. 7
Impact	p. 11
National Lottery Wellness to Wildness Project	p. 12
New to Nature	p. 15
Wild for Skills	p. 15
Know Your Neighbourhood	p. 17
Our Volunteers	p. 19
Trebalisa – a boat for All Seasons	p. 21
Little Explorers	p. 22
Capital Projects	p. 22
King's Award for Voluntary Service	p. 24
Strategic Planning	p. 25
Funding and Finance	p. 27
Centre Staff and Board Members	p. 28
Our thanks	p. 30
Audited accounts	p. 31

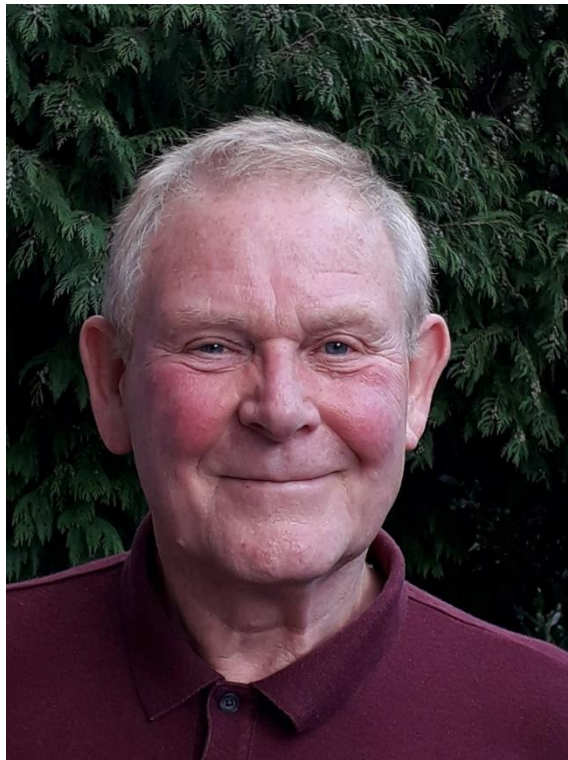
## President's Foreword

In the autumn of 2023, the Government published its *State of Nature* report. It made grim reading. Between 1970 and today, we have seen massive losses of wildlife – half our woodland birds, three quarters of our insect life and almost all the country's wildflower meadows – gone in the space of my working life. The UK is now officially the most nature-depleted country in Europe.

How lucky are we!? We have the Wildside Centre and Smestow Valley Nature Reserve within walking distance of so many people? We still have kingfishers and herons, dragonflies, badgers and song thrushes right in the heart of our city. We even have such special rarities as water voles and otters on the doorstep, and very few people in England can say that.

The team of staff and volunteers has had another terrific year, helping many more people to "get involved." As Sir David Attenborough says: "No One Will Protect What They Don't Care About; And No One Will Care About What They Have Never Experienced".

That is why the Wildside Activity Centre is so important.



Professor Chris Baines, Honorary President

## Chair's Introduction

Welcome to this year's annual report. I hope you enjoy reading about our year as much as we have enjoyed providing an array of activities for all ages, all abilities, designed to reconnect you to nature.

It is commonplace at the moment to hear businesses refer to our economy as VUCA – volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. At Wildside we're not immune from what's happening in the wider local and national economy as households and businesses continue to deal with the cost-of-living crisis, a wetter than usual spring and summer affecting demand, and a squeeze on funding that means grants (which Wildside rely on for much of our income) get ever more competitive. Focusing too much on these challenges could unconsciously have left us believing there's nothing we can do. But, when I look back at the last 12-months, nothing is further from the truth, and we've once again had another bumper year of activities, funded by your many generous donations and our continued success at winning new funding, combined with blossoming relationships with other local groups who share our ambitions for the local area and our community as well as our super important business funders and sponsors. Thank you.



It takes a lot of time and effort to keep a charity like Wildside going and able to offer the wide range of activities it does. That's time and effort provided by our small team of dedicated staff, and a wonderful army of volunteers without whom we simply wouldn't function. Thank you to everyone who gave their time to Wildside this year – every moment is valued and appreciated!

The Board of Trustees meet quarterly to support the management of Wildside's activities, as well as providing ad hoc advice and guidance when required. They do this on a voluntary basis and receive no payment for their time – and Wildside couldn't exist without them. Thank you to my fellow Trustees for their time and support this year, and if you're reading this and interested in knowing more about being a Trustee yourself, please get in touch!

Trying to pick out highlights from the year is an exercise fraught with the danger that I will miss out a personal favourite of someone! So let me prefix my highlights by saying that whether it's a familiar activity like Little Explorers or something new this year, we're grateful to everyone who helped put on the activity and, of course, to everyone who came along, whether for the first time or the hundredth, to enjoy what Wildside has to offer and get a little closer to nature.

We have seen first-hand how people's lives have been lit up and enriched by getting outdoors and enjoying the activities we can offer. The National Lottery funded Wellness to Wildness project has helped to establish a longer-term programme to ensure that this work reaches out to more people in the city.

It is always great to be part of Canal & River Trust activities they really are, right on our doorstep. In February we took part in their open day at the Wolverhampton lock flight at Fowler's Park providing an excellent opportunity to see a lock without any water (!) and

connect with people and organisations interested in the local canal network and its surrounding areas.

Also in February, we set the tone for the year by organising our own vote – to select a name for our new outdoor learning space. Sheddy McShedface was not on the ballot (thankfully), but your votes helped us name what we hope will be a great new resource for the centre providing additional meeting space as well as a hub for an exciting range of learning activities.

March saw the marvellous #LoveTheReans lantern parade which set off from Wildside. It has been great to work with other local organisations such as Gatis Community Space on this and other events and projects. It's amazing how much volunteers



can achieve, when they come together. Thank you too, to everyone from the Friends of the Smestow Valley group who have joined our own volunteers for a range of activities along the canal and in the nature reserve. This included installing coir rolls to help stabilise the soft banks of the canal and improve habitats for aquatic wildlife, litter picks and preparation work for a future community orchard.

Thank you to everyone who donated to our Spring Fundraising campaign. Your generosity helped us raise over £5,000, which thanks to #BigGive was matched £ for £ allowing us to hit our target of £10,000! As I said at the beginning, funding is a constant challenge for small charities such as Wildside, so campaigns such as these enable us to carry on the work we do supporting local people and communities.

As well as individual volunteers, Wildside also receives corporate volunteers who come to help out at the centre. Teams from businesses based in and around Wolverhampton have worked to help us enhance the canal banks, improving the habitats for water-based wildlife, and preparing the groundworks for our outdoor learning space – amongst other things. It's a win-win for us and our corporate volunteers knowing they've made a difference while getting back to nature, and maybe discovering some beautiful local areas they'd not visited before in

**"We have seen first-hand how people's lives have been lit up and enriched by getting outdoors and enjoying the activities we can offer."**

the process. So, if you're interested in corporate volunteering, please get in touch with the team via [info@wildsideac.co.uk](mailto:info@wildsideac.co.uk).

Feeling part of a community can help build feelings of happiness and wellbeing. It gives a sense of worth and belonging through support and understanding from like-minded people. We have been awarded funding through the Heart of England, Know Your Neighbourhood programme

to work with people who may feel isolated or may be at risk of suffering from social isolation and so we are running a programme of activities over 12 months to help build a sense of community.

So, another year of activities and opportunities grasped, and while we will always be dependent on grants and donations there is reason for optimism for the future, *even in a VUCA world*. In the year ahead we're all hoping to see the green shoots of economic recovery, and (potentially) how a Labour Government will support the charity sector so organisations such as ours can continue to grow our services to the people and communities of Wolverhampton.

As ever I hope you enjoy reading about the successes Wildside has enjoyed this year. Much has been achieved and while there will always be challenges ahead, the Board, along with staff and volunteers are focused on how the centre can continue on its positive journey guided, as I started this introduction, by our 'North Star' of providing, an array of activities for all ages, all abilities, designed to reconnect you to nature.

Kevin Sankey, Chair



## Attendance Comparisons

The 2021 census remains the most recent study of Wolverhampton's population which has been used as the comparator for this report along with statistics from Wolverhampton City Council which itself uses data from the Office for National Statistics as its source. Descriptors and language are taken from these two source documents for consistency of reporting.

Within a population of just over 260,000, there are 88 different languages spoken within Wolverhampton. The majority of the population describe themselves as being White (61%), with 21% as being Asian or Asian British/Welsh and 9.3% as Black, Black British/Welsh, Caribbean, African. In terms of age, the median age of Wolverhampton's population is 37.

The gender split is roughly equal with 51% identifying as male and 49% female

### Wolverhampton population summary

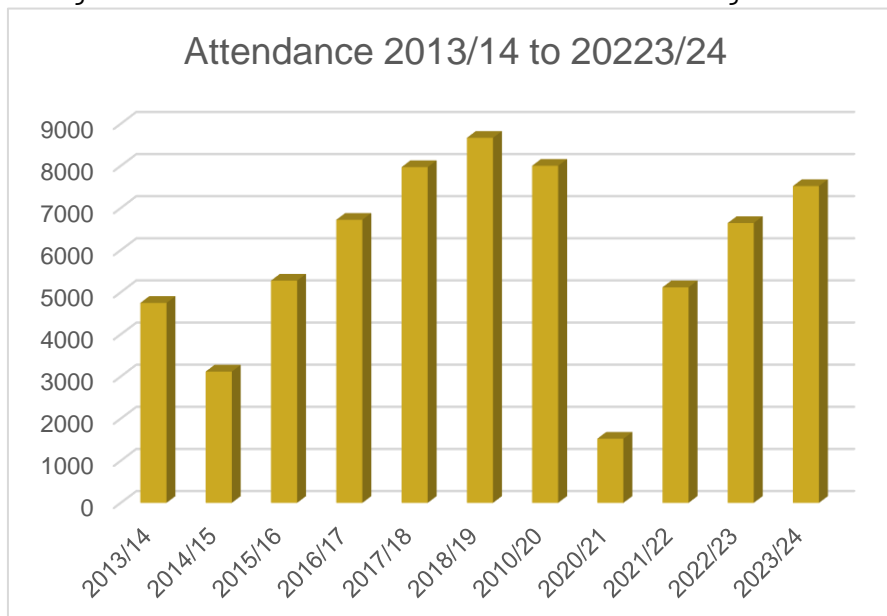
- 35.5% of the population are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities
- 20.5% of the City population have some form of disability

- 16% of the diverse population were born outside the UK (2011 Census)
- City of Wolverhampton has a younger population than the English average
- 3,248 residents aged 16+ estimated to be Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB)  
(<https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/your-council/equalities-and-diversity/wolverhampton-profile>)

## Attendance Outcomes

The total number of users accessing Wildside during the year 23-24 was 7520, an increase of 13% on the previous year and a cumulative increase of 43% on the number of people using the centre in the year immediately following Covid (2021-22). Although this is only the second year since all restrictions were lifted, it shows a clear upward trend which is pleasing to note as it represents a growing sense of confidence in terms of the local community accessing services once again. It also reflects the hard work put in by Wildside staff and volunteers to increase the Centre's profile within the local community.

Schools have also once again started to come back to the Centre in increasing numbers this year. An increase in the number of free activities of children around the school holiday periods such as those offered through the HaF (Holiday Activities and Funding) programme had impacted on the numbers of families and school groups accessing



Wildside's holiday activity programmes over the past three years, so it is reassuring to see numbers start to increase, however the impact of free alternatives will continue to be monitored.

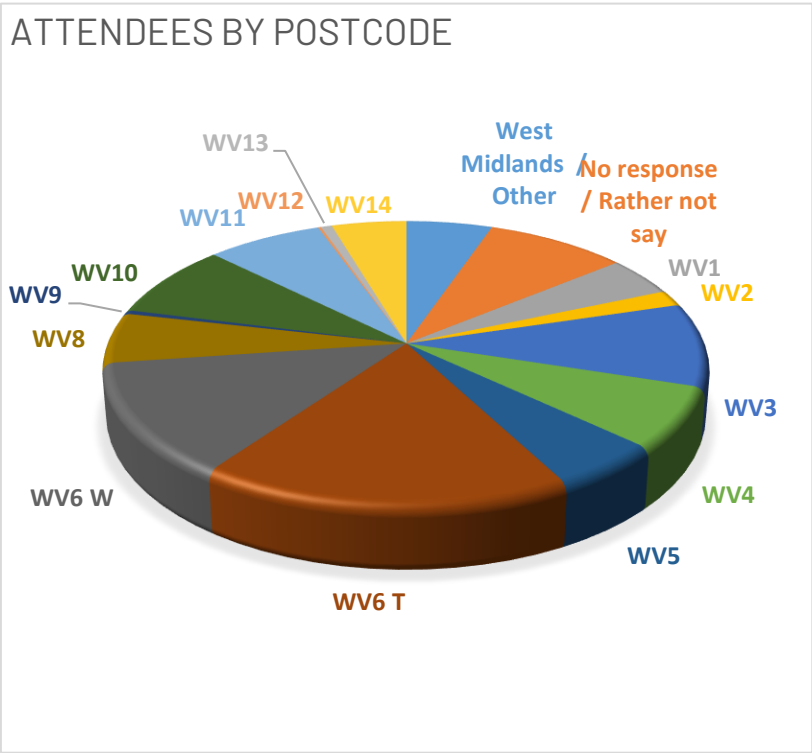
Volunteers continued to contribute to all aspects of centre operations. There were a small but highly committed group of Conservation Volunteers who attended twice weekly throughout the year. In addition, volunteer narrowboat crew members and those helping out with the gardening and various activity sessions helped to maintain a healthy level of volunteer attendance (*see page 20 for more details on Volunteer attendance*).

In terms of the profile of our users; data is collected from all those who engage with the centre. Our booking forms include a section which sets out to gather demographic data, the basis for which is the Office for National Statistics (ONS) classifications for age, gender, ethnicity, and disability. As completing these sections is not compulsory, the data being presented is once again limited by the number of people who took the time to fill in the data.

For some of the responses charts shown below we have extrapolated out the data that has been gathered to provide a broader picture of who comes to us based on the *total* number of attendees, whereas with other data we have merely recorded the actual number of responses received. The rate of non-response was high on some questions, particularly ethnic origin which has been shown as a percentage of overall attendance in the chart below.

### Attendance by Postcode

It is interesting that a higher proportion of users came to us from the immediate vicinity of Whitmore Reans (WV6 W) this year than in previous years, although the highest proportion remain those coming from might be classified as the more affluent areas of Wolverhampton including Tettenhall (WV6 T) and Compton and Finchfield (WV3).



This is a reflection of the centre being more proactive in engaging with the communities immediately on its doorstep, particularly through Project work – primarily the National Lottery Wellness to Wildness project and also Know Your Neighbourhood. Generally there was more of an even distribution across WV postcode areas perhaps reflecting the increased number of users from across the city accessing services more generally post-Covid.

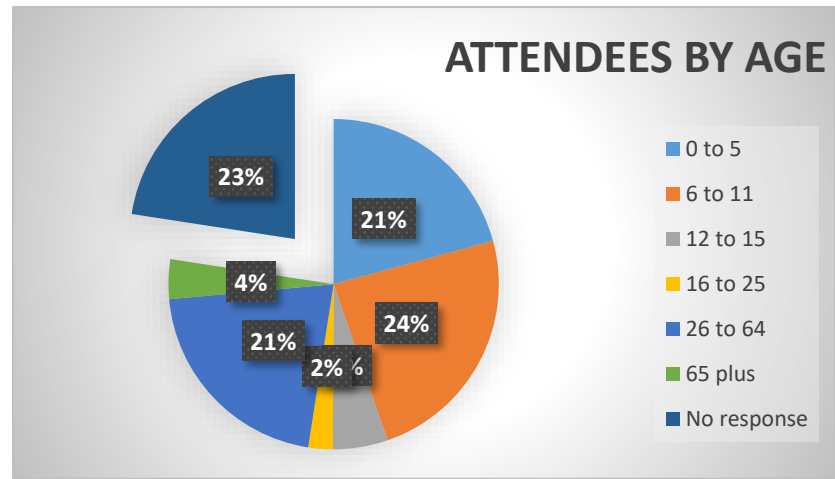
### Gender and age

The split of users between male and female is almost equal with males being the slightly higher category.

In terms of age, the majority of individual users were aged 6-11. This signifies a change from last year when the majority of users were older (26-64).

This shift appears to be due to the increased number of schools coming to Wildside over the course of the year after two years post-Covid when schools were either unable to come due to restrictions in place, or reluctant to use external services such as Wildside in the two years post-Covid.

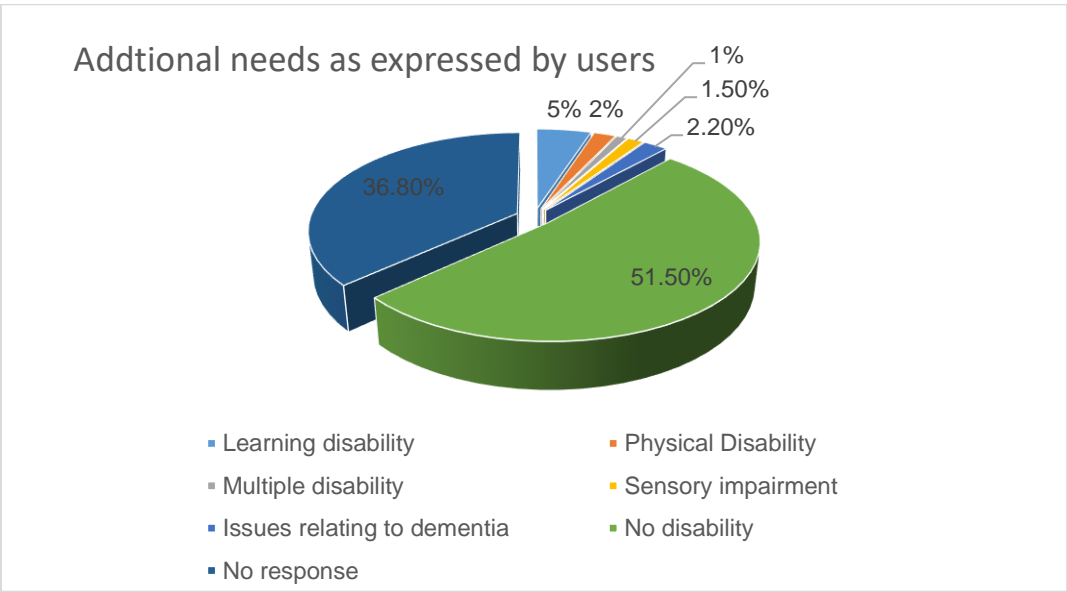
It is also pleasing to note that more young people aged 12-15 are now accessing activities at Wildside compared to previous years.



Disability and additional needs:

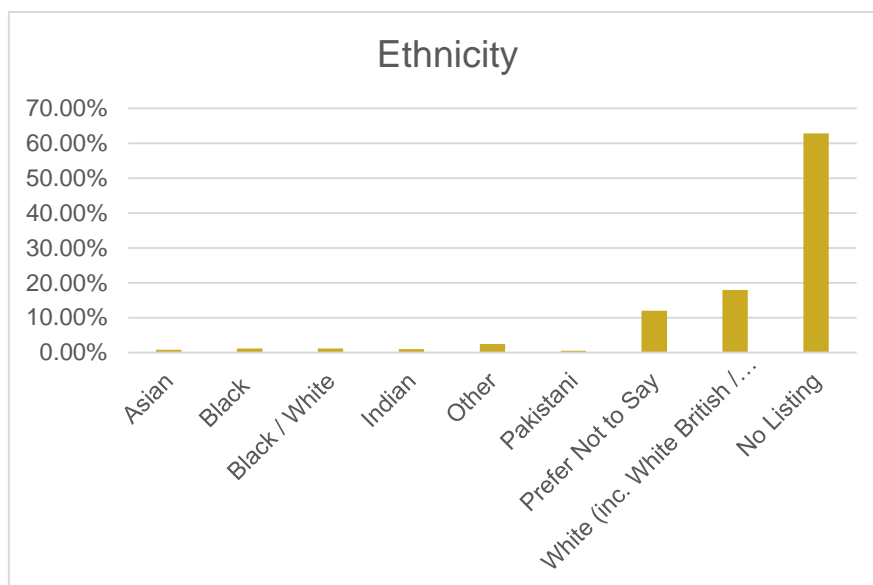
Over half of our users described themselves as not having a disability. Where recorded, learning disability was the highest category, with issues relating to dementia, including Alzheimer’s Disease the second largest category reflecting an increased level of services provided to organisations supporting those with dementia – particularly through the Know Your Neighbourhood project.

Wildside continues to monitor its levels of accessibility and adapt activities for those with additional needs so that it was able to meet its core remit to encourage and enable ‘all ages and all abilities’ to reconnect with nature.



## Ethnicity

When analysing the responses to the question asking users to describe their ethnicity, the highest category were those who *'did not respond'*, with *'prefer not say'*, the third highest response. It is unclear whether the high level of non-responses is as a result of an active choice from users (i.e. a de-facto *'prefer not to say'*) or more likely a reflection of what was



overall an extremely low response rate. If the latter, then it is clear that as an organisation we need to continue to review our data collection methods to encourage more people to complete the demographic questionnaires. The development of a new website with an automated booking system planned for next year, will

support this process to improve the level of feedback, as data will be captured at point of booking.

Where we did receive responses White (British/English/Welsh) represented our highest users with Black and Black/White users second (4.2% combined) and those identifying as Indian forming 1% of those responding. This is a shift from previous years where Indian and Pakistani users were higher than those identifying as Black or Black/White. Those ticking 'Other' made up 2.5% and where users gave further information, descriptors included the following:

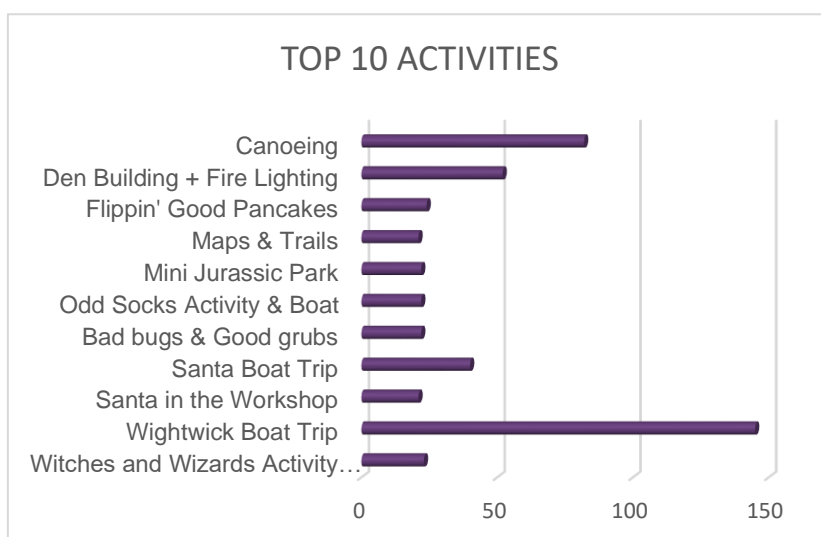
- African
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Gypsy (Romanian)
- Iranian
- Irish
- 'Latin America'
- Somalian

The listings for 'Latin America', Iran and Somalia appear to reflect our continuing relationships with organisations supporting newly arrived and asylum seeker communities.

## Impact

We continue to ask participants for feedback on what they get out of accessing our services. Responses are on the whole extremely positive. The following questions were used to determine levels of impact on the lives of users:

Did the activity have an impact on any of the following areas	(Respondents could tick multiple answers)
Reducing your stress levels	53%
Increasing your levels of physical activity	50%
Improving your feelings of health and wellbeing	74%
Learning more about wildlife and the natural environment	79%



Users continued to enjoy a range of activities offered through the holiday programmes or through the particular projects, however water based activities – narrowboat trips and canoeing were clearly the most popular with our users as can be seen from the graphic below.

55% of users strongly agreed when asked the question: 'as a result of coming to Wildside I feel more confident'

78% of users strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: 'as a result of coming to Wildside I have made new friends or met new people'

74% of users strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: 'as a result of coming to Wildside I feel I have contributed to my neighbourhood'

# National Lottery Wellness to Wildness Project

The Wellness to Wildness funding year runs from June - May at which point annual outputs and outcomes are presented to the Lottery. For the purposes of this annual report, figures presented for each strand of the project cover the period up to the end of March 2024 at which point the project had been in operation just under three years duration (of five years total funding).

In terms of **community engagement** the aims of the project set out to provide 80 sessions per year of health-related activities to get people in touch with nature at the Centre or through outreach sessions. 75% (60 sessions) were focused on people with disabilities / additional needs and 25% (20 sessions) to local families. It is expected that this will equate to 800 direct beneficiaries over the five years of the project.

## Outputs to March 2024

- Activities for those with additional needs: 37 sessions (target 60)\* engaging with 594 participants (annual target 800).
- Activities for local families: 26 sessions (target 20) engaging with 409 participants (target 200)

*\*Session numbers are expected to hit target with activities that had been planned for the remainder of the Lottery year to June 2024.*

## Outcomes

During the year Wildside became one of the partners in the #LoveTheReans initiative which seeks to promote Whitmore Reans and what it offers to local people. Working with Gatis Community Project, Newhampton Arts Centre and a range of community and faith groups from the area, the initiative is seeking to acquire funding for a festival to celebrate the 'Reans' area.

In March 2024, Wildside was the starting point for the Whitmore Reans Lantern a long standing community festival organised by Gatis Community Space.



*The annual lantern parade which begins at Wildside, lights up the streets of Whitmore Reans each March*

The Project Officer (PO) developed a relationship with Wolves Foundation to offer activities to young people receiving support through the Foundation's Holiday Activity Fund (HaF) programme. Activity programmes are offered during each school holiday period.

A relationship has been developed with City of Sanctuary, a Wolverhampton based support group for families who are registered as asylum seekers. Activities for groups have taken place at the centre and as outreach in city accommodation facilities housing asylum seekers.

During the latter part of the year, the PO started to develop working relationships with a number of faith centres and community groups who work with areas of the community from diverse ethnic backgrounds.



## Business engagement

**Objective:** To increase take up from local businesses for personnel health and wellbeing programmes related to environmental activities, outdoor pursuits, the narrowboat, and volunteering. It is anticipated that 20 businesses will be engaged either as corporate members or sponsors, in volunteering, or offering services in kind over the course of the five years. This will involve 300 employees of local businesses over the five years of the project.

- The BDM engaged with 18 local businesses and provider organisations during the period. This equates to 62 over the life of the project to date.
- 141 participants from business organisations engaged with Wildside during the year (249 during the life of the project to date).
- Numbers are now in line with expected targets following two years of reduced engagement due to the restrictions imposed during the Covid pandemic.



Income generated through business contacts in the year: £2,824 (£16,770 over the life of the project to date). 48 volunteer days generated (this is an equivalent benefit to the charity of approximately £32,500 based on an average of 8 individual volunteers working per session at National Minimum Wage). A business package proposal is now being used to promote Wildside's corporate offering, which sets out a subscription table of investments available to businesses looking to work with Wildside.



*Corporate volunteers from the OSB Group worked with colleagues from the Friends of the Smestow Valley to clear ground for the community orchard*

## Funds raised through the work of the BDM

<b>Table 3. Funds raised through business development June 2023 – May 2024</b>		
<b>Source</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Amount (£)</b>
Groundworks (New to Nature)	1 year project employing Community Conservation Champion (Apprentice)	23,645
Heart of England, Know Your Neighbourhood. Phase II	Engaging with those affected by social isolation and loneliness / encouraging volunteering	57,629
WMCA Inclusive Communities Fund	1 year project to provide schools activity programmes and create a generation of Nature's Ambassadors	24,400
Heart of England Small Works Refurbishment fund – Our Space IV	Capital grant to refurbish the centre's entrance ramp to improve accessibility for all.	10,050
Big Give Green match Fund	Unrestricted grant based on match funding (£5,006 pledged by donors, matched by Big Give)	10,012
Corporate donations	£1000 ringfenced for renovating the narrowboat wharf. Remainder unrestricted	2,824
		<b>£128, 560</b>



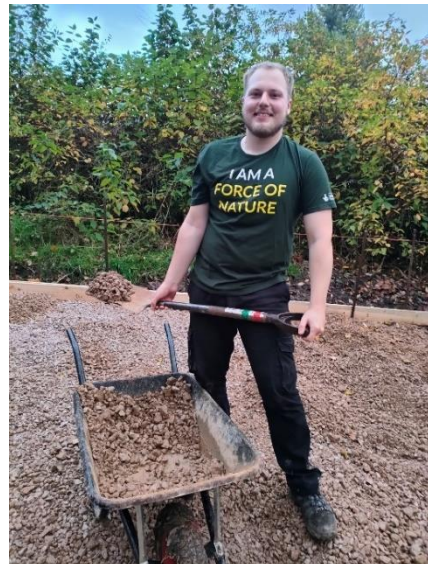
*Wolverhampton Homes, one of the city's key businesses rewarded its own volunteers with a summer boat trip and afternoon tea at Wildside.*

## New to Nature

Following a successful grant application, and a comprehensive recruitment process, in March 2023 we appointed Shaun Harrison to the role of Community Conservation Champion.

This full-time post was funded for a year through *New to Nature*, a national programme operated through Groundwork UK and backed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The remit of the Community Champion role was to:

- support Wildside's conservation volunteers to look after and maintain our habitats for local wildlife
- work with Wildside colleagues to encourage community volunteering to protect local green spaces
- support the delivery of outdoor and adventurous activities for visitors to Wildside
- work with the local community to raise environmental issues, encourage conservation and raise the profile of Wildside and its programme of activities



During his 12 months in post, Shaun proved himself to be a valuable asset to Wildside, willing to immerse himself in the hands-on aspects of our activities whilst being an advocate of our ethos and everything we stand for. He was quick to learn new skills and keen to contribute his own ideas when devising new activities or learning programmes.

His work helped to increase the profile of the Centre within local community groups, and operationally he was able to provide hands-on support with several capital projects that were ongoing during his time here – most notably the construction of the new log cabin learning space.

## Wild for Skills Employability Project

The initial funded period of the Wild For Skills project (funded by the John Lewis Foundation) ended in June 2023. During the 25 months project life (June 21 – June 23 inclusive) 36 different individuals volunteered with the Conservation Volunteer team contributing 852 days of volunteering between them.

The 22 individuals who were supported during the life of the project came from a number of different referral routes including Jobseekers agencies, Wolves to Work and some self-referrals.

Eight of the 22 cohort completed the programme (24 volunteering sessions ), with an additional five people not completing all sessions due to finding work or training prior to completion of the programme – a positive outcome in its own right.

In terms of the recorded outcomes

- 19 users demonstrated increased confidence during their time volunteering
- 15 developing greater wildlife knowledge and were able to use tools safely as a result of the programme teaching
- 12 made substantial personal contributions to at least two different Conservation Volunteer projects/tasks.
- 15 received job related support (guidance, help with applications, CV preparation)
- 9 completed externally accredited training

In total eight individuals moved on to either a work or training outcome after their involvement as a Conservation Volunteer. A further five continued to volunteer with us beyond the end of the project itself.

During the second year of the **Wild For Skills** programme some additional funding was received from Wolverhampton City Council, City Ideas Fund. This was provided to add value to the original project and to provide resources to specifically recruit and support 18–24-year-olds.

The information reported for Wild For Skills includes these participants, but their outcomes have also been recorded separately as follows:

In total seven individuals enrolled on **Nature Works** and all participants received employability support as part of the programme. Of the seven, six made significant progress towards completion of the programme which represents a very high level of retention for a programme of this nature. Those six all made substantial personal contributions to at least two projects/tasks, five of them completing external training separate to Nature Works.

The outcomes for these individuals have been overwhelmingly positive:

- All described an increase in confidence, greater awareness of local wildlife, increased knowledge of tool usage and safety as outcomes of their project involvement.
- One has gone on to Higher Education, one to Further Education, one to an Adult Education course, one to a work placement with on-the-job training and the promise of employment at the end, and one to full time work.
- One participant continued to volunteer with us , and since the official end of the project has started to undertake training with an external organisation to improve their basic skills alongside their volunteering commitments.



*The Wild for Skills volunteers worked with our Conservation volunteer team to transform the old storage container with wooden cladding which not only looked so much better but provided a great surface on which we could attach a whole host of bird and bug houses!*

## Know your Neighbourhood (KYN)

The project began in August 2023 following the award of £49,000 from the Heart of England Trust (HoE) to run a project to identify and engage with those who may be affected by issues around social isolation and loneliness in Whitmore Reans and more widely in Wolverhampton.



*Students from Wolverhampton College try their hand (or should it be feet) at problem solving.*

One of the outcomes identified in the project remit was to encourage uptake of volunteering as a means of alleviating loneliness. A target of 10 volunteers to be recruited by the end of the project (April 2025) was set as one of the project outcomes.

Two project leads were appointed: Elise Stewart in August and Andy Coulter in November. Elise's role also incorporated the Activities Development Leader role through which she helps to coordinate centre activities and plan holiday programmes in conjunction with the administration team

Additional funding of £14,000 was awarded to the KYN project following discussions with funding body, Heart of England. This was used to enhance project delivery and administer the evaluation process as required by the funder.

## Outcomes

At year end the project had engaged with a number of community support groups including Mandem (a men's mental health support) group, Alz Café (dementia support), Wolverhampton College (students with additional needs), City of Sanctuary (asylum seekers and refugees). Activity sessions included rock painting, Christmas decoration making, team building days, social evenings and quizzes. Cooking, canoeing, den-building are planned for future sessions.

A regular monthly drop-in session is also now in place as part of the project offering as well as a book club every six weeks.

## Outputs

- Number of people attending sessions: 115 (39 being repeat attendances)
- 10 people have taken up at least one volunteering session.
- Leaflets have been distributed to local libraires, the Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Alliance and via WCC meals on wheels service to reach those who may be isolated at home.



*KYN coffee mornings (above) offer an opportunity to meet others, whilst the regular workshop sessions at Wildside (left) offer the opportunity for people to try out a range of new activities*

## Our Volunteers

Wildside Volunteers were busy on a variety of projects in 2023-24. These ranged from conducting surveys including for otter, water vole and checking water quality in the canal; cladding Wildside's unsightly storage container and creating a habitat wall on its new exterior. Volunteers also helped with tree and hedge planting, attending a photography workshop, woodland management, managing ponds and nature areas at a number of schools and making model reindeer kits for use in Christmas activities at Wildside.



The soft bank enhancement (coir roll) project along the Staffs & Worcs Canal which was commissioned by the Canal and River Trust continued through the year with Wildside's conservation volunteers helping to install over 50 coir rolls along the canal banks. Help was provided by a number of corporate volunteers as well as fellow volunteers from the Friends of the Smestow Valley group.

Volunteers also helped to support the specific funded projects being run through the Centre including the National Lottery, Wellness to Wildness and Know Your Neighbourhood. There was regular input from two volunteers who helped to keep the grounds looking in prime condition through their planting and weeding work, whilst another volunteer dedicated her employee voluntary hours allocation to helping the admin' team with data input.

We are always grateful for the hard work and dedication of all our volunteers and this year we once again demonstrated our thanks by hosting a thank you event here at the centre during National Volunteers Week.

The event was attended by a number of our regular volunteers, including several Board members who give their time freely to help drive the ongoing strategic development of the centre and ensure it operates within all regulatory guidelines.

The event proved to be a great afternoon – especially the quiz which tested everyone's general knowledge along with the patience of the quizmaster (Conservation Project Leader Chris!) who dealt with the good natured heckling and querying of the correct answers with his usual aplomb.

Conservation Volunteer Numbers					
	Total	Male	Female	18-25	25+
Number of volunteer days	1132	849	283	229	903



*The coir roll project was a major success for the Conservation volunteers this year, with their hard work helping to enhance the soft banks of the Staffs And Worcester canal close to Wildside*



*Anne and Liz's work helped to develop a fledgling 'fernery' at the back of the Centre*

*Our volunteers helped to install a serenity garden featuring a striking wooden candle statue at a local school*



## Trebalisa – a boat for all seasons



It was a relatively calm year for our narrowboat with only one in water inspection taking place after last year's out of water inspection, bottom blacking and LOLER test.



left) who was the oldest passenger we had taken out on the Trebalisa, at age 92.

Trips remained as popular as ever this year. The Christmas period proved to be almost as busy as the summer months with Santa booked for a number of visits to Wildside to meet children (and adults of course) on a suitably festive themed narrowboat throughout December

The 5/344 Transport and General Workers Union Benevolent fund continued to provide for three boat trips per year for local community groups including schools Penn Hall, Green Park and Penn Fields as well as Alz Café which provides support for those experiencing dementia.

Altogether the boat was taken out on 92 trips throughout the year, including a special trip for Lesley (pictured



## Little Explorers

The Little Explorers programme continues to offer pre-schoolers a play-based activity and learning programme which centres on the natural environment.

Sessions this year were led by an experienced activity worker who had undergone a full training programme in the principles of Forest school, the teaching philosophy on which Little Explorers is based.



Attendance for 2023-234 was 1,240 in total (up slightly on the previous year), comprising 655 children and 585 adults.

The programme which works with families primarily based around Whitmore Reans, Aldersley, Compton and Tettenhall areas was supported by funding from a number of organisations including, the Harry Payne Foundation, the Arnold Clark Foundation and Wolverhampton Homes.

## Capital Projects

### Infrastructure

All staff are now using Microsoft 365 Business Premium as the default platform. M365 is a cloud based system which allows full file sharing via SharePoint, a fully protected Microsoft platform. The system also provides the centre's email platform. The 10 M365 licences are provided at no cost for a period of 10 years (until 2031) due to Wildside's charitable status.

As part of the ongoing development and as highlighted in Wildside's strategic development plan (see page 26), work commenced on a new website which is due to be launched summer 2024.

An electronic accountancy platform is also being researched after being highlighted as a priority in the strategic plan.

## Water source heat pump

The system including the heat pump installed in the canal and solar panels on the roof which was funded by a grant from the Enovert Trust in 2022, is now fully operational supplying 'carbon free', hot water and heating to the centre.

During its first year, savings of 80% have been seen on energy bills.



## New outdoor learning space – 'the shed'

Funding for a new learning space to be located in the woodlands was generously provided by TGWU, Asda Foundation and financial service operator OSB Group which supported us with a corporate donation. This year Wildside also partnered with Wolverhampton Homes who acted as consultants on the foundation plans, drawing up the final specifications which were submitted to Wolverhampton City Council Building Control for approval in February. Wolverhampton Homes also provided an additional grant through its Community Chest programme.

Construction of the foundation slab took place in February when Wildside volunteers were supported by members of the Mandem group, a local organisation focused on improving health and wellbeing for men. The construction of the cabin itself took place over one day in March.

Final works including interior insulation and cladding, electrics and outside decking will be completed by the end of June 2024. The official opening of the facility will then take place summer 2024, when community partners, schools, friends and other community representatives will be invited to tour the community facility.

The local community including individuals and groups were polled to select a name for the facility. The chosen name will be unveiled as part of the official opening in July.



The weather wasn't kind on the day of construction, but the team battled through to erect our new learning space.



//

*I just want to say a massive, massive thank you for this.*

*I know it's going to make such a difference to Olivia! What a fantastic outcome from Care Leavers Week.*

//

H.B. Corporate Parenting Officer

## King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS)

The BDM worked in close partnership with Wolverhampton City Council this year to prepare and submit an application to the King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS) 2024.

The application was submitted in September 2023 and the Centre was notified that it had been successful at Stage 1 application at the end of that month. A Stage 2 follow up visit from the Deputy Lieutenant of the West Midlands took place in January 2024. The discussions with the Deputy Lieutenant were extremely constructive and it was felt he was supportive of

Wildside's application, however he did stress that following his recommendations, all applications would go to a national committee and the final decision would rest with that committee.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome in October 2024, with award winners announced in November 2024 to coincide with the King's birthday.

## Strategic Planning

In November, the Board met with the BDM to look at the future development of Wildside, with the aim to set priorities for strategic development over the short, medium and long term (1 – 5 years). A separate meeting with contracted staff was held initially with outcomes going on to inform the Board's discussions.

A questionnaire was circulated prior to each meeting to focus discussions (see box):

The strategy discussions proved to be a constructive focus for staff and Board members to highlight which areas to focus on over the coming 12-60 months.

The following outcomes were agreed upon which will be reviewed at each quarterly Board meeting.

### Strategic focus - priorities

1. What should WAC's annual turnover be in 1 years' time? In 3 years' time? In 5 years' time?
2. How many activity sessions per annum should WAC be holding in 1 years' time? In 3 years' time? In 5 years' time?
3. What type of activities should we be offering in in 1 years' time? In 3 years' time? In 5 years' time?
4. Is one large diesel powered narrowboat the most appropriate vessel for what we need now ?
5. How do we want to grow our relationship with other local organisations including the local council?

## Strategy Discussion Outcomes

1. **To rebuild the Wildside website. New site to include the facility to book and pay for activities on-line and for on-line donations to be made.**

*Quotes received from three web development companies. A decision to build the website in-house was then made based on timings, high cost and the fact that BDM has previous experience building websites.*

*Stage 1 upload of QuickBooks – an new on-line automated accountancy portal has taken place. A new coding system has been set up and financial data is now being recorded using the new system.*

2. **Opportunities / options to open the centre more regularly at weekends and on Bank Holidays. These to be monitored based on impact on staffing (capacity) and cost implications (i.e. would prices need to be higher to meet increased staff costs?).**

*One Bank Holiday session held since the recommendation. Two further sessions planned for the remainder of the year.*

3. **National Lottery Continuation Funding. Set out a plan including a timetable for an application for continuation funding.**

*Meetings have been held with Wildside's Lottery Account Manager who is supportive of a continuation funding application, however they cannot guarantee it would be successful at this stage. The application timeline is:*

- *September 2024: expression of interest identifying areas of focus submitted to Account Manager who will provide feedback on strengths / weaknesses.*
- *March 2025: formal application*
- *May 2025; first stage decision*
- *June 2025: final decision.*

4. **Investigating opportunities to develop commercial activities within the criteria for a CIC.**

*This is a longer term objective: no further progress is reported at the time of writing this report.*

5. **Investigating opportunities to offer overnight stays / activities associated with the opening of the 'shed'.**

*At the end of the financial year we were awaiting completion of the 'shed', but schools, Scouts and other similar groups were informed about the new facility being available to them from summer 2024. A formal launch day for the new space is planned for July 9th to which all relevant organisations will be invited. The event will be staggered in order for different sectors to attend at various times so that the focus can be tailored to their particular needs.*

6. **Being prepared for any change (increase) in funding associated with Social Prescribing.**

*We have established links with the Social Prescribing in Wolverhampton service through the KYN project. Social prescribing coordinators for adults are members of the KYN forum group. In terms of younger people, a focus for the National Lottery project continuation funding application will be young people who are (or at risk of being) out of education for various reasons including behavioural issues. Using the 'shed' for one to one sessions will provide a unique offering to service providers working with this group.*

*[Please note: development activity that has taken place since the initial meeting is shown in italics].*

## Finance and Funding

In some ways, Covid and the impact it had on businesses and organisations such as Wildside feels something of a distant memory. However given that it is only two operating years since the centre had to close its doors to users for considerable periods of time, it is interesting to now reflect on the long-term impact of the pandemic from a financial point of view.

In overall terms the effects haven't been as protracted as we may have once feared. User number continued to rise, even if not to the levels once seen in pre-pandemic years (though this should be qualified by saying the two years immediately before Covid hit, numbers had started to plateau and fall slightly).

Increased activity levels along with the acquisition of a number of key operational grants ensured that we were able to report a healthy surplus of £7,397 at the end of year. This compares to a surplus of £5,492 at the end of the previous year, a significant increase of 34.7%. Increasing profit margins is of course, not the main driver for a charity such as Wildside, however the Board are none the less pleased to be able to report on a trend that continues to reflect steady growth. The Board acknowledges that grants continue to represent the major source of revenue and that this will continue to be the case for Wildside as it is does for many smaller locally based charities throughout the UK, but it is also pleased to see increases in other areas, notably gift and donations from the local business community, whether in the form of monetary donations or in-kind benefits such as corporate volunteering days.

Figures set out in this report show an income and expenditure comparison between 2023 -24 and the previous year, however due to the inherently turbulent nature of the past two years, it may be too early to determine whether changes are indicative of future trends or patterns.

The **income** that the centre receives is split between Unrestricted Funds (that is money earned or donated and is available to meet the day-to-day costs of the centre) and Restricted Funds (which is money that can only be used for purposes laid down by the donor). The Restricted income can vary from year-to-year dependent upon what grants are awarded, and in terms of reporting, this type of income has to be shown in the year that it is received though the money itself may be used in the next or subsequent years (for example to pay staff salaries over the entirety of a two year grant)

Analysis of income (£)	2022/23	2023/24
Activities	18,396	15,432
Rent / Lettings	6,380	5,907
Narrowboat	9,326	11,754
Volunteers	5,053	4,137
Donations	16,279	19,628
Restricted grants / gifts	170,953	141,418
<b>Total</b>	<b>226,387</b>	<b>198,276</b>

Project **expenditure** is funded from the Grants/Gifts income shown above.

Analysis of expenditure (£)	2022/23	2023/24
Staff costs	34,663	42,531
Narrowboat	6,383	5,104
General expenditure	14,969	14,645
Projects	111,138	135,005
<b>Total</b>	<b>167,153</b>	<b>197,285</b>

## Centre staff 2023/24

Catherine Baptie	Project Coordinator Our Space IV
Ian Bennett	Narrowboat Skipper
Alan Chadwick	Narrowboat Skipper
Caroline (Caz) Cox	Environmental Activity Worker
Andy Coulter	Project Officer
Mark Hand	Business Development Manager
Shaun Harrison	Community Conservation Champion
Chris Hopkins	Cycling Instructor (freelance)
Manni Kaur	Project Officer (National Lottery)
Elizabeth Marron	Environmental Activity Worker
Linda McCabe	Programme Coordinator – job share
Chris Muntion-Evans	Conservation Project Leader
Sera Perry	Environmental Activity Worker
Phil Playford	Environmental Activity Worker
Neil Postins	Cycling Instructor (freelance)
Michael Rafferty	Cleaner
Phil Roberts	Canoe Instructor (freelance)
Aysha Shaikh	Administrator, Finance – job share
Sue Shanks	Environmental Activity Worker
Elise Stewart	Our Space Project Coordinator
Tony Stewart	Narrowboat Skipper
Cynthia Stokoe	Environmental Activity Worker
Stephanie Twilley	Environmental Activity Worker

## Board Members 2023/24

Sukhminder Chahal	Steve Downs
Brian Fereday	Len Kruczek
Rob Marris (Vice-Chair)	Ellen Potts
Kevin Sankey (Chair)	Richard Westwood (Treasurer)

We would like to acknowledge with sincere gratitude the support of the following organisations during 2022/3

Arnold Clarke Foundation

Asda Foundation

Cadent Gas

Cycling UK - Big Bike Revival

Canal and River Trust

Groundwork

Haines-Watts Accountants

Harry Payne Fund

Heart of England Community Trust

OSB Group

PIA Wealth Management

Reaching Communities (National Lottery)

Sustrans

Tettenhall Rotary Club

The Big Green Match Fund

Wolverhampton Homes

5/344 Transport and General Workers Union Branch, Benevolent Fund

We would also like to thank the many individuals who have generously given donations to help develop the Centre's work.

A special thanks must also go to all the VOLUNTEERS who have given their time to Wildside - without their commitment and dedication we would not be able to do what we do!

# Reports and Financial Statements



31st March 2024

Registered Company Number: 03241721  
Registered Charity Number: 1059246  
A Company Limited by Guarantee

Haines Watts Wolverhampton Limited  
Chartered Accountants  
Keepers Lane  
The Wergs  
Wolverhampton  
West Midlands  
WV6 8UA

## Contents

	Page
Reference and Administrative Information	3
Report of the Management Committee	4 - 7
Independent Examiner's Report	8
Statement of Financial Activities	9
Balance Sheet	10 - 11
Notes forming part of the Financial Statements	12 - 18

## Reference and administrative information

<b>Registered Name</b>	Wildside Activity centre
<b>Registered Charity Number</b>	1059246
<b>Registered Company Number</b>	03241721
<b>Address of Registered Office</b>	Hordern Road Whitmore Reans Wolverhampton WV6 0HA
<b>Charity Trustees</b>	Kevin Sankey (Chair) Rob Marris (Vice-Chair) Richard Westwood (Treasurer) Liz Ashwell (resigned on 14 <sup>th</sup> September 2023) Sukhminder Chahal Stephen Downs Brian Fereday Len Kruczek Ellen Potts
<b>Company Secretary</b>	Mark Hand
<b>Company Bankers</b>	CAF Bank Ltd 25 Kings Hill Avenue Kings Hill West Malling Kent ME19 4JQ
<b>Company Accountants</b>	Haines Watts Wolverhampton Limited Chartered Accountants Keepers Lane Wolverhampton WV6 8UA

# **Report of the management committee for the year ended 31 March 2024**

## **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **Status**

The centre is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 23rd August 1996 and registered as a charity on 1st December 1996. It took over the assets, aims and objectives of The Queen's Silver Jubilee centre, a Charitable Trust, formerly administered by the then Wolverhampton Metropolitan Borough Council.

### **Management Board**

The Company was established under a Memorandum of Association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. Under those Articles, the members of the Management Board are elected at an AGM to serve a period of up to three years. Those who wish to continue can be re-elected to serve a further term.

Prospective Trustees may be co-opted onto the Board at any point throughout the year with election to full board membership being made at the subsequent AGM. All new members to the Board are presented with a regularly updated Welcome Pack which includes details of the Aims and Objectives of the centre, their responsibilities and all major documents relevant to the operation of the centre and its activities.

Members of the Management Board, who are Directors for the purpose of company law and Trustees for the purpose of charity law, who served during the year up to 31 March 2024 are set out on in the main body of the annual report.

Members of the charitable company guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the charitable company in the event of winding up. The total number of such guarantees is 9 (nine), as of 31 March 2024.

### **Membership of the centre**

Membership of the centre is open to individuals, families and user groups on payment of a nominal annual fee which is reviewed annually by the Board. People wishing to join the centre's membership scheme are formally accepted by the Board at the meeting following their application. Members may if they so wish stand for election to the Board at the Annual General Meeting. Organisations joining the membership scheme are entitled to nominate a representative who is eligible to stand for Trustee status.

The centre also has a category of Friends of the centre, designed for people who want to support the centre and its services without the formal responsibilities of Membership. A lower annual fee is set for Friends of the centre and is reviewed annually by the Board. This change in arrangements was made in 2016 and continues to be well received by supporters.

### **Centre Management**

Ultimate responsibility for the operation of the centre lies with the Trustees. This is delegated to a sub-committee for personnel matters and to the Business Development

- (a) provide enjoyment of the outdoors, by offering users adventurous and environmental activities, thereby promoting wellbeing and an underlying appreciation of the natural world for all; and
- (b) assist users to explore and enjoy the outdoors, and thereby provide them with opportunities for matters such as learning, health improvement, and personal development.
- (c) foster respect and care for the environment, thereby helping to safeguard the planet for future generations.

The aims and objectives as set out are reviewed on an annual basis by the Board to ensure they meet the needs of the centre and the people and communities who access its services.

### **Activities**

The centre is a charity, and its principal activity is the provision of adventurous and environmental education activities to the people and communities of Wolverhampton. To achieve this objective, the centre operates a number of areas - these being: general centre activities, the narrowboat and the Conservation Volunteers.

### **General Activities**

These comprise a diverse range of activities reflecting the wide focus of the centre's work, the main ones being:

- environmental activities - to teach all ages and abilities in a practical, fun-filled way about the local natural environment and how to protect it
- adventurous activities - to give users a taste of more challenging types of activity (such as canoeing, cycling or orienteering). The aspects of working in a team and problem solving are also important
- conservation volunteering – to make improvements to habitat and enhance the environment in the interests of a diverse wildlife

Charges are made for all the general centre activities unless they are subsidised by specific charitable donations. The Board endeavours to keep charges affordable, particularly with regard to the holiday programmes for children and families so that they remain accessible to local residents. A concession scheme is available for families on low income to help them access the holiday activities. The concession provides a 50 percent reduction on all centre charges.

### **Narrowboat**

The narrowboat 'Trebalisa' was acquired under Urban Programme funding in 1992 and is used for taking groups on canal trips. It provides a unique opportunity for all age groups in Wolverhampton to see and experience local history and water based wildlife from a totally different perspective. Some of our users may not have been on a boat before.

Trebalisa underwent an in-water inspection in 2023, passing successfully. In-water inspections are carried out annually. The next out of water inspection is due in 2024 when the hull will once again be painted (black). A stability test was successfully undertaken in

Wolverhampton and we remain deeply grateful to the Trusts, charities, families and individuals who have contributed to funding our work.

## **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

This is the tenth year that the centre has been functioning without any financial support from the City Council which, in the final year, amounted to nearly 70% of the centre's costs. Following the withdrawal of the Council funding, the centre has had to rely heavily on grants, gifts and donations but gradually, and with a lot of hard work from volunteers and staff alike, this dependency is being reduced.

The final outcome for 2023-24 on the Unrestricted (General) Fund was a surplus of £7,397 an increase on last year's surplus of £5,492

Grants and Donations continued to be of significant importance to the Centre. Some of them fund building type work, others fund the provision of specific services such as boat trips for people with additional needs whereas others contribute to the general running costs of the Centre. It is also pleasing to see that, once again in Charitable Income, in particular that received from the Narrowboat, has continued to increase, highlighting the continued need for this provision in the local area.

Overall the Board views this year's outcome with extreme satisfaction and it will continue to monitor the financial situation, maintain a tight control of expenditure and seek out any appropriate sources of funding that become available.

## **Reserves Policy**

The policy sets a target range of held reserves at 3-6 months of general expenditure (that is all budgeted expenditure excluding grant related expenditure) at any time. This is in the normal margins that charities of a similar size set, and the Board consider that this range provides sufficient flexibility in the context of operational requirements, and for an organisation of our size and complexity. Reserves levels and forecasts will be monitored as part of monthly financial reporting, with regular reports provided to the Board of Trustees as part of regular Board Meetings

The centre holds Restricted Reserves of:

- £11,372 for Special Purposes, to be used to cover Pension Fund Deficit costs and other long term liabilities.
- £12,000 as a Bridging Reserve to be used for urgent staffing requirements in the long-term absence or sickness of key volunteers or senior staff.
- £18,443 of restricted grants for projects which will probably be completed during 2024-25.
- The centre holds a Designated Reserve of £8,200 to be used to supplement the existing office work, which can fluctuate from season to season and, a Building and Boat Maintenance and Development Fund of £2,475. This is considered essential after the centre assumed responsibility for the building and its fabric.

We recognise that in the current economic climate, small charities will continue to face levels of uncertainty, but the Board is content that 2023-24 has been another year of progress in key areas against a backdrop of ongoing challenge.

## **FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

Company law requires the Management Board to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the charitable company as at the balance sheet date and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including income and expenditure, for the financial year. In preparing those financial statements, the Directors and Trustees should follow best practice and:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to assume that the company will continue on that basis.

The Trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

### **Accountants**

Following a Board review and discussion, Haines Watts Wolverhampton Limited (Chartered Accountants) were re-appointed as the charitable company's independent examiners and accountants for the year.


This report has been prepared in accordance with the 'Statement of Recommended Practice - Accounting and Reporting by Charities' and in accordance with the special provisions for small companies under Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Management Board on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2024, signed on its behalf by



Kevin Sankey

Chair



Rob Marris

Vice Chair

## **Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Wildside Activity Centre Limited**

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the company for the year ended 31 March 2024 which are set out on pages 9 to 18.

### **Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your company's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

### **Independent examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:  .....

Matthew Baker BA FCA  
Haines Watts Wolverhampton Limited  
Keepers Lane  
The Wergs  
Wolverhampton  
WV6 8UA

Date 27/08/2024

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES**  
**(including Income and Expenditure Account)**  
**for the year ended 31st March 2024**

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2024	Total Funds 2023
		£	£	£	£	£
<b>Incoming resources</b>						
Voluntary Income	2	20,481	-	140,718	161,199	186,693
Charitable Activities	3	37,077	-	-	37,077	39,694
Investment Interest		3,335	-	-	3,335	968
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>		<b>60,893</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>140,718</b>	<b>201,611</b>	<b>227,355</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>						
Charitable Activities	4	53,496	15	143,774	197,285	167,153
Depreciation		-	255	4,917	5,172	3,979
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>		<b>53,496</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>148,691</b>	<b>202,457</b>	<b>171,132</b>
<b>Net Incoming Resources</b>						
Net incoming (outgoing) resources for the year	5	7,397	(270)	(7,973)	(846)	56,223
<b>Total funds at 1 April 2023</b>		<b>32,012</b>	<b>10,945</b>	<b>164,251</b>	<b>207,208</b>	<b>150,985</b>
<b>Total funds at 31 March 2024</b>		<b>39,409</b>	<b>10,675</b>	<b>156,278</b>	<b>206,362</b>	<b>207,208</b>

# **Balance Sheet at 31st March 2024**

	Notes	£	2024 £	2023 £
<b>Fixed Assets</b>				
Tangible Assets	9		68,089	55,228
<b>Current Assets</b>				
Debtors	10	3,107		1,569
Prepayments	11	559		891
Cash at bank and in hand		142,321		156,066
		<u>145,987</u>		<u>158,526</u>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>				
Accruals	12	(7,714)	138,273	(6,546)
<b>Net current assets</b>			138,273	151,980
<b>Net assets</b>			<u>206,362</u>	<u>207,208</u>
<b>Funds</b>				
<b>Restricted</b>				
Fixed Assets Grant		64,776		
Pension Deficit		11,372		
Bridging Reserve		12,000		
Pears Foundation Fund		5,000		
W'ton Social Advice Group		7,579		
McNamara Fund		5,302		
T&GWU		360		
National Lottery		31,806		
CRT Our Space Phase 4		45		
T&GWU (MS Centre)		2,925		
Asda Foundation - Cabin		7,658		
Cycling UK BBR 7		382		
Heart of England (Know Your Neighbour)		1,230		
CBC Sounds of Green		495		
Wolverhampton Homes		3,548		
Cadent		1,000		
Arnold Clarke		800		
			156,278	164,251
<b>Designated</b>				
Admin Support		8,200		
Building & Boat Mntce/ Dev't		<u>2,475</u>	10,675	10,945
<b>Unrestricted</b>				
General Fund - Bfwd		32,012		
-Current year		7,397	39,409	32,012
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>			<u>206,362</u>	<u>207,208</u>

## Balance Sheet at 31st March 2024 - continued

The company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 March 2024

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for:

- a) ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with Sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and
- b) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the company.

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 23rd August 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Kevin Sankey .....  
Chair

Robert Marris .....  
Vice Chair

**Notes forming part of the financial statements  
for the year ended 31 March 2024**

**1. Accounting policies**

- (a) The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, and in accordance with FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" ("FRS 102"), "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" the Statement of Recommended Practice for charities applying FRS102, the Companies Act 2006 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice as it applies from 1 January 2015. The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.
- (b) Voluntary income is received by way of donations and gifts and is included in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable. The value of services provided by volunteers has not been included.
- (c) Grants, including grants for the purchase of fixed assets, are recognised in full in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year in which they are receivable.
- (d) Incoming resources from investments is included when receivable.
- (e) Resources expended are recognised in the period in which they are incurred. Resources expended include attributable VAT which cannot be recovered.
- (f) Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset over its expected useful life.
 

Narrowboat	Over 15 years straight line
Centre Equipment	15% Reducing balance
Water source heatpump	Over 15 years straight line
Learning Facility	Over 15 years straight line
- (g) General funds are donations and other incoming resources receivable or generated for the objects of the charity without further specified purpose and can be used in accordance with the charitable objects at the discretion of the trustees.
- (h) Designated funds are unrestricted funds set aside by the trustees for specific future purposes or projects.
- (i) Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund, together with a fair allocation of management and support costs.
- (j) The company operates a defined contribution scheme for employees the assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the company. The annual contributions payable are charged to the Income and Expenditure account as incurred.
- (k) The company operates a defined benefit pension scheme for employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the company. The contributions to the scheme are charged to the Income and Expenditure Account to spread the cost of pensions over the service lives of employees. Variations from the regular costs are spread over the average expected remaining working lives of current members in the scheme.

## 2. Voluntary Income

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2024 Total	2023 Total
	£	£	£	£
Membership subscriptions	192		192	380
Gift and donations	19,589		19,589	15,360
Grants - General		140,718	140,718	170,253
Other Income	-		-	-
Gifts in kind - accountancy	700		700	700
	<b>20,481</b>	<b>140,718</b>	<b>161,199</b>	<b>186,693</b>

## 3. Incoming Resources - Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2024 Total	2023 Total
	£	£	£	£
General Activities	15,432	-	15,432	18,396
Narrowboat	11,754	-	11,754	9,326
Volunteers	4,137	-	4,137	5,053
Lettings	2,003	-	2,003	2,853
Use of Facilities	3,904	-	3,904	3,527
Miscellaneous Sales	- 153	-	153	539
	<b>37,077</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>37,077</b>	<b>39,694</b>

## 4. Resources Expended - Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted	Designated	Restricted	2024 Total	2023 Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Staff Costs - General	42,531			42,531	34,663
Premises	7,420			7,420	6,831
Travel	12			12	87
Communications	695			695	561
Admin Supplies	1,870			1,870	1,871
Resources & Governance	2,544			2,544	2,604
Boat	5,089	15		5,104	6,383
Projects	-		135,005	135,005	111,138
Other	1,404			1,404	2,315
Governance costs	-			-	-
Independent examiners fee	700			700	700
	<b>62,265</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>135,005</b>	<b>197,285</b>	<b>167,153</b>
Cost apportionment	(8,769)	-	8,769	-	-
	<b>53,496</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>143,774</b>	<b>197,285</b>	<b>167,153</b>

## 5. Net incoming resources for the year

This is stated after charging:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Depreciation	49	57
Independent examiners fees	700	700

During 2024 and 2023 no payments were made to the members of the Management Board for remuneration

## 6. Staff costs and numbers

Staff costs were as follows:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Salaries and wages	28,943	28,943
Social security costs	1,755	1,198
Pension contributions - Defined contributions	-	267
Pension contributions - Defined benefit	5,779	4,255
	<u>36,477</u>	<u>34,663</u>

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000. The average weekly number of employees during the year, calculated on the base of full-time equivalents, was 1.6 During the year no employees paid pension contributions under a defined contribution scheme and 4 employees paid pension contributions under a defined benefit scheme

## 7. Taxation

The charitable company is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities

## 8. Defined Benefit Pension Scheme

The company operates a pension scheme providing benefits based on a final pensionable pay. The assets of the funded scheme are held separately from those of the company, being invested with insurance companies. Contributions to the scheme are charged to the income and expenditure account so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the company. The contributions are determined by a qualified actuary on the basis of triennial valuations using the projected unit method. The most recent valuation was at March 2022.

## 9. Tangible fixed assets

	Narrowboat	Centre Equipment	Water source heat pump	Learning Facility	Total
	£	£	£		£
Cost					
At 1 April 2023	37,257	21,141	58,824	-	117,222
Additions	-	-	-	18,034	18,034
31 March 2024	37,257	21,141	58,824	18,034	135,256
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2023	37,257	20,815	3,922	-	61,994
Change for the year	-	49	3,922	1,202	5,173
At 31 March 2024	37,257	20,864	7,844	1,202	67,167
Net book value					
At 31 March 2024	-	277	50,980	16,832	68,089
At 31 March 2023	-	326	54,902	-	55,228

## 10. Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
General debtors	3,107	1,569

## 11. Prepayments

	2024 £	2023 £
Prepayments	559	891

## 12. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £	2023 £
Accruals	7,714	6,546

### 13. Capital and Reserves

	Balance at 1 April 2023	Income	Expenditure	Grant Amortisation	Balance at 31 Mar 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Restricted Funds</b>					
Grant for Fixed Assets	53,293	16,400	-	(4,917)	64,776
Pension Deficit	11,372	-	-	-	11,372
Bridging Reserve	12,000	-	-	-	12,000
Pears Foundation	5,000	-	-	-	5,000
W'ton Social Advice Group	11,929	-	(4,350)	-	7,579
McNamara Fund	5,302	-	-	-	5,302
<b>National Lottery -</b>					
Grant for 2022/2023 (1)	4,028	-	(4,028)	-	-
Grant for 2022/2023 (2)	34,052	-	(34,052)	-	-
Grant for 2023/2024 (1)		34,871	(34,871)	-	-
Grant for 2023/2024 (2)		34,871	(3,065)	-	31,806
	<b>38,080</b>	<b>69,742</b>	<b>(76,016)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>31,806</b>
<b>Project Grants</b>					
T&GWU (Penn Hall/Distress Fund/ MS Centre)	5,010	-	(1,725)	-	3,285
Alpkit	100	-	(100)	-	-
John Lewis	4,533	-	(4,533)	-	-
CBC Sounds of Green	1,000	-	(505)	-	495
TGWU (Cabin)	-	-	-	-	-
WCC Big Ideas	4,035	-	(4,035)	-	-
CRT Our Space 4	1,821	-	(1,776)	-	45
ASDA Foundation - Cabin	7,658	-	-	-	7,658
Heart of England (Harry Payne)	956	-	(956)	-	-
Cycling UK BBR 7	382	-	-	-	382
Heart of England (Know Your Neighbour)	1,740	29,623	(30,133)	-	1,230
Sustrans	40	585	(625)	-	-
Groundwork (New to Nature)	-	19,020	(19,020)	-	-
Wolverhampton Homes		3,548			3,548
Cadent		1,000			1,000
Arnold Clarke		800			800
	<b>27,275</b>	<b>54,576</b>	<b>(63,408)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>18,443</b>
	<b>164,251</b>	<b>140,718</b>	<b>(143,774)</b>	<b>(4,917)</b>	<b>156,278</b>
<b>Designated Fund</b>					
Admin Support	8,200	-	-	-	8,200
Building & Boat Mntce & Dev't	2,745	-	15	(255)	2,475
	<b>10,945</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>(255)</b>	<b>10,675</b>
<b>Unrestricted Fund</b>					
General Fund	32,012	60,893	(53,496)	-	39,409
	<b>207,208</b>	<b>201,611</b>	<b>(197,285)</b>	<b>(5,172)</b>	<b>206,362</b>

### Designated Funds

#### Admin Support

The administrative work of the centre fluctuates from season to season and this fund will be used to supplement the existing office work as necessary.

#### Building & Boat Maintenance and Development

The centre is now responsible for the structure of the building and, with the boat, needs a fund to cover inevitable future major costs.

### Unrestricted Fund

#### General Fund

This is the amount at the end of the year that is available to the Trustees to use in accordance with the objectives of the charity.

### **14. Analysis of Net Assets Between Funds**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Designated Funds</b>	<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Funds balances at 31 March 2024 and represented by:				
Tangible Fixed Assets	-	-	64,776	64,776
Net Current Assets	39,409	10,675	91,502	141,586
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>39,409</b>	<b>10,675</b>	<b>156,278</b>	<b>206,362</b>

## Restricted Funds

### Grant for Fixed Assets

This represents the written down value of the grant provided for the building/boat/water source heat pump

### Pension Deficit Fund

This was provided specifically to cover any relevant costs and other long term liabilities should the centre be unable to continue in operation.

### Bridging Reserve

This is to be used for urgent staffing requirements in the long-term absence or sickness of key volunteers or senior staff.

### Pears Foundation

This fund is for the consolidation of recently developed activities.

### Wolverhampton Social Advice Group

This is to be used for the development of the Centre's main activities

### National Lottery – Wellbeing at Wildside

This grant is for therapeutic activity sessions for people living with the effects of disabilities, poor mental health or long term health needs, and also to encourage greater take up of activities from local families.

### McNamara Fund

This is a legacy and is to be used to provide support and services for people in the local area.

### T&GWU Penn Hall / Distress Fund / MS Centre

These were given to provide boat trips and other activities for schools and other organisations supporting those with additional needs.

### TGWU Cabin

This was given to purchase the modular building which will form the new outdoor learning space at the centre

### Alpkit

A small grant to purchase canoeing equipment

### CRT Our Space IV

Grant to promote the environmental and leisure benefits of accessing the local canal network (phase 4 of 4)

### WCC Big Ideas

Grant from the City Council to fund a project supporting young people out of the work environment

### Asda Foundation Cabin

To fund the preparatory groundworks and internal fit of the modular building which will form the centre's new outdoor learning space

### Arnold Clark

Unrestricted grant used to fund the Little Explorers programme

### Heart of England (Harry Payne)

Given to support the continued work of the Little Explorers programme

### Groundwork UK

Grant facilitated through Nature Works to fund a 12 month placement for a Community Conservation Champions to support our volunteer programme and help promote the Centre to the local community

### Cadent Gas



Corporate donation to fund the refurbishment of the narrowboat wharf ramp

### Wolverhampton Home Community Chest

Grant award to support the costs of building / fitting out the new log cabin learning space



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