



## Downland Volunteer Group Trustees Annual Report (TAR)

The Downland Volunteer Group is a registered Charity (No 1112181) and a Private Limited Company by guarantee without share capital use of 'Limited' exemption (Companies House Reference 05572984).

This report is compiled and endorsed by the management committee comprising the following Trustees.

Joe Clerkin<sup>1</sup> Chairman, Trustee and Director  
Jean Pocock<sup>1</sup> Trustee and Director  
William Beard<sup>1</sup> Trustee and Director

And the following other committee members

Rollo Duckworth  
Rosita Maskell

Registered Address

The Surgery  
High Street  
Compton  
RG20 6NJ

Principal Banking

MetroBank  
Southampton Row  
London

Contact Details

Email: [DVG.Office@btinternet.com](mailto:DVG.Office@btinternet.com)  
[DVG.Office@btinternet.com](mailto:DVG.Office@btinternet.com)  
[DVG.Handebus@btinternet.com](mailto:DVG.Handebus@btinternet.com)

Website: [Downlandvolgroup.org.uk](http://Downlandvolgroup.org.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> Signatories to the Metrobank Account

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## Objectives and Activities;

The objectives of the DVG are identified in the Constitution as

**"TO RELIEVE PERSONS IN THE DOWNLAND AREAS WHO ARE ELDERLY, SICK OR DISABLED OR WHO ARE OTHERWISE IN NEED BY THE PROVISION OF VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIST SUCH PERSONS IN ANY WAY THAT MAY BE REQUIRED"**

## Achievements and performance report presented at the AGM on 12/6/24.

The last financial year which runs from April to March was an exceptionally busy year. Our volunteer drivers made a total of 994 trips to medical appointments in that period compared to 746 trips in the previous financial year. In this calendar year from the 1st of January we have gained 27 new clients possibly due to the press coverage we have received in recent months.

The highlight of the year was the launch of the new all-electric HandeBus. The launch held in February at Hilliers was well attended with both District Councillors, the Mayor of Newbury and a number of our sponsors present. We received good press coverage in the Newbury Weekly News featuring our MP Laura Farris endorsing this greener community transport vehicle, and in the village news sheets featuring the District Councillors supporting our commitment to an environmentally friendly form of transport. In turn we featured on some of their social media releases. I mentioned at the last AGM that it would be parked in Leckhampstead but we decided to continue parking at the Chieveley surgery where it is recharged each night.

The DVG's main activity is helping residents attend their medical appointments. This is the breakdown of where we have taken them:

| Location             | No. of Trips | % of Total |
|----------------------|--------------|------------|
| Chieveley Surgery    | 226          | 23         |
| W. Berks Hospital    | 192          | 19         |
| Rehabilitation       | 145          | 15         |
| Royal Berks Hospital | 131          | 13         |
| Other Hospitals      | 78           |            |
| Dentists             | 45           | 5          |
| Compton Surgery      | 33           | 3          |
| Misc                 | 144          | 14         |
| Total                | 994          | 100        |

We have 35 Volunteer drivers, 12 office volunteers and 8 HandeBus drivers. We have calculated, from the detailed records we keep to support the Grant we receive from West Berks Council, our volunteers gave an estimated 2,500 hours of their time for free



helping the Downland community. When you talk with the people we take to their medical appointments, many will acknowledge the support they receive from the DVG and in some instances how they would find it impossible to attend their appointments without us.

May I take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers for the time and effort they give to support our community.

Our big challenge this year is to recruit more volunteers given the growing demand for our services. Our services depend on the generosity of volunteers giving their time to support the Downland communities. Please encourage your friends and neighbours who may be able to spare a few hours a week, or a month to join us in helping the residents in our area. They will be most welcome.

Thank you again to our volunteers.

Joe Clerkin

Chairman

## Financial report – Presented by the treasurer at the AGM on 12/6/24.

This is my third treasurer's report since taking on the role in November 2021.

I would like to thank the other committee members for their support and challenge to me throughout the last year which, financially speaking, has been very busy. I would also like to thank all of our volunteers, car and bus drivers and office volunteers.

Further thanks go to Terry Goodsell for examining the accounts this year and keeping me on an even keel.

Finally, I would like to thank all of our financial benefactors throughout the year - some I will refer to shortly.

As has already been mentioned by Joe, this year has been very busy. For the accounts we began with a COIF savings account and three separate Metrobank accounts.

Latterly, this includes a current account, the Butlin legacy account, and the Project Pegasus account. At the start of the year we were mindful that the Financial Services Compensation Scheme only allows the protection of up to £85,000 in a single banking entity. As our assets were substantially greater than that, we felt we needed to move money into another bank account and we chose the Charity Bank as it offered (at the time) a reasonable rate of interest at 3.36%. As such £84,000 was moved to that bank. This matures in June this year so no income is recorded against that as yet. We anticipate about £2800 in total. We have chosen that that interest will become income to our operating funds. We anticipate keeping the investment with the Charity Bank account where interest rates have risen for another year.

In addition, by October, the Pegasus account rose to a substantial figure and I am grateful to Susan Leman for her individual contributions as well as the contribution from Phillip Wahlen on behalf of him and his sister. Philip has sadly passed away but not before participating in the January Handebus launch and witnessing the fruits of his generosity. The Good Exchange contributed some further match funding and we received £1,500 unexpectantly from the Miss Lawrence Trust based in Kintbury. We also received a considerable contribution from my own employer Boeing, who match fund \$10 for every hour of volunteering I donate to the DVG. This came to nearly £6,000.

Clearly we also spent a lot of money last year. Most notably, the bulk of the capital expenditure for 2023/24 was the new Handebus at £78556 and the chargepoint installation at £2910.

If we look at the Income and Expenditure for the year:

We can see increased activity in both the Car Driving and the Handebus has resulted in increased turnover and increased losses in those areas. To compensate we have increased the Butlin subsidy from £3 to £4 for surgery visits and increased the individual contribution for clients from £1 to £2. Prior to the subsidy the clients were paying £4 for surgery visits.



Examined Accounts – Balance Sheet at 31/3/24

|  | <u>23/24</u>  |                                   | <u>22/23</u>  |
|--|---------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| <b><u>Fixed Assets</u></b>                 |               | <b><u>Fixed Assets</u></b>        |               |
| Old Handybus *                             | 2500          | Old Handybus *                    | 2500          |
| New HandeBus *                             | 78556         | New HandeBus *                    | 0             |
| Chargepoint                                | 2910          | Chargepoint                       | 0             |
| Fixed Assets Total                         | 83966         |                                   | 2500          |
| <b><u>Cash Assets</u></b>                  |               | <b><u>Cash Assets</u></b>         |               |
| C.O.I.F.                                   | 21858         | C.O.I.F.                          | 21688         |
| MetroBank Current                          | 9838          | MetroBank Current                 | 8838          |
| MetroBank Savings Butlin                   | 11717         | MetroBank Savings Butlin          | 96162         |
| MetroBank Savings Handybus                 | 3605          | MetroBank Savings Handybus        | 68034         |
| Charity Bank                               | 84000         | Charity Bank                      | 0             |
| Cash in Hand                               | 365           | Cash in Hand                      | 357           |
| Total Cash Assets                          | 131382        |                                   | 195079        |
| <b>Total Assets</b>                        | <b>215349</b> | <b>Total Assets</b>               | <b>197579</b> |
| <b><u>Current Liabilities</u></b>          |               | <b><u>Current Liabilities</u></b> |               |
| <b>Totals Liabilities</b>                  | <b>0</b>      | <b>Totals Liabilities</b>         | <b>0</b>      |
| Capital Employed                           | 215349        | Capital Employed                  | 197579        |
| * Physical assets added onto balance Sheet |               |                                   |               |

| <u>INCOME</u>   |  | 2023/24      | <u>INCOME</u>                  |  | 2022/23                   |
|---|--|--------------|--------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| <u>Clients</u>  |  |              | <u>Clients</u>                 |  |                           |
| Passenger Contributions   |  | 6598         | Passenger Contributions        |  | 3355                      |
| Ms Butlin (1)   |  | 717          | Ms Butlin (1)                  |  | 300                       |
| Less Drivers Expenses   |  | -10731       | Less Drivers Expenses          |  | -6535                     |
|   |  | -3416        |                                |  | -2880                     |
| <u>Handybus</u>   |  |              | <u>Handybus</u>                |  |                           |
| Dept of Transport   |  | 408          | Dept of Transport              |  | 588                       |
| Handybus Billings   |  | 2416         | Handybus Billings              |  | 1711                      |
| Less Handybus Costs   |  | -4576        | Less Handybus Costs            |  | -2654                     |
|   |  | -1752        |                                |  | -355                      |
| <u>Other Income</u>   |  |              | <u>Other Income</u>            |  |                           |
| West Berks Council  |  | 4472         | West Berks Council             |  | 3487                      |
| Bank Interest-COIF  |  | 1040         | Bank Interest-COIF             |  | 4                         |
| Boeing  |  | 5979         | Boeing                         |  | 1749                      |
| Donations Misc  |  | 1635         | Donations Misc                 |  | 3346                      |
| HandeBus donations  |  | 14672        | HandeBus donations             |  | 68000                     |
| Butlin Interest   |  | 269          | Butlin Interest                |  |                           |
| Pegasus Interest  |  | 428          | Pegasus Interest               |  | 34                        |
| Charity Bank Interest   |  | 0            | Charity Bank Interest          |  | 0                         |
| Donations PC's & Fete   |  | 0            | Donations PC's & Fete          |  | 250                       |
|   |  | 38633        |                                |  | 76870                     |
| <b>Total Income</b>   |  | <b>38633</b> | <b>Total Income</b>            |  | <b>73635</b>              |
| Turnover  |  | 37936        |                                |  | 82790                     |
| <u>EXPENDITURE</u>  |  |              | <u>EXPENDITURE</u>             |  |                           |
| AGM Costs   |  | 42           | AGM Costs                      |  | 85                        |
| Audit Fees  |  | 83           | Audit Fees                     |  | 60                        |
| Butlin Transfers (1)  |  | 717          | Butlin Transfers               |  | 300                       |
| Computer Costs  |  | 180          | Computer Costs                 |  | 22                        |
| DBS Costs   |  | 358          | DBS Costs                      |  | 104                       |
| Insurances (2)  |  | 439          | Insurances                     |  | 322                       |
| Driver Assessment Costs   |  | 0            | Driver Assessment Costs        |  | 275                       |
| Legal & Professional Costs  |  | 59           | Legal & Professional Costs     |  | 13                        |
| Lunch Club (3)  |  | 400          | Lunch Club                     |  | 420                       |
| Office Workers Mileage and Office Costs   |  | 284          | Office Costs                   |  | 588                       |
| Office maintenance  |  | 0            | Office maintenance             |  | 0                         |
| Parking Discs/Parking Fees  |  | 2            | Parking Discs/Parking Fees     |  | 27                        |
| Printing, Postage & Stationery  |  | 832          | Printing, Postage & Stationery |  | 313                       |
| Gifts (5)   |  | 188          | Gifts                          |  | 0                         |
| Good Exchange (4)   |  | 1180         | Good Exchange                  |  | 0                         |
| Subscriptions + donations   |  | 0            | Subscriptions and donations    |  | 0                         |
| Telephone   |  | 607          | Telephone                      |  | 593                       |
| Website & Publicity Costs   |  | 218          | Website & Publicity Costs      |  | 0                         |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>  |  | <b>20895</b> | <b>Total Expenditure</b>       |  | <b>3122</b>               |
| Surplus/(Deficit) for Year  |  | <b>17738</b> | Surplus/(Deficit) for Year     |  | <b>70513</b> <sup>a</sup> |
| HandeBus Donations  |  | 16610        | HandeBus Donations             |  | 68034                     |
| Total Operating Surplus   |  | 1128         |                                |  | 2479                      |
| <u>Notes</u>  |  |              |                                |  |                           |
| (1) The Butlin income is a transfer from a restricted account to the general account so is shown as both an income and expenditure                          |  |              |                                |  |                           |
| (2) This is business public and employer liability insurance. Vehicle Insurance is covered under Handybus costs   |  |              |                                |  |                           |
| (3) This is a single contribution to the Lunch Club Christmas Lunch   |  |              |                                |  |                           |
| (4) This figure is the amount transferred to the Good Exchange to obtain the match funding for the HandeBus. The figure is returned in the donations figure |  |              |                                |  |                           |
| (5) These are gifts to volunteers and our auditor who have retired from service to the DVG  |  |              |                                |  |                           |
| a Figure corrected  |  |              |                                |  |                           |

## Considering Income

We received significant donations primarily for the HandeBus but these included a very generous retirement collection from Bob Lemans funeral and also significant donations from Susan Leman, The Good Exchange and Philip Wahlen.



We were pleased to receive an increase in the grant offered by West Berkshire Council. We have also received continued support from the West Ilsley Quiz and Bingo. As mentioned, the match funding from Boeing has significantly increased – it takes a lot of time to procure a bus!

### Considering Expenditure

For expenditure our largest operational expenditure continues to be the car drivers reimbursed mileage. This has increased due to increased trips and the payment of the enhanced mileage rate for passenger carriage. Advice given to our MP Laura Farris from HM Treasury ministers.

Our bus insurance increased primarily from December we were temporarily running two buses.

We provided a few gifts, to our outgoing accounts examiner and a few of our drivers who have handed in their (DVG) keys.

Printing costs increased as we provided more materials to support the launch of the new bus.

Mike Purchase did an excellent job in niftily negotiating our telephone/broadband costs stay broadly the same.

We have introduced two new lines on the expenditure that were not present last year. This is the Butlin donations which is a nil sum gain for the DVG and the transfer of money to the Good Exchange to qualify for their match funding. These lines prevent the accounts double counting income advice given by our external examiner.

For the Balance Sheet we can see the surplus for the year and the procurement of the bus has moved cash assets to fixed assets. Our balance sheet has increased by over £17,500.

### Conclusion and Forward Look

Financially - a very busy year. To conclude our operating finances remain healthy and we have replaced our most significant asset thanks to our generous donors. This has been a second year of enhanced income to procure a Handebus and chargepoint. We have not included any depreciation thus-far and need to agree that in 2024/25.

Looking further to 2024/25 year the office subgroup have been busy looking at improving our office systems. If we adopted an off the shelf system that could cost us circa £1000 per year which we currently could afford. This may become essential if demand for our services continues to grow with, for example, expanded NHS activities in the weekend. We may have to tweak our recommended donations also.

I commend these accounts for approval by the AGM subject to any questions.

The Treasurer's report was accepted by the Annual General Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

W. Gareth Beard  
Treasurer



## Structure, governance and management;

Three of the company directors are also Trustees of the Charity, a fourth Trustee resigned at the AGM due to other commitments. In addition to the Trustees the Charity is run through a management committee which comprises another two committee members. The management committee meets every quarter or more frequently as needed. Generally, the following are discussed, performance and stakeholder engagement, finances, Handebus update, office volunteers update, driver volunteers recruitment and other business. Meeting decisions are recorded through minutes and actions are allocated to members present.

The Chairman generally is responsible for the overarching management of the Group, compliance with the articles of association, liaising externally with key stakeholders including West Berkshire Council, the Downland Practice, local Members of Parliament and other voluntary groups within the West Berkshire Council. He is accountable for any service agreements made with other organisations. The Chairman will investigate any complaints against the group or its members.

The Treasurer is responsible for the financial probity of the group. Generally arranging for financial transactions including the payment of expenses, insurances, application for grants and the banking of donations. The treasurer operates within an agreed written Financial Scheme of Delegation which allows sole authorisation of payments up to £200, another committee member has to approve any expenditure up to £1000 and the whole committee must approve all expenditure over £1000. The treasurer is not allowed to transfer money to himself. Any expenses to be settled by cheque requiring two other signatories.

The Bus Manager is responsible for the smooth running of the HandeBus service, co-ordinates the drivers, the maintenance of the bus and liaison with to the Department of Transport for the Bus Service Operators Grant.

Another Trustee co-ordinates the office volunteer rota and looks after the smooth liaison with the clients and the drivers. She ensures that new volunteers are appropriately vetted using the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Appointment of the committee members is effected by democratic election of the volunteers of the group at the Annual General Meeting. The members are generally the volunteer bus and car drivers and the office volunteers.

Key decisions taken in 2023/24 were the final investment decision, procurement and payment for a replacement for the 2010 diesel Handybus with a state of the art electric Handebus and a chargepoint. The decision was made to dispose of the old Handybus although this did not occur during 2023/24.

Further work was commissioned to establish improvements to the office systems for recording and allocating volunteers for client transport and improve data security.



## Investment Policy

The DVG does not have a formal investment policy. The current strategy is to invest all funds in such a way that they are protected under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS). During the 2023-24 period part of the Butlin Restricted fund (£84,000) was split invested with the Charity Bank (Account Reference), the remaining operational part was invested in an instant savings account with the MetroBank. The figures are detailed in the section on Restricted Funds.

The other Restricted fund (for the HandeBus) is invested in a separate MetroBank instant savings account.

For the period 2023-24 some Reserved Funds were invested with CCLA. These funds are not protected by FSCS and the intention was declared to close this account and bring that balance into the Metrobank suite of accounts. Charity Bank and MetroBank are separate financial entities which results in the total protection by FSCS being £190,000.

## Reserves Policy

The DVG does not have a reserves policy but has approximately £38,000 in unrestricted reserves. This will be sufficient to cover any for-seeable liabilities for several years. No significant liabilities were identified at the end of 2023/24.

## Creditors

During the period 2023/24 one client managed to obtain the services of the group without making any contribution. The Group has written off this liability after strenuous efforts to recover the money.

## Insurances

The DVG annually renews Public Liability and Employers Liability insurance. Additionally, the DVG holds vehicle insurances.

## Service Level Agreement and other permissions

In February 2022 the DVG agreed a Service Level Agreement with West Berkshire Council in order to qualify for a £50,000 capital grant to replace the Handybus. The Treasurer holds the compliance arrangements for all of the conditions in the agreement and this is reviewed annually.

The DVG have two Permits under Section 19 of the Transport Act which allows the recovery of fares on a not for profit basis. One of these is temporary pending disposal of the second bus.



## Assets

During 2023/24 year the DVG had acquired a new HandeBus, installed a three phase charge-point at the Downland Practice and retained the old Handybus pending sale. This accounts for the significant change between cash assets and fixed assets.

## Safeguarding

Before a new volunteer is accepted to work on behalf of the group they are vetted using the Disclosure and Barring Service Enhanced checks. Many of our volunteers were vetted some time ago and as a matter of policy the group decided to renew these checks on a rolling five year programme. We maintain records for each volunteer.

No complaints have been received by the group over the conduct of any of the volunteers in 2023/24. Any complaint would be investigated by the Trustees. Many clients have expressed their thanks and admiration for the services we provide.

A project is underway to look at a more effective, efficient and compliant office system for booking volunteers and clients activities and better manager individuals records, eg addresses. This will improve compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations.

## Restricted Funds

The two restricted funds operated by the group are

|                 | <b>2023/24</b> | <b>2022/23</b> |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Butlin</b>   | £95717         | £96162         |
| <b>HandeBus</b> | £3605          | £68034         |

The Butlin fund was created from a bequest by Mrs Barbara Butlin in 2022 and is restricted, in accordance with her wishes, for subsidising transport of clients to and from GP surgeries. The interest from the fund is not restricted and is used to support the finances of the group generally.

The HandeBus fund was created from donations and grants obtained through 2022/23 and 2023/24 for the procurement of a replacement electric HandeBus. The majority of the fund was expended in 2023/24 for the procurement of an original Ford eTransit van, the conversion by GM Minibuses, type certification, livery and the installation of a chargepoint at the Downland Practice in Chieveley. The fund has been used subsequently for some minor functional modifications to the bus also. A residual amount exists in case further modifications are required, such as a rear air conditioning unit for heating and cooling the passengers. The new bus was publicly launched in January 2024 and many of the donors were invited.

## Depreciation

At the end of 2023/24 the DVGs key assets were the Handebus, the Chargepoint and the office computer. No allowance for depreciation has been made for the bus or the charge-point in 2023/24 but will be made in 2024/25. It is proposed to allow for depreciation of the Handebus at 10% of the original value per annum and the charge-point at 50% such that the bus will be written off after 10 years and the charge-point after 2 years.

The bus depreciation is based upon the warranty on the battery on the bus of 8 years. The chargepoint installation was largely the modification of the surgery electrics and therefore is not an asset which the DVG can easily remove.

Signed on behalf of and with the agreement of the Trustees and in accordance with the statement of recommended practice.



Joe Clerkin  
Chairman



## Examiners Report

**DOWNLAND VOLUNTEER GROUP ACCOUNTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**  
**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO**  
**DIRECTORS OF THE DOWNLAND VOLUNTEER GROUP**

Having examined the necessary documentation I have pleasure in reporting on the abbreviated accounts and the profit and loss account enclosed with this report for the year ended 31 March 2024 without undertaking a full audit

**Independent Examiner's Statement**

I am of the opinion that:

- a. The financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records kept by the company under Section 386 of the Companies Act 2006.
- b. Having regard to, and on the basis of, the information contained in those accounting records the attached financial statements have been drawn up in a manner consistent with the accounting provisions of the Companies Act 2006, so far as these are applicable to the company.
- c. The audit exemption conditions have been met by the company and, at no time during the year, did the company fall into a non-exemption category.
- d. No matter has come to my attention in connection with the examination which gave me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect accounting records have not been kept, or that the accounts do not accord with those records.
- e. There are no matters which have come to my attention in connection with the examination, to which the directors attention should be drawn to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.
- f. I am satisfied that the Treasurer, supported by the Directors, has put in place safe, efficient arrangements and maintain robust controls on payments as an integrated part of the overall financial control system.

Signed: ..........

Date: 21 May 2024

Terry Goodsell  
Independent Examiner

