



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 for 2024/25 is compiled and endorsed by the management committee comprising the following Trustees.

Joe Clerkin¹ Chairman, Trustee and Director
Jean Pocock¹ Trustee and Director
William Beard¹ Trustee and Director

And the following other committee members

Rollo Duckworth
Rosita Maskell
John May
Jim Callaghan

Registered Address

The Surgery
High Street
Compton
RG20 6NJ

Principal Banking

MetroBank
Southampton Row
London

Contact Details

Email: DVG.Office@btinternet.com
DVG.Office@btinternet.com
DVG.Handebus@btinternet.com

Website: Downlandvolgroup.org.uk

¹ 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.

In my Annual Report at last years AGM I began with saying the financial year April 23-March 24 was an exceptionally busy year. For our last financial year 24-25 that phrase is still applicable. We have seen a 34% increase in trips made to assist Downland residents attend their medical appointments. This a breakdown of the main destinations

| Destination | No of Trips | % of total |
|----------------------|-------------|------------|
| Chieveley Surgery | 379 | 28 |
| West Berks Hospital | 231 | 17 |
| Royal Berks Hospital | 153 | 12 |
| Other Hospitals | 67 | 5 |
| Fitness & Rehab | 212 | 16 |
| Compton Surgery | 25 | 2 |
| Other Locations | 270 | 20 |
| Total | 1337 | 100 |

The other locations cover Dentists, Opticians, Physiotherapy etc.
To cope with this increase demand, we have had to introduce a new software system called ‘Optimise’ to streamline the booking of these increased number of trips. This year we also plan to update our phone system to help patients contact us more easily. As you know the DVG is made up of volunteer car drivers, office volunteers and HandeBus drivers. Our office in the Compton Surgery is open Mon-Fri from 9.30-11.30 am so in those 2 hours it is important that requests can be handled quickly and efficiently, hence the need for an efficient booking system.
We are most grateful to all our volunteers. We estimate that in the last financial year they gave 3465 hours of their time for free to support the Downland community. Our volunteer drivers covered 31,133 miles in their own cars helping patients to attend their medical appointments.
The big challenge every year is finding new volunteers to cope with the increase in demand for our service. Also, in the last year three volunteers decided to step down all having given over 25 years of service to our community. We are most grateful to Ian

Whipp a former Chairman and to Norma Smith and Linda Gibson, the latter two are still involved with the Luncheon Club which is supported by the DVG that meets on the last Friday of the month enabling older residents to share a meal and socialise with other 'regulars' that attend.

We are grateful to all our volunteers and those organisations that support us such as West Berks Council and the Dept of Transport who support our HandeBus operation.

Finally thank you to my colleagues on the DVG Committee for the time and effort they give to help the DVG to grow and meet the challenges we face given the continued increase in de

Report to be provided by Joe Clerkin, Chair of DVG and Rollo Duckworth HandeBus Manager

Joe Clerkin

Chairman

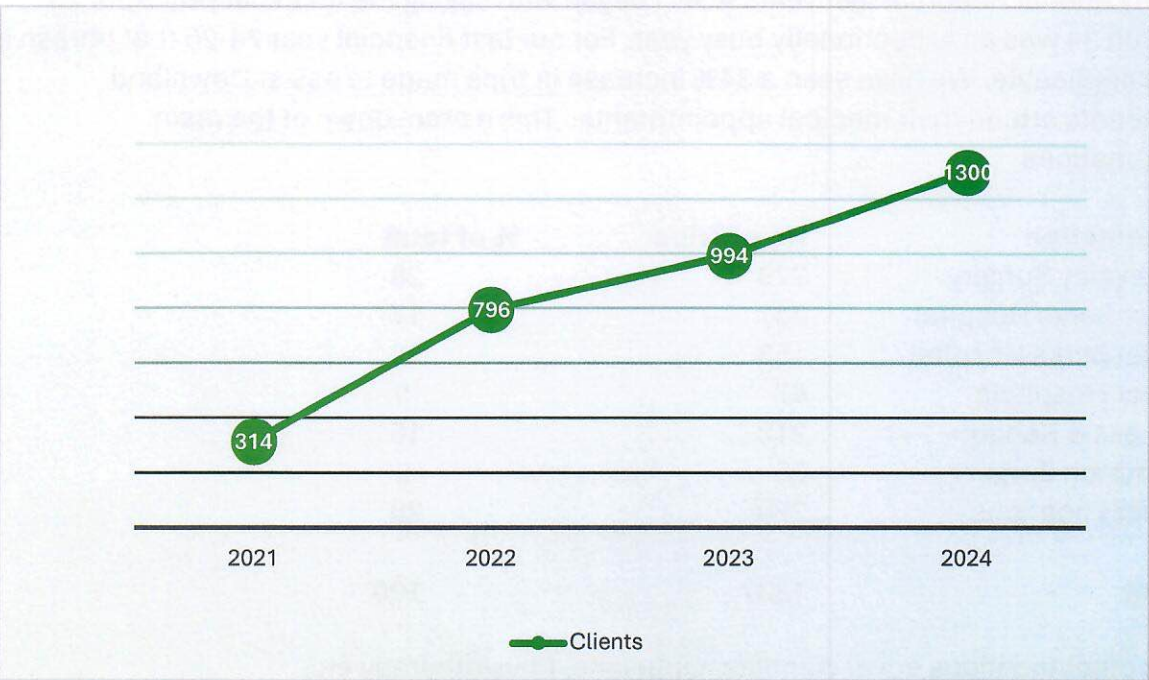


Figure 1Return Car drives in 2024/25

Financial report – Presented by the treasurer at the AGM June 2025.

This is my fourth 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. As already mentioned by Joe and Rollo our activities have increased significantly in 2024-25 cf 2023-24

I would also like to thank all of our volunteers, car and bus drivers and office volunteers for making the DVG as successful as possible this year.

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, our activities increased in both car and bus activities and every journey is a further financial transaction. In respect of the accounts we began the year with a Charity Bank savings account, a COIF savings account and three separate Metrobank accounts. Latterly, these included the main current account, the Butlin legacy account, and the Project Pegasus account. In May, we closed the COIF account and deposited the £21,858.22 into the Metrobank Current Account. This was to ensure the funds are protected under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (£85,000 per financial group). In January 2025 this figure was transferred to a new reserve Metrobank savings account to keep it transparently visible from other funds. The Charity Bank fund which contains the bulk of the Butlin Legacy matured in June and the sum was re-invested in a higher interest account with the same group. In last year's report we predicted the interest would be about £2,800, in actual fact the interest £2764.54 was paid into the Metrobank current account for use as additional income. We anticipate maintaining the principal funds in the Charity Bank although recognise interest rates are on the decline.

Other decisions made were to make available debit cards from the account as some subscriptions and transactions can only be carried out using this technology. The sum-up machine (which is not a DVG asset) was upgraded as the previous device used the 3G signal which is now no longer available. This is kept on the bus although is currently little used. We also have the capability to take credit and debit card payments over the phone, should this be necessary using the Square system. This has yet to be used.

We are grateful that West Berkshire Council were able to enhance their grant to us in the face of exacting budgetary pressures. Contributions from Boeing continue at a substantial but reduced level from the previous year. We were also pleased received a number of individual donations including the Brightwalton Cantemas concert. Additionally, although we were saddened to hear of the demise of the Hermitage Horticultural Society, we were pleased to hear that they wished to donate their residual funds to support our activities.

Our Bus Service Operators Grant from the Department for Transport had an unexpected boost to £3273 this year which is almost ten times the figure in previous years. This meant that the Handebus was in slight operational surplus this year. We also disposed of our trusty old Handybus and were paid a handsome £2500 which we have put in the Handebus reserved account.

Considering Income

In the income and expenditure table we highlight the performance of the driving activity as well as the Handebus. We can see increased activity (30% increase) in the Car Driving has resulted in increased turnover although losses were reduced having increased the Butlin subsidy for donations for surgery visits. We are aware that there is a small but increasing propensity for clients to book appointments further a-field and we recently advised clients and drivers to expect increased donation amounts for trips to Henley, Bracknell and Windsor to name but a few locations.

We can also see the Handebus made a slight surplus with the increased activities, and also increasing passenger numbers.

Joe volunteered to do some pharmacy runs which is an additional cost for which we received income in 2025/26 so does not appear in these accounts.

Considering Expenditure

For expenditure our largest operational expenditure continues to be the car drivers' reimbursed mileage. We argue that the various grants and spectacular money management allows to keep the costs to our clients down. It is understood that although the distances travelled by our Downland volunteers are higher than other volunteer groups the charges we make to our clients remains low in comparison.

Our bus insurance has unfortunately increased to £1700, considerably higher than the older bus.

We provided a few gifts, to some of our drivers who have handed in their (DVG) keys. We also had a few get togethers with volunteers at Hilliers. This is to enable those that rarely meet to get together and build the team.

However, we have instigated two additional significant costs as follows:

The first is legal fees. As discussed by Joe - we were keen to enable the use of the new Handebus to support a wider spectrum of our Downland residents so needed to take legal advice on how to change our Articles of Association and Objects. As a result the fees from Gardner Leader have impacted some of our expenditure. However, by widening the appeal of the bus we can ensure it is used more and therefore offset its fixed costs better still in the years to come. Legal fees will continue during 2025-26.

The second is Optimise. Increasing bookings take a large toll on our office workers and we had a very good bespoke system developed and maintained by David Sheppard. However, a workings group determined that a more helpful commercial solution was

available. For this system we pay a transaction charge of between 30 and 50p per booking. So this came to £1679 last year. However, we do have a number of credits in hand at the end of the year.

Finally, we undertook additional training for securing wheelchairs in the back of the Handebus.

Conclusion and Forward Look

To conclude, our operating finances remain healthy and this year we have invested in our office systems and modernised our constitution and made a cash surplus of £6792. However our balance sheet shows a loss of **£5564**. This is due to depreciation of the bus and also writing off the installation cost of the charge-point.

Looking further to 2025/26 we anticipate our activities will increase further, as will some of our costs but improved use of the bus should compensate for this. The one off legal costs will be repeated somewhat this year.

Terry has examined the accounts and provided his report.

I commend these accounts for approval by the AGM and am happy to take questions.

W. Gareth Beard
Treasurer, Director and Company Secretary.

Examined Accounts – Balance Sheet at 31/3/25

| Downland Volunteer Group | | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| | 24/25 | Year End | 23/24 |
| <u>Fixed Assets</u> | | <u>Fixed Assets</u> | |
| Old Handybus * | 0 | Old Handybus * | 2500 |
| New HandeBus * | 78556 | New HandeBus * | 78556 |
| Chargepoint | 2910 | Chargepoint | 2910 |
| | | None | |
| | 36 | | |
| <u>Current Assets</u> | | <u>Assets at 31/3/24</u> | |
| C.O.I.F. | 0 | C.O.I.F. | 21858 |
| MetroBank Current | 15647 | MetroBank Current | 9838 |
| MetroBank Savings Butlin | 10455 | MetroBank Savings Butlin | 11717 |
| MetroBank Savings Handybus | 6166 | MetroBank Savings Handybus | 3605 |
| MetroBank Reserve | 21899 | MetroBank Reserve | 0 |
| Charity Bank | 84000 | Charity Bank | 84000 |
| Cash in Hand | 7 | Cash in Hand | 365 |
| Debtors | 0 | Debtors | 0 |
| Cash Assets | 138174 | Cash Assets | 131382 |
| | 0 | | 0 |
| Easee Chargepoint | 2910 | Easee Chargepoint | 2910 |
| Old Handybus * | 0 | Old Handybus * | 2500 |
| New HandeBus * | 78556 | New HandeBus * | 78556 |
| Fixed Assets | 81466 | | 83966 |
| Total Assets | £219,639.96 | Total Assets | £215,348.22 |
| <u>Current Liabilities</u> | | <u>Current Liabilities</u> | |
| Depreciation Bus | 7856 | | 0 |
| Depreciation Chargepoint | 2000 | | 0 |
| Totals Liabilities | 0 | Totals Liabilities | 0 |
| Capital Employed | 209784 | Capital Employed | 215348 |
| * Physical assets added onto balance Sheet | | | |
| Surplus based upon Cash Assets | 6792 | | |
| Surplus based upon I&E | 6808 | | |
| Surplus based upon assets | -5564 | Handybus sale | |

Examined Accounts – Income and Expenditure at 31/3/25

| INCOME | | 2024/2025 | Budget | INCOME | | 2023/24 |
|--|--|--------------|--------------|--|--|--------------|
| Car Clients | | | | Clients | | |
| Passenger Contributions | | 10442 | 9000 | Passenger Contributions | | 6598 |
| Ms Butlin | | 1377 | 1000 | Ms Butlin | | 717 |
| Less Drivers Expenses | | -13505 | -12000 | Less Drivers Expenses | | -10731 |
| | | -1686 | -2000 | | | -3416 |
| Handybus | | | | Handybus | | |
| Dept of Transport | | 3273 | 750 | Dept of Transport | | 408 |
| Handybus Fares | | 4286 | 4000 | Handybus Billings | | 2416 |
| Less Handybus Costs including training | | -6234 | -3850 | Less Handybus Costs | | -4576 |
| | | 1326 | | | | -1752 |
| Other Mileage Costs | | | | Stroke Club/Parkinsons & Misc | | |
| Pharmacy Runs | | 109 | | Re-imbursed Costs | | 0 |
| Office Mileage | | 266 | | Less Mileage Costs | | 0 |
| | | -375 | | | | 0 |
| Income | | | | Other Income | | |
| West Berks Council | | 4993 | 4472 | West Berks Council | | 4472 |
| Bank Interest | | 0 | 180 | Bank Interest-COIF | | 1040 |
| Boeing match funding | | 2459 | 2000 | Boeing | | 5979 |
| Donations Misc | | 1362 | 1500 | Donations Misc | | 1635 |
| Handybus Sale | | 2500 | 0 | HandeBus donations | | 14672 |
| Reserves interest | | 41 | | | | |
| Butlin Interest | | 115 | 269 | Butlin Interest | | 269 |
| Pegasus Interest | | 61 | 36 | Pegasus Interest | | 428 |
| Charity Bank and CCLA Interest | | 3011 | 2800 | Charity Bank Interest | | 0 |
| Donations PC's & Fete | | 150 | | Donations PC's & Fete | | 0 |
| Total non-vehicle income | | 14692 | 11257 | | | 38633 |
| Total Vehicle Income | | 18001 | | Total Income | | 38633 |
| Total Income | | 32692 | | | | |
| Projected Income | | | 26007 | | | |
| Turnover | | | | | | 23265 |
| Carry over From Previous year (Cash) | | 365 | | | | |
| EXPENDITURE | | | | EXPENDITURE | | |
| AGM and Other Meeting Costs | | 301 | 85 | AGM Costs | | 42 |
| Audit Fees | | 0 | 60 | Audit Fees | | 83 |
| Butlin Subsidy * | | 0 | | Butlin Transfers (1) | | 717 |
| Computer Costs | | 11 | 3000 | Computer Costs | | 180 |
| Drivers Expenses | | 13505 | 12000 | Drivers Expenses | | 10731 |
| DBS Costs | | 178 | 400 | DBS Costs | | 358 |
| Public Liability Insurances | | 86 | 380 | Public Liability Insurances | | 439 |
| Driver Assessment /Training Costs | | 691 | 900 | Driver Assessment Costs | | 0 |
| HandeBus Expenses | | 5662 | 0 | HandeBus Expenses | | 6234 |
| Gifts | | 130 | 60 | Gifts | | 188 |
| Legal & Professional Costs | | 1673 | 440 | Legal & Professional Costs | | 59 |
| Lunch Club | | 400 | 400 | Lunch Club | | 400 |
| HandeBus transfer | | 0 | 0 | Handybus Transfer | | 0 |
| Optimise | | 1679 | 0 | Optimise (did not exist) | | 284 |
| Office maintenance | | 20 | 0 | Office Maintenance | | 0 |
| Office Mileage | | 266 | | Office Workers Mileage and Office Costs | | 284 |
| Pharmacy Mileage | | 109 | | Pharmacy Mileage | | 0 |
| Parking Discs/Parking Fees | | 62 | 20 | Parking Discs/Parking Fees | | 2 |
| Printing, Postage & Stationery | | 303 | | Printing, Postage & Stationery | | 832 |
| Subscriptions + donations | | 2 | | Subscriptions | | 0 |
| Telephone | | 663 | | Telephone | | 607 |
| Website & Publicity Costs | | 149 | | Website & Publicity Costs | | 218 |
| | | | | | | |
| Total Expenditure | | 25889 | 17745 | Total Expenditure | | 21658 |
| Surplus/(Deficit) for Year | | 6804 | 8262 | Surplus/(Deficit) for Half year | | 17738 |

Structure, governance and management;

Three of the company directors are also Trustees of the Charity, a fourth Trustee resigned at the AGM in 2024 due to other commitments. In addition to the Trustees the Charity is run through a management committee which comprises another four committee members. Following the Extraordinary General Meeting in January these seven individuals comprise the current Members of the group and they have voting rights. 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, complaints and other business. Meeting decisions are recorded through minutes and actions are allocated to members present. The Governance document was updated this year taking advice from legal specialists in this topic. The Group awaited the approval of the Charity Commission.

The Chairman generally is responsible for the overarching management of the Group, 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 who is also the Company Secretary is responsible for the financial probity of the group and compliance with the articles of association and the Service Level Agreement with West Berkshire Council. The Treasurer arranges 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 is required 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 the Department of Transport for the Bus Service Operators Grant. He ensures the DVG meets the requirements of the Section 19 permit from the Transport Commissioner.

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.

Another committee member is responsible for the operation of the Optimise system and liaison with DataCapture Ltd, the package provider. Bespoke reports are generated for him.

A further member takes the formal meeting minutes which especially records actions and decisions by the Committee.

Our last member has an accounting and company background and advises the committee on such matters.

Following legal advice the AGM now acts as an advisory meeting at which the volunteer and other community stakeholders may question the seven members including the three Directors of the group. It is intended that any significant issue with the way in which the Group is run could be aired at the Meeting and members may take a view as to any course of action which may be required – including the dismissal of a Director. This modus operandi will be reviewed in 2025/26.

Key decisions taken in 2024/25 were the changes to the constitution, the closure of the COIF account, disposal of the old Handybus, provision of chargecards, the opening of an additional account the investment in an off the shelf cloud based booking system and introducing Mr Jim Callaghan as a fourth signatory on the Account to replace Mr M Purchase.

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 but unrestricted funds were invested with CCLA. These funds were not protected by FSCS and have been transferred to the recently opened fourth Metrobank account. The 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 2024/25.

Creditors

The group has no significant creditors. However in September the HandeBus was involved in an incident which caused a claim to be made on the insurance. Repairs were made and our insurer's solicitors are pursuing the third party for damages. This has resulted in an increased premium, loss of no claims discount and impuned the reputation of one of our drivers. We believe the third party was wholly at fault and we await the result of legal proceedings against the individuals.

Insurances

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

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 hire and reward recovery of fares on a not for profit basis. One of these was temporary pending disposal of the second bus. We also hold a number of blue badges which are renewed periodically. These allow our drivers to park in blue badge spaces at various venues this reduces costs and speeds up our parking and transfer time.

Assets

During 2024/25 the DVG applied depreciation to two fixed assets. The bus and the chargepoint installation.

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.

One complaint has been received by the group over the driving characteristics of one of our volunteers in 2024/25. A discrete examination of the complaint was undertaken and we have taken some steps to avoid that situation re-occurring. Many clients continue to express their thanks and admiration for the services we provide.

Our new booking system has improved compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations and the security of the sensitive information required to manage our clients' information. The physical security of the DVG office at Compton has also been improved this year.

Restricted Funds

The two restricted funds operated by the group are

| | 2024/25 | 2023/24 | 2022/23 |
|------------------|----------|---------|----------|
| Butlin | £94445 | £95717 | £96162 |
| HandeBus | £6166 | £3605 | £68034 |
| Total Restricted | £100,611 | £99,322 | £164,196 |

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, this reserve was augmented in 2024/25 by the sale of the old bus.

Unrestricted Funds

The unrestricted funds comprise the MetroBank Current Account and the MetroBank Reserve Account. The historical funds are presented for completeness.

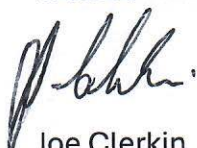
| | 2024/25 | 2023/24 | 2022/23 |
|-------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total | £37,546 | £31,696 | £30,524 |

Depreciation

At the end of 2024/25 the DVGs key assets were the HandeBus, the Chargepoint and the office computer. No allowance for depreciation had been made for the bus or the charge-point in 2023/24 but has been 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 unit at 20% such that the bus will be written off after 10 years and the charge-point after 5 years. The installation cost of the chargepoint has been written off this year.

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 Charity Commission statement of recommended practice (SoRP) guidance. The Trustee Annual Report is required as the Charity turnover exceeds £25,000.



Joe Clerkin
Chairman

Examiners Report

DOWNLAND VOLUNTEER GROUP ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025
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 2025 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: T. Goodsell

Date: 13 May 2025

Terry Goodsell
Independent Examiner

