

Reference and administrative information

Charity registration number:	1133530
Company registration number:	07096574
Registered office and principal address:	10 Wesley Walk, Witney, OX28 6ZJ
Telephone:	01993 776277
e-mail:	office@vlu.org.uk
Website	www.vlu.org.uk
Trustees at 31 March 2025:	Ruth Swift (Chair) Mike Alexander (Treasurer) David Bates Fiona Clough Hannah Hutchings Meryl Smith Tom White Mark Thomas served as a trustee until he resigned on 20 June 2024
Company secretary	Mike Alexander
Bankers	National Westminster Bank Charities Official Investment Fund
Independent examiner	Just Audit & Assurance Ltd
Management team	Barry Beadle – General Manager Sally Heath – Hotel officer Ruth Lapworth – Deputy manager and volunteer co-ordinator Nicky Paris - Good neighbour scheme co-ordinator Catherine Sager – Office administrator and transport co-ordinator

Chairman's Report

Volunteering is important because it benefits both the individual and the community. It fosters personal growth, enhances well-being, and allows individuals to make a tangible difference in the lives of others. Volunteering also strengthens communities by addressing social needs and promoting civic engagement.

Our AGM is that time of year when we, as an organisation, pause and reflect on all that has been achieved in the previous year, whilst looking ahead to the opportunities and challenges ahead. To this end, Barry, our General Manager, has provided an overview of what the team here at Volunteer Link Up has achieved over the last year on page 4.

Looking forward, Volunteer Link Up is acutely aware that individual needs continue to grow within our local community and that further building our volunteer base must be a priority for us in the coming year. We have been very lucky in that we continue to buck the volunteer sector trend and are continuing to attract new volunteers to work with us, but we are actively looking at ways that we can attract even more. **The simple truth is that the more volunteers we have the more we can do/offer.**

We are also conscious that demand for our befriending services continues to grow so time is being spent looking at new ways in which we can address this need eg setting up befriending groups, offering telephone befriending, working to build a local network of befriending providers so that together we can meet more need.

I would like to thank all our trustees, members, staff, volunteers and funders for continuing to support Volunteer Link Up to be such an important and valued part of our local community. Together we are supporting local people to continue to be able to live as independently as possible, feel part of their wider community and feel less lonely and isolated. **Together, we are making a real difference.**

As testament to the amazing work our volunteers are doing, day in, day out, we were excited and honoured to be nominated for the Kings Award for Voluntary Service. This award celebrates the outstanding work of local volunteer groups across the UK and is considered to be the equivalent to an MBE. As such it is the highest award given to local voluntary groups in the UK and it is awarded for life. Having successfully navigated the nomination process we now wait to hear whether we will receive the award, so we have everything crossed for good news.

As we look forward to the coming year, in a world filled with increasing uncertainty and change we hope to continue to play our part in creating a 'ripple effect' within our local community.

*When individuals volunteer,
they inspire others to do the same,
creating a ripple effect of positive change.*

Ruth Swift
Chair VLU

Trustees' Report

The trustees (who are directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act) present their report together with financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025. The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) effective 1 January 2019.

The reference and administration information set out on page 1 forms part of this report

Structure, governance and management

Volunteer Link-Up (West Oxfordshire) ("VLU" or "Volunteer Link-Up") is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity governed by its memorandum and articles of association. The directors of the charity, who are appointed by the members in general meeting, are its trustees for the purposes of charity law and throughout this report are collectively referred to as the trustees.

Objectives

Volunteer Link-Up is the Volunteer Centre for West Oxfordshire, linking people who have time to spare with opportunities to help local residents and charitable organisations who need their services. Details of how these objectives were fulfilled are set out below. The Trustees take into account the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and believe that the activities of VLU are in line with that guidance.

Organisational structure

VLU employs five members of staff; a Manager, a Deputy manager and volunteer co-ordinator, an Office administrator and transport co-ordinator, a Good neighbour scheme co-ordinator and a Hotel officer. All are accountable to the Trustee Board which meets at least four times a year. Trustees are elected at the Annual General Meeting. The Trustee Board provides for the administration, management and control of the affairs and property of VLU. A sub-committee of three members of the Trustee Board makes recommendations to trustees on staff remuneration and budget matters for the forthcoming year.

Objectives and activities

VLU's services enable a community to support itself. It matches residents with residents through matching volunteers with clients. Most volunteers live in the same town or locality as the clients they support.

Our transport service enables residents of West Oxfordshire to safely attend medical and other appointments. Many of our clients are elderly, vulnerable, or isolated. The driver offers more than just transport to a location. VLU's drivers are very knowledgeable about travel routes, car parking and departments within Oxfordshire hospitals. They can therefore take those concerns away from the client. Most importantly, they also offer support during the drive by providing conversation and companionship. Many of our clients are isolated and being able to build a relationship with a volunteer driver helps reduce that isolation.

Our community transport service helps people attend medical appointments that they might otherwise miss. We are sometimes able to fulfil request at shorter notice than our standard timescale as hospitals work through waiting lists, which has helped reduce clients' anxiety.

VLU's practical task volunteers enable clients to use their gardens by mowing lawns, clearing shrubs and hedges, lifting unsafe patios, dismantling unsafe sheds and doing general maintenance. Many clients who are isolated, vulnerable or have mobility issues are unable or unwilling to leave home for long periods and their gardens become an important outside space. Clients report that they are able to enjoy being at home and their mental health improved by having an accessible outside area.

Most of VLU's befrienders visit clients weekly, offering companionship and conversation. Several volunteers also provide help with admin or shopping. Our befrienders are matched with clients for the long term, meaning that unless circumstances change, they continue meeting with the client for as long as they want to. This means that the volunteer and client build a long term and mutually beneficial relationship. Befriending reduces isolation for both the client and the volunteer.

VLU continues to support the Good Neighbour Schemes across Oxfordshire. We hold regular networking meetings which cover topics such as volunteer recruitment, training, funding, and 'top tips' for new schemes. The networking meetings also enable schemes to share their highs and lows as well as share and learn from each other's experiences so they can support one another. We also provide weekly emails including information on funding, best practice, local and national campaigns and events as well as providing example risk assessments. Our Good Neighbour Scheme Coordinator also provides bespoke advice and support to individual schemes around areas such as volunteer recruitment, raising profile, measuring impact and insurance.

Achievements and performances

Number of Clients: 914

New Clients: 327

Number of Volunteers: 122

New Volunteers: 13

Befriending Arrangements: 60

Our Community Transportation Volunteer Drivers completed 2,399 return journeys this financial year, up from 2,227 last year and 2,050 in 2022-23, showing a steady increase in the need for our service.

The Hotel Coordinator role, delivered in partnership with WODC, continues to be an asset which is appreciated by the community, professional network and the approximately 200 hotel residents.

Volunteer Link Up participated in Volunteer's Week and once again the General Manager was one of the judges for the annual volunteer awards.

The local Inner Wheel held a 'Suspense/Mystery' evening and raised £850 for Volunteer Link Up.

We held our annual driver and befriender meetings, those who attended feedback that they find these meetings useful and supportive.

Our AGM followed a slightly different format this year, compared to previous years. We held our AGM and our annual social event on the same day 'back to back'. The

event was well attended by VLU staff and trustees, our network partners, volunteers and funders. The new format increased attendance and was a success.

Our social media contractor has successfully increased the 'reach' of our posts by 900%.

All paid staff were trained in GDPR.

During this financial year, having been nominated for the Kings Award for Voluntary Service, we successfully navigated the process which moves us on to the final stage of the process, which is the decision as to whether we receive the award or not. We will find this out during the next financial year, we remain hopeful and excited.

Plans for Future:

Our Hotel Coordinator role is funded on a 6 monthly basis, renegotiated with WODC each renewal. We will try to negotiate a more permanent and stable arrangement with WODC for this valued role.

Bereavement and EDI training will be arranged for all paid staff.

We have commenced a project which will review our logo and website content. Substantial changes are likely and these will be finalised during the 2025-26 financial year.

We need to improve our new volunteer numbers. Our new volunteer figure this year is substantially down on previous years. Approximately 11.5% of Oxfordshire residents already regularly volunteer. Some believe that we are near 'saturation point'. Whilst agencies who rely on volunteers are keen to work together and support each other, competition for volunteers is significant. We will be utilising our new website content and our social media presence to recruit new volunteers. We are exploring a recruitment initiative within the various churches across West Oxfordshire. If we are awarded the Kings Award for Voluntary Service, this can only increase our appeal to those considering volunteering.

Quotes from a volunteer and a client appear below:

Volunteer

I decided to volunteer as I thought I wouldn't have anything to do when I retired, I thought I would be bored and wondered what I could do. Someone I knew had been visiting someone in a local care home and I thought that sounded a good idea, to be able to visit someone that hasn't got any family or anyone living close by.

One of the reasons I keep volunteering is to keep active. I live on my own and my family all live a long way away and I sometimes think it could be me needing this help in a few years. I've got friends but a lot of my friends still work. I didn't want to volunteer with children as I'd spent many years teaching and I didn't want to tutor. Volunteer befriending appealed to me, and I find it interesting. Two people I visited were both from my area and they could tell you things about it and its surroundings from 90 odd years ago and it's interesting when you compare what it's like now.

I enjoy volunteer befriending, otherwise I wouldn't have continued all this time! I enjoy chatting and it's nice to feel that the client looks forward to me coming round. I don't do it for any pat on the back but it's something that I can do that I will enjoy and that will use up (what I thought) would be all this free time I would have!

Befriending needs sensitivity as well; to let people know that you're not going to be gossiping about anything they say.

Ruth at Volunteer Link Up phones on a regular basis to check in with me and I know if there is ever a problem I can just phone or drop into Witney.

Client

It is a service I could not do without, I am so impressed with the kindness of the drivers and lack of discrimination towards my mobility issues. I enjoy travelling with them and hearing about their lives. I couldn't manage to get to physiotherapy every week without them. Going by public transport would negate the benefit of physiotherapy. I appreciate the kindness of the office staff and all the effort they put into finding me someone. The low cost of transport is also a benefit.

Plans for future periods

1. Trustees have started the process of reviewing/refreshing and updating both our logo and website. To this end we have begun working with Madalena Studio. Our aim is to have a new website ready to launch in the Autumn along with an updated logo and a suite of branded materials.
2. Continue our focus on befriending. We will be starting a bespoke piece of mapping and relationship building work in the run up to Christmas. We hope to identify all befriending opportunities in Witney and the surrounding areas, build a network of providers so that by working together more individuals can be linked up with a befriender whilst also raising the profile of what befriending is locally.
3. Focus on attracting and recruiting volunteers so that we can continue to meet the ever increasing demand on our services.
4. Continue to broaden the training offer available to our staff team as well as creating a suite of training materials for our volunteers.
5. Work with WODC to explore the future of our Hotel Co-Ordination support work.

Financial review

VLU is entirely dependent upon its funders for its continuance. Main sources of funds are grants from Oxfordshire County Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, and Age UK. We budgeted for a small deficit but managed to turn in a small surplus due, mainly, to better than expected fund raising. This has helped to maintain our finances in a sound position.

Incoming resources have, in total, increased by 20% largely because of additional grants obtained to support our work.

Outgoing resources have increased because from 1 April 2024 VLU took on responsibility for Good Neighbours Schemes in the Bicester area. The largest increase is in the employment costs incurred in respect of this additional work. We estimate that the value of volunteer hours is some £200,000.

Reserves policy

The essential principle stated in the Reserves Policy agreed by the Trustees is that the reserves should be sufficient to enable the organisation to continue to operate for up to nine months if it were to suffer a significant fall in its funding that could not be replaced from other sources.

Action necessary in order to maintain Reserves at the requisite level:

1 Regular monitoring of the finances of VLU to ensure that any necessary corrective action can be taken promptly if the level of reserves becomes significantly depleted.

2 Attempts should be made to achieve an increase in the level of funding for the activities of VLU which is at least commensurate with the increases in costs which it necessarily incurs. The main costs are likely to continue to be staff salaries.

Unrestricted reserves at 31 March 2025 amount to some £124,000, which trustees consider to be somewhat larger than required. Steps are being taken to reduce the excess by improving the service we provide to our beneficiaries, and more generally, in line with our objectives.

The trustees are satisfied that the charity's assets attributable to each of its individual funds are available and adequate to fulfil its obligations in relation to those funds.

Risk review

The Trustees believe that risks are well managed within the charity's operations. The nature of the operations requires appropriate risk assessments and health and safety policies to cover the range of different activities. The charity has relevant insurance policies providing employers' and public liability cover.

Trustees' responsibilities for the financial statements

The trustees (who are also Directors of VLU for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with general applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom General Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;

- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees (who are also Directors of VLU for the purposes of company law) are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safekeeping the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

On behalf of the trustees



R Swift

Trustee, 6 November 2025

Independent Examiners Report to the Trustees of Volunteer Link-Up (West Oxfordshire)

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Company for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's 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 VLU 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 charity'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:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of VLU 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 applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

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.



Just Audit &
Assurance Ltd
37 Market Square
Witney
Oxfordshire
OX28 6RE

// November 2025

Accounting policies

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) (as amended for accounting periods commencing from 1 January 2019), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Volunteer Link-Up (West Oxfordshire) meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note.

The charity has taken the advantage of the provisions in FRS102 Update Bulletin 1 to not prepare a Statement of Cash Flows.

Income

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when the charity is entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

- Voluntary income received by way of donations and gifts is included in full in the statement of financial activities when receivable. Grants, where entitlement is conditional on the delivery of a specific performance by the charity, are recognised when the charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the grant.
- Donated services and facilities are included at the value to the charity where this can be quantified. The value of services provided by volunteers has not been included in these financial statements.
- Investment income is included when receivable.

Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred, and includes irrecoverable VAT.

- Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.
- Governance costs include those costs associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the charity and include accountancy fees and costs linked to the strategic management of the charity.

Pension provision

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for employees. Contributions are charged in the Statement of Financial Activities as they become payable in accordance with the rules of the scheme.

Tangible Fixed Assets

Tangible fixed assets are written off at the time of purchase unless their expected life is expected to be at least four years.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources which are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are subject to restrictions on their expenditure imposed by the donor or through the terms of an appeal.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (incorporating an income and expenditure account) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Income					
Incoming resources					
Income from:					
Grants					
WODC		12,500	13,865	26,365	31,980
Age UK		25,000	-	25,000	25,000
Oxfordshire County Council		25,167	-	25,167	10,000
Other grants and donations	1	55,747	150	55,897	40,863
Investment income - interest		3,279	-	3,279	1,202
Total incoming resources		<u>121,693</u>	<u>14,015</u>	<u>135,708</u>	<u>109,045</u>
Expenditure					
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	2	97,531	23,939	121,470	112,891
Governance costs					
Independent examination fee		2,000	-	2,000	1,820
Total resources expended		<u>99,531</u>	<u>23,939</u>	<u>123,470</u>	<u>114,711</u>
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources		22,162	(9,924)	12,238	(5,666)
Unrealised surplus on current asset investment		1,073	-	1,073	1,880
Funds at 1 April 2024		100,910	9,924	110,834	114,620
Funds at 31 March 2025		<u>124,145</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>124,145</u>	<u>110,834</u>

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2025

	Note	2025 £	2024 £
Current assets			
Debtors		11,667	-
Prepayments		2,887	2,251
Bank balance		87,377	98,006
Current asset investment		42,443	41,370
		<u>144,374</u>	<u>141,627</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	5	<u>20,229</u>	<u>30,793</u>
Net assets		<u>124,145</u>	<u>110,834</u>
Income Funds			
Unrestricted funds		124,145	100,910
Restricted funds	7	-	9,924
		<u>108,395</u>	<u>110,834</u>

For the financial year ended 31 March 2025, the charity was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The members have not required the charity to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year in question in accordance with section 476.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of the financial statements.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies' subject to the small companies' regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on November 2025.



R Swift

Trustee

Notes to the financial statements

1. OTHER GRANTS AND DONATIONS

	2025	2024
	£	£
Town and parish councils	4,145	4,145
Oxford Community Foundation	25,288	-
The estate of the late Margaret Jackson	-	22,001
Richard Early Charitable Settlement	1,200	500
Insurance recovery from Age UK	2,734	2,477
Other donations from:		
Grant making charities and bodies	15,671	5,500
Individuals	6,859	6,240
	<u>55,897</u>	<u>40,863</u>

2 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted	2025 Restricted	Total	2024
	£	£	£	£
Employment costs	75,698	23,340	99,038	92,833
HR consultancy	2,496	100	2,596	1,620
Occupational health consultations	834	-	834	-
Printing, postage and stationery	499	40	539	1,026
Photocopying	864	25	889	658
Room hire	2,911	25	2,936	2,754
Insurance	3,480	25	3,505	3,176
Telephone	3,647	60	3,707	3,057
Depreciation	-	-	-	1,097
Digitisation	1,650	-	1,650	1,576
Media and other costs for publicity	1,134	-	1,134	-
Volunteer travel expenses	843	-	843	283
Hotel project expenses	153	276	429	153
GNS direct costs	-	-	-	294
Sundry meeting costs	473	48	521	433
Website and sundry IT costs	205	-	205	163
Staff travel	878	-	878	466
Subscriptions	214	-	214	255
Computer equipment	-	-	-	696
40 th birthday celebrations	-	-	-	481
Payroll services	867	-	867	781
Sundry expenses	685	-	685	1,089
	<u>97,531</u>	<u>23,939</u>	<u>121,470</u>	<u>112,891</u>

3. EMPLOYMENT COSTS

	2025	2024
	£	£
Salaries	92,889	87,092
National insurance	1,496	1,299
Pension	4,653	4,442
TOTAL	99,038	92,833

The average number of paid staff for the year was 5 (2024: 5); they worked part-time in administering the charity. The number of employees in terms of full-time equivalents was 3 (2024: 3).

No employee earned £60,000pa or more in 2025 or 2024.

4. PAYMENTS TO TRUSTEES AND CONNECTED PERSONS

No trustee or person with a family or business connection with a trustee received remuneration in the year, directly or indirectly, from either the charity or an institution or company controlled by the charity.

5. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2025	2024
	£	£
Trade creditors	4,617	5,214
Grant received in advance	13,712	23,667
Accruals	1,900	1,912
	<u>20,229</u>	<u>30,793</u>

6. RESTRICTED FUNDS

	1 April 2024	Funding received	Expenditure	31 March 2025
	£	£	£	£
Oxford Community Foundation	3,168	-	3,168	-
WODC for hotel project	6,630	13,865	20,495	-
Rotary for asylum seekers	126	150	276	-
TOTAL	9,924	14,015	23,939	-

7. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

All funds held are Unrestricted Funds.

8. INDEMNITY INSURANCE

The charity has obtained trustee indemnity insurance cover. The cost of this cannot be determined as the cover is provided as part of a larger combined insurance policy.

9. COMPANY STATUS

The charity is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of the charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity.

11. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

Expenses totalling £321 were reimbursed to two trustees during the year.