

# *A year at Low Fell's Community Library*

## *Low Fell Library Association 2021 / 2022 Annual Report*



Low Fell Library, 710A Durham Road, Low Fell, Gateshead NE9 6HT  
[www.low-fell-library.org.uk](http://www.low-fell-library.org.uk) [facebook.com/LowFellLibrary](https://facebook.com/LowFellLibrary)  
Registered charity no. 1153726



## LOW FELL LIBRARY – ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

### Introduction from the Chair

Welcome to the ninth annual report from Low Fell Library Association, which is made up of the volunteers who keep Low Fell Library going.

2021/2022 has been almost as strange a year for the library as 2020-2021, a result of the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. The library was closed at the start of the year, re-opening for limited browsing over reduced opening hours, on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Regrettably, activities such as Rhyme Time remained out of service for the first part of this year, recommencing in October 2021. Our dedicated team of volunteers nevertheless remained committed to providing whatever service was allowed and at the time of writing we are back fully open with a new offering of events and activities, alongside our regular library service.

The library obtained a renewed, five year lease agreement with the Council, commencing April 2022, so hopefully we will be around for some time to come.

As ever, thanks must go to all the volunteers and trustees who give so much time and energy to running the library and ensuring that residents in Low Fell and beyond have a thriving local community library.

Frank Hindle – Chair, Low Fell Library Association

### Some comments from our library customers:

It's great that the library is open again!

Library customer

The Rhyme Time sessions at the library are great!

Library customers

We love coming to the library, there's a great children's area

### Low Fell Library Association

Low Fell Library Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (charity registration number 1153726) and is made up from the volunteers who run Low Fell Community Library. We work with Gateshead Council and other organisations to deliver a community library service and to ensure that the library building and facilities continue to provide public benefit to the surrounding communities.

The formal statement of the Charity's objectives, as set out in our Constitution, is:

- To advance education by the provision of a library facility and service and other educational community resources and activities for Low Fell inhabitants and the surrounding areas.
- To further benefit the said inhabitants without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or any other opinions by associating together the said inhabitants and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation, leisure time, occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the residents.

## Low Fell Library, 2021/ 2022

### Introduction

At the start of the 2021 / 2022 year, the persistence of Covid-19 variants continued to influence the service being provided by the library. The library re-opened to the public for limited browsing only, in early April 2021, with a break in opening hours in the middle of the day to allow for sanitising between shifts. Photocopying continued other than during complete lockdowns and the library computers also returned for use by the public, albeit for only three of the five stations, to allow for social distancing. Mask wearing remained in place, there were no newspapers or refreshments and Track and Trace was in operation for visitors to the library. Room hire remained unavailable, as was tutoring or other informal use of the library tables. Contact between trustees and volunteers nevertheless continued during 2021 / 22, including holding the AGM, thanks to the option of Zoom calls!

In June 2021 normal opening hours resumed and have remained in place since then.

Events unfortunately remained largely cancelled as a result of Covid-19 until December, when the library held a Christmas coffee morning. Normality was more or less resumed with the Easter coffee morning at the start of April 2022. Rhyme Time started again in October 2021, followed by the Bridge Club (in February 2022) and Knit and Natter group.

Throughout the past year our library garden has been beautifully maintained by the volunteers from Low Fell Gardeners, our thanks to them for their ongoing commitment.





The library renovated the staff kitchen with a new sink unit as well as installing more cupboards and repainted the kitchen walls in a more soothing colour than the previous purple décor! The Association also purchased an air filtration unit in order to enable the Community Room to be used more safely, and after gaining planning permission, installed an external noticeboard to allow better advertising of the library events, opening hours and so on. During the year, the Council was required to mend various leaks to the roof of the main building and the foyer; hopefully these have now been resolved.

Quarantining of books remained in place until late September 2021.

During the year, the library also acquired containers for recycling of used batteries and empty printer ink cartridges; these are located in the foyer and main library respectively.



### *Events in the library in 2021 / 2022:*

The library ran a 'Summer Reading Challenge' during the summer holidays, together with a pre-school reading challenge, rewarded with stickers and certificates. Forty-one children signed up to the Summer Reading Challenge, with thirteen completing this; all the children who completed the challenges were rewarded with a £20 national book token.

A Christmas coffee morning along with a small number of stalls took place in December 2021, this was very well supported by the local community, all of whom seemed glad to be back in the library.





An Easter coffee morning, with stalls and children's crafts took place on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022. This was once again very well supported.



### **Library usage statistics for 2021 / 2022:**

Library usage got off to a slow start at the time of re-opening in early April 2021, but footfall and usage has progressed since then, with a gradual increase in numbers over the course of the year. Visitor numbers and library usage are improving and the library continues to attract new customers on a weekly basis.

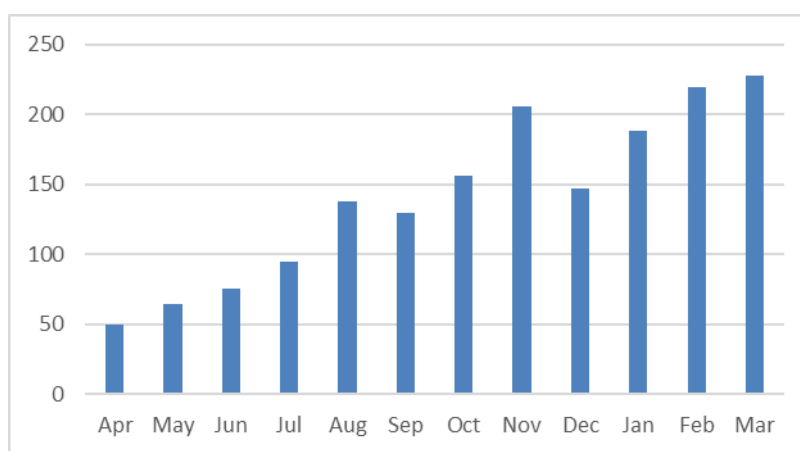
The following information provides a snapshot of the usage statistics for 2021 / 2022 (including comparisons with the previous year):

	2021 / 2022	2020 / 2021
Total hours during the year when the library was open	1689.5	525.5
Mean weekly footfall	141.6	16.0
Mean computer hours per month	52	42
Mean new members per month	17	3
Mean numbers of Rhyme Time attendees per month	73.3	0

### **Footfall**

This is based on the number of visitors per week measured by a tally chart recorded in the second week of each month. Recording of footfall was carried out more frequently after the library reopened in early April 2021.

The footfall figures for 2021/2022 are shown below. Visitor numbers have been understandably limited at times by the restrictions placed upon the library service by Government and local Council Regulations relating to the control of Covid-19.



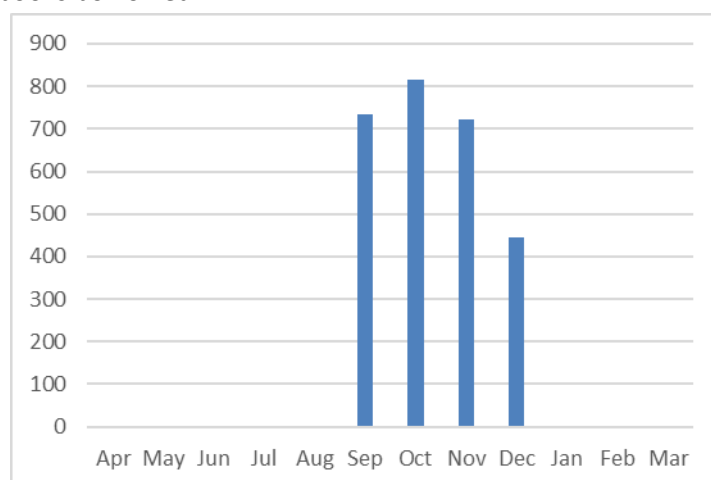
Not only were available hours for library visitors reduced, but the services able to be provided were also severely restricted, with no group activities, restricted (and sometimes no) computer use, and limited or no book browsing.

### **Borrowing of books**

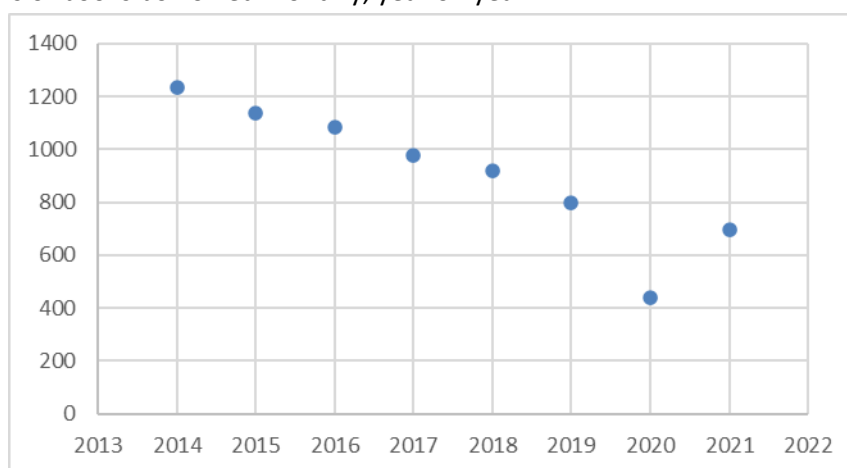
The information provided in the graph below is based on a monthly report provided by Gateshead Central Library, detailing the books borrowed throughout the month. The availability of data for this fiscal year has been limited as a result of the restricted operation and staff shortages over the course of the year.

There has been a progressive decline in the average number of books borrowed year on year at a national level and the figures for borrowing of books from Low Fell Library appear consistent with that trend (see the second graph, below).

Monthly numbers of books borrowed:

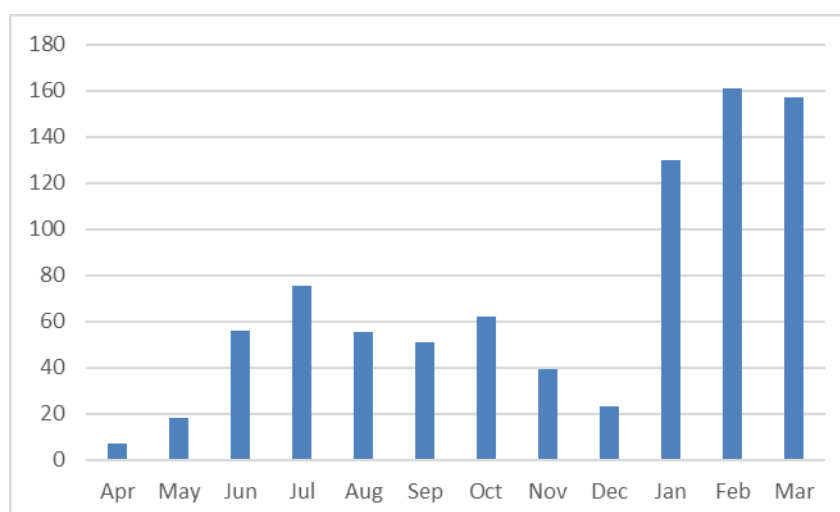


Average numbers of books borrowed monthly, year on year:

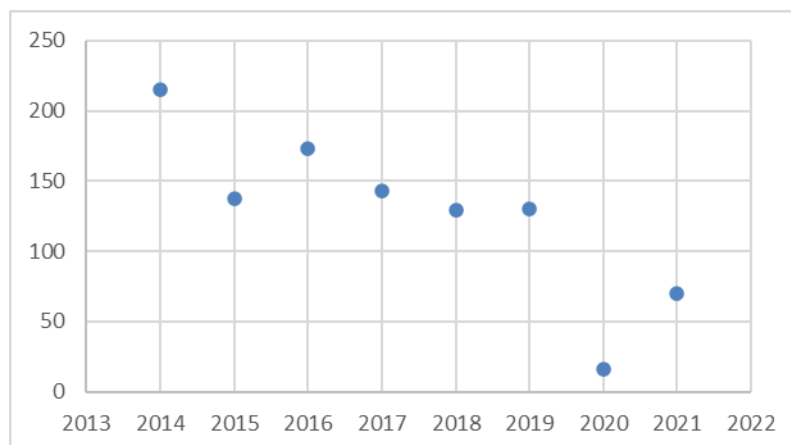


### Public Computer utilisation

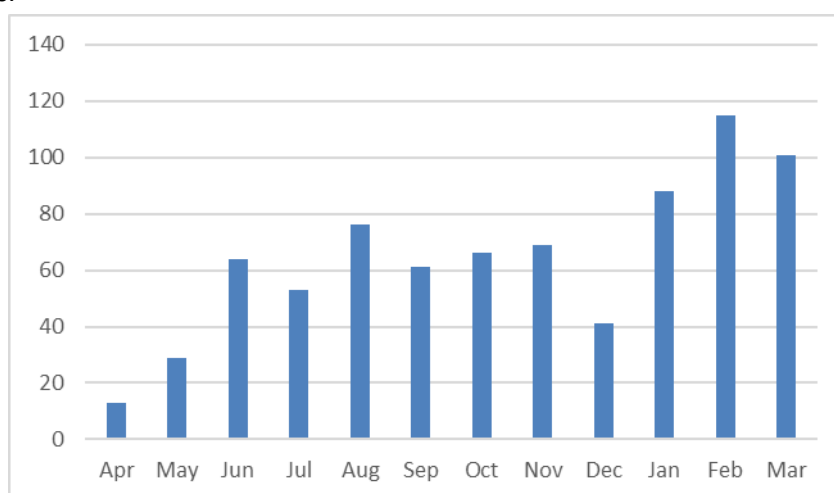
During 2021/2022, only three of the five public computers have been in use. The below information is based on the total hours of usage of the three public computers in any one month, as recorded on the sign-in sheets, and the number of computer users.



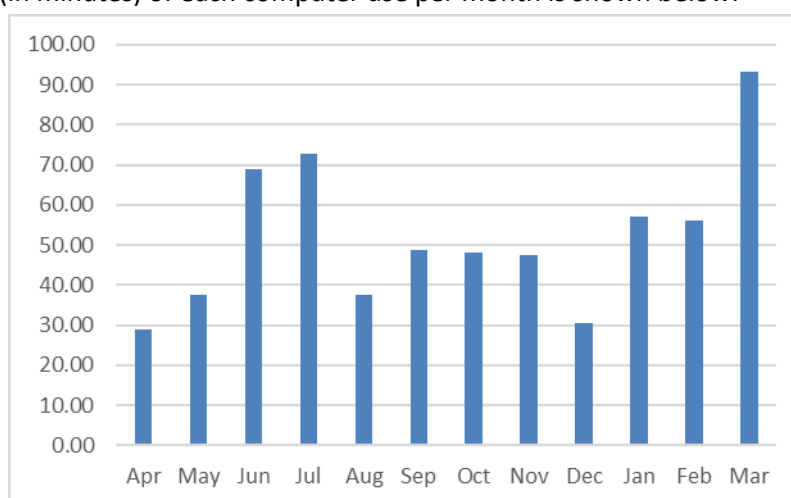
Computer usage was greatly reduced during 2021 / 22 due to controlled availability. Prior to Covid, usage had stabilised and there is a trend to recover that level.



Looking at the number of computer uses throughout the year, month by month, there has been a steady increase (as seen in the graph below) and as the number of computers available is now back to five, it is hoped that this trend will continue. The wi-fi provision within the library does encourage people to use their own computers and tablets, though the restricted seating capacity during this period went against this.



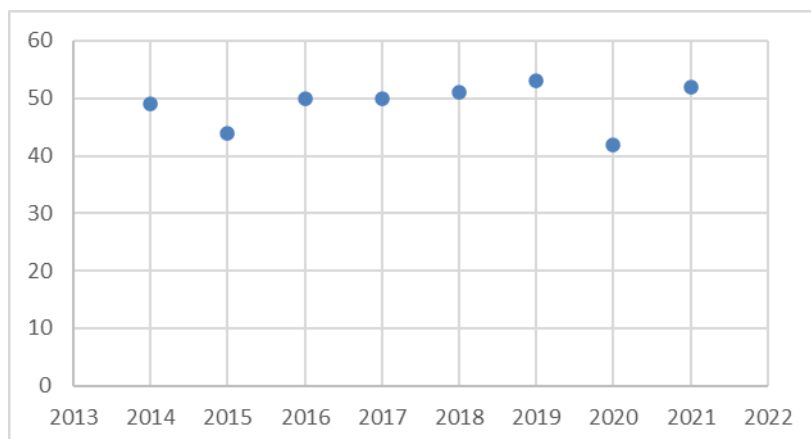
The average time (in minutes) of each computer use per month is shown below:



This would appear to show an irregular increase in the average usage time, offsetting the decline in utilisation.



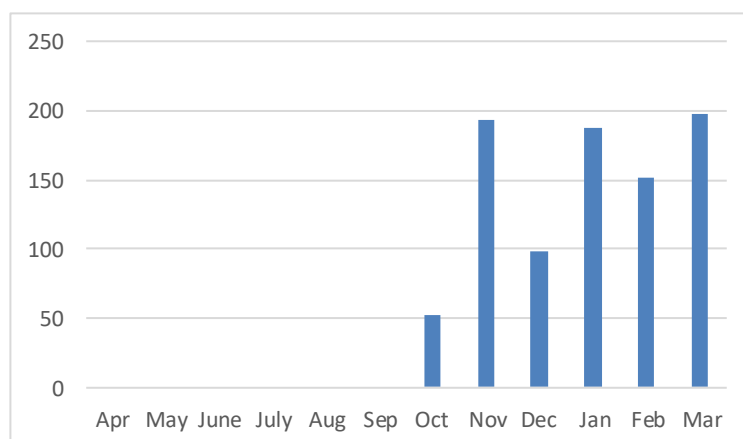
With the relaxation in restrictions on the use of computers in the library, the average time for computer use returned to pre-Covid levels:



### Rhyme Time

Rhyme Time sessions recommenced in October 2021 as the Covid-19 restrictions eased. The library introduced additional sessions to compensate for the reduced numbers of adults permitted at any one session and these have assisted in maintaining numbers of attendees. Online booking was encouraged with up to ten adult places available for each session, plus up to two walk-ins.

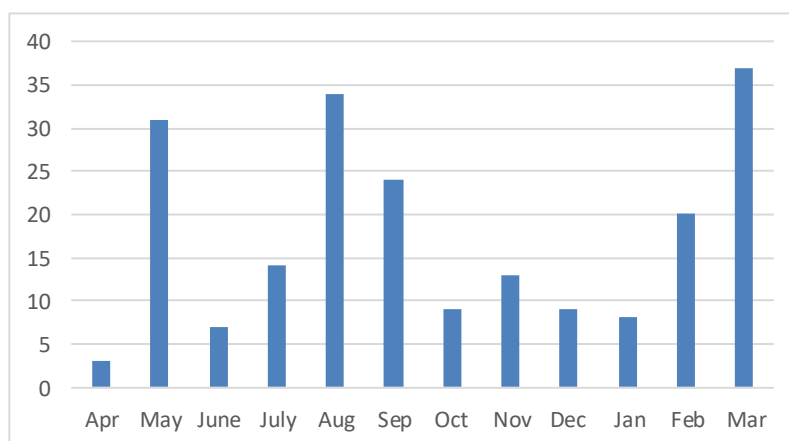
The graph below shows the total number of children attending each month, based on the records for all sessions of Rhyme Time held each week.



### New members

The library has continued to sign up new members since it reopened in April 2021, as shown below. This is based on the register used to record whether or not the new member has agreed to receive library marketing information. These figures are likely to be less reliable than in previous years when membership sheets were printed off and therefore able to be counted.

The marked variation between months can be attributed to changes in the operational rules during Covid. Peaks have resulted from opportunities for an increase in customer numbers, as well as GDPR resulting in customer records being deleted and, therefore, needing to re-register.



### Other information

Regrettably there have been no children's craft sessions, work experience students, school visits or other such activities during 2021 / 2022 as a result of the slow return to 'normality' following the Covid-19 restrictions placed on the library and other public and education services. It is anticipated that these activities will recommence in the 2022 / 2023 year. Two customers were given advice on their CV and both obtained employment immediately afterwards.

### Volunteering at Low Fell Library

Low Fell Library has been fortunate to continue to be supported by an enthusiastic and hard-working team of volunteers, and to have added to this with a number of like-minded people over the past year. These people work behind the desk during their library shifts and some carry out more specialist tasks including social media, publicity and marketing, and general administration. We are extremely grateful to everyone who helps at the library, whether this is briefly or long-term.

New volunteers are eased into the library's processes and procedures, starting with an introductory meeting with two or three of the key officers, to discuss the skills, experience and interests the volunteer brings to the library, and how, when and where they can best be of assistance. An induction into the library (and Association) operation is provided, together with information on our standards, the service agreement with Gateshead Council, health and safety and safeguarding practices and procedures. Training on the Soprano (library book issuing) system is provided for volunteers working on the desk, and DBS clearance obtained for those whose role requires this. After a few weeks the new volunteers have the opportunity to discuss, in confidence, any issues or concerns. The library holds regular meetings for all volunteers to attend, where strategic policy and operational issues are amongst the matters discussed and agreed.

Anyone who is interested in joining us to help in any way is asked to get in touch – we'd be very pleased to hear from you. Email [info@low-fell-library.org.uk](mailto:info@low-fell-library.org.uk), or talk to anyone on the library desk.



### Governance

Low Fell Library Association operates under a constitution approved by the Charity Commission. The provision of a core, community library service is done in accordance with a service agreement with



Gateshead Council and via a rent-free lease agreement for the building, the maintenance of which remains the responsibility of the Council.

The Association holds regular meetings with trustees (elected by the members at the Association's AGM) and members (volunteers), at which policy matters and other major decisions (such as agreeing the annual budget) are discussed and agreed. Trustee meetings are held on a six-week cycle with day to day management carried out by the officers, in accordance with policies and decisions that have been previously agreed by members and trustees. Advice from the Charity Commission, including on rules and regulations, guides trustees and the Council's Library Service provides advice and assistance in relation to the building fabric and library matters.

An 'Activities Group' of Association members meets on a regular basis to plan and oversee the programme of activities at the library and reports back to the trustees and the Association as a whole.

## **Finances**

In addition to the donations of time and effort made by library volunteers, the operation of the library continues to require funding. Gateshead Council's contributions to the library running costs ceased in 2015, but various Government grants and donations have enabled the library to meet its bills and other spending commitments over the course of 2021/2022.



A steady inflow of funds is needed to plan for the future and enable the library to continue to function and as such, all donations – large and small – are welcome and will help with this.

Donations can be made via the 'donations' tub on the library desk or via the library website. If you want to know more about the library's financial needs, or would like your donation to be used for a specific purpose, please ask to speak to the Chair (Frank Hindle) or Treasurer (Brenda Buxton).

## **Reserves policy**

The Association maintains an unrestricted reserve equivalent to six months of core operating costs (this currently equates to a reserve of £7,500.00). If it becomes necessary to draw on this reserve, the trustees will urgently review the situation and identify potential actions that could be taken to rectify the position. This six month period ensures that there is time to either seek additional funding, or (if that is not possible) to wind up the Association in an orderly manner, meeting any obligations and commitments, were that to prove necessary.

## **Statement of accounts**

This is attached as a separate document.

## **Business plan**

The Association's three year business plan for the period 2016-2019 is now behind us and is in the process of review and revision in anticipation of a resumption of some sort of post-Covid normality.

## **In conclusion**

After over nine years' experience of running the library in Low Fell and developing an ongoing programme of events and activities, written and verbal feedback from users and residents continues to be extremely positive.

We are an enthusiastic group of volunteers, committed to improving the services and events offered by Low Fell Library. Our sincere thanks to all our partners and donors who have enabled us to achieve the outcomes described in this report, and who have put us in a healthy position in order to progress in the future. We appreciate and welcome all feedback and suggestions and look forward to the future continued success of Low Fell Library.

### ***Customer impressions of Low Fell Library ...***

While it is often difficult to capture direct quotes from our customers, the following is a flavour of how they feel about Low Fell Library:

- *One customer recently said that Low Fell was a lovely traditional library and that she found some of the bigger libraries rather impersonal.*
- *Several of our adult customers have told us they are so glad we are still open and remember coming to Low Fell Library as children.*
- *We are often told by customers that they find Low Fell Library a friendly place to visit.*
- *Recently we had a woman who came into the library, to use the public computers, who didn't realise it was run by volunteers. After chatting at length with the staff on duty she joined the library and said she would be coming back with her elderly mother, who enjoys reading and who would find Low Fell Library more accessible than a larger library.*
- *One of our outside stall holders, who regularly comes to our Christmas and Easter Fairs (and post pandemic coffee mornings) said recently that these were the best events she attended, as a stall holder, all year.*



# **Low Fell Library Association**

**Registered Charity No. 1153726**

**Financial Statements  
for the Year Ended 31 March 2022**

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**Charity Name:** Low Fell Library Association

**Charity No:** 1153726

**Registered Office:**  
710a Durham Road  
Low Fell  
Gateshead  
Tyne and Wear  
NE9 6HT

**Trustees:**  
Frank Hindle (Chair)  
Gillian Beauchamp (Vice-Chair)  
Susan Le Jeune (Secretary)  
Brenda Buxton (Treasurer)  
Terence Wileman (Health and Safety Officer)  
Ross Brown (Vice Health & Safety Officer)  
Christine Blue  
Elsie Neville  
Angela Joynes  
Catherine Underwood  
June Hesslewood

**Independent Examiner:**  
Darren Thompson  
FutureSkills North East CIC  
44 Witton Drive  
Spennymoor  
Co. Durham  
DL16 6LU

**Bankers:**  
Lloyds Bank PLC  
11-12 The Shopping Village  
Kingsway  
Team Valley Trading Estate  
Gateshead  
Tyne and Wear  
NE11 0EN

## INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

<b>Report to the Trustees</b>	Low Fell Library Association (LFLA)
<b>Charity No</b>	1153726
<b>On the accounts for period ended</b>	31 March 2022
<b>Set out on pages</b>	5-8

### Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Examiner:

The Trustees of the charity are responsible for the preparation of accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and that an Independent Examination is needed. Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts (under section 145 of the 2001 Act.
- follow the procedure laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

### Basis of the independent examiner's statement:

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view', and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

### Independent examiners statement:

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounts do not accord with such records; or
- the accounts do not comply with relevant accounting requirements under section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 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
- the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS102).

I 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.

D W Thompson

Darren Thompson  
FutureSkills North East CIC  
44 Witton Drive  
Spennymoor  
Co. Durham DL16 6LU

Date: 3/10/2022

# Low Fell Library Association

## Receipts and Payments Account 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022

	Notes	Restricted	Unrestricted	2022	2021
		£	£	£	£
<b>Receipts</b>					
Grants & Donations	<b>4</b>	-	16,678.00	16,678.00	27,155.00
LFLA Fundraising		-	350.00	350.00	-
Library Takings		-	2,917.00	2,917.00	212.00
Other Income		-	14.00	14.00	256.00
Bank Interest		-	4.00	4.00	11.00
<b>Total Receipts</b>		-	<b>19,963.00</b>	<b>19,963.00</b>	<b>27,634.00</b>
<b>Payments</b>					
Library & Community Events		-	125.00	125.00	-
Library Running Costs	<b>5</b>	-	8,492.00	8,492.00	10,742.00
Office & General Expenses	<b>6</b>	-	3,750.00	3,750.00	504.00
Volunteer Costs		-	582.00	582.00	54.00
Governance costs	<b>7</b>	-	887.00	887.00	869.00
Course costs		18.00	-	18.00	-
Donations		-	173.00	173.00	154.00
Kitchen refurbishment		2,081.00	691.00	2,772.00	-
Banking charges		-	79.00	79.00	-
<b>Total payments</b>		<b>2,099.00</b>	<b>14,779.00</b>	<b>16,878.00</b>	<b>12,323.00</b>
<b>Surplus/Deficit for the period</b>		<b>(2,099.00)</b>	<b>5,184.00</b>	<b>3,085.00</b>	<b>15,311.00</b>
<b>Total funds brought forward 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021:</b>		<b>2,096.00</b>	<b>46,337.00</b>	<b>48,433.00</b>	<b>33,122.00</b>
<b>Transfer between funds:</b>		<b>3.00</b>	<b>(3.00)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total funds carried forward 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022:</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>51,518.00</b>	<b>51,518.00</b>	<b>48,433.00</b>

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**Statement of Assets and Liabilities  
as at 31 March 2022**

		<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>Notes</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Current assets:</b>			
Cash at bank and in hand		51,455.00	48,433.00
Donations received still to bank		63.00	-
<b>Total current assets:</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>51,518.00</b>	<b>48,433.00</b>
<b>Current liabilities:</b>			
Cheques still to clear		-	18.00
Accrual for late invoices		-	4,435.00
<b>Total current liabilities:</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>4,453.00</b>
<b>Net assets:</b>		<b>51,518.00</b>	<b>43,980.00</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>			
Restricted reserves		-	2,096.00
Unrestricted reserves		51,518.00	41,884.00
<b>Total funds:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>51,518.00</b>	<b>43,980.00</b>

The financial statements were approved by the following members of the Board of Trustees:

Signed: *S. de Jume* Position: SECRETARY

Signed: *G. Hindle* Position: CHAIR



## Low Fell Library Association

### Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022

<b>1</b>	<p>These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant note(s) to these accounts.</p> <p>The accounts 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 (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) – Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>Low Fell Library Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Charity No.1153726 registered on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2013. The organisation is governed by a Board of Trustees. The organisation has no paid staff, the library is operated by a team of volunteers.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p><i>Corporation Tax:</i></p> <p>The charity is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 252 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objectives.</p>
<b>4</b>	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £16,000.00 - Gateshead Council Re-Start grant</li> <li>• £678.00 – Donations</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £1,910.00 - Electricity</li> <li>• £1,480.000 – Gas</li> <li>• £218.00 - Water</li> <li>• £3,262.00 – Recharge to Gateshead Council</li> <li>• £48 – Music licence</li> <li>• £1,574.00 – Library signage and notice boards</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	<p>This includes items such as stationery, cleaning, storage, small items of equipment and miscellaneous costs.</p>
<b>7</b>	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £577.00 – Insurance</li> <li>• £275.00 – Accountancy fee</li> <li>• £35.00 – ICO registration</li> </ul>

8	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cash at bank and in hand - £51,455</li> <li>• Donations received to be banked £63.00</li> </ul>
9	<p>This includes:</p> <p><i>Unrestricted reserves:</i></p> <p>Money available to the charity. The charity has a reserves policy which sets out a commitment to maintaining reserves that are sufficient to meet the anticipated operating costs for a period required to give notice on any lease or service level agreements that the charity has entered into.</p>