

DIGSWELL PLACE GROUP RIDING FOR DISABLED CIO

KNOWN AS DIGSWELL PLACE RDA
Charity Number: 1163233

Trustees' Annual Report

From 1st September 2020 to 31st August 2021



"Another extraordinary year, once again demonstrating the RDA spirit of "it's what you can do" in action at Digswell Place RDA. Thanks to our volunteers, generous supporters and strong financial management, we've weathered the storm, delivered activities when possible, adapted and built for the future with new ways of working. The resilience of the Group is truly remarkable, recognition and thanks go to all in our community for helping us through." Sue Clarke Chair Trustees Digswell Place Group RDA

1. Objectives & Activities

We provide disabled people with the opportunity to ride to benefit their health and well-being in Welwyn Hatfield, Stevenage, Hertford, St. Albans and surrounding area.



Purpose - What we do

The purposes of the charity are set out in the RDA member group Constitution:

The objects for which the CIO is established are to promote the objects of the Riding for the Disabled Association incorporating Carriage Driving a charity registered under charity number 244108 ("RDA"). Digswell Place RDA is a member group of RDA UK.

Objectives

Through horse-riding and horse care activities, we provide therapy, achievement and enjoyment to children and adults with a variety of disabilities. Riders gain physiological & physiotherapy benefits of exercise in the open air and mental health benefits from; learning a new skill, increased self-confidence & independence, improved communication skills and the opportunity to meet and socialise with our RDA community.

Our Activities

Operating from purpose built volunteer led facilities, provided exclusively for charitable purposes; we offer outdoor riding and horse care sessions for children and adults with disabilities. Where there is capacity and with consideration to our Equine Welfare Policy, we support any adult or child with a mental or physical disability who may benefit. Rider applicants are assessed in line with practices set out by RDA UK, to ensure that it is safe and beneficial for them to participate.

Through riding and interacting with ponies, horses and volunteers we make a difference to the lives of our participants through:

Therapy

Achievement

Enjoyment

Our 12 horses & ponies provide riding sessions in two outdoor arenas or in the adjacent woods. Sessions are run by RDA UK Accredited volunteer coaches and volunteer helpers, trained to RDA UK standards. Attendees come from local specialist schools, children supported in attending from mainstream schools & colleges and private adult attendees.

Therapy - our riders;

Gain therapeutic benefit & reach therapeutic goals by connecting with animals. Improve physical mobility, strength and general fitness. Gain the physiological advantages & sensory stimulation of exercise in the open air.

Achievement - our riders;

Learn new skills, particularly horsemanship. Increase self-confidence and self-esteem by achieving personal goals. Develop life skills including communication & understanding instructions. Experience independence and responsibility.

Enjoyment - our riders;

Meet and socialise with the RDA community. Build relationships & share experiences. Combat social isolation & participate in group activities including fundraising & committees.

The true cost of riding with Digswell Place RDA is not passed to the rider

140 Enhanced DBS checked volunteers support our activities

119 volunteers directly help run sessions

11 pony carers

10 volunteers run the Management committee

7 volunteers are Trustees

5 maintenance team members

1 paid Equine Manager

Average volunteer age 45-55 with more younger volunteers joining us

Volunteer retention strong through enhanced engagement programmes

Every session is subsidised by our own fundraising activities. We aim to be an affordable, inclusive and accessible organisation. Bursaries are available to offset all or part of a rider's contribution so that financial hardship is not a barrier to benefiting from our activities.

Volunteers are key to our activities

Without our volunteers we could not achieve our charitable aims, they are at the heart of what we deliver. We are a volunteer led organisation.

Helpers and coaches prepare the horses and ponies, lead the ponies, side walk and Coach. Pony carers (minders) ensure the day to day needs of their allocated ponies are met by exercising & schooling the ponies outside working sessions. They contribute a small amount to the upkeep of their pony and volunteer in session/fundraising roles.

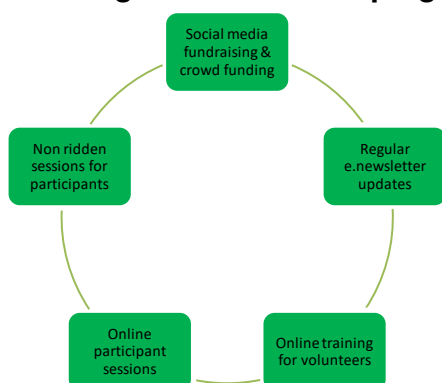
Members of the management Committee and Trustees are also helpers, coaches, riders and minders.

The maintenance team keeps the Yard safe and serviceable by maintaining fencing, paddock & facilities.

Supporting the core volunteer base, we have a freelance advanced Coach and a full time employed Equine Manager. These roles are critical to the charity continuing to deliver its charitable aims and public benefit. In addition to our own volunteers, when able to, we welcome placement students and host working parties from companies to assist with larger maintenance & facilities projects.

Volunteer retention was key for to ensure readiness for return to full strength post Covid.

Weathering the storm - keeping our community connected in new ways



Embracing digital communication:

- ✓ Face book page "likes" increased from 761 to 884 during year
- ✓ Zoom socials & business meetings & presentations
- ✓ Online horse knowledge quiz developed by a young rider
- ✓ Online training from RDA UK for participants & volunteers

Delivering our public benefit and still building for the future.....

We confirm that the Trustees of Digswell Place RDA have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit issued by the Commission. We work within a Strategic Plan which states our vision to extend our public benefit;

***Our vision** "To offer more & different opportunities to experience Digswell Place as a rider, volunteer or supporter. This will be delivered from our existing site with additional coaching facilities, 14 happy and healthy equines & a mix of volunteer and paid staff".*

..... And adapting in response to an extraordinary year

Our overriding priority during the year has been the safety of our volunteers & participants as we worked our way through the changing Covid landscape, guided by Government restrictions and advice from RDA UK and County.

We began September 2020 with 20 independent riders due to social distancing requirements. Between further lockdowns and as restrictions eased we gradually brought back riders and volunteers when safe to do so.

By year end we had 80 riders back in the saddle.

Lockdown diary 2020 to 2021 - From 20 to 80 riders at year end

31st August to opening in September 2020 - 20 independent riders

New Sessions ran during summer holidays to ensure opportunity to deliver benefit maximised during uncertain times

5th Nov - 7th December Lockdown 2

Yard closed to riders to protect the vulnerable in our community

Budget & finances under tight management & capital expenditure held

Annual fundraising ball cancelled

New first crowd funded campaign paid for unexpected vet bill for one of our ponies

7th Dec - 5th Jan - independent riders return

Non ridden horse care sessions delivered for those who couldn't ride

New Social media Christmas hamper fundraising campaign

5th Jan -29th March Lockdown 3

Core volunteer team & staff member only on Yard

Dogs & Daffs physical fundraising event cancelled

New Online horse care sessions delivered for participants, some developed by one of our own younger participants

New online art competition launched

29th March - 31st August - 80 riders back

Gradual return of riders as and when social distancing restrictions allowed

Phase 2 riders supported by family bubbles returned

Volunteer's re induction sessions held at Yard prior to return

Riders return supported by volunteers with appropriate mitigating actions

Plans developed for full return September 2021 including school groups

2. Achievements, performance and impact

80% riders back

One of 60% of groups open nationally by July 2021

Strong foundation for year ahead

Record applications for new riders

20 new volunteers prepared

5 new coaches in training

Equine team held at strength with 12 ponies & horses

Infrastructure development

Although rides delivered were below pre pandemic levels of 1830 for year ending 2019, by year end 2021 80% of our riders were back in the saddle, a huge achievement in the context of RDA UK nationally.

Digswell Place Group was amongst the 60% of RDA groups nationally who were open again at the end of 2021. Across the wider RDA UK organisation the number of participants stood at 20% of pre pandemic levels. (Source RDA UK Activity Levels Report July 2021)

Our mixed portfolio of school groups and private riders helped to ensure a steady return of riders, with private riders returning as appropriate whilst school groups chose to wait until September 2021.

Demand, and support, for our services grew during the year and we ended the year with a record waiting list of 40 new riders.

To support this increase we have 5 new coaches in training and began training 20 new volunteers ready for September 2021.

Although sadly, we said goodbye to 3 of our loyal and long serving equines we replaced them with 3 equines from grant funding and donations.

In line with our 5 year plan we completed; boundary fencing work, began surfacing our new all weather walkway for non ridden sessions and completed hard standing work with grants & fundraising.

671 rides delivered

Operating for 32 weeks

Proficiency tests delivered

Non ridden sessions delivered

Volunteers phased return

Performance and impact

A phased approach based on prevailing social distancing restrictions enabled us to deliver 750 rides in the 32 weeks we could be open.

For those who couldn't ride we offered online "RDA at home" sessions supported by our coaches and non ridden horse care sessions.

These activities were recognised, where appropriate, with RDA UK accredited proficiency tests giving our participants a chance to continue learning & achieving.

A phased volunteer return programme allowed volunteers to return at a pace that suited them with refresher training and social interaction with their session teams.

Performance of fundraising activities - adapting to change

At Digswell Place RDA we are committed to responsible fundraising. In October 2016 the Trustees approved a Fundraising Promise based on the RDA UK's fundraising protocol:

- We do not use cold-calling or unsolicited direct-mailing.
- We do not employ third party organisations to fundraise on our behalf.
- We do not sell or pass on individuals' details to third parties.

We rely on a programme of fundraising events each year to fund our everyday activities and subsidise the cost of rides. All fundraising, including grant funding applications, are undertaken by volunteers and leverages on our local community and wider RDA networks.

All fundraising undertaken by our volunteers through:

Physical events

New virtual events; crowd funding, online art competition, social media campaigns

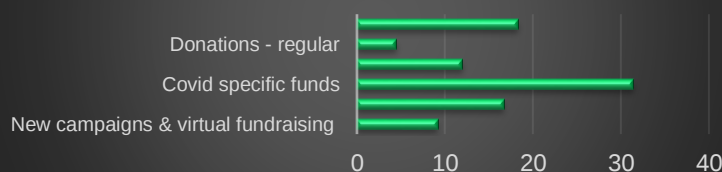
Charitable trust funding

Covid specific funds applied for by our volunteers

Grants applied for by our volunteers

44% non-covid specific funding from donations

Analysis of funding sources £'000



Physical events Our annual ball, Dogs & Daffs event, summer show and dressage were all cancelled leaving a potential shortfall in our fundraising, but adapting to our new environment we embraced alternative fundraising channels and initiatives.

Virtual fundraising Building on learning from early 2020 we launched new campaigns marking firsts for Digswell Place; crowd funding covered unexpected vets fees, an online art competition and Facebook campaigns.

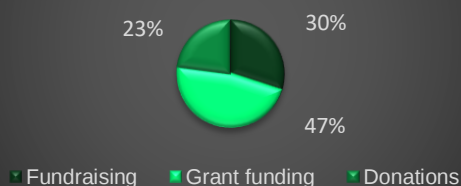
Charitable trust funding A generous grant from Welwyn Hatfield Community Fund allowed us to develop our new all weather walkway and complete hard standing work.

Covid specific funds Our local authority supported us with Covid specific funding for business-as-usual costs, keeping our Yard running and ponies fed.

Grants A grant from RDA UK funded a replacement horse.

Donations Our local business community, volunteers and RDA family were invaluable, regular & one-off donations represented 44% of our non-Covid specific funding.

Diversification of funding



3. Financial Review

As in prior years we finance all expenditure from available cash funds: our underlying principle is to ensure we do not pass on any debt to future years.

We have used the Charity Commission's template Receipts and Payments statement and Statement of Assets and Liabilities to record the charity's receipts and payments for the year ended 31 August 2021 together with comparable figures for the previous year. These have been independently examined, are included at pages 12 to 16 and should be read in conjunction with this review.

As a Group we've shown an amazing degree of financial and operational resilience over the year, emerging from these incredibly difficult and challenging times with reserves of £152k. This is quite a staggering result considering we had budgeted for a reduction in reserves due to cancellation of four key fundraising events. The upturn (which does include income of £16k for our November 2021 Fundraising Ball) is down to a successful strategy of community engagement driven by the innovative "can do" determination of the Group, at all levels.

Resilience & sustainability

Results well ahead of expectations

Reserves maintained

Growing community of local funders & donors

Well managed cost base

Future fit infrastructure plan

Increased demand for what we do

New income streams in the pipeline

Cautious start Historically we have relied on events, particularly our annual ball, to subsidise the cost of rides. Normally numbers of rides would exceed 1500pa, but with a yard almost at full complement of equines, 20 riders in the saddle, social distancing in place, and the prospect of further enforced lockdowns we started 2020/2021 very cautiously.

Bridging the funding gap Early on we looked at alternative fundraising options and were successful in applying for grant funding of £41k, mostly government-backed for running costs but some for future income generating activities. We continued to increase our reach to our local community with ten local organisations providing financial support and our volunteers used initiative and innovation to raise £35k. With events now viable, we can report advance ticket sales for our November Ball of £16k at 31 August 2021.

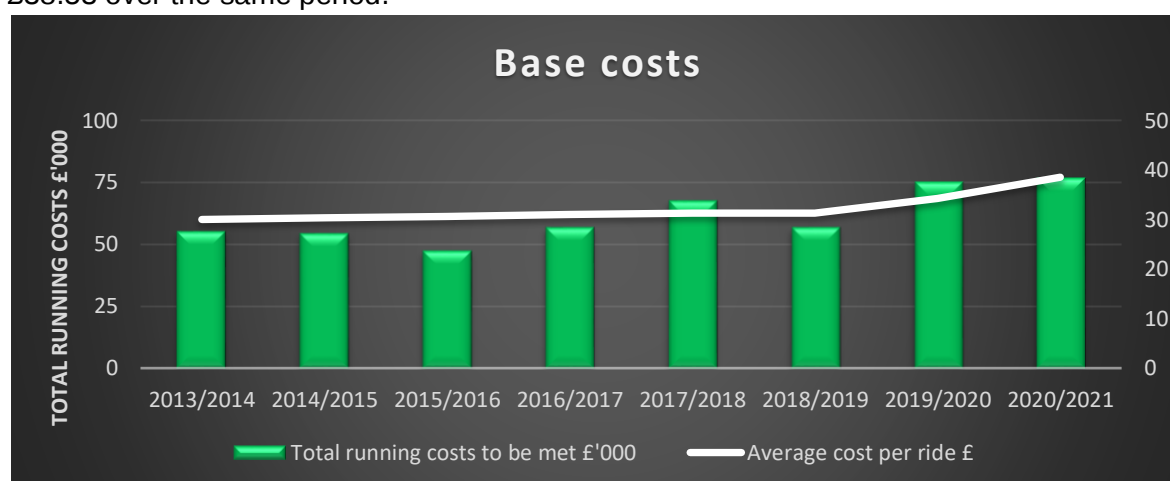
Focussed spending With a five year capital projects plan in place we have maintained our focus on essential spend and contained the run rate at £71k pa (excluding fund raising costs).

Capital projects previously approved by Trustees, and large items of exceptional spend, have been funded from grants awarded and specific fundraising campaigns, enabling us to make use of enforced downtime to ensure that the yard is future fit. Not only were we able to secure our perimeter to safeguard our equines, riders and volunteers, and cover unexpected vets bills but we were able to complete projects started in previous years to deliver more diverse horse therapy sessions to a wider range of beneficiaries in the future. This means we can hit the ground running in September 2021 with new income generating activities.

Silver linings 2020/2021 has been a year when fallen stock levels have been higher than expected. Having lost three key equines, we were fortunate to be gifted a replacement for one, and secured value for money on two further purchases funded with specific grants.

Cost per ride Although many of our rides have been on a one-to-one basis this year in line with social distancing provisions, and our ride numbers are much reduced, we have retained the principle of offering returning riders subsidised rides at group rates - £12 per session.

Our running costs are quite peaky from year to year, often depending on the incidence of fallen, and acquisition of new, stock. With restricted opening capacity and ability to fund raise through large scale events, the last two financial years have not been typical for us and so we have been tracking our average cost per ride to help with decision making. In 2013/2014 our cost per ride was £30 and we charged £10 per ride. Digswell Place is a very different place to where it was in those days. With time our base cost has risen in line with increased regulation and the need to invest in and protect our volunteers, coaches and riders, and to employ professional staff for continuity of equine welfare and service delivery. Average running costs for the eight-year period are £61.4k with an average cost per ride of £38.53 over the same period.



Looking ahead Whilst we anticipate that there will be a longer-term impact of Covid and Brexit on our cost base, and that it will continue to creep upwards, there is clear evidence of growing demand for our therapies post Covid and encouragingly, a strengthening sense of purpose amongst our local communities, to mitigate against this risk and to sustain us.

Policy notes

Reserves policy

In May 2018 the Trustees adopted and agreed a Reserves Policy and agreed 18 months core activity expenditure should be held in reserve in case of a catastrophic loss of income. This was increased from one year to give time to strengthen our operating position and develop a sustainable fundraising programme to enhance our core deliverables. This level of reserves has helped Digswell Place to weather the Covid storm and with the ongoing health and economic uncertainty the UK faces, is considered to be a prudent policy for us for the foreseeable future.

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

In 1996 the freehold of the land was purchased by RDA UK with Lottery Sports Funding.

The land is leased to Digswell Place RDA at a peppercorn rent.

The Stables and Classroom are insured at cost plus RICS inflation. They will have little realisable value and in the event that the charity ceases to be viable they will pass to RDA UK under the terms of the group membership agreement. No investments are held by the Charity. No funds are held as custodian trustees on behalf of others. The Trustees choose not to publicly show the value of the ponies and horses, tack etc.

4. Structure, Governance and Management

The purposes for which Digswell Place Group Riding for the Disabled Association CIO are set out in RDA UK member group Constitution.

Digswell Place RDA is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales. The CIO was entered on the Charity Commission Register of Charities on 20 August 2015 with the Registered Charity number 1163233. The merger of Digswell Place Group Riding for the Disabled 1074341 was registered on 12 November 2015 with a transfer date of 11 November 2015. Digswell Place RDA CIO is governed by a Board of Trustees. The charity is a member group of RDA UK. All member groups are governed by a Membership Agreement with RDA UK.

The RDA UK document “the Essentials of Membership” sets out the standards and procedures by which the charity operates, including the minimum standard of qualification required of those responsible for the activity at any time. In this way we ensure that at any time, all activity is guided and supervised by an appropriate person and the highest standards of safety and welfare are maintained. The Charity is accountable to RDA UK and is required to submit returns annually. The Group is part of the Herts RDA Group and the RDA Eastern Region.

Trustee selection

The original Board of Trustees all stood for election in December 2016 at the inaugural AGM, as required by the CIO constitution. One Trustee left in 2020. Additional trustees are sought from those actively involved in promoting the objectives of the Group. All Trustees are required to have an enhanced DBS check where appropriate.

The structure passed in May 2018 by the CIO voting members, with split roles for Chair of Trustees and Chair of Management Committee, continues to serve well providing more manageable workloads for these volunteer positions.

At August 2021 there were 7 trustees; minuted meetings are held at least 4 times p.a. or more often if needed. No person or body external to the charity is entitled to appoint any of the trustees. During Covid virtual meetings were adopted in line with Charity Commission guidance and our Constitution.

Trustee Training and Induction

A range of guidance produced by the Riding for the Disabled Association including the “Welcome pack for trustees” is supplied to each trustee. Relevant guidance and News releases from the Charity Commission are brought to the attention of Trustees. Support and advice is available from RDA UK staff and website.

5. Reference and Administrative Details

Charity name	Digswell Place Group Riding for the Disabled Association	
Other names charity is known by	Digswell Place RDA	
Registered charity number	1163233	
Charity's principal address	Digswell Place Stables	
	Rectory Road	
	Welwyn	
	AL8 7SU	

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
Sue Clarke	Chair Trustees & Trustee	Re-elected AGM 16/12/20	
Bridget Johnstone	Trustee & Group Secretary	Re-elected AGM 16/12/20	
Carol Redgment	Trustee	Re-elected AGM 16/12/20	
Tom Gough	Trustee	Re-elected AGM 16/12/20	
Jennie Redford	Treasurer & Trustee	Re-elected AGM 2/2/18	
Jackie Meredith	Trustee	Retired 16/12/20	
Annette Ponniah	Trustee & Safeguarding Officer	Re-elected 6/12/19	

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.
Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)	<i>S. Clarke</i>	<i>J Redford</i>
Full name(s)	Susan Clarke	Jennie Redford
Position	Chair Trustees	Treasurer
Date	<i>17 December 2021</i>	

Digswell Place Group Riding for the Disabled		Charity no: 1163233		CC16a
Receipts and payments accounts				
For the period from	1 September 2020	To	31 August 2021	

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted Funds To the nearest £	Restricted Funds To the nearest £	Endowment Funds To the nearest £	Total Funds To the nearest £	Last Year To the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Riders Contributions	7,552	0	0	7,552	15,120
Ponycare Helpers	8,665	0	0	8,665	8,370
Donations General	21,134	0	0	21,134	53,003
Discretionary grant - covid related for running costs	31,433	0	0	31,433	4,200
Grant from Welwyn Hatfield Community fund	0	9,000	0	9,000	0
Grant from RDA UK	0	3,000	0	3,000	0
Interest	631	0	0	631	750
Fundraising	20,693	4,292	0	24,985	38,708
Gift Aid Reclaim	2,600	0	0	2,600	2,209
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	92,708	16,292	0	109,000	122,360
A2 Asset and investment sales					
Pony	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0
Sub total	0	0	0	0	0
Total receipts	92,708	16,292	0	109,000	122,360

A3 Payments

Post Covid Back to Riding costs	0	0	0	0	188
Fees, Hay, Bedding, Ferrier & Horsecare	18,799	0	0	18,799	26,614
Veterinary	4,291	5,413	0	9,704	6,691
Tack, Rugs, Equipment	440	0	0	440	5,377
Maintenance	12,923	0	0	12,923	1,507
Insurance, Utilities & Admin	6,541	0	0	6,541	6,490
Fundraising	1,495	0	0	1,495	19,097
Salaries, Pension & employers' NIC	21,846	0	0	21,846	22,454
Volunteers expenses	992	0	0	992	564
Motor vehicle expenses	86	0	0	86	1,761
Sub total	67,413	5,413	0	72,826	90,743

A4 Asset and investment purchases

Pony purchase	2,565	3,000	0	5,565	3,700
Second arena construction & surfacing	0	0	0	0	70,141
Field reconfiguration	0	0	0	0	11,851
Walkway surfacing	0	9,180	0	9,180	0
Refurbishment of old arena	1,635			1,635	0
Sub total	4,200	12,180	0	16,380	85,692

Total payments	71,613	17,593	0	86,206	176,435
Net of receipts/(payments)	21,095	-1,301	0	19,794	-54,074
A5 Transfers between funds	-1,301	1,301	0	0	
A6 Cash funds last year end	132,860	0		132,860	186,934
Cash funds this year end	152,654	0	0	152,654	132,860

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted Funds To the nearest £	Restricted funds To the nearest £	Endowment funds To the nearest £
B1 Cash funds	HSBC Current A/C	26,607	0	0
	Cash	30	0	0
	PayPal account	510	0	0
	Creditors	-1,609	0	0
	Shawbrook CAF account 60 day fixed term	72,896	0	0
	HSBC Deposit A/C	54,220		
	Total cash funds	152,654	0	0

(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))

	Details	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds
B2 Other monetary assets		0	0	0
B3 Investment assets		Fund to which asset belongs 0	Cost (optional) 0	Current value (optional) 0
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use		0	0	0
B5 Liabilities		Fund to which liability relates 0	Amount due (optional) 0	When due (optional) 0

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print name	Date of approval
<i>S. Clarke</i>	Susan Clarke	17 December 2021
<i>J. Redford</i>	Jennie Redford	17 December 2021

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Digswell Place Group Riding for the Disabled

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31 August 2021

Set out on pages

1 to x14

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 August 2021.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

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

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

Signed:

: *Alexandra Bailey*

Name:

: Alexandra Bailey

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

ACCA

Address:

10 Densley Close

Welwyn Garden City

Hertfordshire, AL8 7JX

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.