

Trustees' Annual Report April 2020 to March 2021

Reference and Administration Details

Charity Name: Rimrose Valley Friends

Registered Charity number: 1171536

Registered addresses:

32 Henley Ave

Litherland

LIVERPOOL

L21 2PU

The Charity's current Trustees are:

Sarah Edey

Linda Gaskell

Gary Young

Tracey Boileau

Structure, Governance and Management

1. The Charity is governed by a written constitution
2. During this period, Gail Wilson, Hazel Davies, Mike Carter, and Janet McNulty stepped down as Trustees and Gary Young and Tracey Boileau were appointed.
3. The Charity has a paid membership scheme, with all members having voting rights at the AGM and other general meetings.
4. During the period one formal complaint was received. The trustees in place at that time investigated the complaint and reached the decision that it not be upheld.
5. The last AGM was held on 10th December 2020, with the next scheduled for February 2022, which is within the 15-month period permitted by the constitution.

This Annual Report covers the period from April 2020 to March 2021 to bring it into line with the Charity's accounts. It therefore includes elements of the previous Annual Report which ran from the calendar year. This explains the repetition of some items.

Objectives and Activities

Objectives:

1. Rimrose Valley Friends sets out to promote, protect and improve the community resource that is Rimrose Valley Country Park.
2. Rimrose Valley Friends aims to benefit the local community surrounding Rimrose Valley, promoting it through events and activities, engaging with other community groups and liaising with the police to cut down on anti-social behaviour.
3. Rimrose Valley Friends' work covers the area of Rimrose Valley Country Park, bordering the Leeds-Liverpool canal and the adjoining communities of Seaforth, Litherland, Waterloo, Crosby, Thornton and Netherton.

Activities:

The Charity's trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit and have undertaken the following activities within the boundaries of that guidance.

During this period, the Charity has aimed to further the core activities of Rimrose Valley Friends and simultaneously run a successful campaign against a road proposal which threatens the park's future, which is known as Save Rimrose Valley. As these have different objectives, the activities for each are summarised separately below.

Rimrose Valley Friends

The Charity's core activities include:

1. Raising awareness and promoting the Charity's work **online** via the following:
 - Writing articles, blogs and content for its dedicated website www.rimrosevalleyfriends.org
 - Administering the campaign's Facebook group "Rimrose Valley Friends"
 - Maintaining the campaign's Twitter account @RimroseValley
2. Raising awareness and promoting the Charity's work **in the community** via the following:
 - Organising activities and events on Rimrose Valley
 - Engaging with local schools, community groups and other charities with shared objectives
 - Attending and supporting local community events
3. Engaging with relevant **stakeholders** including:
 - Local Councillors
 - Green Sefton
 - Sefton CVS
 - Local MPs

Specific activities in this period

Delivery of the Charity's core activities was hampered during this period due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the associated lockdowns and subsequent social distancing rules. However, the Charity remained active, particularly online, and activities included

1. **Facebook** The charity's community group has grown, with thousands of members predominantly from the surrounding communities. This number increased significantly (estimate of around 2,000) as a result of more people discovering Rimrose Valley during the pandemic. The group is used for people to share relevant news stories, photographs and information and is administered by volunteers.
2. **Website** The mailing list has continued to grow. Members of the public can subscribe to this list and receive email notifications of news and events added to the website.
3. **Twitter** This has proven to be a great way of connecting with similar local community groups and supporting each other's work. Again, the account is administered by volunteers.
4. **Rimrose Runners** Activities had to be suspended during the height of lockdown but the club resumed as soon as was allowed and activities followed Covid-secure practices. It saw an increase in membership during this period as more people became aware of the park. The club ran a half marathon in October 2020 raising funds for the Charity. The Club promotes health and wellbeing among the local community as well as raising awareness of Rimrose Valley Country Park and the campaign to save it
5. **Guided Walks** The Charity's traditional programme of walks was suspended during this period due to lockdowns, limits on group numbers and following guidance from Green Sefton. These would resume in the following period.
6. **Litter Picks** Two were carried out in accordance with Covid-secure practises, following guidance from Green Sefton. However, these were limited to a maximum of 6 people and it was decided to revisit when restrictions allowed greater participation.
7. **ValleyWatch** The Charity purchased a trailcam which was placed in the park from May 2020 with the approval of Green Sefton. This resulted in a series of films collecting wildlife footage at a time when many people were in lockdown. These proved popular and this project will be revisited.
8. **Running Track** The Charity supported the efforts of local running club, Marsh Lane Harriers, to reinstate the disused 'Chaffers' running track which surrounds the wildflower meadow. Work was completed with financial support from Jamie Carragher's 23 Foundation. The Charity assisted MLH in gaining permission from Sefton Council and work started in May 2020 at the height of the first lockdown. The refurbishment of the track continued and has been an enormous success. The track is used regularly by Rimrose Runners, Marsh Lane Harriers, a youth group and other informal groups and individuals. There are plans to further develop this facility and the Charity will support these and continue to promote the facility.
9. **Wildflower meadow** The Charity sold seeds harvested from the previous year's meadow to raise the funds for subsequent sowing and to generate income for the Charity. Due to the lockdown restrictions the proposed public sowing event was unable to be held, but the wildflower meadow was again a success during the summer of 2020. As a result of this project, the Charity received a national environmental Bees' Needs Award by DeFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) for creating habitat for bees and other pollinators.
10. **Rimrose Valley Calendar** The Charity invited people to submit photographs for a calendar. This proved to be very successful, with the Charity making a profit from the sales. This is to be repeated each year.

11. **Co-op Community fund** The Charity was successful in its application to be included as a nominated Charity for this fund. The money is to be used for community events. Due to the pandemic restrictions no events were held in this period, but the Co-op Community Fund gave permission for funds to be used for the good of the community. To this end the Charity purchased 2 benches and an Information Board which were installed next to the running track and wildflower meadow in the subsequent period, with the balance to roll over to the next financial year.
12. **Survey of usage** The Charity carried out an online survey of park users during the Covid-19 pandemic with over 1,000 respondents. The survey asked people how often they used the park, what for, why it was important to them, how they travelled there and for any thoughts they wished to share. The results are to be published on the Charity's website and will be used to support future funding bids.
13. **Proposal to grow the charity** During this financial year, a motion was put forward via a general meeting and the subsequent AGM to grow the Charity and to make an application to the National Lottery (or similar) to fund full and/or part-time resource for the Charity. This work was carried over to financial year 2021/22 and will therefore be reported on in the next Annual Report.

Save Rimrose Valley

The Charity opposes National Highways' plans to build a dual carriageway through Rimrose Valley Country Park, known as The A5036 Port of Liverpool Access Scheme.

The Charity set up a Road Action Group in September 2017. The group comprises the four trustees and additional volunteers from the community, with approximately 18 active members.

The campaign's work is coordinated by Stuart Bennett on a part-time paid contractor basis. The role is paid for via a combination of funding from grants and general Charity fundraising.

Guidance and support are received from relevant environmental groups and NGOs including Transport Action Network, Friends of the Earth, CPRE and Lancashire Wildlife Trust.

This guidance informs the campaign's strategy which has two key objectives:

1. To change minds of decision-makers at Westminster
2. To engage the community in the fight to save the park

The campaign's work should therefore fulfil either of the two objectives, with the Road Action Group supporting the delivery of this work.

The campaign's core activities include:

1. Raising awareness and promoting the campaign's work **online** via the following:

- Writing articles, blogs and content added to dedicated website www.saverimrosevalley.org
 - Writing and distributing press releases to local, regional and national media outlets
 - Maintaining the campaign's Facebook page @saverimrosevalley
 - Maintaining the campaign's Twitter account @saverimrose
 - Maintaining the campaign's Instagram account @saverimrose
 - Producing a podcast series "We Said No" covering many of the issues around the campaign
 - Creating videos to convey key messages
2. Raising awareness and promoting the campaign's work **in the community** via the following:
 - Organising demonstrations
 - Leafleting
 - Using signs, posters and banners in prominent locations
 - Engaging with local schools
 - Promoting the campaign at 'in store' events such as LUSH and local supermarkets
 - Engaging with other environmental groups and campaigns from across the Liverpool City Region
 - Attending and supporting local community events
 3. Engaging with key stakeholders in the road proposal including:
 - National Highways
 - Peel Ports
 - Department for Transport
 - Transport for the North
 - Local MPs, Councillors, the Metro Mayor & Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
 4. Documenting key arguments against the road proposal
 5. Exploring and promoting viable alternatives the road proposal

Specific activities in this period

As with the Charity's work, the campaign's public activities were hampered during this period due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the associated lockdowns and subsequent social distancing rules. However, a successful online presence was maintained and key administrative work was progressed with some notable activities as follows:

1. **Social media** Despite being unable to hold demonstrations, the campaign actually grew its following during this time as the connection was made between the pandemic, lockdowns and the importance of access to green space was understood. The campaign its following increase across all channels. Supporters were encouraged to submit photos of themselves using the park during lockdown. Instagram was added as an additional channel, with the hope of attracting a younger audience. Filming short videos also proved to be a good way of increasing engagement during lockdown.
2. **National Highways** Covid resulted in more delay to the project with plans for a statutory consultation, environmental studies and traffic monitoring cancelled. The

campaign continued to submit Freedom of Information requests. These were rejected en masse and subsequently appealed for support from local MPs.

3. **Alternative Solutions** Sefton Council released an Inland Port Connectivity Concept report during this period. Prepared by ARUP, this offered alternatives to moving freight containers by road including a freight pipeline, overhead container transfer and automated guided vehicles. The campaign supports this work and is pushing for the next phase – a more detailed feasibility study.
4. **Politicians** The campaign maintained good relations with Councillors, the relevant Council Officers and MPs; all of whom oppose the road proposal. MPs raised their own FOI requests which were rejected and they committed to following this up. The Metro Mayor and the Liverpool City Region comment on the scheme but do not go as far as opposing it. They support Sefton's stance. Getting the Metro Mayor and LCRC to change their position is a key goal for the campaign. A meeting with the Roads Minister organised by both MPs was unproductive and unlikely to help the campaign.
5. **We Said No** This podcast was launched during this period and has given the campaign a new way to communicate the key issues with supporters. Initial episodes explained the background to the campaign and another focussed on Peel Ports' role. These will continue in subsequent periods.
6. **Media coverage** Despite the pandemic the campaign kept the story in the news with good coverage, particularly around MPs own FOI requests being refused. Press releases remain a key tool for the campaign and will continue.
7. **Leafleting campaign** This took place during summer 2020 with over 20,000 leaflets distributed to local communities, raising awareness of the road proposal, the campaign, ways to get involved and the upcoming statutory consultation. The reverse was a poster which has been a great way for people to display support in their homes.
8. **Funding** The campaign was successful with applications to both LUSH and Patagonia during this period. The LUSH funds go towards ongoing campaign costs, whereas the Patagonia fund paid for the campaign coordinator role for several months.

Achievements and Performance

The main achievement of the Charity during this extremely challenging period has been to continue to raise awareness of Rimrose Valley Country Park. The Facebook group in particular has been a source of promoting the park and enabling people to connect and share stories when this wasn't always possible in person.

In turn, this has continued to raise the profile of the campaign and the threat of the road proposal, growing support in the process.

The Charity plans to grow its work in the next period and to build on the activities outlined above.

In terms of external recognition, the Charity received two, prestigious awards during this period:

- A national environmental **Bees' Needs Award** from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DeFRA) for the Wildflower Meadow project which has created a habitat for bees and other pollinators.
- An Echo Environment **Healthy Living Award** in recognition of the work the Charity undertakes to promote and protect the park. Particular reference was made to the Covid-19 pandemic and the importance of the greens space.

Financial Review

1. The Charity is regularly funded by public donation. It has a LocalGiving account which can accept one-off donations as well as recurring direct debits.
2. The Charity has actively applied for grants and other funding to finance both the Charity's activities and events and the work of the Save Rimrose Valley campaign. Funders include Patagonia, LUSH and the Co-Op with all funds clearly ringfenced in the Charity's accounts.
3. The Accounts for the financial year 2020/21 have been prepared and audited by Sefton CVS and will be reviewed and approved at the upcoming AGM.

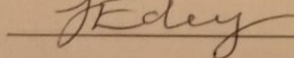
Declaration

Rimrose Valley Friends
Receipts and Payments Account
For the Year ended 31st March 2021

	2021	2020
Receipts		£
Gifts, Donations and Collections	13,451.30	15,647.28
Groundwork	-	1,250.00
Sefton MBC - Contribution to Wildflower Meadow	600.00	-
The Tides Foundation	4,449.67	-
COOP Community Funding	5,351.78	-
Lush Limited - Carbon Tax Grant	2,000.00	6,252.00
IRYO Community Donation	-	4,000.00
Total Receipts	<u>25,852.75</u>	<u>27,149.28</u>
Payments		
Direct event costs	10,693.98	15,168.09
Charitable activities	551.22	333.16
Telephone	61.20	28.80
Professional fees	185.00	335.00
Printing, postage and stationery	598.60	575.25
Equipment hire	-	70.98
Leaflets, flyers	828.02	367.50
Memberships/Subscriptions	242.39	-
Insurance	40.32	420.00
IRYO Communication - Website	5,123.00	4,000.00
Easter Egg Hunt		
Total Expenditure	<u>18,323.73</u>	<u>21,298.78</u>
Excess of Receipts over Payments	7,529.02	5,850.50
Opening Bank Balances	15,145.15	9,294.65
Closing Bank Balances	<u>22,674.17</u>	<u>15,145.15</u>

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Monetary Assets		
Co-operative Bank account - 68778458	-	-
Co-operative Bank account - 65845666	22,674.17	15,145.15
	<u>22,674.17</u>	<u>15,145.15</u>

Signed:  Trustee / Director

Date: 29.11.21

**Independent Examiner's Report
To the Trustees of the Rimrose Valley Friends CIO
For the year ended 31st March 2021**

Charity Number: 1171536

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the CIO for the year ended 31st March 2021

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the CIO you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act')

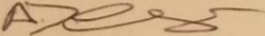
I report in respect of my examination of the CIO's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act. In carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent Examiner's Statement

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

1. accounting records were not kept as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

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.

Signed: 
Date: 29.11.21.

Anthony Deegan MAAT, MICB Pm.Dip
Community Accountant
Sefton Council for Voluntary Service
Crosby Road North
Waterloo
Liverpool
L22 0LG

1st October 2021