

2020-2021 Furness RDA Report for Charities Commission

At the start of our 2020-21 financial year in April 2020 we were already in the first lockdown. Therefore, no riding activities took place, our annual holiday to Clwyd Special Riding Centre was cancelled, no face-to-face meetings were held and no fund-raising took place. We waived getting a refund for our deposit to Clwyd because they are a charity too and were also facing zero income with ponies to feed and staff to pay. By the time things eased a little in the summer of 2020, we weren't due to be riding anyway. We knew that our special schools wouldn't be even considering any out-of-school activities anyway, due to the vulnerable nature of the children riding with us. By September things were getting stopped again. The riding school we use, Seaview in Barrow-in-Furness, had already furloughed staff and got rid of some ponies.

Therefore, because of the national situation, our income and expenditure for the year was a fraction of our usual levels. Our expenditure for the 2020/21 year was basically the necessities of membership and insurance with the national organisation of Riding for the Disabled, and also insurance for our tack and equipment.

Although we weren't able to do any fund-raising, we did manage to get some income. Our Chairman, Judith Stitt, applied for 2 years of Gift Aid and we obtained £1166.44 from that. The local Co-op very kindly took us as a sponsored charity for the 2021/22 year and we received £1269.49 as a first payment in March 2021. Collecting tins in local equine shops raised over £77, a great result when most people were paying for purchases by card by then. We had some generous donations from a few donors and organisations. A veteran volunteer, a retired teacher, sadly died in December 2020, and his family kindly said that donations at his funeral would come to us. Even though only 30 people could actually attend, a large number of family, friends and ex-pupils donated a massive amount of over £1300, such was the esteem he was held in.

We eventually held our postponed AGM for 2019/20 in January 2021 on Zoom. We were trying to be positive then, the vaccination programme had started, and we had hopes that we could think about starting some riding in the autumn term of 2021, albeit with many restrictions and safeguards. We knew some of our committee, including our chairman, had decided over lockdowns that their priorities now lay elsewhere, so we held a few Zoom meetings to pull together a new committee. We held our AGM for 2020/21 in May 2021, at the normal time of year, with new committee members and new trustees.