

Annual General Meeting of The Charlton Park Group RDA
June 13th 2025 – Chairman's Report
Approved as the Trustees Annual Report at the AGM

At the last AGM I reported that the Group was to celebrate its Founding in Greenwich 50 Years ago, by Liz McDermott ...

The celebration duly took place on 21st June 2024 at the Group – happily the weather was kind to us. All were invited as special guests, including some extra special guests:

The King's Deputy Lieutenant for Greenwich: Mr Matthew Burrow

His Worshipful the Mayor of The Royal Borough of Greenwich: CLLR Jit Ranabaht and Lady Mayoress Mrs Gaumaya Ranabhat.

The CEO of RDA National Office: Mr Michael Bishop

And of course, Liz McDermott ...

All of us got access to a wonderful 2 tier celebration cake, topped off with three miniature ponies - a perfect match of our beloved equines.

For my part, I welcomed all and gave a presentation on behalf of everybody present, in which I said:

“2019 saw The Riding For The Disabled and Carriage Driving Association – RDA celebrate its 50th Birthday. Run almost entirely by volunteers, it has since evolved into a nationwide organisation. I am sure that the early pioneers who way back when recognised the therapeutic benefits of horse riding, would recognise that the RDA of today is a true exemplar of excellence in helping disabled young people to reach their true life potential.

2024 sees Charlton Group RDA celebrate its own 50th Birthday.

The Group was started in 1974 by Physio Liz McDermott for the Nursery Department in Charlton School, working on a Wednesday afternoon with one borrowed pony. Greenwich Council soon gave the Group this building, on a peppercorn rent.

We all know that the world runs on volunteers - everyone has something to give! Charlton Group is run entirely by volunteers, supported by a happy band of supporters and donors, parents and carers and certainly not least, by the Royal Borough of Greenwich without whom nothing at all could be done.

We do not make a charge on our young clients and all fundraising to meet the not inconsiderable costs to enable the Group to function so well, all comes from inhouse. Whatever was done in the past half century of Charlton Group, was always done with unequalled passion and camaraderie, a tradition that has remained unchanged to this day, helped along by a great big dollop of fun thrown in for good measure!

Covid has changed the way the world now works and certainly tested our long-established resolve, but it has not broken it. Things are getting back to normal – whatever the new normal may settle down to be – we are comforted by the certainty that the camaraderie between all the wonderful caring people, in whatever capacity they support the Group, remains unbroken, despite perhaps being a little dented at times. The welfare of our beloved equines during these very strange times remained inviolable and was yet another reminder of our unbroken resolve.

Our Group hut was recently refurbished and refreshed to a superb standard courtesy of a High Street Bank, - to stand us in good stead for the next 50 years! The much needed upgrade to the riding school arena was donated by The Supporters Club of Charlton Athletic Football Club.

The icing on the cake to all this undoubted enterprise was that HRH The Princess Royal President of RDA who last visited our Group in 1988, graciously agreed to visit us again in May 2021.

The dedication of the volunteers who whole heartedly committed themselves over the past 50 years without complaint, to 365 days a year in support of the Group. and continue to do so to this day, is to my mind a quite staggering achievement. Our happy band of volunteers continues the mantra – be of good cheer! better times to come!

Here's to the next 50 years of inspirational service by us all, to our young heroes at Charlton Park Group RDA."

An enjoyable and inspiring day was had by all.

The Mayor of Royal Greenwich got his first ever horse ride!

The CEO of RDA National Office presented long service certificates and said lots of kind things about us!

Liz Mc Dermott happily answered questions and duly received our adulation of her, together with our heartfelt thanks!

Everybody got a slice of the celebratory cake! (the 3 miniature ponies later got a place of honour atop a display plinth in the Hut)

Later in the year, a less happy time was had when with Carol I met 2 representatives from Greenwich Council Parks and Open Spaces Department, further to a report that the Council intended to close the animal park section in the adjacent Maryon Wilson Park. A very strong representation was made to the Council representatives, outlining at length the many and varied reasons why the park should remain open, which included reminding that the RDA Group have been extant for

over 50 years, including stabling for the horses in the park without which the Group would have to be disbanded. It was emphasised further that both on-line and various public community meetings and our own Group petition not to close the park, was recorded. The Council representatives promised to report on our presentation, and that it would be added to other representations received and the whole reported to the Council accordingly.

The proposal was subsequently not taken forward by the Council.

The Group's laudable self-sufficiency in remaining one of the very few Groups (if not the only one) that do not make any charges on our clients, inevitably means that fund raising never ceases. The happy fundraising team steered by Carol in her own inimitable way, famously backed up by Xandra, Vicky, Kerry and Maddie continued to perform remarkable fundraising feats too numerous to mention.

Whatever donations, whether they be big, small or anywhere at all in between, are all accepted with sincere thanks to everybody involved. Extra special thanks are extended to The Inverlever Trust and to Greenwich Rotary Club - and to All Aboard Shops for their regular much welcomed donations and support., and to The Royal Borough of Greenwich for ongoing support of us in continuing to provide our Hut and stabling accommodation over the past 50 years, at a Peppercorn rent.

The amazing generosity shown in response to our undoubted fundraising efforts is always most happily snapped up by our grateful and hardworking Treasurer – James Hamilton. Thanks are extended to him for his uncomplaining and inspiring balancing act in keeping our Group accounts records true and up to date.

Sincere thanks are also extended our Group Secretary Eleri Morgan, for her diligence in beavering away without complaint, throughout the year, to safely and expertly keep our Group records in order.

Following determined lobbying by Santa Claus and his Elf minders, the traditional Christmas lunch festivities at Charlton Group was agreed to be held over to Easter, to the delight of the local bunny rabbit community group! Santa (through his interpreter Kevin Clarke) said that although travel might be a tad more difficult without quite so much snow around, he and his reindeer chums would very much welcome a spring break – as it was about time that they stopped being taken for granted! Invitations were subsequently sent out to amongst others, the Mayor of the Royal Borough of Greenwich and to the Lady Mayoress.

In conclusion I am happy to repeat what I have said in previous years ...The unstinting loyalty and sheer hard work that the dedicated Charlton Park Group volunteers and helpers including

my fellow Trustees put into the everyday working of the Group remains a true wonder, working together our happy family of volunteers, donors, supporters, parents and carers, whoever and wherever they are, ensure that we can continue to help local disabled children to reach their true life potential.

John Furlonger
Chairman of Trustees

Charlton Park RDA 2024 Approved at AGM

(Receipts and Payments Method)

	2024 (£)	2023 (£)
Receipts	Approved	Approved
Donations	8,938	7,437
Donations New Pony	3,750	
Donation Head Office		
Just Giving	14,788	3,030
Fund Raising	5,119	7,954
Sales RDA Goods	-	366
Holidays and Outings		
Sales of Equip	-	150
Insurance Claims		
Pony Sponsors	-	150
Total	32,596	19,086
Payments	2024	2023
Fund Raising Expenses	519	316
Operating Expenses	2,791	913
Travel and Training	1,393	1,875
Holidays and Outings	167	600
New Ponies	3,250	3,200
Ponies' Welfare	10,119	8,895
Tack and Equipment	1,535	260
Insurance and Alarms	8,758	8,213
Maintenance and Décor	1,136	1,037
Cost of RDA Goods	257	703
Total	29,925	26,011
Surplus	2,670	(6,925)
Bank Balance	8,888	6,218

Notes:

1) 2024 figures reconcile exactly to the Bank Statements

2) Accrual vs Receipts and Payments methods differ due to uncashed cheques

Cheques for £404.34 total written in Dec2023 were uncashed til Jan 2024

Cheques for £447.91 total written in De 2024 were uncashed til Jan 2025

The difference between the two approaches is negligible this year

3) As the revenue is above the £25,000 threshold the accounts have been independently reviewed. Very kindly Matthew Penston has again agreed to perform this function and has approved them accordingly.

4) There are no serious incidents or other matters that trustees should have reported, but have not done so.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Charlton Park Riding for the Disabled Association Incorporating Carriage Driving C.I.O. ("the charity")

I report to the trustees of the charity on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31st December 2024

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees 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 charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all 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 giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

(1) accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or

(2) the accounts do not accord with those records; or

(3) the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the *Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008* 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.

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:

M.M.

Name

Matthew Penston

Address

98 Bramshot Avenue, London, SE7 7JN

Date

13/6/25