

2025 Review

Throughout the year our befrienders have quietly and consistently enhanced the lives of some of our neighbours, by making regular visits and phone calls to show they are not alone, and by organising an annual get-together. Thank you, befrienders and Befriending Coordinators Carol, Su Mac and Claire.

Our Community Wheelchair scheme (which is free of charge) has provided real support to people in our villages, at a time when they are often in pain or distress. Miranda goes out of her way to choose the right wheelchair, deliver it in person, make sure the operator knows how to use it properly and collect it when it's no longer needed. Thank you, Miranda.

The Community Café, open every Tuesday afternoon, is growing in popularity with around 30 customers a week. It provides a regular meeting place for some older village residents as well as a welcome pit stop for younger children and their parents. There is a dedicated team of 36 volunteers, who work on a rota basis to man the kitchen, and the wonderful Lizzie, who is there week in week out managing everything. Thank you, all the Community Café volunteers and thank you, Lizzie.

The GNS helps many people in a small way, such as posting a letter, walking a dog, helping apply for a Blue Badge, sorting out a router. When you can't do things yourself, small problems loom large in your mind. Having someone to turn to is really important. Thank you, volunteers who have helped in any way, however small.

Having a lift to an appointment is our most frequently-requested service. We currently have 26 drivers amongst our 50 volunteers, which sounds a lot but sometimes we're really stretched. I know I'm biased, but we do provide a fantastic service! It's not just the driving – it's the friendly, someone you know, caring volunteer who willingly gives up their time to make sure you arrive on time and not stressed.

Early in 2025 we bought a number of handles which fit on to the door latch of the passenger door when it's opened, so that the passenger can put their weight on it when getting out of the car. At the end of the year we invested in our new, lightweight, easily-folded wheelchair which we hope will be easier for drivers to get in the boot. We really appreciate all the hours our drivers commit to the GNS and we know those who need our help appreciate it too. Thank you drivers, one and all.

Our two events in 2025 – the Yard Sale in July and the Community Picnic in September – were highly enjoyable despite the showers! It's great seeing villagers of all ages coming together. Thanks for organising them, Jo.

The GNS relies on a team of telephone coordinators who work on a rota basis to man the mobile phone, log requests for help and match volunteers to jobs. It is not an easy task! We all pass the phone on with a sigh of relief at the end of our stint! Not easy, but essential – thank you, telephone coordinators.

Keeping everyone safe and everything running smoothly is the steering group, some of whom you've heard from, but not all. So - thank you, Ted, for looking after the drivers' paperwork. Thank you, Sue, for being our DBS Coordinator and thank you, Helen, for being our Safeguarding Officer and our Volunteer Coordinator. A special thank you must go to Sue and Helen, who have had a lot of additional work in 2025 as a result of the rule change by the DBS Update Service. I'd just like to remind all GNS volunteers to renew their subscription to the Service when they receive an email approximately one month before the renewal deadline. It's like a car MoT!

I'd really like to urge anyone who's interested in the GNS to join as a volunteer (if they're not one already) or come along to a steering group meeting if they'd like to get more involved.

Finally, looking forward, 2026 is our tenth year! We're already almost up to 5,000 jobs since we started so we'll have done over 5,000 jobs in ten years - that's ten a week! Two a day! I think that's really impressive...so thank you all our volunteers.