

Year 8 2024 Annual review

Since we started in 2016 we've had three different year end dates – 31st July for finances, 30th September for statistical reports and the calendar year end of 31st December. This has been annoying me for 8 years! So, in June 2024, we decided to change the financial year end from 31st July to 31st December and also to change the statistical reports to show jobs carried out and hours worked from January to December.

I'll explain the financial implications later on, but first of all I'd like to thank Lynn Hopkins and Tricia Shakespeare who had to re-jig the matrix used to record all the jobs and hours worked and re-format the charts so that they show clearly what we do each year.

There are separate reports on befriending, Community Wheelchairs, statistics and events to follow, but I'd like to mention some of the administrative work we've carried out this year and also report on the Community Café.

The steering group meets regularly to discuss any issues that have arisen and to review our policies and procedures. In 2024 we reviewed 8 of the policies in the volunteer handbook and also wrote guidelines for steering group members with specific responsibilities. The guidelines will prove extremely useful when current members of the steering group leave to make way for younger volunteers (our exit strategy!). The updated policies are all on the GNS website and I'd like to thank Jo's husband Ryan, who has carried out a lot of work on the website in 2024.

We organised a training day for all volunteers in February 2024, the two main topics being safeguarding and driving, led by Sue Young and Miranda Brookes respectively.

Briefly, on events, a highlight of the year was the Yard Sale in July! What a great morning that was! Thank you very much, Jo, for having the idea! Thanks to you and Ryan for all the IT and publicity work and to Tricia who made a flag for each stall. Thanks as well to all of you who supported the Community Picnic in September.

The Community Café started up again in October 2023 and has been well supported by Woodhouse Parish Council. I'd like to thank the clerk to the council, Emma Crowe, and the facilities manager, Alan Gardiner, for their help every week. The Café opened for 50 weeks in 2024 and attracted on average 21 customers a week. It's manned by a group of 36 volunteers, half of whom are GNS volunteers, on a rota basis. In addition, in 2024 different GNS drivers have given lifts to and from the Café every week to two customers who otherwise couldn't attend. From January to March the Café benefitted from cakes made by a local schoolgirl working towards her Duke of Edinburgh award. I'd like to thank all our customers (especially Jan Wooding), all the volunteers and drivers and especially Lizzie Wemyss for all her hard work and for being there every week.

We held a social evening in September, to thank all our GNS volunteers and everyone who helps at the Café.

I must mention the monthly meet-ups held on the first Wednesday of the month and open to all volunteers. There's always a representative from the steering group present just in case there are issues to discuss, but the focus is usually on sharing ideas and catching up with friends and neighbours. It's always a lively, enjoyable morning.

Thank you, Miranda, for organising the monthly meet-ups and for managing the Community Wheelchairs. Thanks, Tricia and Lynn, for maintaining our records so efficiently. Thank you Carol, Claire and Su Mac, our Befriending Coordinators, and thank you befrienders, for giving up your time every week. Thank you all drivers, such a valuable service you provide, making a real difference to the lives of those who struggle to get

around. Thank you Helen, for carrying out inductions and for organising the Telephone Coordinator rota and thank you all Telephone Coordinators! It's not an easy job! Thank you, all steering group members, for making our meetings enjoyable as well as productive. Thank you ALL volunteers for your time and commitment which make this such a great scheme.

Finally, on a personal level, I'd like to thank everyone for helping me get through a difficult year.

Judith Harrison
Chair