

# County Commissioner's Report to the AGM

## July 2023

First of all, a huge thank you to everyone for joining us this evening for our Annual General Meeting and a celebration of Wiltshire Scouting, so without further ado, I would like to share with you all a brief insight into what we have been up to over the past twelve months.

I can put hand on heart and state categorically that Scouting is back to normal as we have now learnt to live with Covid-19 and this has been proven by the amount of visits, outdoor adventures, nights away experiences and expeditions abroad that have taken place since our last AGM and there is more to come throughout this summer and the next. The challenge, adventure and ultimately, fun, is now back with Scouting and this is reinforced by yet another year of growth in this County.

2023 has been very good for us so far and I have every confidence that the latter half of this year and beyond is going to be even better for Wiltshire Scouts. There are so many plans, agreements and actions taking place, on top of all the positivity I am feeling right now, that I can truthfully say, we are in a very good place indeed. Why am I so confident? Well, because we have well and truly started our Transformation Programme for one. Aply led by Dan Bavister, our volunteer Transformation Lead, who has consistently shared Scouting's vision for the future with everyone through the use of social media, the County Website and importantly by creating and delivering on a series of District meetings and whole County gatherings, where individuals can freely share, discuss and resolve concerns and learn more about how we will be improving the volunteer experience, ensuring Scouting is welcome to all, effectively supporting both new and existing members, defining training for individual roles and responsibilities, based on prior knowledge, skills and experience, focusing on learning and providing digital tools to make our lives that much easier. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dan, first for volunteering to lead on transformation for our County but also for all the hard work he has put into supporting the programme and ensuring that we are kept fully up to date on progress.



Another reason for my confidence is that last year, just before Christmas, one of my Deputy County Commissioners, De Jones, came to me with a proposal for recruiting a number of Development Team Assistants (DTAs), now more favourably named Local Growth Assistants (LGAs). Introducing the DTA role was a new HQ concept that could potentially remove the additional workload and the accompanying stress placed on those individuals responsible for growth and development activities at the local level and causing 'project fatigue', which was currently being experienced primarily by members of District Teams at the time. There were of course financial implications associated with employing two DTAs to consider and at the time, there was also an expectancy to employ a HQ

Member who would be responsible for managing the two DTAs and the projects assigned to them. However, De made a suggestion that was accepted at HQ, which was to manage the two DTAs herself with the support of our designated Regional Support Team Manager, Stephanie Ovens. De's proposal was put to the County Executive Committee (now County Trustee's Board), which was unanimously agreed upon.

Well, moving onto just after Christmas, we are very fortunate to have recruited two LGAs, Catherine Riley and Carmel Woolley. Cathy and Mel, as she prefers to be called, started in April this year and have been tasked with a number of growth projects that address matters such as Groups with missing Sections, waiting to join lists, Groups with small Sections, typically less than 12 members, and adult recruitment opportunities, to name just a few. Cathy and Mel have already completed their training for their roles and are now actively undertaking a number of projects across the County on our behalf. As they have only just started in their roles and what is in effect a two year programme, it would be unfair of me to ask them to share with us their experiences and journey so far, therefore, for next year's AGM, we are planning for Cathy and Mel to join us and provide us with some insight into their assigned project work and what has been achieved. I would however, like to take this opportunity to thank De for submitting the proposal, developing the idea and seeing it through, and I am looking forward very much over the next two and final years of my tenure to seeing more young people experience Scouting in Wiltshire.



I mentioned earlier that we are back to normal and our young people are enjoying the challenge, adventure and fun that Scouting brings to their lives and this extends to visits and expeditions both at home and abroad, something that only two years ago, we all thought would never happen again, but how wrong were we? You only have to type in the words 'Wiltshire Scouts' on any social media platform to see the abundance of posts from so many Groups and Sections from Wiltshire and see what wonderful activities they are involved in, from Beaver Scouts enjoying the great outdoors and learning about wildlife, visiting fire stations and visits to the circus, Cub Scouts taking part in kayaking, rock climbing and abseiling at Gilwell Park, the home of Scouting, and Scouts, Explorers and Network Scouts taking part in the London Monopoly Run and experiencing visits abroad to wonderful and exciting places such as Kandersteg International Scout Centre in Switzerland and skiing expeditions to Italy and Andorra, to name just a few. Of course I must mention our Wiltshire contingent who will be going to the World Scout Jamboree held in South Korea just a few days from now. We are fortunate to have a few members of the WSJ Unit with us this evening who have very kindly volunteered to deliver a presentation to you all on their experiences so far and their expectations as they finalise their preparation for their trip of a lifetime, so I will leave it there for them to present to you all more information on this. We also have representatives from the County Skiing trip to the Valle d'Aosta, Italy, which happened earlier this year, where they too have volunteered to share with you their experiences, so I am looking forward to both presentations which will happen shortly.

For those of you who follow our Scouting on social media or work in certain Groups across the County, you may have come across some very young people in red sweatshirts having the time of their lives



taking part in Scouting activities. Well, these are our new Squirrel Scouts, a newly introduced Section for 4 to 6 year olds and over the past year, we have seen the number of these Sections opening up and the interest from other Groups has been absolutely amazing. So far, we have opened Squirrel Dreys at 1st Stratton St Margaret, 1st Trowbridge, 21st Swindon, 1st Malmesbury and Cherhill Scout Groups and there are eight more planned to open very soon at 1st Devizes, 2nd Swindon , 3rd Swindon, Urchfont,

Wootton Bassett, Hilperton, 18th Swindon and Woodborough. I would like to give a huge thank you to all those involved in setting up the new Dreys and the new adult volunteers supporting them.

Quality programmes are key to young people as these are what excites and engages them and ensures that they see Scouting as an important aspect of their lives as they grow up, learn and develop valuable skills for life. To ensure we deliver quality Scouting and the many exciting programmes across the County, I am reliant on quite a few adult volunteers as you can imagine. In addition to De and Dan there is our Head of Programme Support, DCC Kate May, so I would just like to say a huge thank you to Kate for not only supporting and advising me but also for supporting our Districts, Groups and Sections in all matters such as sharing programme ideas, supporting individuals throughout their training and development including supporting a number of County events and activities held over the year.

From an operations perspective, supporting Kate, De and myself are a number of individuals and teams of specialists namely County Support, Section Support and Events Management, so I would like to take this opportunity too to thank these individuals and team members because without their commitment, hard work, enthusiasm and professionalism, my role and responsibilities would be nigh on impossible to realise. They are, Kelvin King, DC for Swindon North who has been caretaking the County Training Manager role for quite a while now and thanks to his management, we are seeing record number of Wood Badges being awarded across the County. Roger Reeves, our Awards Co-ordinator for both young people and adult volunteers, and it is with thanks to Roger, we have appropriately celebrated the achievements of our young people and achieved a much greater success rate with HQ for the higher service awards for our adult volunteers. Thanks goes to Gerald Russell who has supported me on many occasions, as Appointments Secretary, for example, helping me find new District Commissioners to replace outgoing members. Thanks too goes to Emma Cooper, our Safeguarding Adviser, who has freely given much support to our members in helping them address safeguarding issues and advice on how best to address them when they unfortunately occur and thanks to Mike Rose, for managing Wiltshire Scout Centre, keeping the centre in great condition so that it can be used for not only Scouting purposes but also for supporting the community by maintaining it for external agencies and organisations to use too, bringing in vital financial support.

To the Assistant County Commissioner Team I would like to say a huge thanks to the support you freely give in your specialist areas, and this goes to Tracy Jackson (Squirrels), Sharon King (Beaver Scouts), Sue Demspey (Scouts), Alex Millard (Explorer Scouts), Neil Wills (Activities) and Rob Woods (International). Your support to the Sections, activities and the international aspect of Scouting is very much appreciated and it is thanks to you all that quality Scouting is happening in Wiltshire.



To the key members of the Events Team, Mollie Nevill (County Youth Commissioner), Tom Roberts (County Communications Manager), Dan Bavister (Transformation Lead) and Tom Dobson (District Youth Commissioner for Swindon North), since this team has been established you have done brilliantly in running two very successful Celebration Events in the County, delivered the communications expertise to the Basecamp '23 Transformation Roadshows and now planning for a County Camp in 2024, which I am really looking forward to. Thanks you so much for what you have achieved and for your support to the County vision.



Scouting anywhere in the UK would not be able to function effectively if it did not have a team of dedicated trustees to oversee the governance aspect of Scouting and ensuring that we remain compliant with Charity Commission directives, funding projects, activities and events and Scouting insurance to name just a few responsibilities and actions. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to give a huge thank you to this year's County Board of Trustees. They are: Justin Purkis (Chair), Paul Ingram (Treasurer), Sue Rose (Secretary) and Board Members Mollie Nevill, India Mclean, Roger reeves, Dan Bavister, Tom Dobson, Richard Holmes, George Thornton, David Waspe and recently joined members Tom Roberts and De Jones.

Finally I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone involved in Scouting in Wiltshire, to all our amazing leaders, managers and supporters, from District Teams to Groups and their individual Sections, to members of our Scout Active Support Units. Thank you for your time, your energy and your commitment to ensuring that our young people have a great experience of Scouting and learn valuable skills for life along the way. Thank you all.

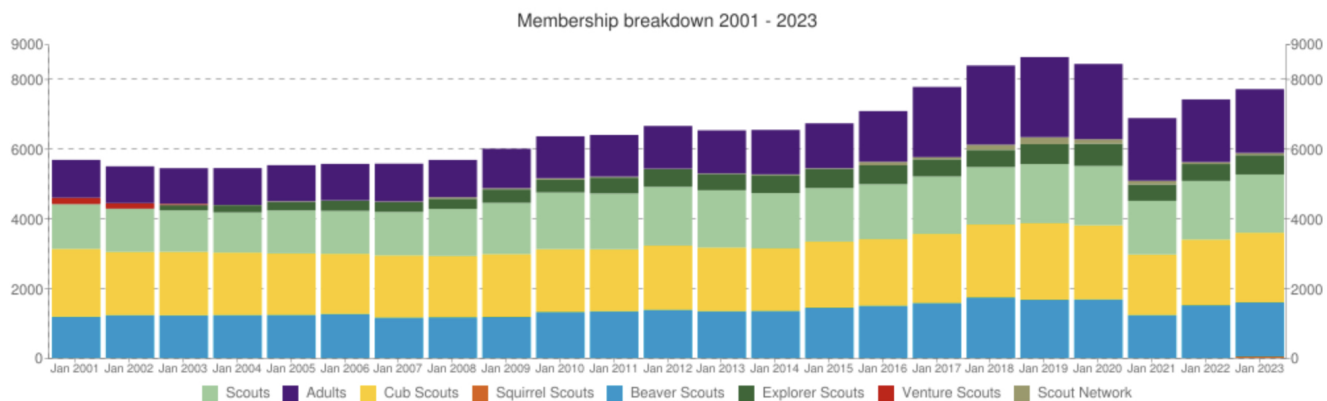
There now follows reports from our two DCCs for Growth/Development and Programme and our Transformation Lead.

## Achieving Growth in 2023 – De Jones

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of all our Volunteers we achieved 4.7% growth of our young people this year bringing our total membership to 7,704. That is 5,874 young people supported by 1,830 adults across the County. Additional Sections have been opened and it is great to be able to report that there are now four Squirrel Dreys open in the County with eight more Dreys opening later in the year.



### Growth Trend



### Extending Our Reach

In the last year we have provided support in conjunction with the Local Growth and Communities Team, advertised the wealth of knowledge now available on the Scouts website regarding growth and development and the first of four in person Adult Recruitment workshop was held in Swindon.

The exciting news this year is that as a County we were successful in advertising for two Local Growth Assistants to help us lower our waiting lists and open new provision for the next two years, we extend a very warm welcome to Cathy Riley and Mel Woolley. At this point I would like to also thank the members of our Steering Group for these projects Stephanie Ovens (Local Growth Operations Manager), Steve Barley (County Commissioner), Justin Purkis (County Chairman), Geoff Begg (District Commissioner representative), Rhiannon Stevens (Young person representative) and Sue Rose for taking all our minutes for us.



Further work has been underway in the last few months to hopefully grow the growth team and extend our reach even further into ethnic minority background communities and areas of deprivation across the county.

## **Growth Opportunities**

As part of our strategic objective we must provide and maintain sufficient Dreys, Colonies, Packs, Troops, Units and Networks to meet local need and with 1,424 young people declared to be on waiting lists within the County we must look at the opportunities we have to ensure more young people have the chance to experience Scouting in Wiltshire.

We are currently missing 5 Sections (Beaver to Explorer age range) to make every Group and District complete. By opening these Sections at 24 per section this would give 120 new young people the opportunity to enjoy Scouting and with the opportunity to open an additional 76 Dreys this would allow the 441 young people on our Drey waiting lists the opportunity to enjoy Scouting in their formative years.

There are 51 Sections with fewer than 12 members. If all of these sections reached 12 members that would give an additional 178 young people the opportunity to gain Skills for Life.

Across the County there are 40 Sectional waiting lists of 12 or greater, 40 new Sections at 12 per Section would allow a further 658 young people to enjoy high quality programmes filled with fun and adventure.

Currently we have 205 Young Leaders across 4 Dreys, 91 Colonies, 96 Packs and 85 Troops to achieve at least two in each Section there would need to be an additional 345 Young Leaders, that is, 345 potential adult members of the future running our Sections.

## **How are we going to achieve this?**

Working closely with District Commissioners and their teams we have a work bank of potential new provision taking us up to 2026.

Having two Local Growth Assistants tasked with opening new provision and lowering our waiting lists will help provide more opportunities for more young people in the next two years.

Focus will be continue on recruiting and promoting Young Leaders, our future adult members, as well as attracting more adults from across all our communities.

The past year has been a successful one thanks to our amazing volunteers' commitment to ensuring more young people have the opportunity to take part in the exciting, challenging fun filled adventure that is Scouting.





## Programme Support – Kate May

This year our amazing volunteers have been providing fantastic programmes which is shown by the increase in our top awards. I would like to take this opportunity to say a massive thank you for all the hard work in providing such excellent programmes which without all your time and commitment would not be possible.

We have been out and about in our local communities where there has been a number of young people working in allotments, village fetes, litter picking, painting of benches and taking part in a duck race just to name a few.

Across the County our Sections have spent a lot of time outdoors undertaking activities such as hikes including Salisbury and South Wiltshire Cub Scouts taking part in Jamboree on the Trail (JOTT), which unfortunately is the last one held in the UK, backwoods cooking, cycling, climbing and spending time on the water which included sailing and canoeing with a couple of Beaver Scouts actually being invested on the water. There has also been a skiing expedition which was attended by a variety of Districts and Oliver, a Scout from Mid Wiltshire, has also taking part in his first triathlon.

There have been numerous visits around the County including Wiltshire Museum and Blakett Observatory, as well as taking part in the London Monopoly Run and the Beavers and Cubs Fun Day at Gilwell Park.

There have been a great number of camps ranging from Wiltshire West Warminster Scouts going to Cornwall to our more local venues.

Swindon North and Swindon Ridgeway Districts are currently preparing for their gang show.

North East District are holding their very popular Beaver Babble event again and Wiltshire North District had lots of fun at their recent District Scrapheap Challenge.

The Jamboree Team have completed their final camp and are all ready to attend the Jamboree in South Korea, where they will no doubt experience amazing adventures and make everlasting friendships with other Scouts from across the world.

It has been really good to see the young people around the County taking part in all these great programmes with smiles on their faces. I particularly enjoyed the County Cub Scrapheap Challenge which was well attended with the biggest pile of scrap I've ever seen, the theme for this year's event was aliens and crop circles and the imagination as you can imagine ran riot. The overall winners being Rodbourne Cheney from Swindon North.

I also had the pleasure of attending the County cooking competition with Warminster Apples and Pears Teams coming joint first.

I cannot wait to see what exciting programmes we have next year.



## Transformation – Dan Bavister

We're continuing our journey to prepare more young people with skills for life, supported by amazing volunteers who deliver an inspiring programme. Our aim is to continue to grow, to become more inclusive, to be shaped by young people and to make a bigger impact in our communities by supporting our volunteers throughout their membership starting from day one.

### Where are we now?

Up to now, we have seen a number of amendments to Policy, Organisation and Rules (POR), which change current Executive Committees to Trustee Boards, with members becoming Trustees. There have also been changes to what Trustees are responsible for and how the Trustee Boards should run with new purpose statements listed in POR at Chapter 5. These changes align us with Charity Commission guidance, ensuring we are undertaking the appropriate governance tasks to continue the delivery of balanced and inspirational programmes for our youth members.

We are also starting to understand the teams-based working method along with our new team descriptions, with your County and District Lead Volunteers (CC and DCs) starting to plan how we will volunteer in the future with our new team structures.

Alongside these changes, we have a new Volunteering Culture making sure we continue to be at our best. Our new culture will encourage new people to join us, as well as making those who are already here want to stay, with a key focus on our values.

### What is coming next?

Across the next few months, we will continue to plan towards implementing our new teams and structures, as well as supporting our trustees with the changes to the purpose of Trustee Boards with upcoming AGMs.

By September 2023, we should have a good idea of how our new teams will work and understand what tasks will be carried out by each team. Trustee Boards should be delivering against the new purpose statements, and we should be continuing to understand these changes and how they will provide new opportunities to welcome new volunteers into our Groups, Districts and County.

Information on our other changes such as our new engaging learning experience and how we welcome new volunteers will be shared as we progress through the rest of 2023. These changes won't take effect until our new digital systems are released in early 2024, so we have some time to fully understand these changes and how we can implement them locally.

For more information on the Transformation Programme, I have published a variety of resources to help you understand and implement these changes on our County Website, with a focus on the current changes to our trustee boards and teams-based volunteering.



## And finally...

Throughout this report, I have given thanks to everyone involved in Scouting in Wiltshire and I would just like to add that without you, this County would not flourish. I am indebted to you all and my only ask is that you continue to do what you do, because you are doing it very well.

I would just like to end this report by sharing with you a number of Leaders and Supporters who have been recognised over the last 12 months for going above and beyond their role description and going that extra mile to ensure that Scouting for our young people is exciting as it can be. Taken from this year's Role of Honour, they are:

### **National Honours (Including King's Birthday Honours List) - British Empire Medal**

Barbara King

David William Tarr

### **Silver Wolf**

Joan Davies

### **Bar to the Silver Acorn**

Christine Broom

### **Bar to the Award for Merit**

Sue Rose

David Robbins

Kenneth Cowie

### **Award for Merit**

David Davidson

Gillian Sherhod

David Jarvis

Nicholas McCormack

Marc Cox

Charles Stone

Ian Easley

Lynda Orchard

Janet Redhead

Stephen Powell

Kevin Hill

### **Chief Scout's Commendation for Good Service**

Catherine Riley

James Stroud

Johnathan Carter

Adrian Baker

Fiona Labdon

Joanna Innes

David Mortimore

Matthew Mullins

Thomas Robinson

Victoria Outram

Jill Rogers

Sarah Albrough-Tregear

Dan Bavister

Lisa Kynaston

Helen Oliver

I apologise if I have missed anyone from the lists above. If you have received an award but not listed here, I would like to say congratulations to you and a huge thank you for what you do.

This ends my report.

**Steve Barley**

County Lead Volunteer (County Commissioner) - Wiltshire