

Forest of Dean District Scout Council



Annual Trustees Report



The aim of an annual report is to demonstrate how the charity is achieving its aims and objectives. What follows is a report on the activity of the District which demonstrates our commitment to providing High Quality programmes to as many young people as possible. Thank you to all of those who have contributed to this.

Youth involvement

With the other youth commissioners in the county, we have been started and hope to do more work on in the future with:

- Mock Executives – ensuring young people understand what executives are, what their purpose is and how they can get involved
- Unit Forums – providing the ability for young people's voices to be heard about any scouting matters, from their programme that they do week to week, or to district or county events
- Young Leaders – supporting Mark Westwood in taking his amazing programme in this district and applying it across the county.

Outside of youth shaped scouting, we've also carried on with Oakleaf. The next edition is due out imminently, just waiting on an important article.



More recently, our focus has been on the launch of the new YouShape Badge. We've again been working with the other youth commissioner to produce a few videos explaining the new badges. If you would like any support, feel free to contact us at:

dyc@forestofdeanscouts.org

More information can also be found on the county website: <https://gscouts.org.uk/you-shape-award>

**Archey Barrell & Lily Hough
District Youth Commissioners**

Explorers

Over the last year Explorer Scouting in the forest has been limited mainly to online offering due to restrictions in place with the pandemic.

This has proved to be difficult for a number of the units to keep the interest of the Explorer Scouts. They have persevered, and as we come out of lockdown and are able to start meeting face to face the Units are starting to offer a more varied programme. Camping is still an issue so at present no overnight camps have been held.

Using the online opportunities work has still gone on to work towards Platinum and Diamond awards, however, the Expedition element has proved to be an issue due to restrictions. To overcome this, we have decided to provide an expedition within the District but with no overnight camping, and where Unit leaders are content that the individual has camped they would then be awarded with the expedition challenge element.

Gareth Ovens

District Explorer Scout Commissioner

Young Leaders

We continued YL Scheme on zoom through lockdown, still with reasonable attendance even though we were online.

Inspired by the need to share practice and ideas, I set up a Facebook page for UK wide discussion of YL Training development which provided new ideas for delivery of the YL Scheme online and virtually. (Currently has over 500 members across the UK)

Also we achieved the following activities:

- 6 YLs completed their YL scheme (belts and badges to be awarded)
- Some new Explorer YLs were identified in lockdown (fewer than normal) and a recent surge of potential YLs have shown a demand for module A and reinvigorating training and networking.
- We have trained a couple of DofE YLs during lockdown.
- Ran YL drop in clinic for Q&A across the county (2 people had a succession of questions answered).
- Ran YL ongoing learning for adults in District (5 people expanded their understanding of the YL Scheme and how they can support them).



Mark Westwood

ADC – Young Leaders

Cubs

Over the last year I have actively kept in contact with Leaders around the Forest making sure they are ok.

Cub Leaders Meetings have been held regularly. These have been well attended and had representatives from all but one Group.

Covid changed the way Scouting worked. My role adapted to the new normal. I have supported the other Cub Leaders with how to use Zoom as a scouting tool and helped several of them get started running their Cub sessions online.



I have run 6 **Zoom Ideas** online sessions to provide support and ideas for Leaders (of any section) with ideas for running zoom sessions. These sessions were attended by 31 Leaders from around the District and a few from other Districts.

I also ran **Chat & Cheers** well-being sessions (fortnightly). This was primarily to keep in touch with Leaders and try to help with mental well-being. There were around a dozen leaders who frequently logged in to chat. These drop-in sessions formed a Leader support network via Zoom where Leaders from Forest of Dean (and any other Districts) from all sections could come together to offer ideas and run different activities and at home camps. I also supported several Beaver Leaders running @home camps aswell. It worked very well.

I spent time supporting St. Briavels & Newent Cubs - helping them get online and running Zoom sessions.

I helped to plan and run the **County Cubs Zoom** sessions. Making sure that this was shared round the District to give all our Cub leaders and especially the Groups who have not had online sessions running, a chance to do some scouting online.

I have kept in contact with Leaders and facilitated the transfer of one Leader from one group to another, so we didn't lose a Leader.

November 2020, a few Cub Leaders got together and successfully held an @home Superhero camp – to highlight the fact that not all heroes wear a uniform. The camp included small activities that the Cubs could do on their own with least parent involvement possible.

We also had some **District competitions** that Cubs could do at home.

Colouring competition, a Miniature garden/Fairy garden competition and also a 'Grow you own sunflower' competition.

These were well supported by all Groups with a special badge given to the winners.

Summer term 2021, I helped a local Group get started back Face2Face- providing guidance and extra adult support and then this term (September 2021), I am helping and supporting another Cub Pack with a new Leader get on their feet and helping recruit new adults for their team.

All-in-all it is as busy as ever in FOD District!

Ang Healy
ADC – Cubs

Training

Obviously, the pandemic had a huge impact on scouting and training felt it as well. Being unable to meet face to face meant we could not hold our training and validations sessions, Zoom came to our rescue, not only with being able to continue but giving the flexibility of meeting people online at a time to suit all parties.

We have managed to complete several leaders training and for them to gain their wood badges. Some of the training team also completed the validation for their managers and supporters training and gained wood badges.



During the easing of lockdown in 2020 we managed to hold a couple of local training and skills sessions, which we repeated in 2021.

My thanks go to all those on the training team for their efforts over the past 18 months. Now we are back at green readiness level we have plans for more locally orientated sessions for new adults, line managers and those wishing to learn new skills or update their training.

As usual anyone who would like to join the team please do get in touch.

Martin Williams
Local Training Manager

Nights Away

As with all scouting activities residential experiences were not possible during the pandemic. Several leaders permit expired during this time, but we managed to meet up either on Zoom or face to face to carry out reassessments and recommend permits to be renewed, so that they were ready when able to resume nights away activities.

Once we returned to green readiness level physical visits to camps and other nights away experiences were possible, so assessments were carried out for adults gaining a permit for the first time.

The assessment team needs to be increased so I have contacted several people to help me in the future.



Martin Williams
District Nights Away Advisor

I'd like to say thank you to everyone in the District Leadership & Support Team for all of their efforts and work, especially during the past 12-18 months, thanks too for these reports.

Mark

DC Report

District activity

As each of the earlier reports has suggested, the defining factor that has been in 2020 and the start of 2021 is the Covid pandemic. You may remember that in March 2020, face to face Scouting was suspended meaning that many young people across the Forest started to miss out on the opportunity of continuing to take part in Scouting on a weekly basis.

It wasn't long though before the amazing adults of this district stepped into this new, uncertain world and started finding ways in which to engage with young people of all ages.

It seems like forever ago, but in May 2020, Forest of Dean Scouts launched and made available the Carry On Scouting badge. A badge for all ages whilst completing a range of activities at home and outdoors. This badge went worldwide, and members of the Forest of Dean are just some of the recipients of the over 5,000 badges that have been awarded. Well done to everyone locally who took part and a huge thanks to Gary and Rosie for coming up with the content and distributing the thousands of badges!



In May 2020, Forest of Dean District also had a number of young people and adults all taking part in the County VE Celebration “We will survive” camp. This district made up a good number of those that took part and lots of photos from around the district were used.

In June, the Forest of Dean, once again helped to inspire and promote great Scouting through a locally developed idea – The Water Activities Weekend, an opportunity to to enjoy water activities.

Many sections also engaged with the national activities like “Hike to the moon” fundraising initiative and the “Great Indoors Weekender” camp.

All of this was on top of finding new, but difficult ways in which to engage with young people on a regular basis. There were groups and sections who ran Zoom meetings, learning and applying a whole new set of skills, that two years ago, many of us would not even have known we were going to need.



There were other groups who emailed their young people and parents with activities and programme ideas to do at home.

There were some leaders who dropped off equipment and resources at homes of young people, and getting stuck talking to parents for hours!

Whatever we did, volunteer adults found new and brilliant ways to continue Scouting for our young people which is without doubt amazing under the circumstances of adapting to work, school and family lives, all of which had been profoundly affected by the pandemic.

Personally, I got to take part in several online camps and activities and even got to invest some young people into their sections. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to take part, even though I wasn't the acting District Commissioner at the time.

As restrictions started to ease, we started to go through a process of doing all we could to ensure that Young People and volunteers were kept safe whilst meeting face to face in the middle of the pandemic. This again, was another set of skills that had to be honed and applied more formally as we had to submit Risk Assessments for approval in order to meet face to face. At this point I'd like to thank Martin and Gareth for all of their support in reviewing and providing advice on Risk Assessments before approving them. This friendly and supportive approach was appreciated and as a District Leadership team we appreciated all of their work to help keep local Scouting safe.

Groups returned rapidly to face to face Scouting, whether it be in a staggered approach, small groups at a time or in cold and windy conditions.

We also had some really sad moments within the District with the sad loss of **Graham Cox** (1st Cinderford) and **Andy Heaysman** (Inferno ESU), their impact on young people and Scouting was huge and they will be missed immensely. I was lucky enough to join a number of adults and young people at Andy's funeral and was inspired and in awe by the work that Andy has carried out for so many years.



May they both rest in peace, and may we aspire continue excellent Scouting in their honour.

Growth

One measure of our success as a movement is how many young people continue Scouting with us and how many Top Awards they achieve while they do. Here is a Year on Year comparison between Census taken in January 2020 and January 2021.

As you can expect there was a significant decrease during the pandemic, but since returning to Face to Face Scouting, numbers have continued to grow and in some cases are exceeding our 2020 levels.

- **Young people** – We had 500 young people recorded as members. A reduction of 185 (27%). This is split as follows
 - **Beavers** – 99 vs 161 (-39%)
 - **Cubs** – 164 vs 211 (-22%)
 - **Scouts** – 183 vs 227 (-19%)
 - **Explorers** – 54 vs 86 (-37%)
- **Adults** – We had **255 adults** recorded as members a reduction of 30 vs the previous year. Although we now recognise that there a number of Group Executive Committee members had not been recorded, we are looking to rectify that over 2021.

Top awards give us all a good indication of the quality of the programme being delivered by sections and their leadership teams.

During the pandemic, many aspects became more difficult to deliver. However, we should still be proud that even though we were only able to meet remotely for many months, some sections still had some fantastic results.

Specifically, **1st Newent Cubs** and **1st Royal Forest Cubs** and **1st Ruardean Scouts** who each achieved **over 100%** of eligible young people achieving their relevant Top Awards.

Across the district:

- **20% of Beavers** who were eligible achieved their Bronze Chief Scouts Award
- **41% of Cubs** achieved their Silver Chief Scouts Award
- **27% of Scouts** achieved their Gold Chief Scouts Award
- Explorer Awards which require much more outdoors activity were even harder to achieve with **1% of eligible Explorers** achieving their Diamond Chief Scouts Award

It's worth mentioning at this point that we have also been lucky to benefit from support from the 3 Counties Development Team, a funded partnership that is paid for by Gloucestershire County Scouts and a grant from the Scout Grants Board. This team has done some fantastic work, especially at helping to maintain and grow 1st St. Briavel's Beaver Colony. Without this work, we will likely have seen the colony close. They will be working more in the district over the coming months and years, so thank you to Coralie, Sarah and the team for all your work in this area.

Looking forward

Since the end of the year that this report is focused on, we have continued to take huge steps forward in the development of Scouting across the Forest of Dean. You'll read more in the next annual report, but let's remember that since April 2021;

- 1st Newent have re-opened their Scout Troop for the first time in several years
- St. George's day celebrations with the brilliant Scout Radio
- Launch of expeditions to Belgium in 2022 and to Haarlem in 2023
- Selection of Young People from the Forest for the World Jamboree in South Korea in 2023
- We have had a District Expedition hike for Scouts and Explorers
- District Cycle Ride for Cubs
- 1st Newent have open the County's first Squirrels Drey, with another opening at 1st Aylburton & Lydney
- District Backwoods Camp
- JOTI & JOTA
- Even more Young Leader training
- Numerous camps have happened
- Attraction, recruitment of the new DC team
- The relaunch of 2nd Mitcheldean, supported by the 3 Counties Development Team

Thank you

All in all, the brilliant volunteers across the district have coped with a huge amount of change, increased expectations and difficulty, with admiration, resilience and courage. I as Acting DC, and in my County Commissioner role am so proud of everything that together you achieved and overcame. **Thank you!**

