

Gareloch Group Riding for the Disabled Association SCIO Scottish Charity No 28645 Trustees' Annual Report For the year ending 31 March 2016

The trustees have pleasure in presenting their report together with the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2016

Reference and Administrative Information

Charity name

Gareloch Group Riding for the Disabled Association SCIO
Charity no SC028645

Address

Colgrain Equestrian Centre, Main Road, Cardross, Dumbartonshire, G82 5HG

Current Trustees

Jen Devery, Chair
Elise Nash, Secretary
Jeff Stobo, Treasurer
Liz Cochrane
Mandi Waterston
Ian Ward
Russell Graves
Anne Johnston

Structure, Governance and Management

Constitution

The Charity is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (a SCIO). It was registered in its current legal form in March 2012. The charity was previously an unincorporated association but changed its legal form to a SCIO. It has a two tier structure where it is the Membership of the organisation that appoint trustees and have decision making powers.

Appointment of trustees

The management committee, which normally meets at least every eight weeks, are the charity's trustees. Membership of the management committee is open to all volunteers, riders and supporters of the Group. Fiona Spy, Proprietor of Colgrain Equestrian Centre also sits on the management committee, however, due to conflict of interest, as owner of the Equestrian Centre where the Group is based, is not currently a Trustee. Trustees are elected at the annual general meeting which is held within 15 months of the date of the previous AGM. There must be a minimum of three and a maximum of eleven trustees.

Objectives and Activities

Charitable purposes

The organisation's purpose is to provide people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities with the opportunity to ride or be around horses to benefit their health and wellbeing in the Helensburgh & Lochside, Dumbarton, Vale of Leven, Clydebank and surrounding Areas.

RDA gives people the chance to:

- Reach therapeutic goals: improve muscle tone and posture, develop motor skills

- Achieve their personal ambitions: whether this is to sit on a horse for the first time, learn new skills, or take part in competitions at local, regional or national level
- Combat social isolation: build relationships, enjoy events and competition, develop self-confidence
- Develop life skills: improve communication, take responsibility, be a team player
- Experience the outdoors: ride in the countryside, access rural Britain
- Connect with animals: adding a new element to life

Activities

We run 9 group sessions a week, each session consists of a mixed group of riders; in ages and ability. There are also a small number of one to one sessions of riding and horse care which occurs out with these Group sessions. We cater for adults, children and young people with a wide range of conditions which may be impairments, activity limitations, and/or participation restrictions. Riders attend either weekly or fortnightly and the sessions run during school term times. The Group is run by volunteers.

Achievements and Performance

The Group has continued to be able to provide 9 Group sessions a week during term time for its riders. This has been achieved despite a reduction in numbers of active volunteers and Instructors. This has been due to ill health, family commitments or relocation out with the area. Whilst we lost Instructors we also had two volunteers newly qualify as Instructors and two have also expressed in interest in becoming Trainees. We would hope that these ladies will qualify later in 2016/early 2017 sharing the workload more evenly for the existing Instructors, whose dedication and hard work is very much appreciated by the Group.

We still attract a high number of young people who come to volunteer with us as part of the Saltire /Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Whilst the Group predominantly consists of retired volunteers it is wonderful that younger people continue to get involved and our younger riders in particular enjoy and benefit from having people more their own age helping at sessions.

Rider numbers continue to stay constant at around 50. Whilst we have lost some riders due to illness or other commitments we have gained new riders and also have two riders on our waiting list. Our ability to accommodate those on the waiting list is dependent on free space within sessions and which horse they would ride. We are not up to capacity in a couple of our Group sessions and hope to place these two riders within suitable sessions in Sept 2016. The steady stream of new riders shows that our service is just as important now as it was when we started 40 years ago.

Our annual survey in November 2015 had our highest ever number of responders and the consensus was that we continue to provide a vital service with many families and caregivers saying they had seen definite improvements in their riders condition as a result of using our services. It should also not be underestimated as to what the Group means to our volunteers. Some are forces families who move around the country and spend long periods separated from partners or are retired due to age or ill health and want to do something constructive and 'make a difference'. Volunteering at the Group brings friendship, stops isolation, promotes fitness and gives self worth as each volunteer really does make a difference, not only to themselves, but to the Group and the riders they help during sessions.

Our second cabin which housed the mechanical horse for a short time will now be a dedicated educational/meeting space. This will be a huge asset to the Group - the current set up has meant that the riders have had teaching sessions in a communal area, the additional cabin will be a place for quiet study, somewhere to hold meetings or discuss confidential or personal matters.

Some of our independent riders attended external RDA competitions. 2016 saw great success at our regional competition with everyone coming home with at least one rosette and one rider went on to compete at the National Competition in Gloucestershire, bringing home a superb 6th place in her class. The Group has adopted the RDA's new tracker system to measure personal growth and progression within our riders. The tracker measures: confidence, communication,

enjoyment, horsemanship, physical change and relationships. Whilst this is new to the Group our preliminary findings show that the majority of riders are making progress in at least one targeted area over the space of a term. It is a powerful and very exciting tool to show what a good therapy riding is!

Overall, the Group has had another extraordinary year. We've seen new riders fight their fears and/or conditions to get on a horse for the first time. We've celebrated when rosettes have been won or a rider has managed to tell their horse to 'walk on'. We've said goodbye to people who have given so much to the Group and welcomed new volunteers. The courage our riders show in overcoming their limitations during our sessions not only brings pleasure and a sense of achievement for them but also for the volunteers too. We've all shed at least one tear for one reason or another whilst volunteering! The Group and the work it does is priceless and the management committee extends a huge thank you to everyone who helps us: The Spy's who generously let us use their facilities at Colgrain, the girls who work there who give us endless patient help and support with our horses, those who fundraise, those who groom the horses week in week out, our volunteers, our Instructors, those who ride with us and last but not least those work behind the scenes making everything possible.

Financial review

A detailed report will be added once the full accounts have been audited.

Reserves policy

The Trustees' policy is to attempt to retain a year's worth of normal running costs in order to cover any unexpected expenditure. Whilst this may seem a large amount for a charity, should one horse need extensive veterinary treatment this can cost many thousands of pounds. With the charity owning four horses we have to ensure we have funds available to take care of veterinary bills for all four, hence the need for what some may consider an abnormally large amount to have as a reserve. This will continue to be monitored.

Plans for future period

Our aim for the future is to look to steadily grow the numbers of riders the Group supports. This is dependent on volunteer numbers and spaces within the sessions we run. We have considered the possibility of another session on a Friday afternoon which if needed could be set up if volunteer numbers allow it. We will continue to look at if it is feasible to provide a non riding, equine therapy service, particularly aimed at current and veteran service personnel. Another possible service for the future is carriage driving. We hope to develop our day to day fundraising activities as we are all too aware that the majority of grant funding is only available for new initiatives and not designed to cover day to day running costs, keeping four horses makes our routine costs extraordinary compared to the majority of charities. Our overarching aim is for us to ensure that our riders continue to benefit from the service we provide in no matter how small a way. Riding provides a unique therapy for mind and body and it must never be underestimated how significant a therapeutic benefit it gives to all involved.

Signed: _____

Date:

Jen Devery
Chair, Gareloch Group Riding for the Disabled Association (SCIO)
Registered Charity No: SC028645