

Reference and administrative information

Charity registration number:	1133530
Company registration number:	07096574
Registered office and principal address:	10 Wesley Walk, Witney, OX28 6ZJ
Telephone:	01993 776277
e-mail:	office@vlu.org.uk
Website	www.vlu.org.uk
Trustees at 31 March 2023:	Hannah Hutchings (Chair) Bill Darbon (Vice – Chair) Mike Alexander (Treasurer) David Bates Keith Blois Fiona Clough Meryl Smith Ruth Swift Mark Thomas Tom White
Company secretary	Mike Alexander
Bankers	National Westminster Bank Charities Official Investment Fund
Independent examiner	Just Audit & Assurance Ltd
Management team	Barry Beadle – General Manager Ruth Lapworth – Deputy manager and volunteer co-ordinator Nicky Paris- Good neighbour scheme co-ordinator Catherine Sager – Office administrator and transport co-ordinator

Chairman's Report

Like many organisations, VLU has been able to return to its core work following disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in previous years. Our clients and volunteers continue to be affected by issues in the wider environment, including the recent cost of living crisis. We are currently seeing a rising demand for support which has driven us to try to recruit more volunteers.

VLU's staff are our main asset in reaching and supporting vulnerable people and volunteers in West Oxfordshire. We would like to thank our office staff, Ruth Lapworth and Catherine Sager, for their loyalty and hard work. We have been pleased to welcome Barry Beadle as our General Manager from June 2022. Barry has used his excellent local knowledge and management expertise to keep improving VLU's services. We also recruited Nicky Paris as our new Good Neighbours Schemes (GNS) Co-ordinator in August 2022. Nicky continues to support and develop new and existing GNS schemes around the country.

Over the last year VLU has digitised its records for its transport journeys, giving more accurate data about the clients and volunteers we are supporting in this area.

It has been a pleasure to welcome new trustees to our board: Ruth Swift, David Bates, Fiona Clough and Tom White have all joined over the last year and brought new knowledge and experience to our board. I would like to thank them and all of our remaining trustees, members, staff and volunteers for making VLU such an important part of our local community.

Hannah Hutchings
Chair VLU

Trustees' Report

The trustees (who are directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act) present their report together with financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023. The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued on 16 July 2014.

The reference and administration information set out on page 1 forms part of this report

Structure, governance and management

Volunteer Link-Up (West Oxfordshire) ("VLU" or "Volunteer Link-Up") is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity governed by its memorandum and articles of association. The directors of the charity, who are appointed by the members in general meeting, are its trustees for the purposes of charity law and throughout this report are collectively referred to as the trustees.

Objectives

Volunteer Link-Up is the Volunteer Centre for West Oxfordshire, linking people who have time to spare with opportunities to help local residents and charitable organisations who need their services. Details of how these objectives were fulfilled are set out below. The

Trustees take into account the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and believe that the activities of VLU are in line with that guidance.

Organisational structure

VLU employs four members of staff; a Manager, Office Manager/Volunteer Co-ordinator, Volunteer Transport Coordinator and Good Neighbour Scheme Co-ordinator. The two Volunteer Coordinators match volunteers with opportunities, etc. All are accountable to the Trustee Board which meets at least four times a year. Trustees are elected at the Annual General Meeting. The Trustee Board provides for the administration, management and control of the affairs and property of VLU. A sub-committee of three or four members of the Trustee Board determines staff remuneration, duties, and conditions of service.

Objectives and activities

VLU's services enable a community to support itself. It matches residents with residents through matching volunteers with clients. Most volunteers live in the same town or locality as the clients they support.

Our transport service enables residents of West Oxfordshire to safely attend medical and other appointments. Many of our clients are elderly, vulnerable, or isolated. The driver offers more than just transport to a location. VLU's drivers are very knowledgeable about travel routes, car parking and departments within Oxfordshire hospitals. They can therefore take those concerns away from the client. Most importantly, they also offer support during the drive by providing conversation and companionship. Many of our clients are isolated and being able to build a relationship with a volunteer driver helps reduce that isolation.

Our community transport service helps people attend medical appointments that they might have otherwise missed. We are sometimes able to fulfil request at shorter notice than our standard timescale as hospitals work through waiting lists, which has helped reduce clients' anxiety.

VLU's practical task volunteers enable clients to use their gardens by mowing lawns, clearing shrubs and hedges, lifting unsafe patios, dismantling unsafe sheds and doing general maintenance. Many clients who are isolated, vulnerable or have mobility issues are unable or unwilling to leave home for long periods and their gardens become an important outside space. Clients report that they are able to enjoy being at home and their mental health improved by having an accessible outside area.

Most of VLU's befrienders visit clients weekly, offering companionship and conversation. Several volunteers also provide help with admin or shopping. Our befrienders are matched with clients for the long term, meaning that unless circumstances change, they continue meeting with the client for as long as they want to. This means that the volunteer and client build a long term and mutually beneficial relationship. Befriending reduces isolation for both the client and the volunteer.

VLU continues to support the Good Neighbour Schemes across Oxfordshire. We hold regular networking meetings which cover topics such as volunteer recruitment, training, funding, and 'top tips' for new schemes. The networking meetings also enable schemes to share their highs and lows as well as share and learn from each other's experiences so they can support one another. We also provide weekly emails including information on funding, best practice, local and national campaigns and events as well as providing example risk assessments. Our Good Neighbour Scheme Coordinator also provides bespoke advice and support to individual schemes around areas such as volunteer recruitment, raising profile, measuring impact and insurance.

Achievements and performances

- We actively support 935 clients.
- We gained 258 new clients.
- We currently have 144 active volunteers.
- 57 Be-friending arrangements are currently active.
- 33 new volunteers were recruited during this period.
- 2,042 return journeys were undertaken by our community drivers during this period.
- Volunteer drivers continue to cover weekend journeys for Covid 19 vaccination appointments.
- Social media profile was raised to encourage new volunteers. (Note: by raising the organisational profile, we also gained more clients).
- In partnership with Age UK and OCVA, VLU were active in the tender process which resulted in Age UK winning the CIN contract tendered by OCC. This means our subcontract arrangement with Age UK has been renewed.
- Actively participated in Volunteers Week (June 2022). One of our volunteers received a long service award.
- A promotional interview took place on Witney Radio.
- Optimise digitisation system is now fully operational.
- VLU was one of 2 charities nominated for support by Witney's mayor.
- Volunteer social events and meetings have resumed after being suspended during the pandemic.

VLU has received some excellent feedback from volunteers and clients:

"Volunteer Link Up is a lifeline I have two sons, but they don't live locally and therefore can't always help. It's essential to have friends; a support network as you get older. When I go with Volunteer Link Up it is brilliant as they can drive where the ambulances go and park and when you go to reception and say you are using volunteer transport, they give you a sticker and so I know I'm not going to get lost. The driver leaves their card with me so that when I'm finished, I go to reception and ask them to ring my driver. They come and find me. It's wonderful." (*Rose anonymised VLU client*)

"For me, volunteering is all about relationships; building relationships, maintaining relationships, about the ability to step into somebody's life and see it from their point of view and help them in some little way." (*Jill VLU volunteer*)

"What I get from volunteer driving is a feeling of doing a good job, which, when you've been in the kind of work I've been in in the past (military), a thank you is a nice thing to get and, in all honesty, that's all I need. Some clients are quiet, some are chatty, that's fine with me. I'm an easy-going person and feel I fit into this very nicely. VLU always gives me plenty of notice and they also know if they phone me up on short notice, I'll either say yes or no and if it's at all practical I'll do it. I think Volunteer Link Up sees me as a safe pair of hands." (*Jim VLU volunteer*)

Plans for future periods

VLU held a strategic away day in 2022, bringing together trustees and staff to discuss VLU's work and future. We continue to develop our strategy to meet the needs of vulnerable and isolated people in West Oxfordshire and aim to spread awareness of our work with the aim of recruiting more volunteers to meet the need.

Over the next year we will be working towards ambitious fundraising targets to diversify our work. We are delighted to announce a pilot project working with Witney Land Army, supporting volunteers beautifying and tidying outdoor spaces around Witney.

In 2023 VLU will celebrate its 40th anniversary and we look forward to celebrating this milestone with our clients, funders and volunteers.

Financial review

VLU is entirely dependent upon its funders for its continuance. Its main sources of funds are grants from Oxfordshire County Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, Age UK and Oxfordshire Community Foundation. We are pleased that again our incoming resources exceed the total of the outgoing resources leaving us with a small surplus for the year.

Incoming resources have, in total, fallen by 13% but have remained sufficient to pay for all expenditure and leave a small operating surplus.

Outgoing resources have in total fallen. The largest fall being in employment costs mainly as a result of the cessation of additional funding which meant that in the previous year we were able to fund additional expenditure to increase our office opening hours.

Reserves policy

The essential principle stated in the Reserves Policy agreed by the Trustees is that the reserves should be sufficient to enable the organisation to continue to operate for up to nine months if it were to suffer a significant fall in its funding that could not be replaced from other sources.

Action necessary in order to maintain Reserves at the requisite level:

1 Regular monitoring of the finances of VLU is needed to ensure that any necessary corrective action can be taken promptly if the level of reserves becomes significantly depleted.

2 Attempts should be made to achieve an increase in the level of funding for the activities of VLU which is at least commensurate with the increases in costs which it necessarily incurs. The main costs are likely to continue to be staff salaries.

Unrestricted reserves at 31 March 2023 amount to some £104,000, which trustees consider to be sufficient to meet this policy.

The trustees are satisfied that the charity's assets attributable to each of its individual funds are available and adequate to fulfil its obligations in relation to those funds.

Risk review

The Trustees believe that risks are well managed within the charity's operations. The nature of the operations requires appropriate risk assessments and health and safety policies to cover the range of different activities. The charity has relevant insurance policies providing employers' and public liability cover.

Trustees' responsibilities for the financial statements

The trustees (who are also Directors of VLU for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with general applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom General Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safekeeping the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

On behalf of the trustees

R Swift
Trustee

21 September 2023

Independent Examiners Report to the Trustees of Volunteer Link-Up (West Oxfordshire)

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Company for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees of the Company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of VLU are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of VLU as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) excepting that during our examination it was recognised that amounts of £4,167 being grants received during the year for future use have been treated as deferred income. We believe the correct treatment would be to declare the receipts in the year and disclosed as part of unrestricted funds. This is reported in Note 6 to these financial statements.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Just Audit &
Assurance Ltd
37 Market Square
Witney
Oxfordshire
OX28 6RE

3 October 2023

Accounting policies

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) (as amended for accounting periods commencing from 1 January 2019), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Volunteer Link-Up (West Oxfordshire) meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note.

The charity has taken the advantage of the provisions in FRS102 Update Bulletin 1 to not prepare a Statement of Cash Flows.

Income

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when the charity is entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

- Voluntary income received by way of donations and gifts is included in full in the statement of financial activities when receivable. Grants, where entitlement is conditional on the delivery of a specific performance by the charity, are recognised when the charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the grant.
- Donated services and facilities are included at the value to the charity where this can be quantified. The value of services provided by volunteers has not been included in these financial statements.
- Investment income is included when receivable.

Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred, and includes irrecoverable VAT.

- Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.
- Governance costs include those costs associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the charity and include accountancy fees and costs linked to the strategic management of the charity.

Pension provision

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for employees. Contributions are charged in the Statement of Financial Activities as they become payable in accordance with the rules of the scheme.

Tangible Fixed Assets

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset over its expected useful life. Asset lives are estimated to be four years.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources which are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are subject to restrictions on their expenditure imposed by the donor or through the terms of an appeal.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (incorporating an income and expenditure account) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restrict ed funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Income					
Incoming resources					
Income from:					
Grants from WODC		12,000	-	12,000	12,000
Grant from Age UK		25,000	-	25,000	35,417
Grants from Oxfordshire County Council					
Sustainability Fund		4,500	-	4,500	4,750
Other		10,000	-	10,000	22,500
Contain Management Outbreak funding		-	8,500	8,500	19,605
Other grants and donations	1	22,040	10,957	32,997	13,036
Investment income - interest		1,083	-	1,083	606
Total incoming resources		<u>74,623</u>	<u>19,457</u>	<u>94,080</u>	<u>107,914</u>
Expenditure					
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	2	77,229	13,490	90,719	93,329
Governance costs					
Independent examination fee		1,880	-	1,880	1,240
Total resources expended		<u>79,109</u>	<u>13,490</u>	<u>92,599</u>	<u>94,569</u>
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources		(4,486)	5,967	1,481	13,345
Unrealised deficit on current asset investment		(2,620)	-	(2,620)	(4,328)
Funds at 1 April 2022		108,821	6,938	115,759	106,742
Funds at 31 March 2023		<u>101,715</u>	<u>12,905</u>	<u>114,620</u>	<u>115,759</u>

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2023

	Note	2023 £	2022 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	5	<u>1,097</u>	<u>2,197</u>
Current assets			
Prepayments		1,269	-
Bank balance		84,011	83,592
Current asset investment		<u>39,490</u>	<u>42,110</u>
		<u>124,770</u>	<u>125,702</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	6	<u>11,247</u>	<u>12,140</u>
Net current assets		113,523	113,562
Net assets		<u>114,620</u>	<u>115,759</u>
Income Funds			
Unrestricted funds		101,715	108,821
Restricted fund	7	<u>12,905</u>	<u>6,938</u>
		<u>114,620</u>	<u>115,759</u>

For the financial year ended 31 March 2023, the charity was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The members have not required the charity to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year in question in accordance with section 476.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of the financial statements.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies' subject to the small companies' regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 21 September 2023.

R Swift
Trustee

Notes to the financial statements

1. OTHER GRANTS AND DONATIONS

	2023	2022
	£	£
Town and parish councils	5,615	2,700
Oxford Community Foundation	10,957	-
WODC for delivering food parcels	-	2,480
Richard Early Trust	1,600	1,600
Gift aid	1,448	-
Insurance recovery from Age UK	1,787	2,660
Other donations from:		
Grant making charities and bodies	6,200	-
Individuals	5,390	3,596
	<u>32,997</u>	<u>13,036</u>

2 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	2023		2022	
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	
	£	£	£	£
Employment costs	65,098	6,013	71,111	74,589
Interim self-employed manager	-	-	-	570
Printing, postage and stationery	985	-	985	1,154
Photocopying	648	-	648	445
Room hire	2,401	-	2,401	2,456
Insurance	2,321	-	2,321	3,558
Telephone	2,805	-	2,805	3,664
Depreciation	-	1,100	1,100	1,619
Digitisation and associated training costs	634	-	634	-
Media and other costs for publicity campaign to recruit more volunteers	-	6,377	6,377	-
Volunteer travel expenses	394	-	394	1,423
Website and sundry IT costs	292	-	292	1,203
Subscriptions	85	-	85	567
Training	-	-	-	193
Payroll services	576	-	576	572
Sundry expenses	990	-	990	1,316
	<u>77,229</u>	<u>13,490</u>	<u>90,719</u>	<u>93,329</u>

3. EMPLOYEES

The average number of paid staff for the year was 4 (2022: 4); they worked part-time in administering the charity. The number of employees in terms of full-time equivalents was 2 (2022: 2).

No employee earned £60,000pa or more in 2023 or 2022.

4. PAYMENTS TO TRUSTEES AND CONNECTED PERSONS

No trustee or person with a family or business connection with a trustee received remuneration in the year, directly or indirectly, from either the charity or an institution or company controlled by the charity.

5. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Office furniture and equipment £
Cost	
At 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023	<u>5,357</u>
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2022	3,160
Provided in the year	<u>1,100</u>
At 31 March 2023	<u>4,260</u>
Net book amount at 31 March 2023	<u>1,097</u>
Net book amount at 31 March 2022	<u>2,107</u>

6. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade creditors	5,496	4,890
Grant received in advance	4,167	6,250
Accruals	<u>1,584</u>	<u>1,000</u>
	<u>11,247</u>	<u>12,140</u>

7. RESTRICTED FUNDS

	1 April 2022	Funding received	Expenditure	31 March 2023
	£	£	£	£
Bernard Butler Trust	6,938	-	4,990	1,948
Oxford Community Foundation	-	10,957	-	10,957
Contain Management Outbreak	-	8,500	8,500	-
TOTAL	6,938	19,457	13,490	12,905

The Bernard Butler Trust funding was given to VLU for the purchase of equipment to further the work of VLU.

The Oxford Community Foundation money is to be used to fund a new post that will commence in the year ending 31 March 2024.

Contain Management Outbreak funding was for was for publicity activities, specifically targeted at the recruitment of volunteers.

8. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Fund	Total
	£	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	-	1,097	1,097
Current assets	112,962	11,808	124,770
Current liabilities	(11,247)	-	(11,247)
	<u>101,715</u>	<u>12,905</u>	<u>114,620</u>

9. INDEMNITY INSURANCE

The charity has obtained trustee indemnity insurance cover. The cost of this cannot be determined as the cover is provided as part of a larger combined insurance policy.

10. COMPANY STATUS

The charity is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of the charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity.

11. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

Expenses totalling £264 were reimbursed to three trustees during the year.