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 2026:	Ruth Swift (Chair) Mike Alexander (Treasurer) David Bates Fiona Clough Hannah Hutchings Pam Jones (appointed 30 October 2025) Alex Pridsam (appointed 30 October 2025) Meryl Smith 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 Sally Heath – Volunteer co-ordinator Nicky Paris - Good neighbour scheme co-ordinator Catherine Sager – Office administrator and transport co-ordinator

Chairman's Report

In November 2025 Volunteer Link Up received the news that they had been awarded the Kings Award for Voluntary Service. **The King's Award for Voluntary Service is the highest award given to volunteer groups across the UK.** The award is equivalent to an MBE and is awarded for life.

Although an immense amount of work had had to happen behind the scenes as we were nominated and then assessed to ensure that all our processes, procedures and policies were in place and as they should be (thankyou Barry and the staff team), it was our amazing team of volunteers and the difference they make, day in and day out, that shone. **We are so proud of each and every one of our volunteers.** Each moment they spend with an individual, be it having a cup of tea, helping them sort through their post, mowing their lawn or driving them to an appointment is life changing and creates lasting change.

But our challenge moving forward is that we, like many charities, are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit new volunteers for our services as they continue to grow exponentially. We are however very good at retaining our volunteers. In order to continue to meet the ever growing demand/need for our support we need to focus time and energy on attracting and retaining volunteers.

The numbers: Approximately 12 million adults in England volunteer formally at least once a year, with around 7 million volunteering at least once a month (NCVO Almanac, 2021/22 data). However, the nature of volunteering is changing — more people prefer flexible, episodic volunteering over regular weekly commitments.

The challenge: Volunteer recruitment is consistently cited as one of the top operational challenges facing charities. Competition for volunteers has intensified, with more organisations seeking fewer regular volunteers.

The opportunity: Despite the challenges, there is a large pool of potential volunteers who have never been asked. NCVO's Time Well Spent surveys consistently show that **a significant proportion of non-volunteers say they would volunteer if asked directly** — suggesting that passive recruitment strategies miss many potential supporters.

As all of us involved in Volunteer Link Up know, volunteering is more than just giving your time—it's a way to make a difference, grow personally, and connect with others. It is a great way to network. You meet people who share your values, and those connections can lead to new opportunities. Plus, volunteering shows employers you're proactive and care about your community

Volunteering is when someone spends unpaid time doing something to benefit others. Helping your close friends or relatives isn't volunteering. But doing something to benefit the environment (and through that, other people) is. Everyone has the right to volunteer. Volunteers can be any age and from any background. They can be studying, working or retired. They might be employees of a company given time off to volunteer. They could be looking for work or seeking asylum…put simply **ANYONE CAN BE A VOLUNTEER**

Volunteering is important because it benefits both the individual and the community, fostering personal growth, social connection, and meaningful societal impact. Volunteering enhances mental and physical well-being. It reduces stress, combats depression, and increases life satisfaction by giving individuals a sense of purpose and accomplishment . Helping others releases feel-good chemicals like oxytocin, which improves mood and overall happiness. Volunteers also gain

confidence, self-esteem, and a stronger sense of identity when they see the tangible impact of their efforts Additionally, volunteering can improve physical health through increased activity and engagement in meaningful tasks.

Put simply, volunteering is not just good for our communities and those less fortunate/more vulnerable, it is good for us too. As we head into the coming year **please consider how you can help us spread the word and encourage others to consider becoming a volunteer.**

Ruth Swift
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 2026. 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) effective 1 January 2019.

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 now employs four members of staff; a Manager, a volunteer co-ordinator, an Office administrator and transport co-ordinator, and a Good neighbour scheme co-ordinator. 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 members of the Trustee Board makes recommendations to trustees on staff remuneration and budget matters for the forthcoming year.

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 otherwise miss. 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 are very proud that after a long and intensive audit process our volunteers were awarded The Kings Award for Voluntary Service. This is the organisational equivalent of an MBE.

Our Community Transportation Volunteer Drivers completed 2084 return journeys during this financial year.

Number of Clients: 1005

New Clients: 280

Number of Volunteers: 122

New Volunteers: 16

Befriending Arrangements: 58

The Hotel Coordinator role continues to be delivered in partnership with WODC, in line with new government policy, numbers in the hotel have decreased this year. We negotiated a 12 month agreement with WODC, as well as a 6% uplift.

All paid staff took part in Dementia Awareness training this year.

Driver and Befriender meetings were held and well received.

Following last year's new AGM format, this was repeated this year with the same degree of success.

We have undertaken 3 initiatives this year, seeking to improve volunteer numbers. We participated in a Witney Volunteer Fair, sharing space with OCVA. Sally delivered an initiative across West Oxfordshire in partnership with local Churches. The Witney Community Insight Fund awarded us £2000.00 so that our Social Media Contractor could pay to boost Facebook and Instagram posts. It is difficult to say how successful these initiatives were. New Volunteer numbers are still low, although slightly up on last year. Of the 16 new volunteers recruited this year 12 were recruited in the last 2 quarters of the year, coinciding with when these initiatives were delivered. Raising the profile of an organisation is always a positive move.

Utilising external contractors, a new up to date logo was designed for use by Volunteer Link Up. Work has also begun on the production of a brand new website.

In the background we have been working on a potential initiative called The Small and Mighty. This initiative will seek to support small community based organisations across Oxfordshire. The partnership consists of OCVA, CFO, Oxford Community Action, Oxfordshire Charity Mentors and Volunteer Link Up. The National Lottery have agreed to fund this over a 4 year period as of 1/05/2026.

Plans for future periods

The website will be completed during the 2026-27 financial year. We will then be able to produce a large range of new publicity material, which will be consistent with the information on our website, using our new logo, along with the KAVS logo.

Fundraising activity will increase again next year.

We will roll out the Small and Mighty work with guidance from National Lottery, OCVA and CFO.

We will be taking part in the tender process for a new SLA with WODC. This process is due to begin mid-July 2026.

Financial review

VLU is entirely dependent upon its funders for its continuance. Main sources of funds are grants from Oxfordshire County Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, and Age UK. We have also received a grant from The National Lottery which has produced income this year

of £19,500.

The deficit shown by these accounts is quite substantial, mainly because a large grant received last year was all taken immediately into income. This despite the fact that it was to fund us for a two year period. If this had been spread across the whole two year period this year's deficit would have been halved. One further reason for the deficit is the trustees decision to spend some of the accumulated reserves on improving and modernising our website and PR. Despite this our finances remain in a sound position.

Incoming resources have dropped by some 13% mainly because of the treatment of the two year grant explained above. Without this, incoming resources are relatively unchanged.

Outgoing resources have increased by 10%. This is partly due to inflationary pressures but also to the cost of the website improvement and associated work. We estimate that the value of volunteer hours is some £200,000.

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 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 2026 amount to some £109,000, which whilst less than the level of previous years trustees still consider to be somewhat larger than required. Steps are being taken to reduce the excess by improving the service we provide to our beneficiaries, and more generally, in line with our objectives.

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 (who are also Directors of VLU for the purposes of company law) 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

H Hutchings
Trustee, 22 October 2026

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 2026.

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).

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.

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

30 October 2026

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 written off at the time of purchase unless their expected life is expected to be at least 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 2026

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2026 £	Total 2025 £
Income					
Incoming resources					
Income from:					
Grants					
WODC		12,500	22,700	35,200	26,365
Age UK		25,000	1,000	26,000	25,000
Oxfordshire County Council		-	-	-	25,167
National Lottery		-	19,500	19,500	-
Other grants and donations		37,879	-	37,879	55,897
Investment income - interest		2,906	-	2,906	3,279
Total incoming resources		78,285	43,200	121,485	135,708
Expenditure					
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities		91,621	43,200	134,821	121,470
Governance costs					
Independent examination fee		1,770	-	1,770	2,000
Total resources expended		93,391	43,200	136,591	123,470
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources		(15,106)	-	(15,106)	12,238
Unrealised surplus on current asset investment		572	-	572	1,073
Funds at 1 April 2025		124,145	-	124,145	110,834
Funds at 31 March 2026		**109,611**	**-**	**109,611**	**124,145**

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2026

	Note	2026 £	2025 £
Current assets			
Debtors		-	11,667
Prepayments		2,115	2,887
Bank balance		83,912	87,377
Current asset investment		43,015	42,443
		129,042	144,374
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	5	19,431	20,229
Net assets		109,611	124,145
Represented by:			
Unrestricted funds		109,611	124,145

For the financial year ended 31 March 2026, 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 22 October 2026.

H Hutchings

Trustee

Notes to the financial statements

1. OTHER GRANTS AND DONATIONS

	2026	2025
	£	£
Town and parish councils	3,145	4,145
Oxford Community Foundation	17,312	25,288
The estate of the late Jean Tompkins	10,000	-
Richard Early Charitable Settlement	1,200	1,200
Insurance recovery from Age UK	2,854	2,734
Other donations from:		
Grant making charities and bodies	800	15,671
Individuals	2,568	6,859
	37,879	55,897

2 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	2026			2025
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	
	£	£	£	£
Employment costs	63,379	40,200	103,579	99,038
HR consultancy	2,894	-	2,894	2,596
Occupational health consultations	-	-	-	834
Printing, postage and stationery	982	-	982	539
Photocopying	816	-	816	889
Room hire	3,104	-	3,104	2,936
Insurance	3,659	-	3,659	3,505
Telephone	4,364	-	4,364	3,707
Digitisation	700	-	700	1,650
Media and other costs for publicity	840	2,000	2,840	1,134
Volunteer travel expenses	570	-	570	843
Hotel project expenses	31	-	31	429
Sundry meeting costs	726	-	726	521
Website and sundry IT costs	227	-	227	205
Staff travel	1,070	-	1,070	878
Subscriptions	308	-	308	214
Kings Award for Voluntary Service costs	1,187	-	1,187	-
Modernisation of website, logo etc	4,200	-	4,200	-
Bicester t shirts and leaflets	460	500	960	-
Payroll services	911	-	911	867
Sundry expenses	1,193	500	1,693	685
	91,621	43,200	134,821	121,470

3. EMPLOYMENT COSTS

	2026	2025
	£	£
Salaries	98,298	92,889
National insurance	398	1,496
Pension	4,883	4,653
TOTAL	103,579	99,038

The average number of paid staff for the year was 5 (2025: 5); they worked part-time in administering the charity. The number of employees in terms of full-time equivalents was 3 (2025: 3).

No employee earned £60,000pa or more in 2026 or 2025.

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. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2026	2025
	£	£
Trade creditors	8,848	4,617
Grant received in advance	8,833	13,712
Accruals	1,750	1,900
	19,431	20,229

6. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

All funds held are Unrestricted Funds.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

Expenses totalling £321 were reimbursed to two trustees during the year.