COUNTRY DAYS

Nature Day Courses for Young People in Bedfordshire

# Country Days

## TRUSTEE REPORT & ACCOUNTS

DECEMBER 2025






Inspiring young people to explore, play, and learn *about* nature, *in* nature, *through* nature.









*Nature. Learning. Adventure. For young people.*



Country Days Limited
Registered number 11433398
Charity number (date of incorporation 26.06.2018) 1181833

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# Country Days

## ANNUAL REPORT

Country Days is a charity dedicated to giving young people the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive through meaningful experiences in the natural world. We believe that access to outdoor spaces plays a vital role in every young person's development, helping to build confidence, resilience, curiosity and wellbeing in ways that cannot always be achieved in the classroom alone.

At The Leys, we provide young people with safe, inspiring outdoor environments where they can explore woodland, fields and wildlife through hands-on activities and practical learning experiences. At a time when many young people have limited access to nature and spend far less time outdoors than previous generations, our work aims to reconnect young people with the natural world and encourage a lasting sense of wonder, adventure and discovery.

Outdoor learning gives young people the freedom to explore, problem-solve, work collaboratively and develop independence. It supports physical health, emotional wellbeing and social development, while also helping young people gain a deeper understanding of, and respect for, the environment around them.

During the Easter and summer holidays, we welcome groups of young people from local primary schools to take part in nature-based activities designed to inspire learning through experience. Seeing young people grow in confidence, ask questions and fully engage with the outdoors is at the heart of everything we do.

At Country Days, we are passionate about ensuring that every young person, regardless of background or circumstance, has the opportunity to benefit from time spent outdoors. We are committed to expanding opportunities for young people with the least access to nature, because we believe every young person deserves the chance to explore, learn and flourish in the natural environment.

### Our Vision

To create opportunities for every young person to connect with nature, discover their potential and develop the confidence and resilience needed to thrive.

### Our Mission

To provide safe, engaging and enriching outdoor learning experiences that inspire curiosity, support wellbeing and encourage young people to develop a lifelong appreciation for the natural world.

*Helen Orssich*

Helen Orssich (nee Hadfield)
Co – Founder



*Esme Watkinson*

Esme Watkinson (nee Hadfield)
Co – Founder

*Nature. Learning. Adventure. For young people.*

# Our Story

Inspiring young people through outdoor learning, curiosity and adventure since 2018.

## 2018

Country Days was founded by Ann Hadfield MBE. After her death in July 2018 Esme and Helen Hadfield became co-founders.

24 children attended the first pilot course in August 2018. We were very fortunate to have 1 shelter which was funded by Ann Hadfield.



## 2019

In 2019 we ran our first course in the summer with 160 children over 4 days enjoying -

- Poetry in performance
- Plastic Recycling
- Sport and problem solving
- Bushcraft
- Arts and Crafts
- Pond dipping



## 2020

In 2020 Covid hit and we ran an online course which over 50 children took part. We had a 2nd rain shelter built in 2020 which was funded by Harpur Trust.



## 2021

In 2021 we decided to extend our courses to Easter which ran for 4 days and a Summer course which ran for 5 days.

**Some of our activities included**

- Obstacle courses
- Orienteering
- Bug hunting
- Botany
- Creative Writing
- Performing arts

We created a partnership with The Grange Academy for a fun-filled day of outdoor learning and we are excited to continue building our partnership in the future.

Also, in 2021 we built an admin shed, science sheds, improved the landing stages for the pond, bought 8 pop up toilets and improved the car parking area.



## 2022

In 2022 our Easter and Summer courses were even more creative. We introduced a theme for our Summer courses: "Treasures Island" by Robert Louis Stevenson.

- Campfire cooking
- Building a base camp
- Archery
- Semaphore
- Creating treasure
- Craft building
- Making maps

We welcomed many children from the Bedfordshire Refugee & Asylum Seeker Support who attended both our Easter and Summer courses.



## 2023

Our Easter and Summer courses were another wonderful success and we chose the theme of Greek Myths for our summer course. Eight activities linked to -

- Greek Myths
- Mythical creatures
- Medusa
- Story of Achilles
- The Odyssey Part 2



## 2024

We decided to increase our activities from 4 to 5 and hired 2 more teachers. In 2024 our activities consisted of -

- Bushcraft
- Pebble painting
- Woodland People
- Sports
- Who's been framed
- Poetree
- Archery
- Pond dipping
- Mini beast hunting



## 2025

In 2025 we were lucky to have some wonderful weather for both courses. Our theme for the Summer course was Roald Dahl, some of the activities were based on

- The Minpins
- Fantastic Mr Fox
- The Enormous Crocodile
- Danny Champion of the World
- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
- The Twits



## 2026

Looking ahead, we will continue to grow and refine our courses, offering even more inspiring experiences for young people.

We are planning new activities, deepening our partnerships and focusing on reaching more children who would benefit most from time in nature.



# The difference we make

## We helped 300 unique young people



**96%**
of young people have shown improved **SELF CONFIDENCE**

We work in partnership with other local agencies including **62** schools, children's services, and specialist organisations, supporting young people and their families.



**45**
hours of interactive learning in small groups of 12 or less



**99%**
would come back to Country Days

**96%**
learnt **SOMETHING NEW**



**95%**
made **NEW FRIENDS**



**95%**
found the courses exciting

**96%** improved **TEAMWORK SKILLS**



**49%**
came from families with financial difficulties

**47%**
of our young people have one or more SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), mental health needs, or are neurodiverse

More than **12%**
have a social worker or are under a Child Protection Plan (CPP) or EHCP

### ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES FROM OUR COURSES

There was a **50%** increase in the number of children who were able to explain what resilience is and why it is important (from 15% to 75%).

By the end of the second day, over **75%** of the children said they felt "very confident" using different art materials.

By the end of the second day, over **80%** of the children could name at least two different creatures they would expect to find in a pond.

**ALL** children rated the course **9/10** or **10/10** for enjoyment.

*Inspiring young people through outdoor learning, curiosity and adventure.*

# We aim for our young people to

- To smell the earth
- **To taste** the rain
- To taste the wind
- To see things grow
- To hear the sun rise
- And night fall
- To care



- resilience
- self-awareness
- focus
- self-esteem

Nurturing confidence, curiosity and connection through nature

- motor skills
- adaptability
- confidence
- fitness

- problem solving
- teamwork
- communication
- creative thinking
- leadership

## Our values

**RESPECT** Be kind to each other.

**FUN** Make friends, be enthusiastic, support each other.

**NATURE** Enjoy the natural world.

# Strategic Review

Country Days is an educational charity dedicated to providing outdoor learning experiences within a beautiful nature reserve for young people from across Bedfordshire. Our mission is to inspire a love of nature, remove barriers to the countryside, and create safe, inclusive opportunities for young people to learn, grow and thrive in the outdoors.

We remain incredibly grateful to our patrons, trustees, teachers, support staff, volunteers and fundraising committee whose commitment, enthusiasm and hard work continue to make our work possible. We are equally thankful to the many individuals, organisations and members of the local community whose support enables us to create brighter futures for young people from low-income families across Bedfordshire.

Research consistently highlights the importance of engaging young people with the natural environment as a way of improving learning outcomes, building confidence, strengthening resilience and supporting emotional wellbeing. At Country Days, we see these benefits firsthand through the growth, curiosity and confidence our young people develop during their time with us.

Each year, we strive to increase the number of places available, broaden the scope of our courses and deliver ambitious and enriching curriculum that makes a meaningful difference to young people who otherwise have limited access. We want the reserve to be enjoyed by local communities, families' schools and other like-minded charities and organisations in Bedfordshire who will benefit from its use.

In line with our commitment to growth and impact, our main focus for our 2025 courses is to introduce new activities which build on the successes and learning from previous years.

A particularly special milestone this year was Country Days taking part in the 25th Annual Bedfordshire Christmas Tree Festival at St Paul's Church for the very first time. The festival welcomed thousands of visitors - typically attracting around 8,000 attendees - and raised a record-breaking £31,044.46. with proceeds shared equally between St Paul's Church and Bedford Hospital Charity & Friends. Being part of such a well-supported community event gave Country Days valuable exposure and further strengthened awareness of the charity within the local community.



Throughout the 2025 summer course, we welcomed many visitors who came to observe our courses in action and experience the positive impact outdoor learning has on the young people we support. Among those visitors were the Rt Rev Richard Atkinson, Bishop of Bedford, and HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire. Such visits clearly showed support and interest in the charity were greatly appreciated. The Bishop of Bedford highlighted the value of Country Days and the important opportunities it provides for young people to connect with nature, develop confidence and experience the countryside in a meaningful way. Their encouragement and recognition continue to help raise awareness of the importance of outdoor learning and the positive impact Country Days has on young people and families across Bedfordshire.

Importantly, 48% of the young people attending our programmes this year were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). Dual Premium support for entitled & in-need Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Supporting the growing number of children facing disadvantege remains central to our mission and highlights the continuing need for accessible outdoor learning opportunities.

We continue to promote our work through social media, newsletters, word of mouth and local fundraising events. Thanks to the strong support of the local community and the increasing number of returning participants, we are also beginning to build the next generation of Country Days volunteers.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to expanding opportunities for young people, strengthening community partnerships and continuing to inspire young people through meaningful experiences.

We were delighted to attend **Green Week at the Higgins Museum**, which provided a wonderful opportunity to engage with local families and be part of an event celebrating the community. It was especially lovely to see children getting involved with the colouring activities from our Country Days booklets. Seeing their creativity bring the pages to life was a real highlight, and we were pleased to share some of their fantastic colouring on our social media channels. Events like this are a great way for us to connect with families, support local initiatives and introduce more people to Country Days in a fun and engaging way.



Country Days was honoured to attend the **Lord-Lieutenant's Garden** Party, joining representatives from across the local community for a very special occasion. The event provided a valuable opportunity to meet and connect with individuals and organisations who contribute so much to the area, while celebrating the strength of the community and the people within it. We were delighted to represent Country Days and to share the opportunity to build new relationships, strengthen existing connections and raise awareness of the work we do. It was a memorable occasion and a privilege to be included.

*Inspiring young people through outdoor learning, curiosity and adventure.*

COUNTRY DAYS
Nature Day Courses for Young People in Bedfordshire



# Our young people.

Country Days provides nature day courses for children aged 7–11 from low-income families **in Bedford.**

**We connect children with nature, build confidence and wellbeing, and nurture a lifelong love of the outdoors.**

Every year we reach **300** children through our Easter and summer holiday programmes.

Feedback from parents, teachers and children is overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the impact on confidence, wellbeing and social skills.

Your support helps break down barriers, reach more children and create outdoor experiences that change lives.

## OUR IMPACT IN 2024

**300+** children reached in Bedford

**95%** of parents rated our courses as excellent or very good

**90%** of children felt more confident outdoors after attending

**15+** schools and community partners supported our programmes

**Our programmes are removing barriers, building skills and inspiring the next generation to care for nature.**

## OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1 **ACCESS & INCLUSION**
Ensure every child can take part by providing access to healthy food and inclusive activities, regardless of financial hardship.

2 **GROW OUR REACH**
Expand to reach more children in areas of greatest social need and strengthen partnerships within our community.

3 **OUTDOOR LEARNING**
Deliver high-quality, hands-on nature experiences that build confidence, skills and a connection to the natural world.

4 **SUSTAIN & GROW**
Strengthen and diversify our funding to ensure long-term stability and grow our impact for more children.

**With your support, we can reach more children, change more lives and create a brighter future — *together.***

Inspiring young people through outdoor learning, *curiosity and adventure.*

countrydays.org.uk @countrydaysbeds

# Our Team

**Head of Curriculum, Victoria Hayward** is the Education Safeguarding and Vulnerable Groups Lead, School Improvement Team, Bedford Borough Council. She has over 15 years of experience working in education as a former Deputy Headteacher with the focus of driving forward practice and improving outcomes for children.

## TEACHING STAFF

Cameron Long | Laura Davies | Katrina Hyden | Emma Wilson | Christopher Tansell | Helen Watkinson | Tim Sergeant

## SUPPORT STAFF

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rita Di Carlo<br>Head of Admin | Lynni Gingell<br>Health and Safety,<br>Fire Marshal<br>First Aider | Roy Horner<br>Site Manager | Nicola Bowyer<br>Group Leader,<br>Coordinator for Volunteers<br>First Aider |

## VOLUNTEERS

Amelie Davies | Izzy Davies | Esme Orssich | Michael Hadfield | Sophie Abdin | Adriano Di Carlo

## FUNDRAISING TEAM

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rita Di Carlo | Esme Orssich | Helen Hadfield | Claire Innes |
| Anna Lewes | Hugh Maltby | Adriano Di Carlo | |

*Inspiring young people through outdoor learning, curiosity and adventure.*

# Country Days Fundraising Journey

**£43,895.43**
TOTAL RAISED SINCE FUNDRAISING BEGAN

## 2019 — Year total: £3,315

**Bedford Harriers Half Marathon** — £3,315
Supporters ran together for Country Days.

## 2020 — Year total: £7,000

**Virtual 10km Challenge** — £7,000
Fifty supporters ran, walked or cycled 10km.

## 2021 — Year total: £14,050

**Virtual 10km Challenge** — £3,000
Local runners and cyclists raised awareness.

**Country Days Fundraising Dinner** — £5,000
80 guests enjoyed dinner, raffle, auction and Pen Hadow.

**Maltby's Miles: 10,000-mile cycle ride** — £6,050
Hugh inspired supporters with an extraordinary challenge.

## 2022 — Year total: £1,500

**Country Days Quiz Night** — £1,500
Our first-ever quiz at The Sun, Felmersham.

## 2023 — Year total: £3,404.04

**Country Days Quiz Night** — £1,750
A lively community evening at The Sun.

**Country Days Family Fun Day** — £1,654.04
Our first family day at the nature reserve.

## 2024 — Year total: £7,238

**Country Days Family Fun Day** — £2,471
Treasure hunt, stalls, tea, cake and bouncy castle.

**ATW Bedford Running Festival 5K** — £1,302
Adriano ran to raise funds.

**Country Days Quiz Night** — £2,165
A record-breaking quiz night.

**Bedford Inner Wheel Fashion Show** — £1,300
A community fashion fundraiser with Claytons.

## 2025 — Year total: £7,388.39

**Great Ouse Primary Academy** — £1,500.39
Bounce-a-thon and Fun Run.

**Country Days Family Fun Day** — £1,661
Activities, stalls and community fun.

**ATW Bedford Running Festival 5K** — £1,503
Adriano inspired donations and awareness.

**Country Days Quiz Night** — £1,804
Another successful evening at The Sun.

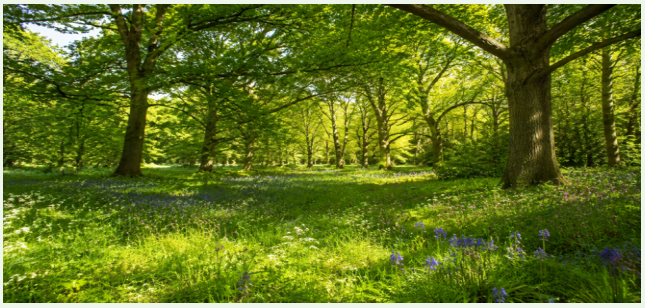
**Yorkshire Three Peaks** — £920
Will completed the demanding challenge.





**Every fundraiser helps Country Days grow**

Thank you to every fundraiser, sponsor and supporter



*Nature. Learning. Adventure. For young people.*

# A Special Thank You

Recognising the people and local organisations whose expertise, practical help and generosity have made a lasting difference to Country Days and The Leys.




## Oakbank Game & Conservation

Continued support since 2022 through generous donations of wildflower and bird-crop seed, practical advice on increasing biodiversity at The Leys, and ongoing guidance on woodland maintenance.



## Tristan Peck BSc MRICS

Planning & Development Surveyor, Robinson & Hall

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

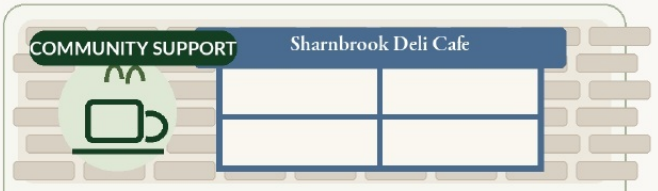
In autumn 2025, Tristan agreed to support Country Days. After more than eight months of dedicated work, he secured retrospective planning approval from Bedford Borough Council for the change of use of The Leys Nature Reserve from agriculture to outdoor learning, together with the erection of ancillary facilities.




## Pete and the team at The Sun

*Felmersham*

Our sincere thanks for your warm welcome, generous support and continued encouragement of Country Days and our fundraising work.




## Sharnbrook Deli Cafe

Thank you to the whole team for your kindness, community spirit and valued support of Country Days.

## Further thanks

We also warmly thank Bedford Inner Wheel, Claytons, Majestic Wine, Portfolio Caterers and Sapori Catering, along with everyone who has donated time, prizes, expertise or encouragement.

*Your support helps more young people discover nature, confidence and possibility.*

*Thank you to all our supporters who help us connect children with nature, build confidence and create unforgettable experiences.*

# Our Sponsors in 2025

We are so lucky to have continued to be supported
by so many fantastic local and national charitable trusts.

## Our valued supporters

- BEA
- Christopher H R Reeves Charitable Trust
- Carlton Educational Trust
- Gale Trust
- St Johns Hospital Trust
- The Wixamtree Trust
- Bedford Borough Council (HAF)
- Tesco Groundwork
- Sharnbrook Parish Council
- Bedfordshire Charitable Trust
- Great Ouse Primary School
- The Miller Trust
- Oakley Parish Council
- Kempston Charities
- Neighbourly Charitable Trust Grant
- National Lottery
- The Sun Pub – Felmersham

*Thank you to all our supporters who help us connect children with nature, build confidence and create unforgettable experiences.*

# Our Patrons

Our patrons provide invaluable support and guidance,
helping us to inspire young people and strengthen our community.

## Susan Lousada

Susan was appointed Lord-Lieutenant for Bedfordshire in 2022 to be the King's personal representative in the county. This is a voluntary position and the retirement age is 75.
Born and educated in Bedfordshire, Susan has lived all but four years of her life in the county. She has over 20 years' experience of running a family business and continues to be a director of a property and investment company.
Susan has devoted much of her life to voluntary service with a particular focus on helping children and young people. Married to Simon for over 40 years, they have two children and two grandchildren. Susan enjoys local history, gardening, skiing, and walking.

## Elisabeth Slack

Elisabeth graduated with first class honours in Agricultural Science from Nottingham University in 1971. She then joined a research team at Bristol University, gaining a doctorate in Microclimatology. A teacher of science and maths, her teaching career culminated in a deputy headship at secondary level.
Elisabeth served as Chairman of The Bedfordshire Festival of Music, Speech and Drama from 2002 - 2010 and as fundraiser from 2002 - 2012 and is now the Festival's President. She was a longstanding volunteer for Youthscape in Luton, the Lieutenanty representative on the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery Board (The Higgins Bedford), and has been a governor of both the Grange Academy in Kempston and Walmsley House School in Bedford. Elisabeth's appointment as a Deputy Lieutenant was made in 2017.

## Lionel Stewart, MBE

Lionel is a retired Police Officer with over 34 years' experience both in London and Bedfordshire. Since retiring from the police, he has held numerous security roles in major companies. For 10 years, he ran Bedfordshire Crimestoppers where he met and worked alongside the late Ann Hadfield. In his spare time, he has a welfare role for retired police officers and enjoys time with his family. He has two sons and two daughters, four grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

*Inspiring young people through outdoor learning, curiosity and adventure.*

# Our Trustees

Our trustees bring a wealth of experience, knowledge and passion to support our mission and ensure the charity's continued success.

## Helen Orssich and Esme Watkinson

Helen Orssich and Esme Watkinson are the twin daughters of Ann Hadfield MBE and grew up in Bedfordshire. They formed the charity inspired by their mother's vision following her mother's death in 2018 and belief in the importance of getting children outside and learning in a natural environment. Esme is a retired General Practitioner, keen gardener, mother of two and grandmother to Helen Watkinson's daughter Juno. Helen is the Executive Producer for a film & advertising company and mother of Esme Orssich, a member of the Fundraising Committee.

## Helen Watkinson

Helen Watkinson is Ann Hadfield's granddaughter. Helen is an English teacher and Head of Key Stage at a comprehensive inner city London secondary school.

## Margaret Campbell

Margaret Campbell is a qualified accountant. She is company secretary for the charity and handles the financial record keeping and preparation of accounts.

## Claire Innes

Claire Innes is a Partner in the Interim HR Practice at Eton Bridge Partners, an Executive Search firm in London. Passionate about education and the opportunities it provides to transform lives, Claire supports Country Days with the recruitment of excellent teaching staff to inspire young people. With two boys of her own, and having grown up in the countryside on a farm in Ireland, she appreciates the value of time spent outdoors and the positive effect it has on mental health and wellbeing.

## Frank McMahon

Frank McMahon was headteacher of Robert Bruce School and greatly appreciated the Fun 4 Young People summer school initiative which enriched the school holiday experiences of so many pupils. He believes Country Days, its ambitious successor, builds on those achievements and significantly develops the range of activities provided. On retirement, he became involved with Emmaus movement, locally and nationally. It provides formerly homeless people with safe and secure accommodation, and supports them through provision of opportunities to regain their self-confidence and esteem.

## Anna Lewes

Anna Lewes runs her own property accounting business from home and has two children. Having grown up in the rural village of Pavenham and as a current resident of Felmersham, she fully understands the joy of the great outdoors and the impact it has on children's health and wellbeing. Anna is thrilled to be part of this wonderful charity in honour of the late Ann Hadfield who was a dear friend and inspiration to so many.

## Tim Sergeant

Tim Sergeant teaches at Redborne Upper School, lectures at the University of Bedfordshire and also works in professional football as Head of Education at Stevenage FC. Having taught on Country Days courses since 2021, he is excited about his new role as Trustee:

*"Once you realise how special Country Days and the people involved are, you just don't ever want to leave! As a Trustee, I hope to continue inputting the charity's work and giving something back for the great experiences I have had so far. I feel I get what Country Days is all about: despite my title of 'PE teacher' I have been a pirate, a wizard, a Greek God and even King of England!"*

*Together, we inspire young minds to connect with nature, build empathy and create a brighter future.*

Connecting children with nature, skills and confidence

COUNTRY DAYS
Nature Day Courses for Young People in Bedfordshire

Great days grow here!

# What Patrons, Trustees, Staff and Volunteers say about us

**HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Mrs Susan Lousada (Patron)**

> Country Days captures something truly special as it gives young people the opportunity to laugh, explore, discover and learn in the beauty of the countryside. I am incredibly proud to be Patron of a charity that inspires such confidence and joy in every child it welcomes.

## Anna Lewes (Trustee)

Being a trustee has been hugely rewarding but a personal learning curve, in particular, the rewriting of our Articles of Association! The key to our achievement is that we have a diverse Board of Trustees from different backgrounds; both in terms of knowledge and experience, however, as a collective we have a common aim to ensure that Country Days continues to thrive. I feel blessed to being a small cog in the large wheel of steering our Charity's continued success for future generations to enjoy.

## Helen Watkinson (Trustee)

Over the last decade, more and more research has demonstrated the profound benefits of spending time in nature for both mental and physical health and wellbeing. Unfortunately, research has also revealed the 'green space disadvanatge gap': those who live in the poorest areas of the country have the least access to green spaces. We also know that spending time outdoors has specific benefits for education; it reduces behavioural problems and boosts cognitive development. However, access to green spaces in school further demonstrates social inequalities: students at top private schools have 10 times more green space than state pupils. Green spaces can also help to mitigate extreme heat; something that this summer's heatwaves has demonstrated to be of urgency. The work that Country Days does not only provides access to nature-rich spaces but also the opportunity to learn through exploration, discovery and play. As ever, it's a privilege to serve as a Trustee. In less than a decade (despite the setback of Covid) the charity has gone from strength to strength – expanding from a pilot course of 25 to two courses providing spaces for over 300 children annually – and I'm incredibly excited about the future!

*Written by Helen Watkinson BA (Hons), MA, NPQCL*
*Head of Key Stage at an inner-city London school and postgraduate researcher in Education at King's College London*

## Vicki Hayward (Head of Curriculum, Safeguarding Lead)

I have been part of Country Days since the charity first began, and it has been a privilege to watch it grow while helping hundreds of children experience the outdoors in ways that many of them never have before.

As a teacher on the courses, I have led a range of bushcraft activities including den building, fire lighting, outdoor cooking and archery. These activities are great fun, but they also teach children so much more than practical skills. They encourage resilience, problem-solving, communication and teamwork as children work together to overcome challenges and support one another.

One of the things I value most about Country Days is giving children the opportunity to spend meaningful time outdoors. Many young people today have limited access to nature or opportunities to take part in activities like these. Watching children discover the excitement of building their first shelter, safely lighting a fire or cooking over an open flame reminds me just how important these experiences are. Outdoor learning builds confidence, sparks curiosity and creates lasting memories that simply cannot be replicated in a classroom.

Throughout the years, I have seen children arrive feeling nervous or unsure of themselves, only to leave with new friendships, greater self-belief and a real sense of achievement. Being immersed in nature encourages children to work together, communicate effectively and appreciate the natural world around them. These are life skills that extend far beyond the course itself.

I believe the work Country Days does is incredibly important. The charity provides high-quality outdoor education for children who may otherwise never have these opportunities, helping them to develop confidence, resilience, teamwork and a lifelong appreciation of nature. Seeing the smiles on children's faces and witnessing their growth over just a few days is why I continue to volunteer year after year. It is a genuinely rewarding experience, and I am proud to have been part of the charity's journey from the very beginning.

## Cameron Long (Teacher)

Working with Country Days has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career, and I'm grateful to continue supporting the charity through their Easter and Summer holiday camps each year.

My role involves delivering PE sessions to children from a wide range of ages, abilities and backgrounds, ensuring every child feels included, encouraged and able to enjoy being active.

What makes Country Days so special is its commitment to giving children meaningful experiences in the outdoors. Seeing children grow in confidence, develop friendships and learn the importance of respecting and caring for the environment is truly inspiring.

## Michael Hadfield (Volunteer)

Volunteering with Country Days is such a fulfilling experience seeing children arrive on the field and watching them grow in confidence, make friends, and enjoy new experiences over the course of the days.

Country Days provides opportunities that many children would not otherwise have access to and also provides reassurance for the parents, knowing their children are being cared for in a positive and supportive environment.

Whether through creative activities, sports, outdoor adventures, every moment is designed to encourage participation and to learn something new.

## Adriano Di Carlo (Volunteer)

I love nature and being outdoors, so volunteering with Country Days is something I really enjoy and care about.

As a volunteer, I help the charity with fundraising, which can be hard at times, but it is also very rewarding. It feels good to know that the effort helps keep the charity going and supports the work it does.

It is lovely to see how being outside helps young people. They have space to explore, learn new things, build confidence and enjoy nature in a calm and positive way.

I also believe Country Days is important for the local community. It gives schools, families and other groups the chance to use and enjoy the nature reserve. I am proud to support work that helps people connect with the outdoors and benefit from such a special place.

*Inspiring young people through outdoor learning, curiosity and adventure.*

# What our families say about us

"The course was amazing, its one of the few places our autistic son is willing to attend without us so it gives the whole family a much needed break"

"My daughter always really enjoys the country days course and I am so grateful to have this on our doorstep - how lucky are we! All the leaders are great thank you, the booking system is really easy and fantastic value for money

"My children were really looking forward to these courses and were very happy with the experience. Each time there were different activities, and the teachers were friendly and supportive.

We are very pleased that such affordable courses are available, and we especially appreciate that the children spend the whole day outdoors"

"I can't thank you enough for the amazing day my girls had. They are honestly in love with your days and only negative is that they wish you did more"

"My daughter and her friend absolutely loved their day and on the car ride home they both said how much they want to do it again. I think it's so important for children to have things like this available to them"

"It was a lovely course with activities. We had four activities. Made me feel connected with nature. We did sport where i targeted an adult on the gaga ball game, pond dipping where I found a lot of snails, I learnt how to tie knots on the bushcraft activity and I did the easter garden activity which was the funniest of all. We had to put soil in our cup and decorate it with natural stuff and paint it. The leaders were kind and encouraging.it was my first time and I recommended going again"

"My daughter thoroughly enjoyed spending time outdoors at the nature reserve, making new friends and doing fun activities. She enthusiastically told us about making a stick dog, learning to use a compass and making a mini garden"

"I just wanted to say a massive thank you for organising this lovely camp. My daughter came home buzzing- she had such a great time!

Please also pass on our thanks to all the helpers who made it such a wonderful experience"

*Inspiring young people through outdoor learning, curiosity and adventure.*

# Trustees' Report

Country Days Ltd is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered with the Charity Commission. The charity is governed in accordance with the objectives set out on the Charity Commission website.

## Charitable Objectives and Activities

The charity acts as a resource for young people living in Bedfordshire by providing physical, educational and recreational activities designed to:



**A) Advance young people in life**

By developing their skills, confidence, capacities and capabilities, enabling them to participate in society as independent, mature and responsible individuals.

**B) Advance education**

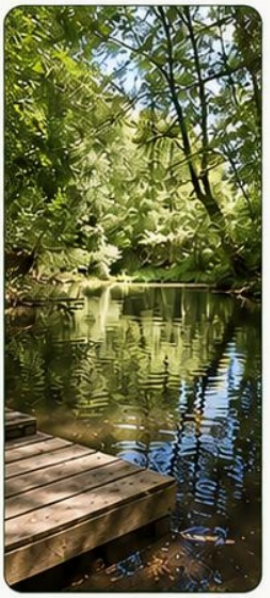
Through outdoor learning experiences and nature-based educational activities.

**C) Provide recreational and leisure-time activities**

In the interests of social welfare for young people who are disadvantaged through social or economic circumstances, with the aim of improving their quality of life and wellbeing.

## Public Benefit Statement

The Trustees confirm that they have given due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives, planning future strategy and setting policy.



The work of Country Days plays an important role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people in Bedfordsie by providing opportunities they may not otherwise have access to. Research consistently demonstrates the benefits of outdoor learning on young people's social, physical and academic development. With the growing challenges posed by climate change, it is increasingly important that young people develop an appreciation and understanding of the natural environment through meaningful time spent outdoors.

The Leys Nature Reserve in Felmersham provides an exceptional setting for Country Days' activities. The reserve includes woodland containing 33 varieties of trees, a pond inhabited by great crested and common newts, resident ducks and a wide range of wildlife, as well as three natural open play areas.

Use of The Leys Nature Reserve for Country Days courses is generously donated by its owners, Esme Watkinson and Helen S E H Orssich, who also serve as Trustees of the charity. Funds raised by the charity have been invested in maintaining and developing the site to ensure it remains safe, accessible and fit for purpose. Improvements include rain shelters, pond landing stages, two science sheds, an administration hut and additional storage facilities, enabling the charity to expand activities and meet increasing demand for places on its programmes.

The nature reserve itself is operated on a not-for-profit basis. The owners intend to continue developing opportunities for primary schools, voluntary organisations and other charities in Bedfordshire to benefit from the use of the reserve where appropriate and when not in use by Country Days. Any fees generated through such use will be donated back to Country Days to support the ongoing preparation, maintenance and development of the site for the charity's courses.

*Inspiring young people through outdoor learning, curiosity and adventure.*

# Financial Review

## Accounts December 2025

The charity received total income of **£55,148** during this financial year through a combination of grant funding, donations and community fundraising activities.

Major sources of funding included grants from The Wixamtree Trust, The Carlton Trust, The Bedford Educational Association (BEA), The Gale Trust, Kempston Charities, The Miller Charitable Trust, The St John's Hospital Trust, The National Lottery Community Fund and Bedford Borough Council through the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme.

Country Days currently holds sufficient unrestricted reserves to meet the funding gap between operational costs and income received. These reserves also support the charity's ongoing growth and development plans, enabling us to expand opportunities for more children across Bedford and increase the use of the nature reserve throughout the year. However, the Trustees recognise that reserves will reduce as the charity continues to grow.

The charity committee and administrative team continue to explore new fundraising opportunities to support the long-term sustainability of Country Days. During the year, the charity also benefited from the outstanding efforts of several dedicated supporters who undertook significant sporting challenges to raise sponsorship funds on behalf of the charity.

The Trustees acknowledge that, as with many charities, grant funding can be uncertain. However, they remain confident that the charity has adequate resources to continue operating for the foreseeable future. For this reason, the Trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis when preparing the financial statements and maintain prudent reserve levels.

A draft budget is approved by the Trustees for each financial year. Any expenditure exceeding the agreed budget, but considered essential to the charity's operation or development, must receive approval from the Board of Trustees. In addition, all capital expenditure and core costs exceeding £2,000 require formal approval from the Board on an ongoing basis.



*Inspiring young people through outdoor learning, curiosity and adventure.*

Registered number
11433398

# Country Days Limited

## Report and Accounts

## 31 December 2025

**Country Days Limited**
**Registered number: 11433398**
**Directors' Report**

The directors present their report and accounts for the year ended 31 December 2025.

**Principal activities**
The company's principal activity during the year continued to be the provision of nature courses for children aged 7 - 11.

**Directors**
The following persons served as directors during the year:

Helen Orssich
Esme Watkinson
Caroline Heaton
Claire Innes
Francis McMahon
Alexis Orssich
Caroline Waterfall
Helen Watkinson
They are also trustees of the charity

**Small company provisions**
This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions in Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

This report was approved by the board on 22 September 2026 and signed on its behalf.

Helen Orssich
Director

**Country Days Limited**
**Profit and Loss Account**
**for the year ended 31 December 2025**

| | 2025<br>£ | 2024<br>£ |
|---|---|---|
| **Turnover** | 53,742 | 58,919 |
| Cost of sales | (23,131) | (29,961) |
| **Gross profit** | 30,611 | 28,958 |
| Administrative expenses | (29,864) | (22,597) |
| **Operating profit** | 747 | 6,361 |
| Interest receivable | 1,406 | 1,488 |
| **Profit before taxation** | 2,153 | 7,849 |
| Tax on profit | - | - |
| **Profit for the financial year** | 2,153 | 7,849 |

**Country Days Limited**
**Registered number:** 11433398
**Balance Sheet**
**as at 31 December 2025**

| | Notes | | 2025 | | 2024 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | £ | | £ |
| **Fixed assets** | | | | | |
| Tangible assets | 3 | | 439 | | 6,880 |
| **Current assets** | | | | | |
| Cash at bank and in hand | | 99,170 | | 90,576 | |
| **Net current assets** | | | 99,170 | | 90,576 |
| **Net assets** | | | 99,609 | | 97,456 |
| **Capital and reserves** | | | | | |
| Profit and loss account | | | 99,609 | | 97,456 |
| **Shareholders' funds** | | | 99,609 | | 97,456 |

The directors are satisfied that the company is entitled to exemption from the requirement to obtain an audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Act.

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

The accounts have been prepared and delivered in accordance with the special provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime. The profit and loss account has not been delivered to the Registrar of Companies.



Helen Orssich
Director
Approved by the board on 22 September 2026

**Country Days Limited**
**Statement of Changes in Equity**
**for the year ended 31 December 2025**

| | Share capital | Share premium | Re-valuation reserve | Profit and loss account | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| **At 1 January 2024** | - | - | - | 89,607 | 89,607 |
| Profit for the financial year | | | | 7,849 | 7,849 |
| **At 31 December 2024** | - | - | - | 97,456 | 97,456 |
| **At 1 January 2025** | - | - | - | 97,456 | 97,456 |
| Profit for the financial year | | | | 2,153 | 2,153 |
| **At 31 December 2025** | - | - | - | 99,609 | 99,609 |

**Country Days Limited**
**Notes to the Accounts**
**for the year ended 31 December 2025**

## 1 Accounting policies

***Basis of preparation***
The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with FRS 102, The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (as applied to small entities by section 1A of the standard).

***Turnover***
Turnover consists of the funds donated and amounts raised from the activities of the charity.

***Tangible fixed assets***
Tangible fixed assets are measured at cost less accumulative depreciation and any accumulative impairment losses. Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets, other than freehold land, at rates calculated to write off the cost, less estimated residual value, of each asset evenly over its expected useful life, as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Structures on the field | over 4 years |

***Creditors***
Short term creditors are measured at transaction price (which is usually the invoice price). Loans and other financial liabilities are initially recognised at transaction price net of any transaction costs and subsequently measured at amortised cost determined using the effective interest method.

***Taxation***
As a charity tax is not payable

***Provisions***
Provisions (ie liabilities of uncertain timing or amount) are recognised when there is an obligation at the reporting date as a result of a past event, it is probable that economic benefit will be transferred to settle the obligation and the amount of the obligation can be estimated reliably.

***Foreign currency translation***
Transactions in foreign currencies are initially recognised at the rate of exchange ruling at the date of the transaction. At the end of each reporting period foreign currency monetary items are translated at the closing rate of exchange. Non-monetary items that are measured at historical cost are translated at the rate ruling at the date of the transaction. All differences are charged to profit or loss.

***Reserved funds***
The company does not hold any reserved funds in the strict technical sense, but it is the policy of the directors to hold in reserve enough funding to cover the courses of for the following year and any donations given for specific purposes are spent in the year of receipt so no funds are held at the year end.

## 2 Employees

| | 2025 Number | 2024 Number |
|---|---|---|
| Average number of persons employed by the company | 0 | 0 |

## 3 Tangible fixed assets

| | Plant and machinery etc £ |
|---|---|
| **Cost** | |
| At 1 January 2025 | 25,765 |
| At 31 December 2025 | 25,765 |
| **Depreciation** | |
| At 1 January 2025 | 18,885 |
| Charge for the year | 6,441 |
| At 31 December 2025 | 25,326 |
| **Net book value** | |
| At 31 December 2025 | 439 |
| At 31 December 2024 | 6,880 |

## 4 Other information

Country Days Limited is a private company limited by shares and incorporated in England. Its registered office is:
3 Alpha House
4 Beta Place
London
SW4 7QN

**Country Days Limited**
**Detailed profit and loss account**
**for the year ended 31 December 2025**
*This schedule does not form part of the statutory accounts*

| | 2025<br>£ | 2024<br>£ |
|---|---|---|
| **Sales** | 53,742 | 58,919 |
| Cost of sales | (23,131) | (29,961) |
| **Gross profit** | 30,611 | 28,958 |
| Administrative expenses | (29,864) | (22,597) |
| **Operating profit** | 747 | 6,361 |
| Interest receivable | 1,406 | 1,488 |
| **Profit before tax** | 2,153 | 7,849 |

**Country Days Limited**
**Detailed profit and loss account**
**for the year ended 31 December 2025**
*This schedule does not form part of the statutory accounts*

| | 2025<br>£ | 2024<br>£ |
|---|---|---|
| **Sales** | | |
| Donations | 45,273 | 52,287 |
| Fund raising events | 4,725 | 3,800 |
| Course fees | 1,473 | 2,635 |
| Other | 2,271 | 197 |
| | 53,742 | 58,919 |
| **Cost of sales** | | |
| Course costs | 12,330 | 12,562 |
| Field costs | 10,801 | 17,399 |
| | 23,131 | 29,961 |
| **Administrative expenses** | | |
| Employee costs: | | |
| Fees paid | 14,300 | 10,725 |
| | 14,300 | 10,725 |
| Premises costs: | | |
| Water | 809 | 180 |
| | 809 | 180 |
| General administrative expenses: | | |
| Telephone and internet | 276 | 277 |
| PO box | 446 | 425 |
| Fund raising costs | 2,204 | 1,926 |
| Bank charges | 73 | 107 |
| Insurance | 1,029 | 1,041 |
| Computer costs | 590 | - |
| Rubbish removal | - | 243 |
| Depreciation | 6,441 | 6,441 |
| Sundry expenses | 365 | 391 |
| | 11,424 | 10,851 |
| Legal and professional costs: | | |
| Advertising and PR | 283 | 841 |
| Other legal and professional | 3,048 | - |
| | 3,331 | 841 |
| | 29,864 | 22,597 |

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

# Independent examiner's report on the accounts

## Section A Independent Examiner's Report

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Report to the trustees/ members of** | Charity Name<br>COUNTRY DAYS LIMITED (11433398) | | |
| **On accounts for the year ended** | 31st DECEMBER 2025 | **Charity no (if any)** | 1181833 |
| **Set out on pages** | 1 to 8<br>(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets) | | |

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31/12/2025.**

**Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

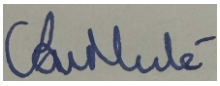
**Independent examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

* *Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Signed:** |  | **Date:** | 14/10/2026 |
| **Name:** | SOPHIA MULÉ | | |
| **Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):** | ASSOCIATION OF ACCOUNTING TECHNICIANS<br>FMAAT 10261662/ 1004410 | | |
| **Address:** | 27 ST CUTHBERT'S STREET<br>BEDFORD<br>MK40 3JG | | |

| Section B | Disclosure |
| --- | --- |
| | Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners). |
| **Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose**. | |