Wistaston Scout Group
(35th South West Cheshire)

Registered Charity No: 520281

www.wistastonscoutgroup.org.uk

ANNUAL REPORT YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31st 2025

After returning to pre pandemic levels our overall membership numbers have remained constant. Beavers and cub numbers have increased while scouts have shown a decrease. This trend is mirrored across the district and is, we believe, as a result of the last of the members affected by the Pandemic passing through the group. Many of our youngsters who are now in Scouts have never camped outdoors. This is proving a challenge to prepare them for the camping season and summer camp in particular.

The media, once again, is making much of the waiting list to join Scouts nationally, that may well be so but Wistaston scouts does not reflect that. We do have quite a few children on our waiting list but they are all below Beaver age (6 years old), and there will almost certainly be a space for them once they reach Beaver age. Our leadership numbers have remained almost constant for several years at 30, that is not to say that we could do with more help, we would welcome it particularly with Beavers,

The latest census figures (January 31st 2026) show that we remain the largest group in the District and:

- We have two Beaver colonies with a total of 35 beavers
- We have two Cub packs with a total of 35 cubs
- We have two scout troops with a total of 27 scouts.

I have spoken before of the brilliant young leader system in South West Cheshire. We fully

support that system and believe that these youngsters represent the future core of the group leadership team. At the time of the census we had 9 young leaders and I confidently expect that number to increase in the coming months.

Without being complacent we are in a very good place as far as membership is concerned. Undoubtedly we can do with extra adult support in one or two of the sections so if anyone can spare that mythical hour a week then please let me know. Just to set that myth right it as much as you want to give but in reality it is a minimum of about 90 minutes per week (the length of a section meeting). You will need to have a Scout DBS which is free and which we can arrange, there is also some mandatory training: Safety, safeguarding and GDPR which are all on line and First Aid which is a six hour session usually held in our building. From there you can do as much or as little training as you want to do. Some of our sections run a parent's rota which works well and ensures that we always comply with the Scout rules on ratios, If anyone wants to take this challenge and join a very happy and integrated team then please contact me via glv@wistastonscoutgroup.org.uk

In an attempt to recruit more scouts, Richard Austin decided to try an initiative with schools. He has prepared a recruitment video which he and Alex Smith have taken to two local primary schools and shown it to those who are approaching or are of scout age. This has been quite successful, that is reflected in the increase in scout numbers in the last few months. Hopefully we will not have to do that again in the near future!

The national Scout Programme has been developed to provide our young people with Skills For Life. We fully embrace that concept and programme, in addition we fully endorse the concept of the **OUT** in Sc**OUT**ing. We have a scout centre in a pretty unique location, on the very edge of Joey the Swan, a SSBI, and we make use of that to develop knowledge and learning of the area, in particular its flora and fauna. We have a number of scout camp sites in Cheshire that we use and also other scout buildings located in areas rich in nature, with hiking trails, indoor accommodation etc.

During 2025 all our Beavers had the opportunity to have one night away at Bickerton Scout Hut. Our cubs had two nights away in the Scout Centre and two nights under canvas. Scouts, as you would expect, have more nights away, two nights are pent at Brereton Scout hut the remainder are under canvas and in total in 2025 they all had the opportunity to have

a total of 15 nights away.

The scout nights away figure includes seven nights at the annual summer camp, we are one of very few groups in South West Cheshire who continue to have a week long summer camp, camping under canvas and do their own cooking for the whole week. In fact for the last night in camp they devise their own menus and shop for the requirements of that menu before cooking it, resulting in innovative meals enjoyed by all. In 2025 summer camp was held at one of our regular sites on the outskirts of Criccieth. In total, 61 scouts, explorer scouts and leaders enjoyed a week under canvas, being self sufficient, preparing and cooking all their meals and generally having a great time.

In 2026 the summer camp will be held on Anglesey near Rhoscolyn, this is a new site for us, very close to the runway at RAF Valley. Hopefully there will plenty of aircraft coming into and leaving Valley during the week. This is a traditional “greenfield” site where we have to build from scratch a camp for 49 youngsters and 20+ leaders. There will be a weekend training camp ahead of summer camp and the troop programmes from now until July will focus on preparations for summer camp, the programme for which is as ever both educational and fun. The number of young people who are booked to attend summer camp is the highest we have had for many years.

All these activities, section meetings in the scout centre, in the area around the centre and the camps, provide the opportunity for the youngsters to gain various awards. There are literally dozens of activity badges which can be gained. Beavers and Cub Scouts in the main complete these under leadership supervision, although they are encouraged to do much of the work at home in their own time. Scouts also have dozens of activity badges which they can attain and they are encouraged to be self motivated as to which they take on and complete. There are 43 activity badges for Beavers, 58 for Cub Scouts and 80 for Scouts.

In 2025:

- The two beaver colonies awarded a total of 449 activity and challenge badges
- The two cub packs awarded a total of 309 activity and challenge badges
- The two scout troops awarded a total of 156 activity and challenge badges

The activity badges supplement the Challenge Badges which have to be gained in order for the Beaver, Cub or Scout to be awarded the Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards, the highest award in each section and in 2025 the following were awarded

- 15 Chief Scouts Bronze Awards
- 4 Chief Scouts Silver Awards
- 7 Chief Scouts Gold Awards
- 2 YouShaped Awards

The group pays for all these badges at a cost of over one thousand pounds, which explains where some of the subs, paid by each youth member, goes. Each year Beavers and Cubs who have gained the Chief Scouts award are invited to attend a celebration afternoon arranged by the District team along with other Beavers and Scouts from South West Cheshire where they receive their certificates.

The Scouts attend a Celebrating Success afternoon in Warrington organised by the County Team. The Scouts along with others in Cheshire who have achieved the Chief Scouts Gold Award receive their certificates (including the YouShaped awards) at that event.

Richard Austin, one of the scout leaders spends much of his summer camp photographing and filming the event, he then compiles a recording, some 20 minutes long with an appropriate music soundtrack. In 2025 the video was premiered at a special summer camp awards evening held at Reaseheath College. Over 100 adults along with summer camp participants attended a very enjoyable evening. The video is now available online for download.

Each year Scout HQ arranges a St George's Day Parade held at Windsor Castle on the Sunday nearest St George's Day. For the adult invitees the day starts with Matins held in St George's Chapel, well known for its Royal connections (weddings and funerals). It is a beautiful building with wonderful accoustics (built in an age when nobody had even heard of accoustics). This is followed by a parade of the recipients of the Kings Scout Award on the upper Quadrangle, in 2025 the parade was reviewed by HRH Duke of Kent who is Joint President of the Scout Association along with the Chief Scout Dwayne Fields. Also present

as guests were leaders who had gained the higher awards, the Bar to the Silver and the Silver Wolf. In 2025 the author had the privilege of attending as a spectator and to watch with great pride the Kings Scouts parade which included Tom Austin one of our scout leaders. After the parade the Kings Scouts then attended a service in St George's Chapel. It was a truly memorable day

I am often asked how much time each volunteer gives to scouting so I have done a quick calculation of the number of hours our volunteers put into scouting annually. These are minimum figures and do not include time spent in planning section evenings, events and camps. For Summer Camp that time is extensive, planning starts from almost the end of the last camp. Normally there will be at least one recce visit to the site, to check out proposed off site activities and find local shops that can provide for example fresh meat, vegetables and bakery products. That sounds quite easy but when we are catering for over 75 people it can be a time consuming business. The average number of hours spent by our leaders in 2025 were:

- Beaver Section Leader: 158 hours including one camp
- Beaver Assistant Leader:146 hours including one camp
- Cub Section Leader: 186 hours including two camps
- Cub Assistant Leader: 174 hours including two camps
- Scout Leader : 459 hours including camps
- Scout Assistant Leader: 447 hours including camps

These figures assume that the leaders all attend the various camps, with the exception of the scout section leaders it does not include summer camp. Many of our beaver and cub leaders do in fact attend summer camp, either for a few days or for the week. If they attend the entire week they are giving up a further 168 hours of their time.

In addition, Leaders are recognised for their service to Scouting. In 2025 the Group President, Gerald Newbrook, was awarded the Bar to the Silver Acorn and Keith Sarson our Quartemaster and an Assistant Cub Leader was awarded the Medal for Merit. Well done to both and very richly deserved

As reported last year at the end of 2024 the Scout Association rolled out a new digital

membership system to replace the outdated Compass system. There have been continual problems with it culminating in the UK Chief Scout Volunteer recently stating that it is not fit for purpose, I think that most leaders would agree with that comment. It was never easy to navigate the old system, but that was nothing compared with the new model. It is very time consuming and not easy to navigate the new system which for group leads is very frustrating.

The tragic death of Ben Leonard on the Great Orme several years ago, and the subsequent findings by HM Coroner continue to cause concerns as we try to adapt our processes to comply with his findings. We also are reviewing our practices following the tragic murders of three young girld in Southport. We want to introduce a system which will prevent anyone other than a leader driving into the scout compound. Access for everyone else will be via a new pedestrian guide we have installed. Unfortunately the council has allowed a contractor working on nearby properties to have their site compound outside our compund which is where parents park to drop of and pick up their cidren. This site cpompond is causing chaos for parents and stopping us from intrducing a new system designed purely with safety in mind. We have had to involve our MP to get action, we hope to be able to introduce the new system after the summer break.

Risk assessments are nothing new to the group and all leaders are now conversant, and comply, with the requirements. These are now produced for all activities ranging from, for example; games played in the scout centre or at Joey the Swan, to basic fire lighting and cooking over a wood fire, to the annual summer camp (over 35 separate assessments for the 2025 event) We have developed a library of all our risk assessments which can accessed by leaders, downloaded, reviewed and updated where appropriate.

I am delighted to report that we had no safety related incidents deemed reportable to Scout HQ. There was one near miss on summer camp which occurred during an activity we had “bought in” from a third party. No one was injured, the fault lay solely with the third party and was addressed by them but we reported it to Scout HQ in line with our processes..

In many respects 2025 has been another challenging year for the leaders and trustees as we adapt to the various changes. However, during this period one thing has remained constant – the level of commitment of the leaders to our young members and the provision

of Skills for Life.

The Scouts current ten year plan called Skills for Life will shortly be replaced by three plans each three years in length. The overall plan will be known as “Place to Belong” althougn the phrase Skills for Life will be retained. The leaders and trustees are just starting to get to grips with their roles within Place to Belong.

Once again, the group is grateful for the continued support of the Parish Council. As ever they made the offer of funding towards equipment. In 2024 our Trustees agreed to a programme of replacement of our ageing canvas tentage some of which is over 25 years old (remarkable value for money). The first replacement costing £1500 was purchased in 2024 and we were extremely grateful to the Parish Council for donating £700 towards this cost. We plan on buying another replacement in 2026 and then one every two years after that. and will ask the Parish Council for a donation.

Finally I must pay a huge thankyou to our leaders (including our young leaders) and the group trustees for the amazing work they have done to provide scouting during 2025. When thanking the adult leaders I must include their wives, husbands, partners, girlfriends and boyfriends for their continued support. Without their assistance we could not provide the quality scouting to our young people which they receive in Wistaston Scouts.

May 2026

John Bennett MBE
Group Lead Volunteer (Group Scout Leader)
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SURPLUS AND LOSS ACCOUNT - 2025 Year To Date

INCOME				
Subs				
Current Year - 2025	£	15,874.00		
Previous Year - 2024	£	-	**£**	**15,874.00**
Fundraising Etc.				
Fundraising	£	2,845.80		
Donations	£	780.00		
Grants	£	250.00	**£**	**3,875.80**
Miscellaneous				
Gift Aid	£	5,471.67		
Camps & Activities	£	1,650.69		
Summer Camp	£	13,715.67		
Floats/Cashing Cheques	£	-		
Interest	£	123.79		
Explorer Rent	£	708.14		
Centre Hire Income	£	281.00		
Other	£	152.09	**£**	**22,103.05**
New HQ Funding			**£**	**-**
			£	41,852.85

EXPENDITURE				
Utilities				
Electricity	£	1,147.65		
Water	£	358.47		
Gas	£	1,160.24		
Phone/Broadband	£	244.42	**£**	**2,910.78**
General				
Training	£	520.00		
Insurance	£	1,942.13		
Capitation	£	6,386.00		
Subs Expenditure	£	370.35		
Hygiene services	£	-		
HQ Expenditure	£	3,808.82	**£**	**13,027.30**
Equipment				
Scout & Guide Shop	£	1,156.73		
Camping Gas	£	-		
General	£	70.00	**£**	**1,226.73**
Sectional Expenses			£	1,002.52
Floats/Cashing Cheques			£	-
Fundraising Expenditure			£	764.01
Camp & Activity Expenditure			£	1,695.98
Summer Camp Expenditure			£	13,669.15
Gifts			£	-
Other			£	84.00
New Equipment Expenditure			£	2,121.86
			£	36,502.33
Net Surplus			£	5,350.52

Transfers between accounts (Excluded from Income/expenditure)	
Moving from	
Natwest Main Account	16013.06
Natwest Activities account	0.00
Natwest Summer camp	6000.00
Natwest Savings 1	0
OSM Payment Cards	1005.72
Moving To	
Natwest Main Account	1005.72
Natwest Activities account	0.00
Natwest Summer camp	913.06
Natwest Savings 1	15000.00
OSM Payment Cards	6100.00
Transfer balance	0.00

TOTAL Income	**£**	**41,852.85**	**£**	**41,852.85**

Opening Balances 01/01/2025		
Cash	£	-
Natwest Main Account	£	29,853.14
Natwest Activities Account	£	5,372.48
Natwest Summer Camp Acc	£	690.84
Natwest Savings 1	£	-
OSM Payment Cards	£	416.20
Unbanked Cheques	£	-
Assets		
Liabilities	£	-
Total	**£**	**36,332.66**

Current Balance		
Cash	£	-
Natwest Main Account	£	20,083.86
Natwest Activities Account	£	5,272.50
Natwest Summer Camp Account	£	1,103.03
Natwest Savings 1	£	15,123.79
OSM Payment Cards	£	100.00
Unbanked Cheques	£	-
Assets	£	-
Liabilities	£	-
Summer Camp Expected Expenditure		
Summer Camp OSM	£	-
Total	**£**	**41,683.18**

Non Monetary Assets (Insured Values)		**2025**
Buildings	£	508,200.00
Equipment, Furniture etc - Building	£	73,000.00
Equipment, Furniture etc - Shipping container	£	3,000.00
Trailer	£	2,500.00
Total	**£**	**586,700.00**

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the

35th SWC SCOUT GROUP/~~DISTRICT/COUNTY/AREA SCOUT COUNCIL~~

I report on the accounts of the Group/~~District/County/Area~~ for the year ended 31/12/25

which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet and related notes set out on pages.....

This report is made solely to the trustees in accordance with Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an Independent Examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees for my examination work.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

The Group's/District's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year (under Section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act)) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts (under Section 145 of the Charities Act);
- To follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under Section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act); and
- To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Group/District and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent Examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *):

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
   - to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 130 of the Charities Act ;and
   - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act

   have not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, 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*

Name: Simon Prestage

Qualification: CCWC

Address: 53 Sandymans Piece

Date: 9TH JUNE 2026

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