Annual Report

2025 -2026

City of Coventry Scout County

“A Place to Belong”








You Volunteers

Make all the Difference

for Young People

Chair – Clive Bennett

It has been another busy year for the County Trustee Board. In addition to the normal ongoing review, scrutinising and updating, where necessary, of all our policies and procedures we have started to requisition the work required following the Headquarters Staff visit to Rough Close. This work is an ongoing project and is mainly to do with updated fire regulations and safety. The work is essential in order to make Rough Close a safer place to be for all our members. You will, no doubt, have already noticed some changes around the site.

In the past we have had a few accidents and/or near misses which create a great deal of, time consuming, work for the people involved but this can be alleviated by ensuring that all risk assessments and specific policies and procedures are in place. There is even more emphasis on compliance now which is the responsibility of the respective Group, District and County Trustee Boards.

The work regarding the buildings database is nearing completion. When completed, this will act as support and advice for Group Trustee Boards and inform them of what documents they need to have in place in order to be compliant with P.O.R. Many Groups across the County have already loaded documents into their file, which means their documents are all together in one secure place. If you have not already done so, I would urge you to upload your documents as soon as possible.

In March we held our third consecutive annual County conference which was a well attended day with some interesting workshops. We were, again, really pleased to welcome a number of members from Headquarters Staff to this event.

The new building planned for the Guild Field is passed the planning stage and we hope to see the ground broken very soon. We owe a great deal of thanks to Dave and co for the work done to bring this to fruition.

Last November saw the official opening of the Coffee Shop at Rough Close and there has been a few really successful events held there. Massive thanks to Sarah for all the effort to get this project up and running.

The Big Walk took place on 7th June. A really successful day, it was great to see so many of our younger members walking together and socialising as they went.

We continue to plan the future of the Scout Shop. Progress is slow but we do need to ensure that we make the correct decisions in order to provide the most appropriate building set up which is easy to manage for the staff who spend so many hours there, on behalf of the County.

I would like to thank everyone who has served on the County Trustee Board in the past year for their contribution and ideas. These people perform an amazing amount of unseen work.

Finally, a huge thank you to all of you, no matter what you do within Scouting. The variety of programme and activities you provide is fantastic and the smiles on the faces of the young people says it all and that is all down to you.
Enjoy your summer as we look forward to Scouting in 2026/27.

County Lead Volunteer – Phil Cracknell

As County Lead Volunteer, I am pleased to reflect on another year of Scouting across the County. Whilst this year has presented its challenges, it has also demonstrated the resilience, dedication and passion of our volunteers, young people and supporters.

During the year we introduced our new Strategy, **"A Place to Belong."** This strategy sets out our vision to ensure that everyone who joins Scouts feels welcomed, valued and supported, whilst creating opportunities for more young people and adults to experience the benefits of Scouting. It provides a clear direction for the years ahead and reflects our commitment to delivering safe, inclusive and high-quality Scouting across the County.

Our Census data shows that membership has reduced over the past year. Whilst this is naturally disappointing, it reflects many of the challenges facing the voluntary sector. We remain optimistic about the future and are confident that the foundations we have put in place through our new strategy, volunteer support and programme development will enable us to rebuild and return stronger in the 2026 Census.

One of our key priorities this year has been a renewed focus on safety and safeguarding. Ensuring that every young person can enjoy Scouting in a safe environment remains our highest priority, and significant work has been undertaken to strengthen our culture, improve compliance and support volunteers in delivering safe Scouting at every level.

Throughout the year we have delivered a wide range of successful events, providing memorable experiences for young people and volunteers alike. It has been particularly exciting to launch our new Explorer Belt offering, giving Explorer Scouts the opportunity to take part in one of Scouting's most challenging and rewarding international-style expeditions.

The past year has also provided some truly unforgettable opportunities for our young people. Two groups represented the County at national events, attending both the **Trooping the Colour** celebrations and the **VE Day commemorations**, creating memories that will last a lifetime. We also celebrated young people travelling to Windsor to receive their prestigious **King's Scout Award**, whilst many others successfully completed and celebrated achieving their **Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award**—a testament to their perseverance, leadership and commitment.

International Scouting continues to be a major strength across the County. Districts have remained committed to providing life-changing international experiences, with a number of overseas expeditions and international visits taking place throughout the year. These opportunities continue to broaden horizons, develop confidence and foster friendships that extend well beyond our County and the UK.

It has also been inspiring to see so many young people achieve their top awards, recognising years of commitment, personal development and adventure. Alongside this, many adult volunteers have been recognised for their exceptional service and dedication to Scouting. These awards are a fitting tribute to those who continue to give their time so generously to provide opportunities for others.

As we look ahead, there is much to be excited about. Our calendar for the coming year is filled with a wide range of events, activities and development opportunities. In September, we will celebrate the significant anniversaries of our Squirrel Scouts, Beaver Scouts and Cub Scouts sections with a county-wide celebration. Looking further ahead, plans are already underway for a major event for Scouts, Explorer Scouts and Scout Network members in mid-2027.

We are also delighted that our ever-popular St George's Day celebration will return next year, bringing the County together once again to celebrate our shared values and achievements. Alongside these events, we will continue to invest in our volunteers through new learning, development and skills opportunities, ensuring they have the confidence and support to deliver exceptional Scouting experiences.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to every volunteer, trustee, supporter, parent and partner who has contributed over the past year. Your commitment, enthusiasm and generosity make everything we achieve possible. Together, I am confident that we will continue to build a County where everyone truly has **A Place to Belong**.

County Treasurer – Dave Hart

The only income the County has is the income from County Membership fees, this year £8.00 per young person, and interest earned on any saving investments. With our membership this year of 2121 the total being approximately £17,000. Income earned from both Rough Close and the Trading Post is accrued respectively.

This year we withdrew from the Schroders investment portfolio and moved to a more lucrative savings platform.

Currently we have savings of £240,000 are held by Flagstone with interest realising £13,000 this year. (A two-year savings plan maturing this year). Plus, savings in the Coventry Building Society and Barclays Bank.

Within the Counties holdings are restricted funds, these primarily for Rough Close, Geoff Stack and HQ Maintenance Fund.

The Counties expenditure for the year is approximately £23,000 before we embark on training, events etc.

The 'Trading Post' and 'Badges and Things' (the on-line arm of the shop) has not only serves our own County but many of our neighbouring Counties and Districts bringing more visitors to our Campsite and Activity Centre. We are deeply indebted to our Staff who manage the shop. The 'Trading Post' and 'Badges and Things' returned a surplus of approximately £15,000 over the last year.

Rough Close is becoming a mammoth operation with more visitors each year. Over the past year our expenses have been on the increase our utilities have increased, and we have had to significant expenses for safety inspections at Rough Close, these include Fire, Gas and Legionella. After these inspections there is a need to accept and remedy following inspection reports.

This year the actual income from the Camping and Activities was more than £100,000 but our expenditure has increased.

In certain circumstances we can no longer rely on volunteer labour, and we have to bring in specialist contractors for some of our tasks, this significantly increases our expenditure. Despite the increases etc. Rough Close returned a trading surplus of approximately £17,000. This will go towards improvements to Rough Close and Activities.

County Administration

County Trustee Board: met 11 times and held discussion on a range of issues within the County including Safety and Safeguarding which are on each meeting agenda. Discussions were held regarding the reports circulated from The Scout Association in their response's to Coroner Court's 'Prevention of Future Deaths' notices which were sent to all Trustee Boards and their Trustee's. Where appropriate measures have been taken.

Rough Close Scout Campsite - Dave Hart

2026 THE 80TH ANIVERSARY OF ROUGH CLOSE

As in previous years the aim of the County through the Rough Close Management Committee has been to improve the site helping it to become one of the premier Scout sites in the Midlands. Bearing in mind that some of our neighbouring sites are run corporately the number of visitors we are attracting justify our aim.

Over the last year we embarked on a programme of improvement, firstly by improving the Retreat kitchen, taking out the old units, and replacing with more hygienic stainless steel. With the improvement it gave us the opportunity to add a water supply and drainage to the existing Bar area enabling the added facility of the Coffee Shop. This is now fully operational.

The Norton Cabin has been open for twenty years this year. It is extremely popular and booked every weekend. Our plan was to improve the Kitchen like the Retreat by making it all stainless-steel units and introduced a new fridge freezer unit. We have also replaced all the mattresses in the dormitories. It is still our intention to refurbish the toilets but after the new Guild Cabin is completed.

Following the County Conference in February HQ were invited to visit and look at operation and safety aspect of Rough Close. During the visit, some areas were highlighted as needing attention, this was far reaching with the buildings, activities, woodland, and operation were inspected.

Generally, HQ were impressed with what we had and how we operate, bearing in mind we have owned Rough Close for 80 years this year some of our buildings are over fifty years old it was no surprise that recommendations were made. Building regulations have changed over the years and different safety legislation has been introduced.

A programme of work is being introduced to bring all our other buildings up to the recommend standard.

The way we operate our instructor led activities was also considered, recommendations have been made and improvements have been incorporated. Thus, over a period, we have been unable to offer some of our high rope activities. This has now been rectified and soon all our activities will be up and running again.

Activities can only be available when we have the relevant instructors, our customers want to book these activities so consequently we are looking to recruit and train more instructors. We are deeply indebted to our instructors for the time they put into Training and running these popular activities.

Along with buildings the condition of our woodland has been an area of concern, most of our trees have only a life expectancy of 60 years and most are over that. Over the year we have had to take some trees out. This year with the help of Lloyds Bank employees and Woodlands Trust we planted a further two hundred and will continue to replace. Although we lose some trees the timber they have produced is milled and used for fencing and various projects on site.

Over the year we have been frustrated by the delays in being able to start on the replacement of the Guild Cabin. The initial delay was Solihull Council granting planning permission. This took from June 2025 with it being granted in February 2026. The current hold up is meeting the requirements of the Grant of £100,000 from the HS2 project. We are currently working to resolve these issues. We are deeply indebted to our former County President Clive Benfield for the work he has put in to getting us this far.

We have now fully adopted the OSM booking system, it has made booking easier for our customers and streamlined our internal systems. It has given us a better visibility over our customer needs.

Over the next few months, we hope to have made significant progress on the new Guild Cabin, refurbished the Camp Fire Circle and extended the Tunnel complex. We have already created activity boxes for our visiting Squirrel Section.

Rough Close is run by a small team of volunteers, this includes our mid-week crew, a small week-end Crew, and some individual volunteers. All are represented on the Rough Close management committee. They meet monthly to ensure that the site is available to meet all the needs of our visitors. We could not operate without these dedicated volunteers and would welcome anyone who would wish to help.

Awards Report– Mike Pitham (County Awards Team Leader)

This last year we have seen a change in the way awards are nominated and approved/supported.

HQ have moved over to a digital process that encourages all members to consider nominating others. The system checks the criteria for awards such as time from last award and minimum years service before allowing the nomination to proceed. The lower awards – up to and including Silver Acorn – are now approved/supported by Districts and higher awards approved/supported at County level. This only changes when the nomination for lower awards is made by DLV when those nominations go to County level.

As the nomination process is completely digital members are encouraged to nominate their peers rather than wait for team leaders to do it. This is because members know their peers better than anyone else!

Remember that long service awards (5, 10, 15 years, etc.) are automatically generated by HQ. Good Service Awards are generated by nominations. When thinking whether someone should be nominated, think about outstanding performances and continued performance above and beyond regular meeting attendance. Think about the "Wow" moments that stand out!

Writing a nomination should be taken from the standpoint that the person approving the nomination has no knowledge at all of the individual or their activity that has prompted the nomination. So please include all the information you have about them. Keep nominating!

DOE Awards – Bob Tansey

Thank you, to all Young Persons, Explorer Scout Leaders, Supporters of Leaders, Parents, and anyone in the Districts, County who have helped over this last year, in being involved in the County D of E programme.

It has been great to see young people, Leaders and helpers, once again, camping, Holding Unit, and District events, getting involved in the Scheme, which runs jointly with the King's Scout award, the total numbers that are current on the eDOE scheme in Coventry are 443, Young persons aged from 13.5 to 25 years.

In relation to D of E awards, and participation, a number of changes are being made in to take into account various levels of achievement for all young people that have various problems in their life's, which is good to see, as the scheme offers a much wider scope for young persons in/ doing, starting on there eDOE, these ideas have been based on the numerous surveys, that have been taking place over the last few years.

A Gateway award scheme, as been added to the awards system, that will run jointly with the D of E award scheme and our own scouting awards system, but also be a stand-alone award in itself.

With 10 Bronze Awards 6 Silver awards, 8 Gold awards awarded, since 01/04/25 to 1st April 2026, in Coventry. Scouting alone, well done to all those young person's on their achievement, which also gives them the equivalent Scout awards.

Finally once again a big thank you everyone in the County, for all of your help through this Year, District Trusty Boards, Explorer Scout Unit's Leaders, Assistants, Parents, Helpers, Scout Groups, & sections, that have helped in keep Explorer Scouting going in Coventry.

Support Team – Luke FitzPackham

I would like to begin by thanking everyone across the teams I have the privilege to support. Without their dedication and commitment, this role would not exist and would be significantly more challenging.
As Support Team Leader, I oversee several key operational areas that support Scouting across our County:

Rough Close Campsite

Rough Close remains a key asset for the County, supporting programme delivery, events, and training opportunities.
The work undertaken by the team over the past year has been exceptional. It has been a pleasure working with Dave, Nigel, and the wider team to better understand their priorities, ongoing maintenance requirements, and the improvements planned over the next 12 months.
More detail can be found in the campsite's separate report. I would like to thank everyone involved in making the site a place where our young people can access outdoor experiences and truly feel a place to belong.

Badges and Things

The team in the Scout Shop has worked tirelessly throughout the year, ensuring consistent availability of uniforms and resources for both young people and adult volunteers.
I would like to thank Mary, Amanda, Barry, Carol, and Kira for their continued hard work. Their role extends far beyond opening the shop on a Saturday, including ordering, stock management, collections, and distribution throughout the week.
Without their efforts, our members would not have access to such a valuable and well-run resource.

County Fundraising

A big thank you goes to Sarah Tooth and the fundraising team for their ongoing work supporting Groups, Units and Districts. Their efforts include; Supporting fundraising initiatives and grant applications, attending events, Supporting the operation of the Coffee Shop.
They also create a welcoming environment for visitors at County events and campsite activities. The team continues to explore opportunities to strengthen fundraising across all levels of the County. Any ideas are welcomed

Digital, IT and Communications

Over the past year, the team has made significant progress in improving systems and accessibility for leaders. Including, improved access to Office systems, increased use of the website for event management, integration with OSM and development of new communication channels, including the County Update and WhatsApp Community
The team is always looking for additional volunteers with an interest in digital, IT, or communications. If you or anyone you know would like to get involved, please do get in touch.

It has been a very positive year, with strong progress in building and strengthening collaboration across the various support functions. My role has focused on ensuring that our key assets and services continue to operate effectively, while supporting volunteers in their roles and responsibilities. This has included managing change and balancing the needs of multiple teams as they arise.

I would like to give a special thank you to Jordan, his time, support, and expertise have been invaluable, and the effectiveness of the team would not be where it is without him.

We are always looking for new volunteers to support the work of the Support Team across all areas. If you are interested in getting involved, please do reach out, there are several exciting opportunities and developments planned over the next 12 months.

Finally, thank you to everyone who contributes to the Support Team and to all those who work with and alongside us. Your efforts help ensure that we continue to provide a Scouting experience that makes our young people proud to belong to Coventry Scouts.

Volunteering Development – Ashley Hyde

As mentioned in last year's report, I have made myself a bit busier than normal this year by supporting Charterhouse District as their District Lead Volunteer alongside the VDTL role for the County.

This has had an impact on what I've been able to put into the County role slightly as I have had to prioritise the District role more so in some areas. That said, the various teams and tasks that line into the Volunteering Development Team have focused well on their individual areas which has then supported me in balancing two big roles.

Last year we saw a huge increase in learning compliance (helped largely by the HQ cutoff date for existing members to have updated their individual learning for Safety and Safeguarding), but thank you to all individual team members, team leaders and lead volunteers for supporting this massive push. The next step on this journey as a County is to support people to complete their Growing Roots learning. A new volunteer has a few things to do within the first 30 days of joining as part of their Volunteer journey.

Firstly, they need to complete their DBS check, safety and safeguarding learning within 30 days of their role being started on the system. These 3 things will always be the priority for a new volunteer, however from the day the role is started all new volunteers should also complete the remaining modules for the Growing Roots learning within 6 months of the role start date. This has been a bit of a stumbling block this year as the focus has been heavy on the safety and safeguarding compliance. As part of the Volunteer Journey, new volunteers should have a Welcome Conversation with an (independent) accredited Welcome Conversation volunteer and someone in a similar role. The Line Manager of the new volunteer shouldn't be involved in the WC, but does have a duty to arrange and record the name of the person who conducted the conversation. We have had a few occasions this year where volunteers have been named as having the WC but have never met or spoken to the new volunteer. Over the next 12 months I want to work with the District VDTLs to streamline this process.

In my head, the way I think this would work best is for GLVs to advise their DLV and District VDTLs when volunteers join (and who they are) so that the VDTL can then approach accredited people within the District to make contact with the new person to start this process. Once a date is set, the GLV can then ask someone in the group or district to support as the second person. The Welcome Conversation should cover next steps, such as learning needed, the option to enrol for the Wood Badge scheme, DBS requirements, who to go to for support, etc. This will improve the overall onboarding and retention of new volunteers, both short term and also in the long term. I will be doing what I can to support this important part of the new volunteer journey across the County. What I want is to be able to show a drop in suspensions for non compliance with the timebound parts of the process (DBS, Safety and Safeguarding) and increase the support available for this to happen.

Once again we have had a successful year getting people up to date with First Response learning and validation. We do have a team of trainers for this and over the next few weeks we are all getting together to plan availability and how regular we can run courses. As a County, we still offer the full 6hour day course but can also now offer the Blended model where the learner completes some online learning and then joins a face to face session that includes a bit of a recap and then the practical demonstration elements, making the commitment on the day of the second session only a 3 hour commitment instead of 6. This also means that trainers could run a morning session and an afternoon session, giving twice as many opportunities for people to renew and then be re-validated. While there are some recent changes to the syllabus that have come in this year, once done it is still valid for 3 years. Within the next few months, I may be looking for a Team Leader to co-ordinate the First Response team and work with me on improving access to courses. All of the trainers in the team should be able to run either 6 hour or blended 3 hour courses. My hope is to set a timetable of events open to the County in advance but to also offer groups the option to book courses as well – I know from experience it can be easier to manage expiration dates of first response learning if all of a Group does there's at the same time, as then they all renew at the same time too.

We have seen a nice number of nominations for Awards as well – remember, anyone can nominate anyone else for an Award. If you would like support in nominating someone, please get in touch with Mike Pitham, myself or your Lead Volunteer.

I have had the honour in this role this year to attend a thank you event, alongside Mike Pitham, hosted by the Lord Lieutenant of the West Midlands, Derrick Anderson CBE. You may or may not know that as a County, we were

nominated for the King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS) – which is the charity organisation equivalent of an MBE. While we were successful in making the shortlist we were not presented the award on this occasion. The County can be re-nominated in 3 years time and we would have the benefit of feedback and meeting members of other charity organisations who were successful. This is a huge achievement in itself to make the shortlist. Only 250 organisations are chosen each year (last year being the first one to formally introduce a cap to this), so to be so close is a huge testament to all the volunteers across the City who contribute on some level to Scouting in Coventry.



Finally, I want to say thank you to every single person who volunteers something for all aspects of Scouting in Coventry – you are amazing, skilled, dedicated and committed to ensuring that the best experiences possible are made available to all our young people. I know the County Leadership Team are very proud of what we can achieve.

If needed, I can be contacted by email: ashley.hyde@coventryscouts.org.uk Mobile: 07921 869919

Coventry Scouts Gang Show – Nikki Newman

This year has been another highly successful and rewarding year for Coventry Gang Show, marked by exciting developments, strong community support, and outstanding achievements both on and off the stage.

One of the most significant milestones was our move to a new venue, The Box at Fargo Village. This fantastic space enabled us to stage a full-scale production and provided a fresh and exciting environment for both our performers and audiences. The venue proved to be an excellent home for the show and played a major role in the success of this year's production.

Our cast consisted of approximately 50 young people and adult performers, supported by a further 50 volunteers and helpers working behind the scenes. Together, they demonstrated incredible commitment, enthusiasm, and teamwork throughout the rehearsal and performance period. I am particularly proud that the entire production was coordinated and managed solely by myself this year, which was both a challenge and a rewarding achievement. I want to personally thank Zoe who stepped up and lead on sketches and Abi who helped with the choreograph.

We were also delighted to receive the news at the start of rehearsals that Coventry Gang Show had been awarded a grant to support the show over a three-year period. This funding is already making a positive impact and will continue to help us develop and strengthen the production in the years ahead. We are extremely grateful to have received this support and look forward to making the most of the opportunities it provides.

A key development this year was the increased involvement of young people in the production and technical aspects of the show. For the first time, several young members took on backstage and production-related responsibilities, giving them valuable opportunities to learn new skills, gain confidence, and develop experience in areas beyond performing. This initiative has been very successful, and we plan to expand it further next year by involving additional young people. We also have several new ideas in development to increase youth participation backstage and create even more opportunities for personal development and leadership.

The performances themselves were a tremendous success. We achieved a sell-out audience on opening night and sold approximately 700 tickets across the run of the show. The positive feedback received from audiences, supporters, and members of the Scouting community was overwhelming and reflects the hard work and dedication of everyone involved.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our cast, volunteers, helpers, supporters, families, and audiences for their continued commitment to Coventry Gang Show. Their enthusiasm and support make the show possible year after year.

As we look ahead to next year, we are excited to build on this success, continue developing opportunities for young people, and further strengthen Coventry Gang Show for the future.

Roll of Honour

2025 – 2026

Kings Scout Award

Rebecca Sutton	Avani Heer	Abbie Clarke	Angelo Sijo
Richard Smith	Jenny Jaison	Euan McIlhone	

In Remembrance

Rosemary Lavens (Bablake)
Lynne Porter (82nd Coventry)
Fred Pauling (70th Coventry Rover Crew)
John Towle (13th Coventry & County)
Chris Knott (Rough Close Service Crew)
Margaret Sherwood (3rd Coventry)
John Gazey (County Vice-President)
Norma Timbrell (County)
Colin Salt (70th Coventry Rover Crew / Grange VSU)
Paul Smithers (3rd Coventry)
Freda Nicholson (Gang Show)

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Tel.: 024-7646-4310
County Website: www.coventryscouts.org.uk County Email: secretary@coventryscouts.org.uk

Rough Close Campsite:: Rough Close Reception: Open weekends only Tel.: 024-7646-4310
Campsite Website: www.roughclose@coventryscouts.org.uk Email: roughclose@coventryscouts.org.uk

Trading Post: Opening hours Saturday 10:00-13:00, 14:00-16:00
Badges & Things: https://www.badgesandthings.co.uk/

Adult & Youth Recruitment: Tel.: 0845-643-1048CITY OF COVENTRY SCOUT COUNTY