

Strangford District- DC ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The last AGM in June 2022 focused on Recovery for Strangford District coming out of Covid-19 and what we had achieved. However, since the beginning of 2023 the focus has been on support and growth.

Across this report you will hear how the district has supported, reopened and developed a number of groups within the past year. We make a difference to young people and Scouting is needed now more than ever.

Nothing changed in relation to reminder emails being sent out to everyone in relation to mandatory training in Safety, Safeguarding and GDPR. Thank you each and every one for completing this training and ensuring that you are compliant, however there are a number of leaders outstanding and as you are aware as DC I have received direction that Leaders are to be suspended for non-compliance of their Access NI and Mandatory training. The compliance figure has been brought down from 12% non-compliant to 2%. Please complete this as your earliest convenience. I have already taken the tough decision to suspend leaders and will continue to do so in order to protect you, your GSL, your Group and most importantly our Young People. I would ask that when you get the 90 day reminder that you take action and complete the training as soon as possible so that unnecessary work is not required- thank you.

If you have any issues with accessing IT or a number of people in the group need to complete it please get in touch with myself and your GSL.

July and August 2022- saw a number of groups head of across the water to various camps, the most popular being the Isle of Man Activity Centre with four groups from the district heading there for their summer camps. Everyone arrived safe and well back home with lots of adventurous activities being completed.

September 2022- A sad beginning to the new Scouting year with the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, Kayleigh Finlay our District Youth Commissioner was honored to be chosen to help with the Queens lying- in- state. Kayleigh wrote a diary blog about each day and had some fantastic stories about the people she met. Kayleigh, you are a credit to Strangford District and Scouts NI. It was not an easy task to undertake both mentally and physically and we thank you for your service.

October 2022- I joined 1st Newcastle Scout group for their registration evening and was encouraged to see the healthy number of young people registering for a new year of scouting.

Executive meetings took place throughout the year and I would like to thank those who sat on the District Executive this year whilst supporting me in the role and keeping me up to date with items for the Agenda.

November 2022- As mentioned in the Cub report a District Cub Quiz was held. It was great to see District events being organised and groups taking part. The aim was for each section to deliver at least one event across the year and build on this for the following year.

December 2022- Scrabo and Comber explorers joined forces last year and delivered a fantastic program to our young people. I was invited to their Christmas event which included Dinner and bowling in Dundonald. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the leaders involved in getting the two units up and running together. I would also like to Thank Mick Lynn who stepped down from his role and moved to Cardiff in September 2023 to be with his family. Mick helped the explorers across Strangford and I wish him the best as he starts a new scouting career in Wales.

January 2023- January as usual was the month for the yearly census return and many thanks to everyone involved for inputting the data and getting it in on time it was very much a team effort.....Thank you!!! It was very encouraging to have numbers of 1200 including Squirrels and Leaders. This is close to what we had in January 2020 before covid and the NIC had given Strangford the target of getting back to those numbers of 2020 not including squirrels by the census of Jan 2023 which was not met so the same target remains for Jan 2024. So how are we going to do this together?

I know that many GSL's are expecting the numbers to increase with new groups opening, current groups growing which gives us all a positive lift for being a leader with so much responsibility. Each one of you has a part to play in increasing the numbers of Young People and Leaders and together we can achieve the target.

I also took part in the Comber Scout Troop and Explorer camp at the School house in January. Thank you to Neil and his team for making me feel so welcome and allowing me to take part in a day hike and sharing my hillwalking knowledge with explorers.

February 2023- 1st Newtownards Scout Group- Michael Robinson stood down as GSL and I took on the role of supporting the group to get back on its feet, moving forward and getting back to being one of the strongest groups in Strangford. This has not been an easy task but I am delighted that all the hard efforts of the leaders and young people we now have a new GSL- Errol Graham in place, a new trustee group board

and an exciting program ahead. This has been a group I have observed and supported the dedicated leaders on a weekly basis going from strength to strength and finding new leaders to join the sections.

March 2023- saw the re-opening of 1st Ballynahinch Scout Group, new leaders completed training, section programs were designed and delivered for 10 weeks for squirrels, beavers, and cubs with over 80 young people. Colin Stewart agreed to take on the role as treasurer and registered the group with the EA. Young leaders were volunteering as part of their DofE and have been a fantastic asset to the group. I could not do it alone and am grateful for the help of the ADC team Tracey and Philip and NI HQ development team Pamela, Vicky and Emma helped support the leaders on a rota basis making sure someone was there to deal with questions from parents and share knowledge and experience about supporting young people. It has been great to see a group reopen after covid with enthusiastic leaders. This is why we do what we do and why we are a part of this organisation.

April/ May 2023- Nights Away season began with assessments continuing to take place as always I encourage you all to apply for renewals and first time permits early as the assessment process and paperwork does take time. Please make sure your compass record is up to date with all your personal details and permits.

June 2023- NI Beaver Day took place with a number of beavers from across the district taking part. It is great to see Strangford District supporting NI events and giving our young people opportunities to take part. Thank you to the leaders who gave up their Saturday to take part in the event.

Various camps took place across the District and NI Squirrel event was a great success at Todd's Leap with squirrels from the district travelling on a bus down to Omagh for the days events. I hear the bus home was silent with exhausted squirrels.

July/ Aug 2023- Emma Currie- Assistant Unit Leader, Suzanne McGrath and Charli Ogg two participants, and Three IST (Kayleigh Finlay, Megan Hunter and Philip Dalzell) travelled to South Korea to the World Scout Jamboree. As I am sure you saw in the media this was not the adventure our young people and leaders had signed up for. UK Scouts had pulled the UK contingent from the event early due to concerns of Health and safety. Our NI unit spent the rest of the trip in the city of Seoul and taking part in a range of activities. The strength and resilience of our young people and leaders needs to be commended. The NI unit all came home safe and although not what they expected had their own stories to tell. It was great to see Strangford being

represented and I encourage leaders and young people to apply for future international experiences including explorer belts, WSJ 2027, and more.

September 2023- For a second year in a row I joined 1st Newcastle Scout group for their registration evening and was encouraged to see the number of young people registering for a new year of scouting. I discussed the effects of the storm on Tipperary wood campsite and what the group may need for support. They are hoping that in spring of 2024 to have an open day and further information will be communicated out across the district.

October 2023- I have been encouraged to see so many leaders attending the wood badge and out and about weekends across the year. UK transformation is in the pipeline and until then it is business as usual. There is still plenty of training opportunities and if leaders have nearly completed training, I encourage you to get the training validated and signed off before the move to the new compass system takes place and get your wood beads that you deserve and have worked hard for.

Scouts held a District climbing competition at Hot Rock in Tollymore outdoor Centre with over 40 in attendance. A great day was held by all, and I would like to thank Richard Dorian, Leanne McGrath and Andrew Donaldson who took the lead on organising the fantastic event.

November 2023- the launch of 1st Greyabbey Scout Group. 20 Squirrels walked into Greyabbey community hall on the 7th November for a 6 week programme. There were plenty of smiles on the faces of the young people which can only mean the night was a success. The new leaders have visited 2nd Donaghdee Squirrels and thanks to Tracey and her team for inviting them along for some programme ideas and OSM training. They are hoping to open Beavers, Cubs and Scouts in the new year. An exciting time ahead for Ards Peninsula.

Moving Forward

As we move into the rest of the 23/24 Scouting year the focus is on **Growth and Development**.

What does this look like?

- It could include opening sections in groups where there isn't a section E.g- 1st Saintfield do not currently have squirrels- how can we open?

- Continuing to open new groups and sections E.G Greyabbey currently have squirrels, how can we open all other sections.
- Supporting current groups and leaders- E.G 1st Donaghdee

Finally THANK YOU!!!! To each and everyone of the leaders and helpers from all the young people in Strangford District and myself who you support on a daily basis and provide an excellent diverse programme, teaching and mentoring our young people to be the best that they can be.

To the team leads (Tracey ADC Squirrels and Philip ADC Cubs) who have worked tirelessly to help and support the re-opening of 1st Ballynahinch Scout Group and the opening after 34 years of 1st Greyabbey Scout Group. Thank you both for all your efforts they do not go unnoticed. I welcome Emma Stevenson onto the District Team as our Development Lead who will be supporting groups in anyway necessary, and Emma looks forward to getting out and visiting groups over the coming months.

To the Youth Commissioners Kayleigh and Megan for working closely with our young people and supporting leaders with programs. Thank you in advance for delivering the Young Leader scheme to explorers across the District in the new year.

To Richard the District Chair thank you for always being at the end of a phone, text or email. Discussing various issues and coming up with solutions to best support the District.

To Sean the District Treasurer, who has the hardest job and continues to do it so well. Thank you for keeping me right with the EA, CCNI, Explorer accounts and more. You are so meticulous in your work and I thank you for all your efforts.

A big thank you must go to Pauline who has been updating your compass records once your training has been completed. Pauline Thank you.

To the District Secretary Jo Burridge and Scout Active Support Coordinator Jill Breadon. Thank you for the years of service you have given to your roles. Thank you for supporting me and keeping me right. Please accept this token of appreciation from

the District and I wish you both the best as you continue as GSL for 1st Saintfield and Scout Active Support member.

Many thanks for you all attending the AGM tonight, I look forward to working with you all in the new scouting year, getting out to visit groups and sections and taking part in district and county activities.

We are all experienced in so many ways and with so much knowledge – let's use that to our advantage in providing new memories for our Young People. If there is a role you would like to try or want to nominate someone for the role then please speak with me for more information.

- Team Lead- Beavers
- Team Lead- Scouts
- Team Lead- 14-25
- Deputy DC
- SASU Team Lead
- GSL 3rd Newtownards
- GSL 1st Ballynahinch

This concludes my report.

Danielle Markwell

District Commissioner

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