

Trustees Annual Report

Brentford Riding for the Disabled Group 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024

Charity Number NIC 104625

The Charity exists to provide therapeutic riding and associated activities for children attending special needs schools and has been providing rides to pupils of Fleming Fulton School, Belfast for many years. Rides take place at Lusks Riding School in Carryduff. Improved core strength, exercise tolerance, balance and co-ordination are some of the physical benefits as well as the sense of achievement and enjoyment provided for the riders through contact with a horse, even by children initially nervous or unwilling to take part.

The principal contact for the Charity Commission is Mrs Kathy Stewart of 81 Ballykeel Road, Moneyreagh, Newtownards, BT23 6BW.

In the period under review, rides took place on 18 of a possible 22 weeks, down on the previous year due to additional bank holidays in 2023 and the early 2024 Easter holidays. Rides were cancelled on 4 occasions due to poor weather and transport issues, disappointingly up by one occasion on last year.

Fleming Fulton continues to provide a dedicated physiotherapist contact who identifies a pool of potential riders at the start of each school year and accompanies the children to most of the rides. We were able to accommodate up to four riders at each session and a total of 72 rides were provided to 9 children during the 12 months under review, the decrease on the previous year reflecting fewer weeks. We welcomed two new children in 23-24 and as the remaining 7 children have been with us some years, their riding skills progressed very satisfactorily during the year.

The group continues to be based at Lusks Riding School at Carryduff where we have access to a good pool of suitable riding school ponies, using a total of seven during the year. We have use of a large indoor school and there is also a quiet lane for occasional short hacks in the good weather which both the children and volunteers enjoy.

While all facilities including the ponies are provided free of charge, donations are made each term to help towards riding school overheads including the upkeep of ponies. We would like to formally record our thanks to the proprietor of Lusks Riding School, Denise Neill and her staff for all their assistance to us.

We are fortunate in having a very loyal group of volunteers and during the year under review we were fortunate to welcome 3 new recruits bringing our volunteer numbers to 31 (including our two coaches). Sadly, this number has reduced to 23 since March 2024 as a number of volunteers are no longer able to attend due to health reasons, carer responsibilities, house moves and other commitments. We would like to formally acknowledge the contribution made by all our volunteers, who faithfully turn up week after week and without whom we would be unable to carry out any activity.

The Trustees met regularly throughout the year to enable planning and management of on-going activity and to ensure completion of all necessary reporting and compliance paperwork. Every effort is made by the Trustees to ensure that sessions are conducted safely by using suitably qualified coaches and trained volunteers, and a qualified First Aider is always in attendance. The Group has a safeguarding policy, and all volunteers are required to have an enhanced Access NI check as well as providing references. Thanks are due to all the Trustees for their hard work and completion of training as required.

In the financial year to March 2024, donations received from Fleming Fulton towards riding school costs were less than payments made to Lusks, again due to timing issues resulting in a deficit of c£1k for the year compared to a small surplus for the year to March 2023. Taking the two years together, the deficit averages at £476 p.a. roughly equivalent to annual insurance costs and bank charges. The donations from Fleming Fulton intended to cover payments made to Lusks, have put the Group's finances on a more secure footing. Current reserves should cover insurance costs and other small items of expenditure for more than 10 years and we therefore look forward to the future with confidence but with the knowledge that should reserves fall to an unsustainable level, further donations and/or fundraising will be required to continue to operate.

We consider the Trustees have had regard to the Commission's guidance on public benefit and have fulfilled our obligations in this respect.

Signed K. E. Stewart

Mrs Kathy Stewart on behalf of the Trustees of the Group