

Sheltered Work Opportunities Project Report of the Trustees

The Trustees present their report and accounts for the period ended 31 January 2009.

Governance and management

The Trustees who served during the year were as follows:

D M Stewart (Chair)
R J Bere resigned 1 November 2008
S A Carson
B Grower
K T James
A G Livingstone
J M Wood

Methods of recruitment and appointment of Trustees

The directors of the company are also Charity Trustees for the purposes of charity law and under the company's Articles are known as members of the Board of Trustees. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association the members of the Board of Trustees are elected to serve for a period of a year after which they must be re-elected at the next Annual General Meeting.

All the Trustees retired by rotation and, being eligible, offered themselves for re-election.

SWOP's principal activity is to help restore the well-being of people with mental illness through working with land and horticulture and to ensure that the value of such therapy is widely known.

As a result of this primary activity the charity also encourages and assists in formal and informal research and education regarding the use of land as a therapy for persons in need, and the therapeutic value of horticulture, agriculture and other methods of land use to provide for dissemination of the results of this research.

SWOP also helps co-ordinate and exchange information among, co-operate with, and provide guidance and other services to, government and non-governmental organisations, companies, societies, associations and persons regarding their activities and programmes. The charity also helps organise and promote, public meetings, seminars and discussion groups involved in the debate of how best to help people suffering with mental illness

The Board of Trustees seeks to ensure that the needs of this group are appropriately reflected through the diversity of the trustee body.

The more traditional business and health skills are well represented on the Board of Trustees. In an effort to maintain this broad skill mix, members of the Management Committee are requested to provide a list of their skills and in the event of particular skills being lost due to retirements, individuals are approached to offer themselves for election onto the Board of Trustees.

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Trustee Induction and Training

Most Trustees are already familiar with the practical work of the charity, having been encouraged to follow closely the activities of the Project.

Additionally, new Trustees are invited and encouraged to attend the day to day operation of the Projects to familiarise themselves with the charity and the context in which it operates. These visits are jointly led by the Chairman of the Trustees and the Treasurer with the help and support of the Project managers.

Information provided to new Trustees includes:

- ~ The obligations of the Board of Trustees
- ~ The main documents which set out the operational framework for the charity including the Memorandum and Articles of Association
- ~ Resourcing and the current financial position as set out in the latest published accounts
- ~ Future plans and objectives

The Charity Commission's guide "the Essential Trustee" is made available as a follow up to these sessions. This is distributed to all new trustees along with the Memorandum and Articles and the latest financial statements.

Organisational Structure

The Board of Trustees meets at least quarterly with a pre-planned agenda and receives management accounts, a written and verbal report from each nursery manager and a financial risk and funding overview, to enable it to make decisions. Volunteer observers also attend the meeting and are permitted to report back to other volunteers on the meeting. SWOP's two managers report to the Board of Trustees. The power to make decisions relating to the day-to-day operations of SWOP is vested in the managers and an appointed management committee on each site. An open group of volunteers also attend such a meeting.

Related and affiliated organisations

SWOP is not connected with any other charity or company but does work closely with a number of different organisations. In so far as it is complimentary to the charity's objects, the charity is guided by both local and national policy.

Risk management

The Board of Trustees has conducted a review of the major risks to which the charity is exposed. A risk register has been established and is updated at least annually. Where appropriate, systems and procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Potential external risks to funding have led to the development of a plan which will allow for the diversification of funding activities. Procedures are in place to ensure the health and safety of staff, volunteers and visitors to the centre. These procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the charity.

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Objectives and activities

Objectives

The objectives of the charity are:

To offer a sheltered workplace to those suffering from mental illness, to encourage and assist in formal and informal research and education regarding the use of land as therapy for persons in need;

To co-ordinate and exchange information among, co-operate with, and provide guidance and other services to government and non-government organisations, companies, societies, associations and persons regarding their activities or programmes;

To organise and promote conferences, public meetings, seminars, discussion groups and similar activities.

Activities

The main areas of charitable activity are the provision of two sheltered workplaces, Cherry Tree Nursery and Chestnut Nursery, as well as support, training and guidance for the volunteers who attend.

The volunteers, who are the primary beneficiaries of the charity, are those with mental illness who are referred to the project by The Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and other agencies. All services are provided free of charge to the volunteers.

The main objectives and activities for the year continued to focus upon the improvement of the quality of operation on both sites. The strategies employed to assist the charity to meet these objectives included the following:

- ~ The constant improvement of the facilities of the sites to ensure they continue to be welcoming to existing and prospective volunteers.
- ~ To ensure that the employees of the project are well communicated with in order to assist them in their work
- ~ To communicate continuously with the local community in order to promote the projects' work and fund raising efforts.
- ~ Working in partnership with other agencies to ensure the widest range of services is available that best matches the needs of the volunteers.

The Trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the Charity's aims and objectives and in planning its future activities. The Trustees do not consider that the activities of the charity cause any significant detriment or harm or create any significant benefit other than to the main beneficiaries.

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Achievements and Performance

Review of the business

SWOP now has two thriving nurseries helping the mentally ill in East Dorset and West Hampshire. Building on past achievements, the charity continues to work towards sustainability. The trustees have identified that the funding gap between plant sales and running costs remains the major issue the charity needs to address. The cost of salaries which is 50% of SWOP's total running costs is the most important issue. It needs to be noted that many of the grants awarded cannot be relied upon to be repeated and the need for additional fund-raising remains.

Volunteers

During the course of the year, 260 volunteers with severe and enduring mental illness attended Cherry Tree or Chestnut Nurseries. In the last 12 months, 22 were successful in moving on. The majority of our volunteers have substantially gained in skills and confidence. Their achievements, too numerous to mention, were made in employment areas including horticulture, sales and marketing, office, construction and repair tasks. Considerable advancements have been made by volunteers in IT, numeracy and literacy skills. Both locations are now very close to their full operating capacity.

A recent survey carried out to evaluate the project found that over 90% of the volunteers felt more confident since attending the project and over 86% felt more independent. Over 55% now feel able to consider open employment. The full results of the survey are available on request.

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The Year in Focus

Cherry Tree Nursery

- ~ 5 volunteers left to take up full-time work.
- ~ Employment of a volunteer as a driver under the Community Employment Scheme.
- ~ 31 volunteers started and 20 moved on.
- ~ Total of 112 volunteers and 47 friends on the register.
- ~ Celebrated our 18th Birthday.
- ~ Opened a new Information Centre named in memory of Nan and Peter Brushett.
- ~ Using the new Information Centre increased public awareness of mental health issues.
- ~ Canford School donated 12 computers.
- ~ Establishment of working relationship with the new Centre for Wellbeing and Quality of Life at Bournemouth University.
- ~ Upgraded to 3 phase electricity.
- ~ Best ever year for plant sales.
- ~ More school groups visited.
- ~ Continuing to run a variety of horticultural courses – for volunteers and public, in conjunction with Bournemouth & Poole College Foundation.
- ~ Volunteers of Cherry Tree Nursery Bolivia group fundraised to provide safe clean piped water to a fourth community, having now raised over £23,000. Bolivian visitors and Bolivian band at plant sales.
- ~ Refurbished the volunteer tearoom and repaired the roof again!
- ~ Took part in the Stour Valley Festival.
- ~ Sadly saw the retirement of Ray Bere.
- ~ Visit from Colonel Blashford-Snell.
- ~ Harry Roffey Day visit to Heale Gardens and Stonehenge.
- ~ Publication of volunteer evaluation results.
- ~ Camping trips & caravan holidays to Swanage and the Purbecks.

Chestnut Nursery

- ~ Our volunteers became regional finalists at the Nationwide Community and Heritage Awards and went to the Tower of London for a presentation (cheque £500). These awards were set up to recognise the time and energy volunteers give to the local community..
- ~ Chestnut Nursery has been chosen as one of the Mayor of Poole's Charities. This will help create more awareness and raise the profile of the Nursery.
- ~ The Nursery won a 'Poole in Bloom' award for best town centre business frontage. It was lovely that our volunteer's hard work was recognised in this way.
- ~ Volunteer numbers have increased significantly and we continue to receive referrals, which highlights a real need within the local community for the project.
- ~ Our volunteers have designed, planted and maintained a new vegetable garden at the Nursery. This has proved very popular as produce is shared amongst everyone. We like to think it also encourages healthy eating!
- ~ Our sales have been exceptional this year - this reflects the fact we are growing more plants than ever before, and more people know we exist.
- ~ John Finny joined us as office assistant; this has made a big difference. He not only does many clerical duties but also helps with deliveries and covers the shop when we are short.
- ~ Hanging basket workshops for the paying public will fund a course later in the year for our volunteers.
- ~ Thirteen volunteers completed a first aid course. For many this was a huge achievement.

Such achievements were only possible with the help and the support of our many volunteers, friends, hard working staff and supporters who are referred to in the next section of this report.

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Financial Review

Against the backdrop of limited resources and insecurities over funding, it has continued to be difficult to plan or develop services. Nevertheless the charity, with the aid of sound financial management and the support of both its staff and volunteers generated a positive financial outcome for the period with a net increase in funds of just over £10,000.

Principal Funding Sources

The Trustees are particularly indebted to and would like to thank Dorset HealthCare NHS Foundation Trust, Borough of Poole, Bournemouth Borough Council, The Alice Ellen Cooper Dean Foundation, The Graham Burroughs Charitable Trust, The Valentine Trust and The BIG Lottery Fund but not Hampshire County Council who withdrew their funding.

However there are a number of other individuals and organisations who have made the projects' work possible during the year. We are equally grateful to them for their enthusiastic support and thank everyone who has donated their time, money, or goods.

Finally we would like to thank our volunteers, employees, patrons and friends without whom nothing would have been achieved.

Investment Policy

Aside from retaining a prudent amount in reserves each year most of the charity's funds are allocated for upcoming projects so there are few funds for long-term investment. Having considered the options available, the Board of Trustees has decided to invest the amount that it has available in a CAF Fixed Rate Selector Account administered by Birmingham Midshires and a Barclays fixed term deposit. Investment policies are reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Reserves Policy

SWOP maintains sufficient reserves to meet its liabilities under any leases held and in respect of anticipated or potential redundancies. Overall it aims to hold sufficient unrestricted reserves to meet one year's running costs and all salary costs currently supported by other organisations. The trustees believe it is necessary to allocate reserves to cover future eventualities. They also recognise that all the buildings at their Bournemouth site will need replacing over the next few years which will be a very large item of expenditure. £211,394 is allocated in the salaries fund and £145,000 in the new buildings fund.

Plans for future periods

The Trustees are aware of the demand for projects such as 'Cherry Tree' and 'Chestnut' Nurseries in other conurbations and will look at other opportunities should any sites become available. Maintaining the high quality of the support being offered remains paramount and any future expansion must not jeopardise the current standards of care.

In the short term both projects continue to invest in improved facilities for volunteers, staff and customers. Details of up coming developments are available on an on going basis from each site.

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Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the accounts

The Board of Trustees (Directors) are responsible for preparing the report and accounts in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

Company law requires the Board of Trustees (Directors) to prepare financial statements for each financial period which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the balance sheet date and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including income and expenditure, for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the Board of Trustees (Directors) are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- prepare the accounts on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The directors are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with the Companies Act 1985. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Disclosure of information to auditors

In accordance with company law, as the company's directors, we certify that:

- ~ so far as we are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditors are unaware: and
- ~ as the directors of the charitable company, we have taken all the steps that we ought to have taken in order to make ourselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

Audit

Accounting for Charities Ltd were re-appointed as the charitable company's auditors.

Following a change in the statutory audit threshold, the charity is no longer required to have an annual audit of its accounts. The Trustees have chosen to continue to have a full audit to assist them in their governance responsibilities.

Small company special provisions

The report of the directors has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part VII of the Companies Act 1985 relating to small companies.

This report was approved by the board on 16 July 2009.

D M Stewart
Company Secretary

