



opencountry
out there together

OPEN COUNTRY NEWSLETTER

July to September 2025 Anniversary Edition

Open Country is a charitable organisation (1107331) which enables anyone with a disability to access and enjoy the countryside, through the provision of

David, our Chief Officer, writes:

“In the summer of 1990, I was a fresh-faced, long-haired lout enjoying a summer environmental exchange trip to Hungary. Bumping into an English family, I eagerly sought news from home. “Well” said the dad, “Graham Gooch scored a swashbuckling 333 against India, including 43 fours and 3 sixes. “Owt else?”, I probed. “Well, Stuart Pearce and Chris Waddle missed penalties that sent the England football team crashing out of *Italia 90*”. “That the lot?” I persisted. “Yes, that’s it. Oh... except Saddam Hussain just invaded Kuwait and we’ve declared War”.

Given that chap’s slightly skewed view of life, it’s hardly surprising he missed the other seismic event of 1990 - *the birth of Open Country*! But that’s the thing about milestones, they can mean either everything, something or nothing, depending on each individual. To those for whom Open Country is something special, thanks for joining us for the ride - it’s been the hootiest of hoots!

In another 35 years, English cricketers will still buckle their swashes and English footballers will be missing penalties. Sadly, there will probably also

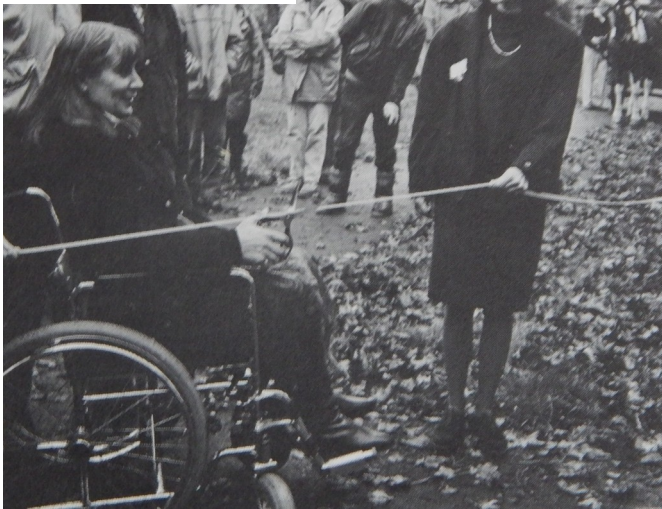
be the odd tyrant causing havoc. Let’s raise a glass and hope Open Country is also going strong in 2060, helping those who need our support get ‘Out There Together’.

This newsletter will concentrate on our 35th Anniversary. Read on and, if the party fever grips you, why not purchase one of Anniversary mugs for only £10!



A quick magical history tour

Way back in 1990, attitudes towards disability were thankfully improving. Some of the big institutions like Whixley and High Royds were closing and 'Care in the Community' was prevailing.



Open Country was established as a three-year project to work out what were the barriers preventing disabled people from accessing the countryside.

Early partners were the Countryside Commission, Harrogate Borough Council, North Yorkshire Social Services, Harrogate Health Authority and the Fieldfare Trust.

We experienced many highs (and a few lows) down the years but have always been blessed by tremendous community support and our incredible volunteers.

Above - Baroness Masham of Ilton launches Open Country in 1990

Right - Our first logo!

Timeline - some major milestones

1990 - Launch, with one Project Officer and a (non-accessible!) minibus

1998 - Troubles. £37.03p in our bank account and a part-time staff member.

2001 - Got through Foot and Mouth

2005 - Became a charity and a limited company. First Board of Trustees

2006 - Received the Queen's Award. Invited to No.10 Downing Street

2011 - Established our Allotment

2017 - Appointed our first Wakefield Hub Manager

2020 - 2022 - Navigated Lockdown. Face-to-face work ceased for a while.

2024 - Appointed our first Teesside Hub Manager

2025 - Obtained first electric minibus. We have 400 beneficiaries, 19 staff members, 175 volunteers, 8 trustees, 3 Hubs and 6 minibuses.

The Future - Limitless!



Open Country

Celebrate 35 Years of Open Country by helping us

This year, we celebrate our 35th anniversary - a wonderful milestone letting us reflect on achievements, enjoy the present and look to the future. As we mark this special occasion, we'd love to encourage our local communities to support us! There are many different ways to get more involved.

Members and volunteers:

- Help us spread the word - share your stories of how Open Country helps you with your physical or emotional wellbeing. Our communications officer Rachel would love to talk to you!
- Do your family and friends work for a company who might support us? Could you get us an introduction?
- Do you have any unwanted gifts or bric-a-brac you could donate to us for fundraising tombolas?

- If you use Facebook, could you set up a birthday fundraiser for friends and family to donate to - it's easy and free, just follow the steps on Facebook when prompted.

Partners and friends:

- Can you donate a 'gift' for our 35th birthday fundraising campaign? A donation of any size will help us continue to flourish, giving accessible adventures across Yorkshire and Teesside. You can donate online at www.givey.com/OC35thbirthday or scan the QR code on the image below.
- Could you commit to making a regular monthly donation? Regular monthly gifts can help us plan and are a simple way to support us.
- We're looking for prizes for a special Christmas auction - can you donate a gift voucher for a service or experience?
- We're also looking for partner

support from local businesses - do you know a business who would donate to Open Country or possibly raise funds? We'd happily meet them to tell them more.

Contact our fundraising team on 01423 507227 or email them at community@opencountry.org.uk



It's our 35th birthday!
Fancy giving us a gift?



Celebrating 35
years of accessible
adventures!
Can you support us
with a donation?

SCAN ME



www.givey.com/oc35thbirthday - thank you!

Our 35th Birthday Bash

We're holding a celebratory ceilidh to mark our 35th anniversary on **Saturday 18th October** at St Andrew's Church in Starbeck. We've booked a great band called *English Rebellion* and the caller will make sure everyone can join in!

The church is in the centre of Starbeck, with great rail and bus links, and parking is available on nearby streets.

Tickets are just £5 and include a light supper, with a licensed bar. There is a quiet area for those needing to dip in and out of the fun. Tickets are limited, so please register your interest for what promises to be a fantastic evening.

We also need some volunteers to help set up and clear up afterwards, so please let us know if you can help out.



Big Birthday in Store!

This year, Open Country celebrates its 35th anniversary - a wonderful milestone that invites us to reflect on our achievements, look ahead to the future, and enjoy the present. As we mark this special occasion, we would like to share it with the people of Harrogate through a fantastic day at *ASDA Harrogate*.

On **Saturday 12th July, from 11am to 4pm**, we'll be hosting a birthday stand complete with a tombola, free Breakfree packs, and plenty of delightful surprises. We'd love for you to stop by, say hello, and help us celebrate - your kind wishes would make our day extra special!

THANK
YOU!

35 YEARS
open country
out there together
Registered Charity Number 1107331

Join Open Country for a
Celebration Ceilidh!

Saturday October 18th
St Andrew's Church, Starbeck, 7pm-10.30pm
Tickets £5.00 including a light supper

35

Dancing to English Rebellion Ceilidh Band -
with a caller to help us learn the steps!
Licensed bar
Quiet area
Raffle
Inclusive dances for all

Tickets are limited - order yours today
Email: info@opencountry.org.uk
Telephone 01423 507227

Harrogate Hub News

Nidderdale Access for All project

We recently had a lovely day out at Thruscross Reservoir, in Nidderdale, to celebrate the completion of a major access partnership between *Nidderdale National Landscape* and Open Country. The 'Access for All' project was our first attempt at improving access on a landscape scale! With an £83,000 budget from *DEFRA* to project manage, and less than a year to deliver the whole project, we completed the following:

- Mapping of inclusive access opportunities in Nidderdale National Landscape, including access ideas for the future.
- Creation of ten lovely audio walks, which you can find on our website and we also produced a new Breakfree pack for the area.
- Working together with *Experience Community*, between us we produced access videos for Swinsty and Fewston Reservoirs and Fountains Earth Moor.
- We completed twelve practical access improvement projects, including a fully accessible path around the pond in Fishpond Wood, Bewerley and new access alongside Angram Reservoir.
- Delivery of two training courses on aspects of encouraging access in the area.
- Purchase of three manual wheelchairs for use by groups in the project area.
- Provision of two off-road 'Tramper' power chairs for visitors to use.



Under our expert guidance, and funded by *DEFRA*, *Yorkshire Water* has also contributed to improving accessibility at several of its NNL sites.

Notable enhancements include barrier removal at Timble Ings, and a wheelchair-accessible picnic table at Thruscross Reservoir. Additionally, new benches have been installed at Scar House Reservoir and a brand new access viewpoint and picnic table created at Angram Reservoir.

We are extremely proud of the progress we've made in our efforts to make NNL more accessible. Our expertise is helping ensure that more people can explore and enjoy this exceptional landscape, regardless of their abilities.

We also want to congratulate *Yorkshire Water* for their excellent work in improving access at their sites. Their efforts will make Nidderdale a more inclusive and welcoming destination for those who need it most.

Alastair Harvey from Yorkshire Water said: “Learning from and working with Open Country on improving access to our sites in Nidderdale has been invaluable. We strongly believe that everyone who wants to enjoy the outdoors should be able to, and we’re delighted we’ve been able to implement the necessary changes and additions at our reservoirs to make that possible.”

Speaking for Nidderdale National Landscape, Iain Mann, Manager said: “We want everyone to be able to enjoy the amazing landscapes we have here in Nidderdale, and the ‘Access for All’ project is a big step in making that happen. It’s been fantastic to team up with Open Country to make real, on-the-ground changes that will make a big difference to people’s experiences. Whether it’s a new bench with a view or a trail that’s now easier to use, it’s all about helping more people feel welcome and able to get out and enjoy nature.”

Open Country members have been involved in some of the practical projects, including creating an accessible path round Fishpond Woods near Pateley Bridge, and helping make paths at attractions such as Brimham Rocks.

Looking ahead, we are hopeful that the project will be extended for a second year and are waiting for the outcome of the recent government spending review. Regardless, we hope to be able to continue this collaboration with Nidderdale National Landscape to carry out further practical improvements.

Well done to all staff, members and volunteers who have played a part in this important project!

Breakfree in Nidderdale!

The new Nidderdale ‘Breakfree’ pack is now available for people to pick up and explore new places with. Free online packs are on www.opencountry.org.uk, or hard copies can be requested by phone. Our Breakfree packs feature carefully selected routes and include detailed maps with essential information such as public transport links, benches, path surfaces, and toilet facilities. Packs are designed to help visitors of all abilities to plan their trips with ease and confidence.

We’ve also developed a new series of audio walks that bring the sights and sounds of some popular Nidderdale trails to people in the comfort of their homes. Have a listen to them on our website or on our Youtube channel.



Volunteer News

Firstly, a warm welcome to our new volunteers Jane Gaukroger (Allotment Group), Steve Hardcastle (Harrogate Tandems), Marie-Anne Craggs (Ripon Tandems), Lee Elvin and Ian Harrison (Selby Tandems), David Gee, Brian Manson, Mark Thomas (Wetherby Tandems) and Nick Perks (York Tandems) - welcome aboard and thank you for getting involved. Farewell to Geoff Eddy, Doug Munro and Anne Scott - thank you for all your help with the walking groups; we'll miss you!

Volunteer Summer Social

Come and join us down the Open Country allotment near Starbeck for some drinks and nibbles on **Friday 1st August, 7 - 9pm**. Please let us know if you are planning on popping down so we can prepare accordingly.

DBS Reminder

For those that are subscribed to the DBS Update Service, please renew your DBS subscription when reminded to do so – they will now be contacting you on an annual basis. Unfortunately, we cannot renew it for you, so please follow the instructions in their email. Thank you!

Volunteer Code of Conduct

Open Country values the considerable contribution volunteers make and recognises that they are an integral part of our organisation. We have produced a 'Volunteer Code of Conduct' which we hope will ensure a safe, respectful, and positive experience for everyone.

It outlines what is expected of volunteers, as well as what Open Country's commitment to volunteers is. We will issue the Code of Conduct to all new volunteers but existing volunteers can also view it on our website under 'Policies'.

Placing you under a vest

We purchased some yellow hi-vis vests with 'Volunteer' printed on them for you to use on activities.

It is not compulsory to wear, but they can be useful if, for example, you are a back marker on walks, you are in a crowded place, or when you are at admission desks at venues to show you are a volunteer. They are kept in a bag hanging off the front seats in the minibuses, so please help yourself and pop them back when you are finished.



Volunteer Picnic

It was lovely to see so many of you at the volunteer social in June. We enjoyed a relaxing stroll around Temple Newsam before tucking into a picnic, finishing with a Yorkshire quiz!



Teesside Hub News

We're delighted to announce Ellie has passed her D1 and, with that piece of the jigsaw in place, we now have a minibuss based on Teesside permanently!

Teesside Tandems

We are having a really lovely time touring along the coast and the woodlands of Redcar and Cleveland. The tandem season runs until October and more members are very welcome!



Volunteers Needed

We have had great success with our outings so far but need more volunteers to help keep the party going! In the next few weeks we are taking in the ironstone museum and geological walk on Skinningrove beach, a steam train trip and a visit to Whitby Jet Museum.

Getting to know you

We had a display at the Women's Tour of Britain, followed by a successful day at Redcar Kite Festival. We worked with Karl, a disabled artist from 'Kiting with Karl' where we taught dozens of people to build robust and well-crafted kites. Many people with disabilities took part and took the opportunity to chat to us.

Teesside Tandems and our weekend outings have now commenced and we will launch our nature conservation work party in the next few weeks. Please join us for fun at:

Tandem Bike Club: Tuesdays 6pm - 9pm

Nature and Access Club: Wednesday 10am - 4pm.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Club: Thursdays 10am - 4pm.

Weekend Outings: Every other Saturday in the month.

Our club activities leave from Margrove Heritage Centre. Pick ups and drop offs via our accessible minibuss is available for those who are not able to travel to Boosbeck.

Our Teesside office address is:
Open Country,
c/o Tees Valley Wildlife Trust,
Margrove Heritage Centre,
Boosbeck, Saltburn,
Redcar and Cleveland,
TS12 3BZ

Contact teesside@opencountry.org.uk for more information on our activities, or if you are interested in coming out with us as a member or volunteer!



Wakefield Hub News

New Wakefield activities

Our 'Wild about Water' programme ended with a splash in June. We hope you all enjoyed the water-based activities and we'll look to continuing the most popular sessions where possible through the weekend programme.

Thanks to our hard working fundraising team, we've been awarded grants to deliver some new time-limited projects in Wakefield, starting this summer:

- **'Wild about Woodlands'**; woodland themed activities and creative sessions around Wakefield with the Wild-things group on Fridays through to January next year. (Wakefield Council Culture Grants).
- **'Wild about Airedale'**; A mixed programme of activities including walks, outings and conservation activities through July to the beginning of August.
- **'Conservation without Barriers'**; UKSPF funding to contribute to the running of our Trailblazers and Nature Force groups and pay for some upgrades to 'The Den'.

Our programme for weekend Outings and Adventure Club activities from July to September is out now. We're looking forward to the residential weekend at Parsons House Outdoor Activity Centre in August for a weekend of climbing, weaselling, kayaking and abseiling.

Places are limited, but we'll try and run the above activities again through our Adventure Club outings, so that everyone gets a chance to try something new.

Welcome aboard!

Welcome to new volunteers Mandy, Claire, Tillie and Noah who some of you might meet over the next few months, helping out with the mid-week groups, tandem rides and outings.

Two imminent arrivals

After a long delay with procurement issues, our new Wakefield minibus has finally been ordered! A *Renault Master*, it will be provided by *Treka*, who are based at Brighouse, and should hopefully be with us by the end of this activities programme.

Beth's due to have her little girl in early July, so we all wish her well. Beth's kept her name a closely guarded secret, but we look forward to meeting 'Tequila Lilibet Longfellow' very soon.



Harrogate Advisory Group

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday 2nd July 2025, 6.30pm, down our allotment! We are looking for club reps for our Walking Groups and Wild Things. All regular members welcome!



Tom's marathon stint

Open Country would like to say a huge thank you to Harrogate MP Tom Gordon, who has raised an incredible £1,000 for our charity by taking on not one, but two major challenges - both the Paris and the London marathons!

We're so grateful to Tom for going the extra mile - quite literally - to help make the countryside more accessible for people with disabilities. What an outstanding achievement, that makes a real difference to the people we support.

Tom Gordon MP at our bus launch



Please email info@opencountry.org.uk if you would prefer to receive our newsletter electronically or if you want to be taken off our mailing list.

GET IN TOUCH...



Follow us on Facebook, Bluesky, Instagram & YouTube



Our Head Office address is:

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