

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

Open Country's trips to the seaside have long been the most popular events in our calendar. Maybe it's to do with us being an island nation, maybe not. There is certainly something about the sea that draws us back. Sadly, all too often the coastline can be an incredibly hostile place for people with disabilities.

Our late member Sandra loved the sea. We joked that you could never take the sand out of Sandra. On one trip she remarked she had never paddled in the sea. Determined to put this right, we tried in vain to get her power chair as close to the lapping waves as we could. When this approach failed as her chair bogged down, we formed a human chain, scooping up handfuls of sea water and running back up the beach in turns to throw it on Sandra's feet. It was the nearest to a paddle she ever had.

Yet beaches needn't be inaccessible to so many. Greece has 280 beaches that are fully accessible from promenade to sea. The figure for Britain? *None*. But the tide may finally be turning. A research paper, 'A Coast for All', launched its findings in May (see page 2). Groups such as *The Wave* in Scarborough and *Sandcastles Water Park* in Blackpool are finding novel ways of negotiating the sand.



Even in some of the most landlocked parts of the country like Harrogate and Wakefield, the approaches used to make 'Yellowspace' accessible can still be beneficial. For the lessons learnt may also help us to improve access for all to our lowland heaths, reclaimed mining sites, reservoirs, wild swimming spots and riversides.

Hopefully, if the movement takes hold, anyone who thinks that 'Life's a Beach' but can't currently get there will begin to find things get a little easier.

'A Coast for All'

That's the new report looking at barriers and opportunities for inclusive beach access. It's a stimulating 41 pages long, but the slimmed-down key recommendations are:



- 1) Develop a national evidence base on beach accessibility.
- 2) Develop national accessibility standards for beach and coastal environments.
- 3) Invest in accessibility infrastructure and adaptive equipment.
- 4) Improve accessible facilities.
- 5) Give clear & consistent information.
- 6) Support assisted access services.
- 7) Improve training, awareness and coordination.
- 8) Strengthen transport connections.
- 9) Establish joined-up approaches.

Ask us for a pdf report. It's impressive!

Volunteer News

Welcome Aboard!

A warm welcome to our new volunteers Steve Carter (Ripon Tandems), Chris Carvey (Thursday walks & Harrogate Tandems), Matthew Kirk (Harrogate Tandems), Alistair Paul (Thursday walks), Suzanne Shuttleworth (Selby walks), Tim McKernan (Harrogate Tandems) and Sally Wilson (Trailblazers). Thank you for joining us; we hope you have an enjoyable volunteering experience.

Allotment Evening Invitation

We'd love our volunteers to join us for a relaxing evening at our allotment on **Friday 31st July** from 7 to 9pm. Come along, unwind, and enjoy good company with tea and scones (beer and wine will also be available). Please let us know if you are coming so we have an idea of numbers.



Volunteers' Week

Great to see the Wakefield and Harrogate volunteers at our recent picnic at Fairburn Ings Nature Reserve near Castleford. We didn't spot a kingfisher, but did have the pleasure of seeing spoonbills and a bittern, so we can't complain!

DBS Reminder

For those that have 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. Sadly, we cannot renew it for you, so please follow the instructions in their email to keep your DBS current. Thanks!

Fundraising News

Welcome to Angelica Sutton, who is our new *Fundraising Development Officer*. It's a new post, whereby we hope to work more closely with many more businesses and community groups who like the sound of supporting what we do.



Angelica writes: "We have an exciting line-up of community fundraising events over the summer and we'd love to see you there. Whether you're able to pop by for a quick hello or join us for an entire event, your support would be great!

We're always on the lookout for raffle and tombola prizes. If you'd like to donate an item, please get in touch with me at community@opencountry.org.uk or call 01423 507227. I'd be happy to have a chat and arrange a convenient drop-off or collection.

Upcoming Events

Saturday 4th July

Information Stand - Pure Country Music & Dance Festival, Sherburn-in-Elmet

We're thrilled our wonderful friends at the Pure Country Music & Dance Festival

chose Open Country as their Charity of the Year. We'll have an information stand from 1:00pm to 6:00pm, so come and say hi!



The festival promises to be a fantastic day out, with live music, dance workshops, games, and activities for all ages. We can't wait to be part of it.

Monday 13th July, 11:00am - 4:00pm
Harrogate ASDA Tombola

Come along and support Open Country while trying your luck on our tombola. It's promises to be a lovely day with many chances to win, so please pop by and say 'hi'. A huge thanks the ASDA Team for their continued kindness, generosity, and support!

Monday 20th July, from 7:00pm
Charity Quiz Night
The Empress Pub, Harrogate

Our fantastic friends at *The Empress* have kindly agreed to host a charity quiz night in support of Open Country. Tickets are £5 per person, and it's set to be a fun-filled evening of quizzing, laughter and friendly competition. There will be quiz prizes, as well as a raffle on the night, so bring your thinking caps and your lucky streak!

We're currently busy planning even more community events for the months ahead, so keep an eye on our social media channels for news and updates."

We love a good GAS!

We are still collecting nominations for our 2026 Good Access Scheme award. Nominations could include sites or groups that have:

- Created a new circular route.
- Installed benches along paths.
- Encouraged the installation of gaps or more accessible gates to replace stiles.

Really, the awards are about reflecting the best inclusive access in the outdoors that YOU think are important.

This year's *GAS Conference* is at Burley-in-Wharfedale on **Friday 13th November**, The theme is 'YellowSpace'.

Open Country's 'Gold Standard'

This easy-to-use access grading has been devised by one of our trustees, David Titchmarsh. It distils down readily available access guidance into a few key categories, hopefully making the work of access managers wanting to improve their patch just a little bit less daunting.

In short, *Access For All - the Gold Standard for Access*:

1. Highlights the bare essentials that people require in order to easily access the countryside i.e. sets the standard,
2. Focuses attention on what individuals and organisations should do in order provide such access i.e. highlights the action needed.

3. Provides a system of recognition to those organisations and individuals that make the effort to achieve the Gold Standard for Access – enables individuals to highlight to users that their route meets the particular standard.
4. Indicates to users to identify, before proceeding along a route, that the route is of a standard that they can manage (there is nothing more frustrating for a disabled person than to get 75% along a route only to find that they are faced with an insurmountable obstruction).

Access for All - The Gold Standard is designed to be self-regulated by those organisations and individuals who manage the land. The Checklist is designed so individuals can quickly establish the Gold Star Rating for a particular route. The Rating can then be used to illustrate the relative suitability of a route for a certain user.

Open Country would like, over time, to construct a national inventory of Gold Star-rated routes and publish this on it's website. This would enable users visiting a particular area to search for accessible routes to the standard that they can cope with before they visit the area in question.

The new Standard is available for free download on the 'Access Projects' section of Open Country's website.



Give it a rest!

We're very keen to promote the need for more benches in the outdoors. Many people need to sit down at regular intervals and, when you need to rest those laurels, a piece of old scaffold board balanced across two milk bottle crates is better than nothing! That said, some people really manage to go the extra mile with their seating, giving a facility that is practical, artistic and tells you about the area you are admiring.

At Ingleborough Quarry in the Yorkshire Dales, a seat has been installed that neatly mirrors the nearby summits of Park Fell, Simon Fell and Ingleborough.



Over in the Howardian Hills National Landscape, they have commissioned 35 new seats to commemorate their 35th anniversary.

The new seats (top right) bear appropriate flora and fauna for the Howardian Hills, carved on the uprights:

Howsham Mill - barbel.

Osbaldwick village hall - hare.

Low Hutton - kingfisher.

In short, we'd encourage people to let their imaginations run wild when installing seating, (though giving them a back and arm rests is often vital!). The main thing is that we get more benches in the countryside. **Don't sit on the fence - let's sit on a bench!**



"Now, how do we get out of this thing?"

Harrogate Hub News

Local Hero Awards 2026

Run each year by the local radio station *Your Harrogate*, the awards shine a light on the selfless, dedicated and inspirational people living and working in the Harrogate area.

We are incredibly proud to have been presented with the 'Sustainability Award' at the 2026 award ceremony.



Martin and Emilia pick up our award

Sponsored by *Envirovent*, this particular award recognised the work of our conservation groups in protecting the local environment. Staff member Emilia and volunteer Martin picked up the award on the group members' behalf at a gala black tie event at Rudding Park.

Well done to everyone who works so hard on our weekly work parties. Result!

It's even easier to Breakfree!

Our Breakfree packs are an Open Country speciality and now there are even more to choose from!

Following all the practical access improvements in Nidderdale National Landscape, we have been able to revise and update the Nidderdale Breakfree pack. It now features new cards for Nutwith Common and Toft Gate Lime Kiln.

There are also brand new packs for both Barnsley and Teesside.

We have hard copies of all of the new packs to distribute and all our packs are available for free download on the 'Explore' section of our website.



Harrogate Advisory Group

The next meeting is on **Tuesday 7th July** at Community House. Our Special Item is '*Our Access Films - how can they be developed?*' All regular members are welcome.

Wakefield Hub News

Goodbye, Gemma!

A big thank you to Gemma Foley who leaves us this August to pursue her dream of becoming an Occupational Therapist. We will miss her creativity and kindness, and wish her well in the future.

Welcome back, Beth!

After a year of maternity leave with her lovely daughter Summer, we are pleased to welcome back Beth Longfellow to our Wakefield team. Beth will be working for us part-time, running the Nature Force group and the Wild Things group.

Farewell to stellar Ella

We're so sorry to see the remarkable Ella Dixon leave us in mid-August. Your contribution has been stellar, Ella. Ella's role is advertised and we hope to have a new 'Wakefield Team Leader' very soon. Let us know if you know anyone who you think would fit the bill!



New Wakefield activities

Thanks to funding from *Wakefield Council* and *West Yorkshire Combined Authority*, this summer we are offering six free introductory taster sessions for women to try something new. These sessions will be held at Pontefract Park, Anglers Country Park and Thornes Park and there will be adapted cycling, walking and wheeling all on offer. We welcome our existing female members and new women to come try our services this summer.

opencountry
out there together
Registered Charity Number 1107231

Women Only Taster Sessions with Open Country

01423 507227
All sessions are free
Booking Essential

Walking and Wheeling Tasters

- Sunday 19th July, 1-4pm, Pontefract Park
- Wednesday 22nd July, 1-4pm, Thornes Park
- Wednesday 12th August, 1-4pm, Anglers Country Park

Adapted Cycling Tasters

- Saturday 15th August, 10am - 1pm, Thornes Park Stadium
- Sunday 23rd August, 1pm - 4pm, Pontefract Park
- Saturday 29th August, 1pm - 4pm, Anglers Country Park

Our sessions are open to any female adult (18+) who wants to try walking, wheeling or tandem bike riding with Open Country. We can offer free local pick-ups and drop-offs in our fully accessible minibus and have a range of adapted equipment to use, plus support from volunteer guides.

- Have fun exploring the natural world
- Try accessible activities
- Meet local like-minded friends

Kindly funded by:

Thomas Park Nursery, Thomas Road, WF2 8QE | opencountry.org.uk | wakefield@opencountry.org.uk

We are pleased to be opening up our Nature Force group this summer thanks to funding from *Live Well Wakefield*. A big thanks to volunteers Dave and Simon for supporting this project by driving the second minibus throughout the summer.

Wakefield Hub News

Ramblin' Richard rolls!

After much delay, we finally obtained the new Wakefield minibus. It is named 'Ramblin' Richard' after much-missed volunteer, Richard Lucas. The launch is on July 14th at Pugneys, 10.30 - noon.



Last few flowers left - trees next!

After a busy spring for our Nature Force and Wild Things groups, we are pleased to have grown over 1,800 native plug plants and have planted out most of them on partner sites. We have a few remaining, so get in touch if you want some in your patch. We now look ahead to the winter tree planting season and are keen to work with new landowners in South and West Yorkshire who want to increase their canopy cover. We have the tools, some native whips and lots of enthusiasm! Get in touch to learn more.

Churchyard Champions sought

We are keen to work on more churchyard nature conservation projects and would welcome new churches to get in touch if they are interested in some support managing their green spaces. Thanks!

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...



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Complaint? Our confidential trustees' email address is opencountrytrustees@gmail.com

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