

October to December 2026

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.

Autumn, the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, is well and truly upon us - that funny time of year when seasons switch around and change is in the air.

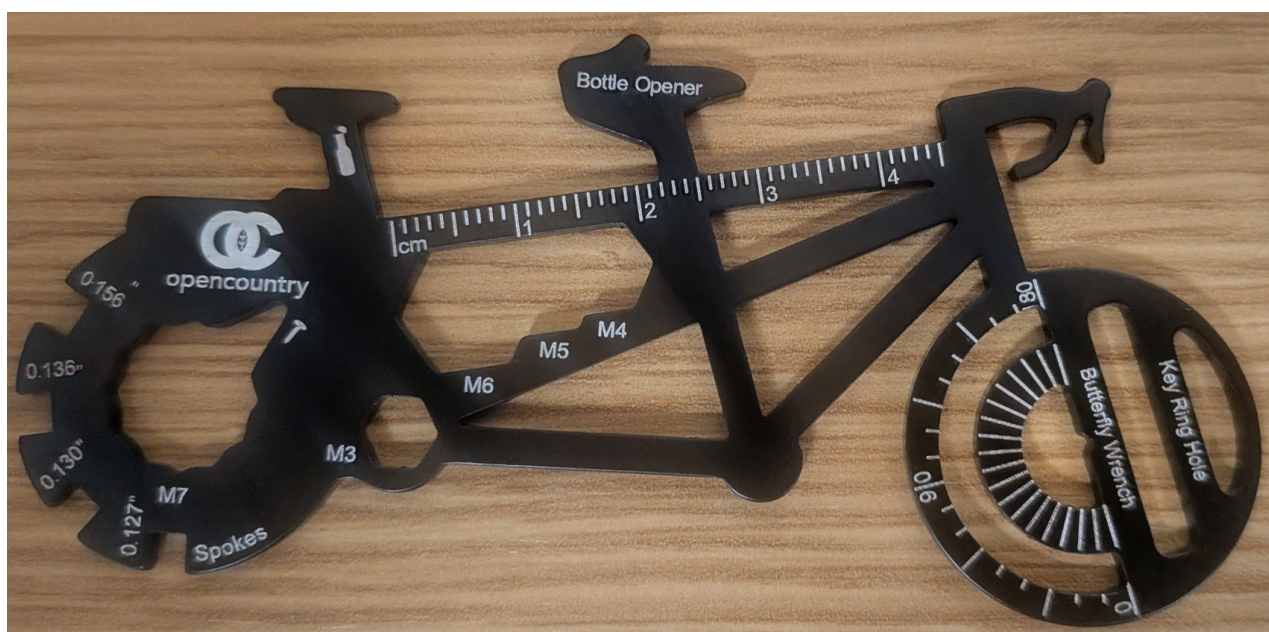
Talking of *change*, if you have any spare change on you, why not buy one of our fantastic new **tandem multi-tools**? Our tandem clubs have long been a key part of what we do and this bespoke tool celebrates all that. Buy yours from us for the princely sum of £5, plus any P&P. They make wonderful stocking fillers.

Talking of *stockings*, with the colder weather comes the need to really dress appropriately. Cyclists should have an extra layer and gloves with them for the rest of the season. People using other

groups will also need to think about bringing a hot drink in a flask, a coat and a woolly hat. The main thing is that you are comfortable and warm, as we will be out and about in whatever Mother Nature sees fit to throw at us!

Talking of *throwing*, we are throwing some pretty amazing fund-raising events in this programme. Take a gander at pages 4 & 5 and see if you can join us on some. They're a great way of having fun and raising money for Open Country at the same time!

Talking of *time*, thanks to everyone - members, volunteers, trustees & staff, who give their time to keep everything chugging along - whatever the season!



Tell us your story!

If coming out with Open Country has made a difference to your life, we'd love to hear from you!

We're always looking for members, volunteers and carers or family members who would be willing to share a few words and a photo with us. We can then use your stories in different ways - to help inform other people about what Open Country do, and help us attract more funding to carry on our services! If you want to see some examples, you can look at our website <https://www.opencountry.org.uk/our-impact/>

You can email Rachel, Open Country Communications Officer, at community@opencountry.org.uk, give her a call in the Harrogate office or talk to a Countryside Activities Officer, who will pass your message on.

Askham Bog

The 'Wanderers' and 'Walk on the Wild Side' groups recently visited the fantastic new accessible boardwalk at Askham Bog Nature Reserve in York. They loved seeing the huge Royal Ferns and gave the boardwalk a big thumbs up!



Harrogate Volunteer News

Welcome Aboard!

A very warm welcome to new volunteer Suzie Jones and a big welcome back to Mark Jenkinson. They will both be helping out on weekend activities.



Our lovely Harrogate & Wakefield Volunteers having a well deserved day off earlier in the year

Volunteer Christmas Social

Join us at *Mykonos Bar & Grill*, 4 Mayfield Grove, Harrogate, HG1 5HB, on **Tuesday 8th December at 7pm**, for our annual Christmas get-together. Please contact us to book your place. We look forward to seeing you there!

Tandemonium!

There are just a few rides left in the season, so we want to say a massive thank you to our tandem volunteers. We've enjoyed fantastic rides, gorgeous weather and a brilliant community atmosphere this season; you all make these rides possible.

New 'Changing Places' toilet opens in Malham

A new 'Changing Places' toilet - a fully accessible facility, specially adapted for people with profound disabilities - has opened at Malham National Park Visitor Centre, adding to similar facilities already available at Grassington National Park Visitor Centre and the Dales Countryside Museum in Hawes.

With three Changing Places toilets now in place across Yorkshire Dales National Park Visitor Centres, provision for people with disabilities has been significantly improved, giving more visitors and their families the confidence to plan visits to the Yorkshire Dales.

The new facility forms part of a broader commitment to improving accessibility, including the recent addition of a second all-terrain wheelchair at Malham, which is available for free hire, helping more people experience the Yorkshire Dales National Park in time for summer.

The improvements are complemented by the Authority's 'Miles Without Stiles' network and recently launched online Access Hub, giving practical information to help people plan accessible visits to the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Open Country has also noticed that the neighbouring North York Moors National Park has installed a modular Changing Places block at its Sutton Bank Visitor Centre. Great work, everyone!

Let's celebrate the power of accessibility in Yorkshire's countryside!

Have you found a path or trail that's now more wheelchair-friendly, or an outdoor attraction that's breaking down barriers? If so, tell us!

We're still accepting nominations of businesses and organisations that are leading the way in inclusive outdoor spaces, for our '2026 Good Access Scheme Award'.

We'll be meeting in November for our inspiring Conference, where we'll once again explore the triumphs and challenges involved in making the countryside accessible for all.

Nominations for our GAS Award close at the end of October.

Get in touch: email us at info@opencountry.org.uk or give us a call on (01423) 507227



Great Access? Send us a nomination!

Fundraising News

Help us bring a new electric minibus to Open Country!

As we head into the final three months of the year, we're fundraising for a new electric wheelchair-accessible minibus for our Harrogate Hub! It will help us to be a bit kinder to the environment and to comfortably travel to various sites across Yorkshire and sometimes beyond.



We've already raised a good part of the money, but we still need your help to reach our target. Perhaps this could become a Christmas gift for all of us - we believe in a little bit of magic to help us bring more people #OutThereTogether! If you'd like to support our project, please go to our website and check out the link to our minibus campaign page.



Autumn Dates for Your Diary!

We hope you've all enjoyed a fantastic summer and are beginning to feel all the warm and cosy feels of autumn!

We've got lots of exciting dates for your diary over the coming months, and we'd love to see you at as many of our events as possible.

Bettys of York does it again!

The amazing Kat and Zoe, along with the wonderful team at Bettys of York, have been doing some incredible fundraising for us this year, including completing the 'Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge' in July (pictured below), and they've been busy organising two more events to support Open Country.



Bingo Night

Monday 28th September from 6.30pm

The Team will host a Bingo Night, with tickets priced at £10 each. If you'd like to join in the fun, email Kat at kat.gladders@bettyandtaylors.co.uk to confirm your attendance, the number of people attending and dietary needs.

More fundraising diary dates

Jumble Sale

Wednesday 7th October, 10am -1pm

The Bettys team will also be holding a jumble sale at St Hilda's Church on Tang Hall Lane in York, with clothes, bric-a-brac and plenty of cake on offer!

If you have any clothes or bric-a-brac that you'd like to donate, please drop them off at Bettys York and clearly mark them as being for the Charity Team.

Charity Coffee Morning

Saturday 10th October, 10am - 12pm

Our wonderful volunteer and good friend of Open Country, Sally, has very kindly organised a Charity Coffee Morning for us in *Knaresborough United Reformed Church* (entrance on Windsor Road), with an abundance of coffee and scones on offer. We'd love to see you there!

Pub Quiz & Raffle at *The Empress* - **Monday 26th October, from 7pm**

A huge thank you to everyone who came along to our first pub quiz at The Empress on 20th July. Lots of fun was had, and the evening proved such a success that we've decided to do it all over again!

Tickets will be £5 per person, and the incredible 'Ant the Trivia Guy' will once again be putting our general knowledge to the test.

To book your place, please contact Trish on (01423) 567629 or enquire at info@theempressharrogate.co.uk.

Coffee & Christmas Craft morning - **Thursday 12th November, 10 - 1pm**

We're also excited to announce that we'll be hosting a joint 'Coffee & Christmas Craft Morning' alongside our friends at the *Wheelchair Service* and *AJM Healthcare*.

The morning will take place in the York Room at St. Robert's Centre in Harrogate and will be a lovely opportunity to get together over coffee while enjoying some festive crafting. We'll have a tombola on the day, as well as a free wheelchair repair shop and clinicians on hand for a chat.

Be sure to keep an eye on our social media channels for more details nearer the time!

Thank you, as always, for supporting our fundraising activities. It makes such a difference to the charity in these difficult times. We can't wait to see lots of familiar faces over the autumn!



Harrogate Hub News

Welcome to Natalie Clifton (below), who takes over from Kate Leggett as a Countryside Activities Officer within the Harrogate Hub Team. Natalie comes from a background of animal rescue and countryside rangering in Kirklees. She will be co-ordinating our Harrogate Hub Volunteers, as well as running our Wanderers and Explorers groups, Ripon Tandems and some weekend activities.



Nidderdale Access for All project

Our 'access for all' project has been continued for a further year, with the promise of a further two years after that!

One recent success is the resurfacing of the path around Toft Gate Lime Kiln. The local sheep had been busy and there was years of their accumulated muck to remove before a new surface could be laid. We love the new path - check it out!



Toft Gate Lime Kiln - all spruced up!

Tom has produced a smashing new audio walk for Panorama Walk at Pateley Bridge. You can hear it by finding the link on our website or YouTube channel.



Harrogate Advisory Group

The next meeting is **Tuesday 3rd November** 2026. Our Special Item is 'Deciding the Winner of the 2026 GAS Award'. All regular members welcome.

Wakefield Hub News

Kate legs it to Wakefield

Kate Leggett has taken over from Ella Dixon as the new Wakefield Team Leader. She has been with Open Country for over 15 years, so brings a tremendous amount of experience and knowledge to the role.

She says "I am delighted to be joining Beth and Bob, and working with such a dedicated group of members and volunteers. I am particularly looking forward to exploring the fantastic Wakefield countryside together and helping to shape and develop the future of the Wakefield Hub."



Kate with Harry, Robbie and Bob at Fewston

Ella Dixon will be continuing to run the weekly Spin class on a voluntary basis until further notice. Thanks, Ella!

Bog standard

Work has begun on two new accessible public toilets within the Holmfield Park Pavilion in Thornes Park, with completion expected by December 2026. Good news for us when we are running activities nearby!

Culture Grants

Thanks to funding from Wakefield Council's Culture Grants, our upcoming programme will be getting a creative upgrade! We will be running an incredible mix of activities including dance, Pilates, poetry, printing, photography, planting and sketching.

Wakefield Advisory Group

The next meeting is **Tuesday 3rd November** 2026, at Thornes Park. All regular members welcome.

Volunteer News

Welcome Aboard!

A very warm welcome to our new volunteers; Sean Birch, Jamie Forde and Phil Pearson. Thank you for your help and we hope you enjoy your time with Open Country.

We are looking for volunteers to help support two of our fantastic groups: 'Nature Force' (Tuesdays) and 'Wild Things' (Fridays). If you have time to spare or know someone who loves the great outdoors, please get in touch!

Volunteer Christmas Social

Join us for a curry at *Syhiba*, George Street, Wakefield on **Friday 4th**

December at 7pm. Please contact us to book your place. We look forward to seeing you there!

Unsung Heroes Award

Well done and good luck to volunteer Catherine Brocklesby, who has been shortlisted as an unsung hero! The awards are organised by *Community Foundation Wakefield District* and the finalist with the most public votes throughout September will be awarded the People's Choice award. Catherine, has volunteered for Open Country for eight years and her willingness to help out with any group or task has made an immeasurable difference to the charity.



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

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

