

District Lead Volunteer Review

April 2024 - August 2026

Building Stronger Foundations

The past two years have been a period of consolidation, development and ambition across Walsall Scouts. Following the recovery work and organisational changes brought about through Transformation, our focus has increasingly shifted towards strengthening our Groups, supporting our volunteers and creating opportunities that will benefit young people for many years to come.

Whilst much of our work continues behind the scenes, I am proud of the progress we have made as a district. We have strengthened local leadership, improved governance, invested in infrastructure, developed new opportunities for young people and built a culture where Groups support one another rather than working in isolation.

Our growing culture of collaboration is one of the district's greatest strengths.

Supporting Volunteers and Developing Leaders

Our volunteers remain the heart of Scouting. Every week, hundreds of adults across Walsall give their time, energy and expertise so that young people can enjoy adventure, challenge and friendship.

Over the last two years, a major priority has been ensuring volunteers feel supported and valued. Experienced volunteers have continued to mentor new leaders, support compliance processes, share skills and assist Groups through periods of change and growth. The willingness of volunteers to support one another across Group boundaries continues to build a stronger culture of collaboration throughout Walsall Scouts.

I would particularly like to recognise Kay Cresswell-Green, whose work in Volunteer Development and Resolutions has been invaluable. Kay has supported volunteers throughout Walsall and has also been called upon to assist with appeals and volunteer matters beyond the district, reflecting the confidence others place in her experience, judgement and commitment to supporting volunteers fairly and consistently.

Kay has also continued to support programme delivery for young people, including leading the successful Cubs Birthday Event at Beaudesert. The event brought Cub Scouts from across the district together for a memorable celebration of adventure, friendship and Scouting.

Strengthening Our Groups

One of the most important areas of work during this period has been supporting the long-term sustainability of our Groups and developing strong local leadership.

We have supported several leadership transitions and appointed new Group Lead Volunteers across the district. These appointments have brought renewed energy, stability and local leadership to Groups. Supporting the new Group Lead Volunteers has been a significant focus of the District Team, helping build confidence, share good practice and strengthen local governance.

Alongside these appointments, members of the District Team have worked directly with Groups requiring additional support, helping with governance, recruitment, succession planning, programme development and local challenges. This often unseen work has helped create stronger, more resilient Groups for the future.

The integration of former Walsall North Groups into the wider district has also created a more unified organisation with greater capacity to support volunteers and young people across Walsall. Increasingly, Groups are sharing resources, knowledge and expertise to overcome challenges and provide better opportunities for young people.

Adventure and Opportunities for Young People

Adventure remains central to everything we do, and significant progress has been made on major projects designed to provide exceptional opportunities for young people.

Preparations for Kandersteg 2027 have continued at pace. I would particularly like to recognise Tom Johnson for the tremendous amount of work he has invested in leading and coordinating the project. Alongside a dedicated team, Tom has overseen fundraising, communications, training events, transport planning, participant support and expedition logistics. The expedition is shaping up to be a truly life-changing experience for everyone involved.

Planning has also begun for ChaseFest 2028, an ambitious district-wide festival and camp. What started as an idea has quickly developed into one of the most exciting projects in our district's history.

Under Tom Johnson's leadership, and with significant contributions from Jenny Purawal, Thomas Durbin, Charlie Rowley, Jake Durbin and many others, substantial progress has been made in programme planning, site infrastructure, transport management, communications and event governance. The professionalism and commitment shown by the volunteer team reflects the strength of leadership developing within Walsall Scouts.

Charlie Rowley has continued to support communications, branding, engagement and Network Scouting. Thomas Durbin has strengthened administration, financial systems and event delivery while supporting some of our largest projects. Their contributions, alongside those of the wider team, continue to build capacity for the future.

Governance, Finance and Investing for the Future

The district continues to benefit from increasingly strong governance arrangements and financial oversight. I would like to thank David Rowley for his leadership as Chair of Trustees and all members of the Trustee Board for their continued commitment.

Considerable work has been completed to strengthen governance, improve financial reporting and consolidate finances and assets following the merger with Walsall North. This has created a stronger and more resilient financial position and helps ensure resources are used effectively for young people.

I am particularly proud of the creation of the Hugh Fletcher Camp Access Fund. The fund will help ensure that financial circumstances do not prevent young people from accessing residential experiences and adventure. Through careful stewardship by our trustees, Hugh's legacy will continue supporting future generations of Scouts across Walsall.

Volunteers have also invested considerable time in facilities, infrastructure and compliance. Safety improvements, building maintenance, equipment and resources all help us provide safe, welcoming and sustainable environments in which Scouting can thrive.

Looking Ahead

Walsall Scouts is in one of the strongest positions it has been for many years. We have dedicated volunteers, capable leadership teams, strengthened governance and ambitious plans that will benefit young people across the district.

Challenges will always exist, but the culture of collaboration, support and innovation that continues to develop gives me enormous confidence in what we can achieve together. Thank you to every volunteer, trustee, supporter and young person who has contributed during this period. Everything we achieve is made possible by your dedication, enthusiasm and commitment to providing Skills for Life.

Dan Phillips

District Lead Volunteer
Walsall Scouts