



FOREST VOLUNTARY ACTION FORUM
ANNUAL REPORT

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES IN THE FOREST OF DEAN

2022 - 2023



COVER PHOTO: View of Cinderford, taken by Cllr Mark Turner



I take immense pride in our team's unwavering commitment to promoting positivity in their collaborations and highlighting the inherent strengths within our communities.

CEO REPORT

It has been a huge privilege to oversee yet another year of achievements and sustainable growth for FVAF, even amid increasingly challenging conditions for both the sector and the country. As they say, in the darkest of nights, we see the brightest stars, and this sentiment truly encapsulates the remarkable progress we've observed in recent years, both within the Forest of Dean and beyond.

It's easy to become fixated on challenges and deficits, but I take immense pride in our team's unwavering commitment to promoting positivity in their collaborations and highlighting the inherent strengths within our communities. Our team continues to demonstrate innovation and resilience, guiding communities through the hurdles that might otherwise hinder their pursuits. Whether it's offering fiscal hosting, employee hosting, assisting with governance, conducting DBS checks, or mediating challenging conversations, our team consistently goes above and beyond, and I am humbled by their dedication to the cause.

The strategic influence of FVAF has never been more significant, as we now stand as a leading voice in the sector, representing the Forest of Dean and Gloucestershire on numerous boards, partnerships, and forums. This influence is gradually leading to better-designed services, equitably distributed funding, and more robust VCS infrastructure. We continue to facilitate powerful thematic partnerships to address the ever-growing needs and demands of our community. Notable examples include the My Networks Mental Health Alliance, the Forest of Dean Youth Association, and Digi Hubs, to name just a few. A particular highlight has been our collaboration with the Gloucestershire Gateway Trust to establish the Gloucestershire Gateway Partnership, bringing communities closer to delivering commissioned services tailored to their needs and utilising their unique assets.

CEO REPORT

One of the most remarkable milestones of the year undoubtedly was our move to our new offices, Ow Bist. Nick, FVAF's Programme Manager, and the team have worked wonders in transforming what some had considered for demolition into a vibrant hub that will serve the Forest of Dean well for the next 25+ years. We express our gratitude to Cinderford Town Council for their invaluable support in bringing us to this point. The future certainly looks bright, and we hope you all continue to join us on the exciting journey that lies ahead.

Watch this space...



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Chris Brown'.

CHRIS BROWN
Chief Executive Officer

CHAIR REPORT

I am thrilled to be reporting on another year of innovative and exciting work taking place under the FVAF umbrella. This, my first year in the role of Chair, has taught me so much about the day to day work of this organisation, the work that often goes unnoticed, behind the scenes, working hard to generate funding, training and grassroots support for the community at large.

The changes taking place within the local community supported by the work of the FVAF team have been huge in 2023.

I'll begin by thanking the whole team for the hard work they put into the Forest Volunteer Awards Ceremony. I believe this event showcased and encapsulated the values of FVAF as an organisation. Offering practical support, centred around the community, valuing group and individual contributions to improving the lives of others and celebrating how much fantastic work goes on in the Forest. I found this a profoundly moving experience. The variety of ways that our team of skilled workers have worked with many of these organisations to develop trust, confidence and are fostering a level of collaboration and networking that works so well in the development of new and exciting projects. We are truly recognised throughout the county as an active and engaged organisation, an organisation that, thanks to the leadership of our excellent CEO Chris, is a welcome addition to any countywide think tank.

I need to acknowledge the hard work of Nick and others who have made fantastic changes to our new home at Ow Bist, again showing a real commitment to the local community with a standard of design and finish that our residents can be proud of. FVAF are working alongside local and national organisations here to create a hub, offering high levels of support and advice to those who are really struggling to manage during these times of great financial hardship. We are also working hard to develop this 'hub' concept throughout the Forest area, to ensure that some of the outlying areas have access to this essential information and too.

There are so many great projects in the pipeline right now: The My Network mental health project, having a significant influence on mental health transformation within the county, helping people get into work and volunteering: The Employment and Skills Hub Outreach: Digital hubs team helping people to negotiate the digital world: The Youth Association work continuing to support youth clubs and volunteers: The Community Pantry easing the cost of your weekly shopping bill and so many more wonderful initiatives.

If you wish to find out more, or wish to join our fantastic team of volunteers, please just get in touch with one of our team.

PENNY HULBERT
Chair of FVAF





TREASURER REPORT

The year ending March 2023 has seen FVAF consolidate the significant progress of recent years.

The fulfilment of our move to the new HQ 'Ow Bist' has been achieved and is being developed to be a great environment in which to maintain our mission. Financially the past year has seen our grant income increase by c£25,000. Staff costs have increased by c£100,000 and our overhead costs are substantially higher: the move to Ow Bist has increased expenditure, some of these costs being one off in nature. The total surplus at the year end was £214,785 (2022 £336,128). Unlike a commercial organisation FVAF is not driven by profit and our success is measured in the overall benefit to the communities in which we operate. We must however ensure that the funds we receive are responsibly used and our organisations and communities served in a sustainable way. I am content that this is the case. The organisation maintains its reputation in the Forest of Dean and Gloucestershire which is proved by the increasing level of support by those organisations who fund our activities.

We would like to thank the organisations below for contributing to our continued success:

Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board, Gloucestershire Health and Care Trust, Barnwood Trust, National Lottery Community Fund, European Social Fund, Thirty Percy, KW BELL Group, Co-op Foundation, Cinderford Town Council, Coleford Town Council, Feeding Britain, Youth Music Fund.

JONATHAN GAULT

Treasurer

FVAF ACCOUNTS 2022/23 | STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

INCOME - CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	YEAR TO 31.03.2023	YEAR TO 31.03.2022
FODDC SLA	£14,640	£13,500
TRAINING	£380	£630
FORESTERS' FOREST	-	£36,318
PROJECT GRANTS	£617,699	£636,447
OFFICE SHARE & SERVICES	£5,889	£4,600
DONATIONS & MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	£5,536	£108
SUBSCRIPTIONS	£10	£10
JOB RETENTION SCHEME & KICKSTART	£8,626	£39,158
DEPOSIT ACCOUNT INTEREST	£980	£3
CORE BUSINESS GRANTS	£101,319	-
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	£755,079	£730,774

EXPENDITURE	YEAR TO 31.03.2023	YEAR TO 31.03.2022
WAGES & SALARIES & NI	£365,373	£269,520
EMPLOYERS PENSIONS	£5,880	£2,052
RENT & RATES	£10,389	£7,918
LIGHT & HEAT	£22,772	-
CLEANING	£8,712	£168
REPAIRS, RENEWALS & MAINTENANCE	£5,866	-
INSURANCE	£1,135	£421
PRINTING, POSTAGE & STATIONERY	£4,184	£2,415
TELEPHONE & INTERNET COSTS	£2,147	£2,310
ACCOUNTANCY FEES	£2,496	£864
PAYROLL PROVISION	£1,157	-
SUNDRY EXPENSES	£5,824	£1,597
PROJECT EXPENDITURE	£90,010	£107,381
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED	£525,945	£394,646
NET INCOME / (EXPENDITURE)	£214,785	£336,128
NET ASSETS	£793,027	£578,242

WHAT WE DO

Throughout 2022/23, everything we do has continued to be underpinned and driven by our four strategic aims:

- Establish a positive presence and reputation throughout the Forest of Dean
- Support stronger, resilient and sustainable communities
- Establish 'what works', tell the stories and demonstrate the value of strong communities across the country
- Build capacity with the focus of facilitating productive conversations with communities

We continue to grow year on year, and the following pages are an overview, highlighting the progress, development and success of just some of the projects and support that FVAF has continued to deliver on over the past year.



VOLUNTEERING



At the core of our day-to-day activity is providing advice, guidance and practical support to local people and hundreds of voluntary and community groups in the district.

In 2022/23 just some of our highlights include:



**supporting over
500 local volunteers**

**processing
100 DBS checks to
groups/volunteers**



**providing safeguarding
related advice and support
to 20 local organisations**

Along with helping hundreds of individuals into volunteering, over 2022/23 we have provided a variety of support to local groups including:

- review and creation of Constitutions
- funding advice and signposting
- volunteer induction and training
- help finding and setting up bank accounts
- helping groups through challenging situations
- trustee training and facilitation
- advice on Terms of Reference
- policy templates and advice
- lending equipment and help locating specialist equipment
- ...and so much more



FODDC SLA

In March 2023 we were delighted to be awarded another 3-year Service Level Agreement from Forest of Dean District Council. This continued investment will allow us to provide advice and support for volunteers and community groups, including provision of training, set up, networking and encouraging volunteers.

DBS checks

To support safeguarding in the local voluntary and community sector, in 2022/23 we received funding from Forest of Dean District Council to provide fully funded DBS checks to existing and new volunteers. Thanks to this funding, to date **we have processed nearly 100 checks** for individuals and have provided bespoke 1-2 1 safeguarding advice and mentoring support to a range local groups. The response by the community to this project has highlighted to us the need for the ongoing provision of DBS checks and, we are working on ways to continue to offer this support. Watch this space...



The experience of volunteering is rewarding and cathartic. It is satisfying to see a tangible difference being made and know you helped to achieve it. Volunteering allows you to meet people who you would never had known before and creates a sense of camaraderie among you.

Coleford Welcomes Walkers Volunteer



NEW Forest Compass

In 2022 we kicked off the creation of the long awaited second edition of the Forest Compass. This publication is a comprehensive directory of the many hundreds of local community groups and organisations delivering activities and support across the whole of the Forest. The second edition of this popular local guide to all things community, now features more than double the amount of entries. We were overwhelmed and delighted by the response to be featured which, once again shows what a fantastic network of likeminded people are coming together to offer support, advice and fun for their community and the entire district! Copies of the updated Forest Compass are available at community venues across the district or from Ow Bist, FVAF's main office in Cinderford.





VOLUNTEER STORY

Natalie

Forest Sensory Service

I look back at the person I was 8 years ago, and I can't believe that I have changed so much!

Suffering from anxiety and bullied at school, Natalie left with no GCSEs. Unsure where to go next, she began volunteering at the Heart of the Forest Community Special School, this led her to go back to college to study childcare. After finishing her studies, Natalie decided that childcare wasn't for her, and she found that her anxiety returned.

An introduction to FVAF was the turning point for Natalie. We chatted to her about the types of volunteering opportunities available. Natalie told us that she liked helping people and wanted to learn new skills, so we signposted her to Forest Sensory Services (FFS). Initially volunteering in the admin team, she enjoyed it so much that when a paid role came up, Natalie jumped at the chance and was delighted to get the role.

That was 2 years ago, and Natalie has gone from strength to strength. With her new found confidence she has learnt to drive and has trained to be an ECLO (Eye Care Liaison Officer).

But she hasn't forgotten her volunteering roots – alongside her job, she still volunteers to support the FSS skittles club, with summer activities, as well as running OWLS – an activity club for younger members.

GROUP STORY

Sedbury Space

Sedbury Space is a shining example of local people coming together and developing a welcoming and inclusive hub, at the heart of the village. A once neglected community space, following a consultation with local people, in 2014 a group of likeminded residents got together to create a new multi-use space for the wider community to enjoy.

Over eighteen months they raised money through grant applications, a crowdfunding campaign and a series of private donations to fund the building works to remodel and refurbish the space. With a focus on encouraging community participation and well-being, there is something on offer for everyone to enjoy including; One Stop Cafe, Memory Cafe, exercise classes, crafting, reading and many other regular activities

The support given by FVAF has been key in ensuring the long-term future of Sedbury Space. Through a trusted partnership with FVAF, it has been possible to employ staff.

In addition FVAF has provided funding and governance advice and access to our huge district-wide network which is helping to bring new services to Sedbury.



“

Such a warm and welcoming space, it feels just like walking into somebody's living room. Sedbury is lucky to have this gem!

”

FOREST VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Forest Volunteer Awards recognise and celebrate the amazing efforts of volunteers. Local people were asked to nominate those volunteer heroes who have demonstrated exceptional and outstanding support to the local community.

We see the importance and value of shining a strong spotlight on the incredible impact and strength of volunteering activity in the Forest of Dean and in June 2022 we relaunched the Forest Volunteer Awards.

We had an amazing response from the community, with hundreds of nominations submitted. On 7 September 2022 we were delighted to host a packed out celebration evening where the following winners were crowned:

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR – PEOPLES' CHAMPION

WINNER: Les Cockle – Great Oaks Hospice

Highly Commended: Hannah McGowan (FOD Hosts of Ukrainians Support Group), Martin Elsmore (The Golden Triangle Club), Steve Gregory (FVAF / Walking with Wheels) and Mark Jones (Community First Responder SWASFT)

COMMUNITY VOLUNTARY GROUP OF THE YEAR

WINNER: FOD Hosts of Ukrainians Support Group and Ukraine Community Hub

Highly Commended: Together We Can, Newnham Archery Club, Dean Radio, The Friends of Longhope Church and The Rewild Project

OUTSTANDING NEW VOLUNTEER

WINNER: Lisa Tootell – Girlguiding FOD South Division

Highly Commended: Sarah Maxfield – Berry Hill Memorial Institute

YOUNG VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR 16YRS & UNDER

WINNER: Keira Stone – Together We Can

Highly Commended: Toby Niblett – Lydney Youth Hub

YOUNG VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR 17 – 25YRS

JOINT WINNERS: Jordan Terrell and Chloe Whatley – FOD Sea Cadets

COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD

WINNER: HIPs Social

Highly Commended: Recycle Shop CIC Newent and Wilde Earth Journeys

The celebration evening was made possible thanks to generous sponsorship for the following local organisations: KW Bell Group and AccXel Training Centre (main sponsors), Hot Tubs Rock, Versarien, and The Midcounties Co- Operative.



KNOW YOUR PATCH

Know Your Patch connects the Voluntary and Community Sector, Statutory Services and local residents in a way which creates better ways of working.

Year on year, membership of this group grows, in 2022/23:

Year Total attendance: 633

Total Meetings: 24

2 in-person community networking events

Across the year the Forum heard from internal and external guest speakers who spoke on a wide range of subjects, for example; Apprenticeship Programme, Homes for Ukraine (HFU), Digital Inclusion in the Forest, Benefit Buddies, Forest Sustainable Food Network...and many more.

An ongoing theme in 2022/23 was the impact the rising cost of living was having on our community. To help combat this we hosted 2 KYP community in-person events:

Coping with the Cost of Living' event

On Wednesday 2 November we hosted a drop-in event at Oaklands Sports Club in Cinderford. With over 20 information stalls attendees got the chance to network and speak face-to-face with organisations that can help with a range of problems including reducing bills, energy saving, searching for a job and benefits and money advice. Along with welcoming the general public, this event was a great networking opportunity.

'Living for Less' event

Over 60 local people came along to a drop-in community event held on Wednesday 22 March at Lydney Town Hall. With 25 information stalls, experts were on hand to offer help with food support, reducing bills, energy saving, searching for a job and benefits and money advice. Interactive demos were also held featuring cooking with Dean Forest Kitchen, grow your own tips from Adult Education Gloucestershire and upcycling skills with Newent Upcycling.

Organisations presented at both events included Forest of Dean District Council, Citizens Advice Bureau, Severn Wye Energy Agency, Prospect Training, DWP, Two Rivers Housing, Healthy Lifestyles, Warm and Well, Crossroads Care Gloucestershire and many other local support groups



COMMUNITY HUBS

Our Community Hubs model was established in early 2022. Initially trialled at 10 locations, **we now have 7 regular hubs** covering the district from Sedbury, through Lydney, Coleford, Cinderford, Mitcheldean, Newent and all the way up to Staunton and Corse in the North.

Our community builders regularly support individuals with volunteering opportunities, employment skills, governance for organisations, digital support and signposting to local groups and organisations operating in their local area.

In 2022/23 we:

held over

160 hubs

supported 100s residents – 55% of which return



ESHO

Helping people step towards education, volunteering or work

In January 2023 we started delivering the ESHO (Employment Skills Hub Outreach) programme. Funded by Gloucestershire County Council, this is a new programme aimed at economically inactive people (16-64 years) and those who are neither employed nor unemployed; they're not in paid work, but they're also not looking for a job (or in receipt of a state benefit - Universal Credit -that requires them to seek work) or available to start work.

Delivered by our community builders and Volunteering Manager, outcomes across the first few months have included finding work, starting training, education, and volunteering.

We'll report back with the project's results next year.

“

At the start of the year and even before that, I was feeling incredibly directionless and confused about where my life was going. Without a doubt, if I hadn't had the support I've had through ESHO, I feel I'd probably still be stuck without much direction.

”



CEV ROADTRIP!

Over the past 6 months we have been getting out and about in our most expensive investment to date!

Our community engagement vehicle AKA 'CEV,' purchased with funding from Children in Need, is supporting the work of the Forest Youth Association by providing a visible and safe mobile drop-in space for children and young people across the Forest of Dean.

Along with this, CEV has been put to work as a mobile community hub and has parked up at a number of community events to promote the work we, and the rest of the local community and voluntary sector are doing.

No Wi-Fi? No problem!

Thanks to funding from GCC's Digital Innovation Fund, CEV is now decked out with its own portable power source and mobile Wi-Fi which means we can operate at any location across the Forest, from town centres to rural areas. In the near future, our ambition is to be able to make this asset available for groups in our community to use for their own promotion and engagement activities.



WALKING WITH WHEELS

One of the smallest, yet most impactful projects that we run, popular with local residents and visitors alike is Walking With Wheels.

Following the end of the Foresters' Forest Lottery Heritage Fund programme we secured grants from the Forest of Dean Ramblers, and Barnwood Trust to continue this scheme for at least another 3 years.

Over 2022/23 **178 users (over 700 people in total)** accessed the beauty of the Forest using one of the 2 off road mobility scooters.

Demand remains high with around 45% of users return users. To meet this demand, our ambition is to increase the offer, and we are in talks with Forestry England for an additional tramper centre at Beechenhurst hosting a minimum of 2 scooters.



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY FOOD

We continue to work across the community to help build a collaborative network that creates a more locally based, self-reliant food economy.

This has included supporting the distribution of supermarket surplus food with over 200 collections in the Bream, Chepstow, Cinderford and Coleford areas:

200 Collections
10,592kg of food
25,254 meals equivalent
33,856kg of CO2 savings

At the end of 2022 we were lucky to negotiate a secondment opportunity for Lynda Bailey through the John Lewis Partnership's Golden Jubilee Trust scheme. This scheme offers long-term staff the opportunity of a secondment to a UK registered charity.

Lynda joined the team for six months in February 2023 and is focussing on exploring and trialling a Community Pantry, membership-based scheme for the Forest of Dean.



FOREST YOUTH ASSOCIATION

The Forest Youth Association continues to go from strength to strength.

Along with weekly youth outreach, which included walkabouts to engage with young people and running regular youth clubs, the HAF Programme, and our Service Level Agreements with Town and Parish Council has enabled us to expand our grassroots community youth provision.

In early 2023 we were delighted to welcome 2 new fantastic Youth Development Officers to the team; Lisa Robertson and Katy Virgo.

During this period, we also supported CANDI (Cinderford based youth group) on a weekly basis with our Projects Officer, Courtney Middleton, and also facilitated the employment of Youth Worker, Emily Timmins on behalf of Tidenham Parish Council.

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME

It was another busy year for the Forest Youth Association co-ordinating a packed programme and fun and educational activities in the school holidays.

Funded by Gloucestershire County Council, the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) is open to all school aged children, who live in the Forest of Dean, and who qualify for free school meals. In 2022/23 we:

- **offered over 5500 sessions**
- **reached over 3000 unique C&YP**
- **72% of which were on benefits related Free School Meals and 10% of those are SEND**

Building on feedback from families, over 2022/23 we expanded the range of HAF activities offered and saw a significant increase in the number of young people aged 12years+ accessing HAF. This was achieved through our increased community youth club presence and the one-off trips which included indoor golf, bowling, swimming, and dry slope skiing.

“

*We are very grateful to FVAF for including *Child* in the HAF scheme. She has benefitted in confidence from meeting different children. Thank you.
Parent of a Ukrainian Refugee family*

“

**Child* had such a great time with us that he chose to eat his food in the Apple Barn with everyone. His Mum was amazed and very pleased.'
Child with SEND who usually would not eat with others*

”

”



FYA & HAF



FYA & HAF

MORE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS FUN!

February Half Term Activities

The Integrated Locality Partnership (ILP) recognised a gap in the HAF programme delivery with no provision offered during the half term breaks. Thanks to their generous support, in February 2023 we were able to:

**Deliver over 350 activity spaces
over 4 days**

**Provide 150 activity packs, distributed via
our Town and Parish Councils**

**Working with 12 Forest of Dean based
providers to deliver these opportunities**



YOUTH MUSIC

Building on the success of last year, the second year of our National Lottery funded Youth Music project delivered a fantastic range of community based music opportunities for local young people to enjoy. Through building strong relationships with local secondary schools – Dean Academy and Five Acres High Schools in particular, and events such as the Coleford Music Festival and Cindyfest, we were able to deliver:

- 2 under 18s club nights with combined attendance of over 400
- 14 young people directly involved in the production of Coleford Music Festival '22
- 10 young people involved in artist selection and booking
- Over 30 young people performing on live stages across these major events
- Over 300 young people responded to surveys helping us to understand what they would like to see in their community



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In alignment with our strategic aim to; 'Build capacity with the focus of facilitating productive conversations with communities', we continue to facilitate powerful thematic partnerships to address the ever-growing needs and demands of our community.

In 2022/23 we have seen a growth in our influence, and role in identifying, creating and maintaining strong, sustainable cross-sector partnerships. Some of these successful partnerships and collaborations include:

BARNWOOD DIGITAL INCLUSION FUND

At the end of this financial year we were successful in securing our largest funding pot to date from the Barnwood Trust – some £203k to form a collaborative partnership, across the Forest of Dean, focusing on digital inclusion.

The aim of this community partnership project is to break down the barriers people face in relation to digital inclusion by harnessing the power of the community sector to create impact locally. This district wide project is focusing on 5 key areas:

- 1. Learning Disabilities/ Additional Needs**
- 2. Physical Disabilities**
- 3. Sensory Disabilities**
- 4. Mental Health/ Wellbeing**
- 5. Children & Young people that may experience any of the above**

The Partnership officially kicked off in January 2022 and we are looking forward to sharing the progress and achievements of this project in the near future.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE GATEWAY PARTNERSHIP

FVAF and Gloucestershire Gateway Trust have come together with 42 partner organisations to establish the Gloucestershire Gateway Partnership. The Partnership has evolved from an evidenced need for an appropriate vehicle to deliver on community services which cover the entire county but ultimately retain a local focus. The initial ambition is to co-design and bid for the upcoming Family Hubs contract. If successful, the Partnership will put 9 Children's Centre across the Forest of Dean and Gloucester into the hands of local communities.



DIGITAL HUBS PROJECTS

The success of our Bream Community Hub Pilot, back in 2021, and our wider Forest of Dean roll out (see page 15) caught the attention of the GCC Adult Transformation Team. Together we have led on a new innovative approach to tackle digital exclusion across six districts in Gloucestershire by replicating the FVAF Digital Community Hub model.

The main aim of the Digital Hubs is to create a 'front door' to supporting people to access technology and improving their digital literacy in a safe, supportive, and social way.

This project is now fully up and running with each District offering free, accessible, tailored support to individuals, facilitated by the following seven skilled community partners; FVAF (Forest of Dean), Creative Sustainability and GL11 (Stroud), GRCC/DAISI Project (Cheltenham & Cotswolds), Gloucester Community Building Collective (Gloucester), Priors Park Neighbourhood Project and Brockworth Link Library (Tewkesbury).

MY NETWORKS

In 2022 FVAF began supporting My Networks, a community alliance, who are collectively working on developing community-led mental health provision that enables individuals from across the Forest to obtain high quality, consistent, connected support.

Led by experienced mental health practitioner, Simon Price, a steering group of local experts by experience and those working in a professional capacity has been assembled.

Guided by this steering group, an 8-month scoping project has been undertaken to determine local need and current capacity. Using community based participatory action research, conversations have been held across the entire district:

- **98 People over 18 focus groups**
- **38 People through the steering group meetings**
- **80 People completed the survey**
- **72 Individual conversations.**

The Barnwood Trust funded this scoping exercise and provided support via Forest based project officers.



OW BIST

We've moved!

At the beginning of this report Chris, our CEO, highlighted one of our largest milestones of the year – moving to our new home and our ongoing project to renovate the former Dockham Road Health Centre to deliver a multi-use community hub.

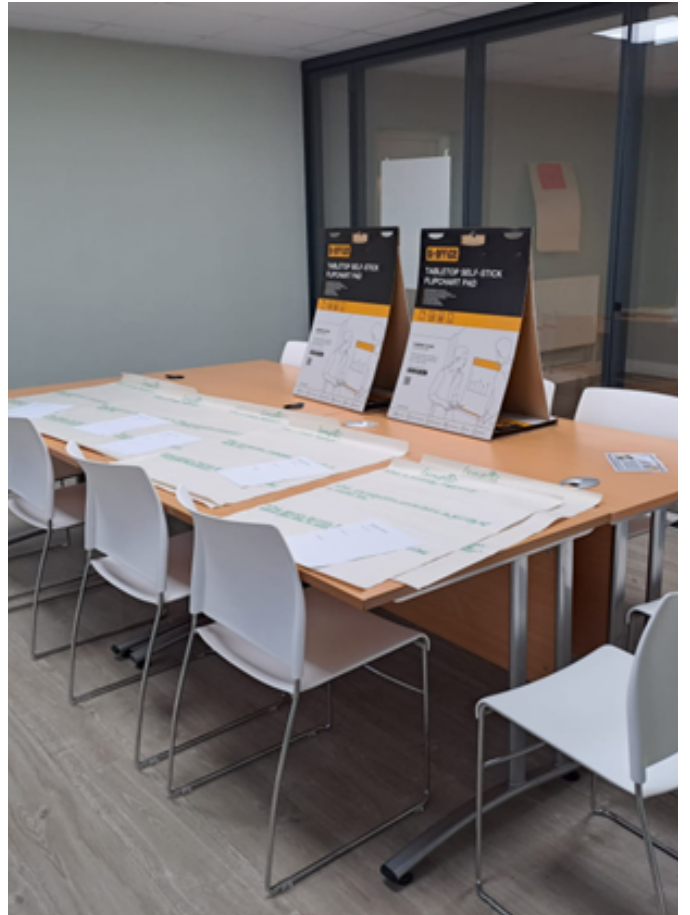
An extensive community consultation was carried out to collect name suggestions for the new building. These suggestions were presented to a panel of selected community representatives who picked Ow Bist – a traditional welcome in Forest of Dean dialect.

We are close to finishing Phase 1 of the build and, to date, have relocated our office and welcomed permanent community partner tenants; Citizen Advice Bureau, Healthy Lifestyles and CCP.



Next steps:

- Completing the frontage
- Installing changing places toilet
- Fundraising to open Community Café in 2024
- Creating community garden spaces
- Sustainable energy production
- Launching community activities programme
- Open as a 'Warm Hub' Promoting hot desking opportunities
- Working closer with the NHS to become a 'Health Hub'
- Sharing our story and supporting others to do similar



OW BIST



RECOGNITION OF OUR WORK

Over the last 12 months, FVAF have once again been recognised through the work that we undertake.

GEM GREEN IMPACT GOLD AWARD

We were delighted in 2022/23 to match our feat of the previous year by achieving the “Gold” standard in the overall programme for NUS Green Impact Challenge.

This UN award winning programme is designed to support and challenge organisations to look at the way they work and ensure that the practices they follow are as environmentally and socially sustainable as possible.

We also won special awards for “Community Action” and “Participation Engagement” and were Highly Commended for “Innovation for Engagement”.

Working together as a team, we shared ideas and encouraged lifestyle changes in the following areas:

- use of water and energy
- travel – work and personal
- recycling
- reducing and dealing with waste
- upcycling, freecycling unused goods
- using sustainable products
- encouraging biodiversity

Building on this we are busy researching ways we can retro-fit and install sustainable energy and environmental features in the refurbishment and development of Ow Bist.



NUS Green Impact

GOLD AWARD

Delivered by Students Organising for Sustainability - UK



BIG THANK YOU TO...

FVAF Trustees during the year

Penny Hulbert- Chair

Sid Phelps- Vice Chair

Jonathan Gault - Treasurer

Simon Murray

Roger Deeks

Diana Martin

Bob Rhodes

Christopher Walker

Louise Penny

Sue Pritchard

Vickie Head

Observers

Cllr Bernie O'Neill



Forest Voluntary Action Forum

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES IN THE FOREST OF DEAN



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