



Annual Report 2019

Nottingham Narrow Boat Project Ltd: Registered Charity 1176252

Introduction



2019 has been the first full calendar year of the operation of the Nottingham Narrow Boat Project Ltd charity and the first full calendar year of our grant from the National Lottery Community Fund - Reaching Communities fund. The year has been defined by an increase in both booked trips and Volunteers for the Project and by the commissioning and implementation of an Organisational Review of the charity. The Organisational Review has been funded by a separate grant from the National Lottery Community Fund - Building Capabilities Grant and we want to record our thanks to the National Lottery Community Fund for this additional Grant. The review has had a significant impact on the activities and workload of the Trustees and has introduced new disciplines and policies to the charity as will be seen later in this report.

An increase in personal business commitments during the year, meant that one of our founding Trustees, Steve Smith resigned from the Board in September 2019. The remaining Trustees want to place on record their thanks to Steve for his hard work, diligence, support and expertise during the process of setting up the charity and taking over the Project from Nottingham City Council in July 2018. There is no doubt that without Steve's involvement it is unlikely that the Project would have been successfully transferred to the new Charity.

The Board was pleased to announce the appointment of a new Trustee, Gary Bramley in August 2019. Gary's employment background in the Royal Engineers and the Post Office brings a significant experience in operations, health and safety, boat maintenance and logistics to the Board and the Board are grateful for Gary's significant contribution in the second half of the year.

Our Year in Numbers

1

full
calendar
year of
operation

439

School children,
children and young
people welcomed
on board

14

Residential
trips lasting
one night or
more

156

vulnerable
adults
welcomed on
board

1

Full-time
Operations
and Liaison
Co-Ordinator
appointed

20

High priority
action areas
focused on
following
review

41

older people
welcomed on
board

50%

Increase in
volunteers from
20 to >30

Funding

The charity is funded in the main by a three-year grant from The National Lottery Community Fund - Reaching Communities grant totalling £120,000. The grant was made in December 2018 and is paid in half yearly instalments. The grant covers a significant part of our operating costs and enables us to implement a charging policy for qualifying organisations such that they can book trips on the boat for our target beneficiary groups at a nominal cost. This has significantly increased the availability of the boats in the community.

The charity is also funded by a significant grant from the Jones 1986 Charitable Trust in May 2019 which also contributes to our operation and running costs. The Board would like to thank the Jones 1986 Trust for their generous contributions in both 2018 and 2019.

The charity also received a one-off grant of £12,000 from The National Lottery Community Fund - Building Capabilities fund. This grant is a restricted fund, designed to ensure that the new charity enjoys a sustainable future, with robust governance, policies, fundraising and strategic direction. The grant has been used to fund the Organisational Review and the implementation of the recommendations of the report.

The charity has also benefited from Trips which have been delivered at commercial rates for local business organisations and private individuals, as well as donations from the public at various events in which we have taken part.

More details of the funding are disclosed in the Financial section of this report.



Organisational Review



The Building Capabilities grant was used to commission an Organisational Review of the charity. The Trustees regarded this review as a priority and the commissioning process involved discussions with and proposals from a number of Charity Consultants, recommended to the Trustees from several sources. A short list of three was drawn up and the successful Consultancy, Willow Charity Consulting was appointed in early 2019, conducted the review in February 2019 and delivered the final report in March 2019.

The review was conducted by Felicia Willow, with on-site meetings, telephone calls, emails and a review of documents submitted by the Board. Trustees, Volunteers, Beneficiaries and Staff were all involved in the process. The general feedback from those involved was that it was a very thorough process, with all aspects of the charity's activities looked at and examined.

The report listed some 42 recommendations, divided into High, Medium and Low priority. The report introduction stated "The Charity is performing very well for its age and state of development and benefits from dedicated Board, experienced Volunteers and a robust approach to boat training. It has an open and consultative culture and is self-reflective. It has secured financial support until 2021, which gives it an uncommonly secure position for a charity in its' first year of independence".

Organisational Review

The Trustees have concentrated their efforts in 2019 on the 20 High priority recommendations. This has been a big challenge with a small Board and the focus has been dealing with the straight forward ones, such as “establishing a complaints system” and “providing safeguarding training, producing a Trustee Recruitment Policy and conducting a skills audit”. The Board has felt uncomfortable implementing some of the others, such as “developing a comprehensive strategic / business plan setting out operational, internal and financial outputs and outcomes over the coming three years” without the benefit of a larger and more diverse Trustee Board of 5-8 Trustees – another of the high priority recommendations. The Board is taking steps to increase the number of Trustees, has several interested individuals and hopes to make appointments in the first quarter of 2020. It then expects to be able to implement the remaining high priority recommendations.

Several the medium and low priority recommendations have already been implemented and the Board will implement more in 2020. The Board has engaged the services of another independent charity Consultant to help it through this process and will also invite Willow Consulting to conduct another review in the first quarter of 2020 to give an independent progress report to the Board.

As stated earlier the costs of commissioning the report, implementing it and reviewing it are covered by restricted funds from the Building Capabilities grant.



Volunteers



Our Volunteers are the backbone of our charity, freely giving of their time, expertise and skills to deliver our services to our beneficiaries. We have seen a significant increase in the number of volunteers in 2019 and without this increase we would struggle to meet the demand for our trips. We have developed a volunteer induction programme, involving progressive training and involvement in trips, which leads to qualifications in boat handling and skipper qualifications, backed by our membership of the NCBA (National Community Boats Association). Volunteers also provide maintenance and refurbishment skills, while other Volunteers provide Office, Admin and Financial support. All volunteers are provided with branded workwear, reimbursement of out of pocket expenses and an annual Volunteer's meeting and lunch. As an outcome of the Organisational Review mentioned earlier, we are focused on increasing the diversity of the ethnicity and gender of our volunteer base.

The Trustee Board would like to place on record their sincere thanks to all Volunteers for their support in 2019.



Measuring Outcomes

A major part of our application to the National Lottery Community Fund - Reaching Communities fund, was the four Outcomes we intended to deliver if we were successful with our funding application. We had based these on our experience as volunteers for Nottingham City Council and limited statistical information available from the Council in the previous few years. At the start of 2019 we had no method in place to measure these outcomes and the Board is very grateful to Anne Cook, one of our Volunteer Skippers, whose business background lends itself to this task, for taking on the responsibility. Anne has built a database of facts figures and feedback from our beneficiaries and her first report is detailed below. The results have provided us with an accurate analysis of our Outputs and Outcomes in 2019 and form the base for us to further develop in 2020. The Outputs and Outcomes will continue to be reviewed in 2020 and actions taken to respond to the results. Access to the database can be provided to interested parties, subject to GDPR and confidentiality.



Outcome 1 – Children and young people will have increased skills and learning through access to outdoor learning in a new environment.

We have given 215 school children (65% of our annual target) the opportunity to learn in a different environment. This has helped them to meet key stage requirements for school. In addition to this it has enabled them to improve wider skills and learning such as water safety and the environment.

Outcome 2 – Children and young people will have increased confidence and self-esteem through active engagement on board the narrowboats.

We have given 439 children and young people (132% of our annual target) the opportunity to work together and to become more confident in their abilities, thereby raising their self-esteem. They have learnt to work both as a team, working the locks safely and individually learning how to steer a narrowboat that is 70 feet long and weighing 20 tonnes! The sense of personal achievement cannot be overestimated. There have been 14 residential trips lasting one or more nights. This involves teamwork and improves social skills by living, eating and sleeping in a confined space. Some of the children have been involved with volunteering projects with us such as litter picking and bird box making.

Measuring Outcomes

Outcome 3 – Older people will have improved mental well-being through accessing canal and river trips.

We have given 41 older people (21% of our annual target) the opportunity to socialise and reminisce together in a calm relaxing environment. They have all said that they have enjoyed being out of their normal care home environment, enjoying the outdoors, watching nature and scenery as it drifts past their eyes in a leisurely manner. One person said how it really lifted her spirits following a recent stay in hospital.

Other vulnerable adults (25-59)

Our primary focus is on children and young people (<25) and older people (> 60). For the older people target, we have not had the uptake needed to achieve that target. However, we have made a very positive impact on groups of vulnerable adults in the 25-59 age range. These people have a combination of mental health, homeless, drug and alcohol issues etc. These issues are particularly prevalent in our current society and anything that can be done to reduce the effects of these issues are, we feel, a very valuable contribution to the community and (we hope you) agree a worthy use of the Lottery Funding that we receive.

We have given 156 vulnerable adults the opportunity to get away from the problems of their daily lives. The impact on the mental wellbeing particularly of this group vulnerable adults has been heartening to see and hear. One person in this group has applied to become a volunteer with the trust.

“People were talking more and opening up to each other”

- Participant

“I haven’t thought about drugs all day” - Participant

“Felt like therapy, getting away from City life”

- Participant

“Dream ticked as I have never been on a boat before”

- Participant

“Very relaxing, calm, good to see nature”

- Participant

“I crewed on a trip for the homeless and drug dependent, many of the passengers expressed how much they enjoyed the day away from their homeless and drug/alcohol normal existence. This particular trip reinforced why I volunteered in the first place” - Volunteer

Measuring Outcomes

Outcome 4 – Volunteers will have increased skills and more confidence to support beneficiaries on boat trips.

We started the beginning of the year with 20 volunteers and now have over 30. They have all received thorough induction to the project along with familiarisation and ongoing training. This enables them to support participants on boat trips and ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all. Here are a few of the comments that our volunteers said they get out of volunteering with the project.



“There are some things and experience that money just can’t buy” - Volunteer

“Empowering people to ‘have a go’ and seeing them grow in confidence is a great feeling” - Volunteer

“It is a pleasure to see the ‘buzz’ they get when they navigate the narrowboat and work the locks”- Volunteer

Financial



As previously mentioned, we are fortunate to have the financial support for 3 years of The National Lottery Community Fund - Reaching Communities fund which provides 70% of our funding, in addition we received a 2nd Grant from The Jones 1986 Charitable Trust which accounts for circa 20% of our income and the rest comes from Fees from our users. Our grant income has enabled us to make only a notional charge to our primary users who are Charities, not for profit Organisations, Community Groups and Educational Establishments enabling all of those organisations to make more use of our facilities.

Our accounts for the year to 31 December 2018 were filed at Companies House in November 2019 and Accounts and Annual Return to the Charity Commission were filed in October 2019. (A copy of the accounts can be [downloaded here](#) or supplied on request)

The accounts showed a surplus of £25,000 which was mainly due to the timing of the first Lottery Fund receipt. The accounts to 31st December 2019, our first full year, will show a surplus of c £2k. This lower figure is due to a delay in receiving our Lottery Fund payment, due in December 2019, which has now been received. Had this payment been received on time we would have had a surplus similar to 2018.

As part of the organisational Review detailed earlier, we are now starting the process of planning our future strategy and the funding we will need for activities post 2021 when, we will likely need, not only revenue support, but also capital funds to replace the boats which are now circa 40 years old.

Operations and Maintenance

At the end of 2018, as a result of the National Lottery Community Fund - Reaching Communities grant, we were able to create a full-time role of Operations and Liaison Coordinator and Catriona Joynt was appointed by the Board to this position. The Trustee Board want to place on record their thanks to Cat for her dedication, commitment and expertise in keeping the show on the road and the Volunteers in order!

Our boats are beginning to show their age and are having to carry out a high number of maintenance hours. This has provided some volunteering opportunities for people who currently don't wish to crew or skipper our boats but do enjoy working and maintaining our fleet. We are also incurring costs for break / fix items, such as lights and horns etc. in addition to regular consumable items such as diesel, pump outs and gas. The Board has invested in a River and Canal Rescue membership to provide emergency support to volunteers engaged in overnight residential trips away from the base.

We have provided boats and crew to support the Canal Heritage Centre in Beeston during their Open Days and other activities, which has provided opportunities for families to come out and experience time on our boats and to enjoy the rivers and canals with many of the families being out on the water for the first time.

We are undertaking a comprehensive review in 2020 with the full support of the trustees and volunteers, to ensure that all our SSoW (Safe Systems of Work), SOP's (standard operating procedures), policies and procedures in general are up to date, and conforming to current legislation and guidance. We continue to refresh and update our volunteer's skills levels and experience, taking full advantage of our in house, NCBA instructors and external training providers, to ensure we are providing every opportunity for our volunteers to progress their skills.

We are currently undertaking some improvements to our workshop to improve the working environment, for our staff, volunteers and visitors.

We are continually looking at improving our boats to ensure our customers continue to enjoy their experience when out with us and take every opportunity to fully involve our beneficiaries in operating boats on our inland water ways.



Supporters



There are several people and organisations without whose support we would not be able to operate.

We are hosted at our base by **Castle Rock Brewery** and their Canalhouse pub. Our moorings, workshop and office are part of the Canalhouse facilities, and we can make use of their utilities, such as gas, electricity and water. This is a major contribution by Castle Rock Brewery and we are very grateful for their support.

Marina services such as diesel refuelling, toilet pump outs and gas replacements are provided at a generous discount by **Castle Marina in Nottingham** and we are very grateful for this support.

We work closely with the **CRT (Canal and River Trust)**, the managing body of our local waterways and benefit from a discounted boat licence in our role as a boating charity. We are grateful to the CRT for this support. We have adopted part of the Nottingham Canal and River Trent in conjunction with the CRT and together with the support of several of our User Groups of beneficiaries, we regularly litter pick, build and install bird boxes and generally try to improve the canal and river environment for the Community.

A donation of a new Flotex flooring for Tinkers Leen was received from the manufacturers **Forbo Plc** and the Trustees would like to acknowledge this generosity.