Trustees' Annual Report
April 2024 to March 2025

Reference and Administration Details

Charity Name: Rimrose Valley Friends

Registered Charity number: 1171536

Registered addresses:
32 Henley Ave
Litherland
LIVERPOOL
L21 2PU

The Charity's current Trustees are:

Simon Albert
Sarah Edey
Linda Gaskell
Gary Young

Structure, Governance and Management

1. The Charity is governed by a written constitution
2. During this period, each of the charity's previous 5 trustees retired and were reappointed at the last AGM, in line with the charity's constitution.
3. RVF member, Simon Albert, put himself forward as a trustee at the AGM in this period, which was confirmed by those present
4. Tracey Boileau stepped down as a trustee in January 2025
5. The Charity has a paid membership scheme, with all members having voting rights at the AGM and other general meetings.
6. The last AGM was held on Wednesday, 19th Junel 2024, with the next to take place within the 15-month period permitted by the constitution.

This Annual Report covers the period from April 2024 to March 2025 in line with the Charity's accounts covering the same period.

Objectives and Activities

Objectives:

1. Rimrose Valley Friends sets out to promote, protect and improve the community resource that is Rimrose Valley Country Park.
2. Rimrose Valley Friends aims to benefit the local community surrounding Rimrose Valley, promoting it through events and activities, engaging with other community groups and liaising with the police to cut down on anti-social behaviour.
3. Rimrose Valley Friends' work covers the area of Rimrose Valley Country Park, bordering the Leeds-Liverpool canal and the adjoining communities of Seaforth, Litherland, Waterloo, Crosby, Thornton and Netherton.

Activities:

The Charity's trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit and have undertaken the following activities within the boundaries of that guidance.

During this period, the Charity has aimed to further the core activities of Rimrose Valley Friends and simultaneously run a successful campaign against a road proposal which threatens the park's future, which is known as Save Rimrose Valley. As these have different objectives, the activities for each are summarised separately below.

Rimrose Valley Friends

The Charity's core activities include:

1. Raising awareness and promoting the Charity's work **online** via the following:

    - Writing articles, blogs and content added to dedicated website www.rimrosevalleyfriends.org
    - Administering the campaign's Facebook group "Rimrose Valley Friends"
    - Maintaining the campaign's Twitter account @RimroseValley

2. Raising awareness and promoting the Charity's work **in the community** via the following:

    - Organising activities and events on Rimrose Valley
    - Engaging with local schools, community groups and other charities with shared objectives
    - Attending and supporting local community events

3. Engaging with relevant **stakeholders** including:

    - Local Councillors
    - Green Sefton
    - Sefton CVS
    - Local MPs

Specific activities in this period

The following is a summary of the key activities in this period:

1. **Facebook** The charity's community group has remained an active and positive forum to thousands of members predominantly from the surrounding communities. At the time of preparing this report, membership of the group stands at around 9,500. The group is used for people to share relevant news stories, photographs and information and is administered by 2 volunteers who ensure that the community rules are adhered to and that it is a pleasant online space. The group's settings are private for this purpose. Following the success of the Save Rimrose Valley campaign (see below), the campaign's Facebook page has been rebranded as RVF and currently has over 4,400 followers. This is visible to the public and is therefore used to promote projects, activities and events and to share important news.
2. **Website** During this period, we redesigned and rebuilt the charity's website which was almost 10 years old. The new site better showcases our work, ways to get involved and is much more in line with other sites in our sector. The mailing list has continued to grow. Members of the public can subscribe to this list and receive email notifications of news and events added to the website.
3. **Upgraded Membership Platform** The new website contains a brand-new membership platform which is to replace the existing 'WebCollect' platform. This was deemed user-unfriendly and complicated to subscribe to. The switch to the new platform will see new enhancements to our membership offering
4. **Twitter/X** This had previously proven to be a great way of connecting with similar local community groups and supporting each other's work. However, the platform has become a less inclusive space and the charity is considering whether it should remain on X. We are less active on this platform as we have found that majority of our supporters use Facebook to engage on Rimrose Valley matters
5. **Insta** The charity previously had no presence on Instagram. However, following the success of the Save Rimrose Valley campaign (see below), the campaign's account was rebranded as RVF and currently has 850+ followers. The charity is looking to engage younger volunteers to run Insta and possibly TikTok and other platforms in the future in other to connect with a younger demographic
6. **Eventbrite** After securing funding to deliver more events and activities in this period, the charity increased its use of the Eventbrite platform to administer these. This helps track bookings and communicate with participants more effectively than social media alone. At the time of preparing this report, the charity has 298 followers on this platform, up from 159 in the previous period.
7. **Paid role** Following the success of the Save Rimrose Valley campaign (see below) the charity wished to maintain one paid role in order to progress its work. Residual campaign funding meant this role was funded until June 2025. At the time of preparing this report, the charity is actively pursuing funding applications for a new Project Manager role to continue its work.
8. **Guided Walks** We arranged 4 guided walks during this period; a foraging walk in May; a nature walk led by Green Sefton in June; a bird-spotting walk led by our local RSPB officer, also in June. We worked with Green Sefton to arrange another bat walk in September. These walks are incredibly popular, and all were free to take part in.
9. **Tesco Stronger Starts – Explore & Learn on Rimrose Valley** We secured funding from Tesco's Stronger Starts programme, which focusses on delivering activities based on learning in the community. Delivery of these activities took place throughout this reporting period and included the following:

i. Yoga
ii. Tai Chi
iii. Guided Walks – RSPB, Mindfulness and Foraging
iv. Art & Relaxation classes
v. Craft sessions
vi. Forest School
vii. Apple pressing

These activities were incredibly well received. RVF were represented at each session and captured the necessary feedback for the funder. As is common with many other local groups offering free events, we noticed a number of 'no shows'. We fed back to our supporters that because an activity is free doesn't mean there is no cost to providing it. We will continue to communicate this for future events

10. **Liverpool's Most Wuthering Heights Day, Ever!** In July 2024, we became Liverpool's first location for this event which began life in Brighton as a way of marking Kate Bush's birthday. It was then picked up by other countries and recreated across the globe. The purpose of this event was to draw attention to the park and our campaign to save it. Almost 300 people attended and recreated the 1978 Kate Bush contemporary dance masterpiece. The event was a huge success attracting people from across the Liverpool City Region, and beyond. We arranged rehearsals in advance and people were led by instructors from local dance schools on the day. The positive feedback from the event means that we will look to host this again in future years.
11. **60 Minute Heroes!** A new volunteer joined our action group as a result of the Wuthering Heights event. They were keen to get involved and have subsequently led weekly volunteer sessions encouraging local people to get involved in hands-on work to improve the park. Activities include litter picks, trimming overgrown benches, tables and footpaths and reclaiming tarmac pathways by removing vegetation. There is now a core group, with plans to grow this work in the future. All work is done using hand tools and in line with Green Sefton's volunteer guidance
12. **Step-tember!** This walking challenge was suggested by a member of our action group as a means of drawing attention to the park, getting people active in autumn and encouraging people to engage with the campaign to save it. Over the course of the 30 days, people used apps and pedometers to log the number of steps they has walked or run each day, with a requirement that some or all of this had to be on Rimrose Valley. The target of 10 million steps was reached with days to spare, boosted by huge contributions from running groups Marsh Lane Harriers and Rimrose Runners. Following its success, we plan for this to become an annual event.
13. **Dr Bike** Our contacts at Cycling UK offered free bike maintenance sessions under their Dr Bike initiative during this period. We coordinated these with Merseyside Police so members of the public could get their bike serviced and security marked at the same time. These were extremely popular, with dozens of local people taking advantage of the service. We will continue these in the future and explore ways of doing more with Cycling UK.
14. **Wildflower meadow** Once again, the Charity sold seeds harvested from the previous year's meadow to raise the funds for subsequent sowing and to generate income for the Charity. Following concerns expressed around the use of herbicide outlined in last year's report, the decision was taken to transition away from annuals to perennials, which do not require the annual intervention of herbicide. This is in line with the charity's objectives of championing the environment and the health and wellbeing of the surrounding communities. This meant that 2024/25 was the final year the RVF

meadow at the centre of Chaffers running track will be sprayed. A community sowing took place in May 2024 which was well attended by people of all ages.

15. **Rimrose Valley Calendar** The Charity again invited people to submit photographs for the 2025 calendar. 500 copies were ordered and the majority sold, making a healthy profit from the sales. Leftover copies were given to local individuals, community groups and businesses who support the Charity's work, as well as being recycled in card-making classes
16. **Marsh Lane Harriers & Chaffers Running Track** At the time of preparing this report, this work has yet to commence on the clubhouse construction at this location within the park, outlined in the previous year's report.
17. **Rimrose What If? Sessions** We supported a local student with their Masters dissertation by providing them with documentation and promoting drop-in consultation events they organised in the local community. With their permission, we are able to use the anonymised information gathered from these invents to help inform our future work and funding bids. The dissertation outlines a vision for restoring nature on the park and enhancing it for local communities. We therefore hope to work with the student to explore what we might be able to deliver in the future.

Save Rimrose Valley

The Charity continued to oppose National Highways' plans to build a dual carriageway through Rimrose Valley Country Park, known as The A5036 Port of Liverpool Access Scheme.

The Charity set up a Road Action Group in September 2017. The group included several of the charity's trustees and additional volunteers from the community, with approximately 20 active members.

The campaign's work was coordinated by Stuart Bennett through a part-time role, funded via a combination of grants and general Charity fundraising. During this period, this moved from a contractor to a paid role (PAYE) to give greater job security and a pension, which took effect in July 2024.

Guidance and support were received from relevant environmental groups and NGOs including Transport Action Network, Friends of the Earth, CPRE and Lancashire Wildlife Trust.

This guidance informed the campaign's strategy which had two key objectives:

1. To change minds of decision-makers at Westminster
2. To engage the community in the fight to save the park

The campaign's work therefore met either of the two objectives, with the Road Action Group supporting the delivery of this work.

The campaign's core activities included:

1. Raising awareness and promoting the campaign's work **online** via the following:

    - Writing articles, blogs and content added to dedicated website www.saverimrosevalley.org
    - Writing and distributing press releases to local, regional and national media outlets
    - Maintaining the campaign's Facebook page @saverimrosevalley
    - Maintaining the campaign's Twitter account @saverimrose
    - Maintaining the campaign's Instagram account @saverimrose
    - Producing a podcast series "We Said No" covering many of the issues around the campaign
    - Creating videos to convey key messages

2. Raising awareness and promoting the campaign's work **in the community** via the following:

    - Organising demonstrations
    - Leafleting
    - Using signs, posters and banners in prominent locations
    - Engaging with local schools

- Promoting the campaign at ‘in store’ events such as LUSH and local supermarkets
- Engaging with other environmental groups and campaigns from across the Liverpool City Region
- Attending and supporting local community events

3. Engaging with key stakeholders in the road proposal including:

    - National Highways
    - Peel Ports
    - Department for Transport
    - Transport for the North
    - Local MPs, Councillors, the Metro Mayor & Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

4. Documenting key arguments against the road proposal
5. Exploring and promoting viable alternatives the road proposal

Developments and activities in this period

1. **Cancellation of the road proposal** On 30th October, 2024, the Port of Liverpool Access Road was cancelled in the Chancellor’s Budget Statement on the grounds that it was ‘unfunded and unaffordable’. The charity believes that this was the culmination of public and political pressure brought about by the Save Rimrose Valley campaign, as other, far more costly road schemes survived this spending review.
2. **Celebration gathering** On Sunday 17th November, the charity held a small, symbolic gathering on Rimrose Valley to mark the above announcement, which included guest speakers from Sefton Council, Friends of the Earth, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Scouse Flowerhouse with statements read out for those unable to attend. These included both constituency MPs, CPRE and Transport Action Network.
3. **Future campaigning** Despite the road’s cancellation, the charity remains vigilant and will continue to keep an eye on transport developments which have the potential to impact the park and the surrounding communities. We will seek multiple ways to protect the park long-term and continue to research and push for sustainable, non-road alternatives to port access. In this sense, an element of campaigning will continue.

Many of the following activities pre-date the announcement above but are included here for completeness:

4. **Social media** The campaign continued to grow its following across all platforms during this period which was a vital and dynamic way of communicating key issues. Following the road’s cancellation, we have taken advantage of the following the campaign gathered on its Facebook Page and Insta profile by rebranding these as the charity to promote and grow our work
5. **Website** The campaign-specific website was updated consistently throughout this period with press coverage secured, blogs and longer articles covering the more detailed topics linked to the campaign. Many articles have been viewed thousands of times. At the time of writing the website is relatively dormant, but we will continue to use it to flag important developments and consultations. Some minor updates are required to reflect that the campaign as a success.

6. **National Highways** We facilitated a meeting with National Highways, Sefton Council and residents from the existing port access route – the A5036 – in February 2025 through our participation in the South Sefton Communities Alliance. This was with a view to improving relations with those from the wider community and to demonstrate that our charity cares about securing a better solution for everyone. We hope to continue to engage in the SSCA and its work
7. **Alternative Solutions** At the time of writing, we are actively pursuing alternative options and have met with 2 consultancies, having been introduced by Transport Action Network. We wish to commission a study into port access and have written to the Mayor of the LCRCA and Council Leader asking for their input and a contribution to the cost of the report.
8. **Politics** The campaign maintained good relations with Councillors, the relevant Council Officers and MPs; all of whom opposed the road proposal. The 2024 general election saw Labour come to power, which no doubt influenced the decision to cancel the road proposal, with Sefton being a Labour council, both MPs Labour and a Labour Metro Mayor. We again attended the Labour Party Conference in September 2024, which was a great opportunity to network with the newly elected government's Transport Ministers
9. **We Said No** The podcast series continued throughout this period, culminating in an episode which documented the small gathering we held to mark the success of the campaign.
10. **Media coverage** Press releases remained a key tool for the campaign and we continued to keep the story in the news with major developments covered locally via the Liverpool Echo, BBC Radio Merseyside, Granada TV and BBC North West Tonight. The Echo and Radio Merseyside each reported on the campaign's success.
11. **Funding** The Charity was successful with funding applications to Foundation for Integrated Transport and Patagonia Action Works. A combination of these 2 grants secured the role of campaign coordinator for 2 days per week for this accounting period, putting the campaign in a secure position. The campaign also held several in-store fundraising events at LUSH in Liverpool. These proceeds go towards the general costs of running the campaign – leaflets, signs and design costs.
12. **Consultations** During this period, the campaign responded to key consultations and encouraged supporters to the do same, as they had a direct link to transport in our area and our local environment. These included the LCRCA's consultations on its Draft Local Transport Plan and its Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Both presented opportunities to flag the important of Rimrose Valley to South Sefton communities.
13. **Demonstrations** In April 2024, we commissioned a local visual design company to project campaign images and core messages onto major landmarks in Liverpool city centre at dusk and into the late evening. The subsequent video was viewed thousands of times, further raising awareness of our work. In September 2024, we demonstrated outside the Labour Party conference, calling for the Chancellor and Transport Secretary to cancel the port access road and other damaging road proposals.

Achievements and Performance

The Charity continued to raise awareness of Rimrose Valley Country Park and to pursue our core objects of promoting, protecting and enhancing the space and improving the health and wellbeing of surrounding communities.

We gathered feedback on our work in 2024-25 and are in the process of documenting our effectiveness in the form of an evaluation report to aid future funding bids.

The campaign was successful in securing the cancellation of the road proposal. It is one of only a handful of campaigns to have successfully stopped a government-led Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) – something we are incredibly proud of.

Financial Review

1. The Charity is regularly funded by public donation. It has a LocalGiving account which can accept one-off donations as well as recurring direct debits.
2. The Charity has actively applied for grants and other funding to finance both the Charity's activities and events and the work of the Save Rimrose Valley campaign. All funds applied for are ringfenced for their specific purpose and are clearly referenced in the Charity's accounts
3. The Accounts for the financial year 2024/25 will be prepared and audited by Sefton CVS and will be reviewed and approved at the upcoming AGM.

Declaration