

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2023



Upper
Teesdale
Agricultural
Support
Services



Introduction



2023 was an incredibly busy year in which UTASS consolidated its position as the go-to organisation for support within Upper Teesdale and Upper Weardale.

In addition to hosting the Post Office and the Citizen's Advice, UTASS is now hosting Barclays Bank who have recently closed its branch in Middleton. We are fortunate that we are able to provide facilities so their essential services have not been lost.

The health and welfare element which has always been integral to the role of UTASS has been added to in recent times by the addition of a Parish Nurse Gladys Mugambi. Gladys' role is flexible and will develop in line with the need of the dales, working as part of the now three-strong community care team. This role is not medical as such so does not impinge upon the role of the Forge Surgery, but I hope complements the medical care provided by the surgery. The Parish Nurse is paid for by the Durham Diocese, and working together we are looking at a second Parish Nurse to be appointed in February 2024.

Richard Betton, together with Charlotte Fletcher, have been working hard over the course of the last year assisting with the changes with regard to the Basic Payment Scheme and Farm for the Future programme. This I feel is an invaluable element of UTASS, giving as much certainty as possible to our farmers or at the very least providing an understanding (as best we are



able) as to what is actually going on and how the changes will affect farmers and the countryside.

Throughout the year Grace Crawford continues to keep UTASS on the right track with funding applications and the continued grant funding, which we receive, is due to the sterling effort Grace

puts into our applications and the ongoing conversations and relationships with grant funders. Grace deserves our thanks and congratulations.

I was delighted to attend and spend some time and money at our Christmas Fair, again spent at Middleton Mart. This was quite a treat on a bright frosty November day to see so many people of all generations gathering to buy Christmas treats, both for themselves and for others with a chance of bumping into Father Christmas. I would like to pay tribute to those who worked so hard to pull together with the Christmas Fair giving their time in arranging the Mart, putting up lights and decorations ready for the various stall holders, and especially Emma Spry for arranging it all.

It is, I think, the most important part of my role as Chairman to say thank you;

- Thank you to our members who support us, recognise what UTASS and its staff do in the communities we operate and also will put their hands in their pockets to support us financially, be this by way of donations when UTASS helps them, or will turn up to events such as the Christmas Fair and spend money which filters back into our coffers.
- Thank you to our dedicated staff. Without them UTASS would be nothing.
- Thank you to those grant funders who continue to recognise the relevance of UTASS and its very real input into our communities.
- Finally, a thank you to our patrons for their continued interest and for the fact that they continue to spread the word about what UTASS is about and does, far and wide.

This year we have been very fortunate in that we have not lost any members of staff but have gained three, Gladys our new parish nurse, Alison Brown our Finance Officer (who has taken some of the role of manager Bob, lightening his unenviable workload) and Janet Dodson our Time Together Coordinator.

We also gained two new Trustees, Stephanie Markwick and Caroline Colling who were appointed at the last AGM. Sadly at the last AGM we said goodbye to our long standing trustees, Ian Tallentire, and Roy Oxby, both of whom have, in their different ways, been a particular miss to the board. I send to them both, the good wishes of our organisation.

UTASS continues with its mission emboldened, to provide care and support for our agricultural community and it must be emphasised our community at large. If I am ever in any doubt about the need for UTASS and concerned about what we do, such worries or concerns are soon allayed by the knowledge that so many government, non-government, and charitable, organisations understand what we do and are not only prepared to praise what we do but actually use UTASS as the benchmark for other regions and organisations using us as almost a guiding light.

I bid you well for 2024 and sign off in the firm assurance that despite difficulties we as a community face, we do so together.

Michael McGarry
UTASS Chairman



Farming Support



Our farm support team went from strength to strength during 2023 as Charlotte expanded her depth of knowledge and Caitlin, who only joined UTASS as admin support in late 2022, began her IAgSA Agricultural Secretary training. Caitlin has already been supporting the farming team in completing grant applications and grant claims. Emma remains part of the team, dealing with farm support matters as well as Basic Payment Scheme claims. The support Caitlin and Emma provide ensures the pressure and demands of Charlotte and Richard are eased.

2023 saw the final claims for **BPS** being submitted before the Rural Payments Agency move to the delinking of payments.

Most of the problems with the RPA online system, which have caused havoc in the past, had finally been ironed out making it a much less stressful time for all concerned. That said, we did see additional problems with 5-year HLS extensions and the annual claim forms for both Higher Level Stewardship and Countryside Stewardship.

Assisted our members with
197
BPS claims
in 2023

The RPA are planning to use the Rural Payments system for future Environmental Land Management Schemes so making sure members' mapping was up to date during their BPS appointment was a good investment for the future.



Grant assistance remained a recurring support need with CS applications as well as new SFI applications (Sustainable Farming Incentive). We also often help sort out problems with existing agreements and assist with submitting online CS capital grant claims, especially for wall and hedge restoration.

Charlotte and Richard have attended numerous Defra online workshops covering the development of the new ELMS schemes, guidance, penalties, and many other aspects.

“Anything we’ve needed help with has been there, especially Charlotte’s assistance and patience negotiating walling grants.

We really appreciate being able to get through to UTASS’s helpful reception staff without choosing options, recorded messages and long holds.”

Mr & Mrs Harrison

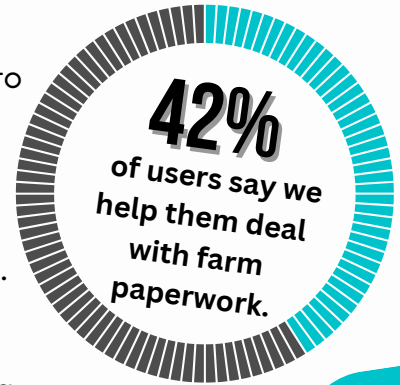
“We have had excellent help and support from Richard and Charlotte at UTASS in advising us on completing the SFI and Capital Grant applications. We appreciate their invaluable time and assistance.”

Mr & Mrs Hodgson

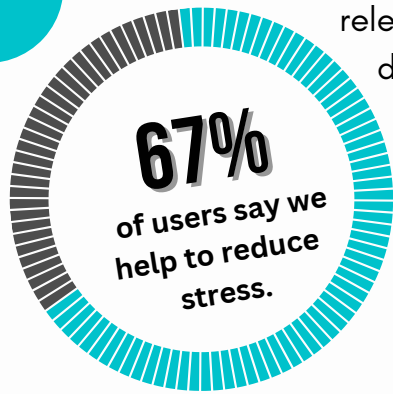
Farming Support

Agricultural secretary support helps our members with a wide range of farm record-keeping tasks and dealing with a range of agencies such as the RPA, APHA, BCMS, LIS and local councils;

Anything from the notifications of movements for sheep and cattle, to the registering of calf births or farm assurance inspections and medicine records to appeals and planning applications. Our assistance in this area can be essential for those without internet connections/limited confidence with IT as most need to be done online.



Our briefings remain vital for our farming members. Such a small amount of the over-complicated, jargon-laden policy documents and scheme guidance is actually relevant to farmers in our area. Richard and Charlotte transform the relevant information into easily understood snippets to ensure our members don't miss any crucial information for their farm business.



Richard remains the secretary for five local **graziers groups** as well as two groups of Field Reeves for local common land.

Although the Raby grazing groups all have HLS extensions still in place, Natural England have advised that it is likely that these will be moved over to Countryside Stewardship before the end of the current agreements. Although there has been welcomed uplifts on CS rates, there will be considerable work to administer new agreements for all the groups.

A part of our nucleus is **providing a voice** on behalf of our members. The rate of change in the farming landscape, including schemes, regulations and cost inflation, is challenging for all of us. We have set up a **farmers forum** to work in partnership with us and keep us fully in touch with the impacts on the ground so we can deliver the most helpful and necessary support to the farming community.

Both Charlotte and Richard regularly attended the RPA Farmer Welfare Group and Richard attended conferences and worked with the North Pennines AONB, Tees Swale, NFU, to name but a few, as a voice for our members and to ensure that these organisations have greater understanding of our farming communities and their needs, while Emma has been working with the Livestock Information Service to help shape the new system for cattle recording.

Farming Support



In late November Sandy Kapila, Head of External Affairs at the RPA, came to UTASS to meet with our members. He talked through the RPA's role post-Brexit in designing and delivering the new schemes. He also answered wide-ranging questions, often more relevant to the short-comings of other Defra agencies, with candour and honesty. The message that resonated most with our members was the RPA's intention to move away from the former EU punitive inspection approach to more developmental visits focussed on producing outcomes rather than imposing penalties. He fully recognised that building trust between farmers and the RPA would take time but hoped that this event, and the relationship that already existed between UTASS staff and the RPA, would help that process.

2023 saw the delivery of our second **Farm For The Future** resilience programme, developed and funded by the Royal Countryside Fund.

Although the programme was again hampered, with details from DEFRA failing to be announced on time, the programme has enabled our members to gain a better understanding of many different aspects that contribute to the overall success of farm businesses.



The programme provides two standard sessions; Ian Cairns' 'Farm Business' session which looks at better understanding annual accounts and also costing out individual enterprises and Janet Fairclough's session on 'Environmental Opportunities'.

The programme gives participants access to expert one-to-one support as well as the opportunity to request extra meetings on topics that are interest-specific to them. In 2023, these extra meetings included a



“The Farm For The Future programme has been very informative.

I found the workshops engaging and definitely got me thinking about the future of my business and the decisions I will have to make going forward”

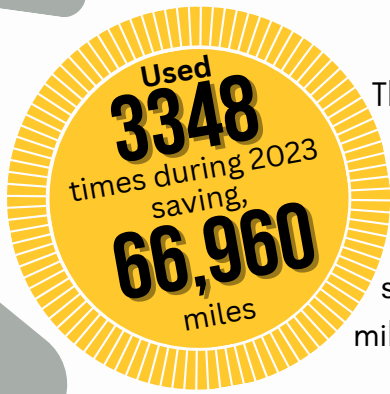
Robin Bellas

session on carbon and another on 'Tenants Rights' which was run by George Dunn the Chief Executive of the Tenant Farmers Association.

We will continue to build on this work, the programme will run year-on-year until 2025, to allow more members to sign up and reap the benefits of the programme.

Access to Services

POST OFFICE®



The twice weekly **Post office** sessions are more vital than ever since the loss of the Barclays branch. The service, provided by Barnard Castle Post Office, now gives the community access to banking facilities, as well as postal services. It also massively benefits the environment, saving the dale a 20 mile round trip to Barnard Castle.

citizens advice

This year saw a change in the way in which we work together with **Citizens Advice** County Durham. A new team of locally based volunteers were recruited to provide a more regular service in the Dale.

Janet and Paul, having undergone a full training programme, are now providing face-to-face advice here at UTASS.

Thanks to their commitment we now have weekly sessions, making it easier for people to call in for advice when they need it. Our volunteers have already helped deal with issues relating to benefits, housing, utilities and personal finances.



UTASS was identified as a 'test centre' by

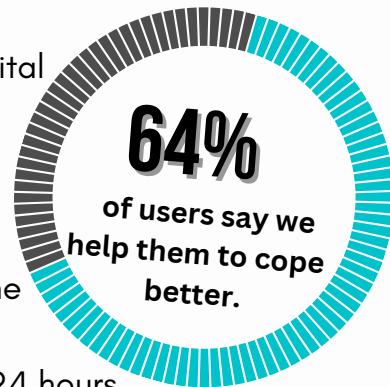
Pearson Vue

and during 2023 they offered Health and Safety Tests on behalf of the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) every fortnight. This test is needed prior to applying for a CSCS card (Construction Skills Certificate Scheme) for those working or sub-contracting into the construction industry. Prior to this the nearest test station was 50 miles away!



BARCLAYS

Due to the closure of the **Barclays** branch in the village, UTASS was again identified as an ideal location, this time to become a 'Barclays Hub'. Barclays staff are based here twice weekly. They offer a cashless service, providing money advice, help with making CHAPS & BACS payments, and digital assistance, again saving members of the community from having to travel.



Durham County Carers Support



is an independant charitable organisation who we work closely with. We refer members within County Durham who are

carers, to enable them to receive support and advice as well as practical help. UTASS is often used as a venue for coffee mornings for local carers.

'Out of Hours' assistance

is one of our original and vital services; we're available 24 hours

a day, 365 days a year!

Whatever the time of day our emergency telephone number can be called, or texted, or more often these days, people get in touch via our website or social media pages.



Bringing People Together



Yoga & Pilates

continued to be popular well attended sessions. Laura, a local physiotherapist, continued to hold her well-established weekly pilates session. Hatha Yoga went from strength to strength this year, swapping from mid-day to an evening session quickly saw it reach maximum attendance.

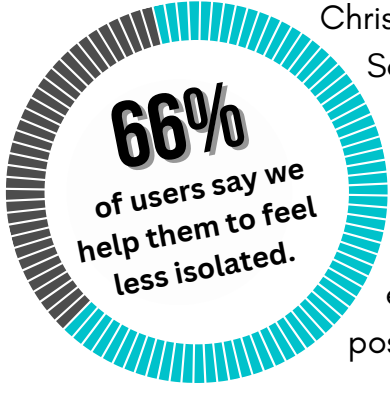


We have been fortunate that Jude continues to lead her Hatha Yoga sessions on a voluntary basis. Our Resilience Support Worker, June, also runs a weekly session, offering very gentle yoga, relaxation and mindfulness, which has also seen an increase in attendees.

“Excellent class. Very well run and friendly. The teaching is clear and a good combination of movements to enhance participants’ mobility and flexibility.”
Yoga Participant

Fortnightly **shopping trips** took place throughout the year with 26 trips taking place.

This included a regular monthly trip to Tindale Shopping Park, as well as trips to local farm shops, garden centres, and other retail parks. By popular demand we visited Sam Turners three times, with almost full seats each time! In December we took 20 people, using both minibuses, to enjoy the Christmas Markets at the South Causey Inn.



2023 saw many regular residents coming along on the trips, as well as an ever-increasing amount of new faces. Our shopping trips would not be possible without our volunteer drivers, who we are very grateful for.



Highlights

is a touring scheme that brings an affordable programme of theatre, for all ages, to rural communities like ours.

In October we hosted ‘Mountain Music’ by Little Bulb, an Olivier Award-winning company, and seasoned community tourers. It was great to see new faces in the crowd, who witnessed an unforgettable theatrical feast of tales and songs, featuring sumptuous three-part harmonies and a

foot-stomping five-piece string band telling of culture, migration and history, exploring the roots of Americana and its impact on popular music today.



Bringing People Together

The **CREE monthly lunches**

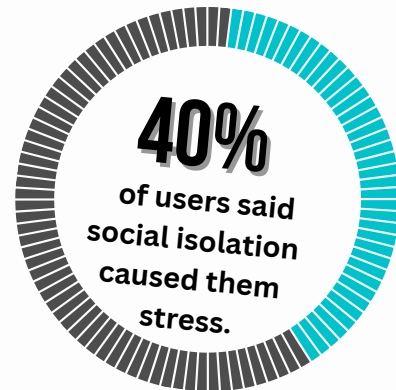
at Middleton Mart, St John's Chapel and Barnard Castle Mart continue to be well attended. We now contact more than 60 men every month and they all do their best to attend. They are served wonderful food cooked by Rosemary Thompson with much-appreciated help from our volunteer, Rosie.



The 3 groups were treated to two extra meals in 2023. They joined together at Easter for lunch at Langdon Beck and again for a Christmas meal at the Moorcock. It was good to hear all the chatter, banter and laughter.

"You 3 ladies made us all so welcome when we arrived at the Moorcock. A good venue, couldn't fault it."

Tom Anderson, Member



We organised seven **ladies outings** this year, including a couple of ladies lunches, visits to Wensleydale Creamery, the Spanish Gallery at Bishop Auckland, Harrogate Flower Show, Richmond Cinema and a ride over to Tebay Services which has recently been featured in a TV Series.

Many thanks to our volunteer drivers, we couldn't do these trips without you.



"Brilliant meal and company. Thank you from the Cotherstone Ladies."

Members who attend ladies outings

2023 saw three **theatre trips** take place. We saw the musical 'Buddy' at Darlington

Hippodrome in March, we then went to the Sunderland Empire in April to see The Lion King and returned to Sunderland again later in November to see Sister Act.

There is much appreciation for these trips, especially with providing group transport, eliminating the stress of driving and parking.



Bringing People Together



Tuesday morning **Chat & Craft** sessions continued throughout 2023 with Gina leading and supporting them... and still being one of the highlights of her week! Jacqui, one of our Youth Team workers also helps to support the group.

800+
Tea Cakes were enjoyed at Chat & Craft sessions in 2023

25 sessions were led by local artists which included pottery, felt making and flower arranging, as well as advice-based sessions ran by the Alzheimer's Society, and Clare Tellegen and June Wainwright, who focussed on wellbeing with reflexology and relaxation.



Participants are greeted at every session with a cuppa and a teacake.

We have 64 registered participants, all of whom enjoy meeting old and new friends,

"I can't underestimate the difference this has made to me as an individual. I moved to the village after retirement three years ago.

while soaking up all the new skills and advice and appreciate the programme UTASS are able to offer.

I am really impressed with the innovative and varied programme. No matter what your starting point is, the sessions are suitable for all abilities and interests. One of the real benefits of the group is the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends.

Gina has built a strong bond with many who attend the sessions, allowing her to help and support them in various other ways as and when needed, whether that be NHS assistance or helping them to understand the support Citizens Advice can offer.

On average we have **17** participants attending weekly sessions

Tuesday mornings are a real point of contact for us all and that is what we appreciate the most. It has definitely helped me with initial feelings of isolation that come with retirement and moving to a new part of the country."

**Linda Halbert,
Chat & Craft participant**



Age UK have worked closely with us to plan regular sessions for older people. A 'Seated Exercise' class proved very popular promoting the idea of 'Keep Moving, Keep Well'. 'Device Support' drop-in sessions, held straight after our weekly Chat & Craft session gave an opportunity to have one-on-one tech support for tablets, mobiles, and the like.

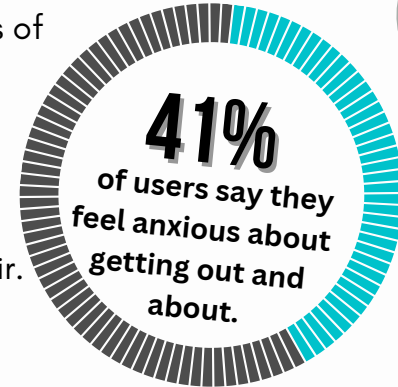


Bringing People Together

Wellness walks continued to take place on a weekly basis led by Sue Bainbridge, a local part-time first responder and Wendy Stefeckis a local volunteer who helps run the community gym in Middleton-in-Teesdale.

The walks are designed to enable anyone to join, regardless of fitness level. Sue leads a short, gentle walk, while Wendy generally leads longer walks. The UTASS minibus is often used to allow the group to travel to various locations - In 2023 they explored Stanhope, Baldersdale and Cow Green

Reservoir.



“It's always a pleasure and a privilege to join in the Music and Memories sessions at UTASS. Mike Bettison's song leadership and ukulele playing and Julia Stephenson's warm hospitality make these events very welcoming to all comers. Mike makes it easy to join in by providing songsheets and projecting lyrics onto a screen.”

Music and Memories participant



Throughout 2023 **music and memories** sessions took place monthly, again led by Mike Bettison with his ukulele, a welcomed change saw regular attendee, Katherine, now playing alongside Mike.

We saw our regular attendance double in December, when the Choir from Middleton-in-Teesdale Primary School performed Christmas songs, uplifting our Christmas spirits!



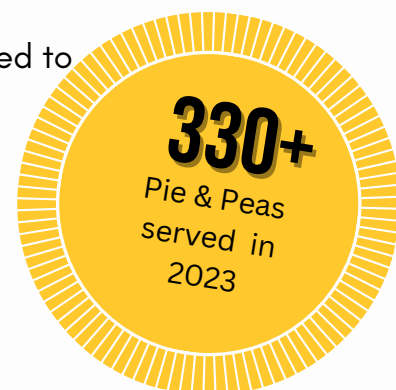
With the help of a regular volunteer driver, we were able to provide transport for residents from two local care homes with our minibus, enabling them to come along to join the sessions. In December, the journey home detoured around some local villages so the care home residents could enjoy the sight of the various Christmas light displays!

Monday **pie and peas** sessions continued to be a hit throughout the year with 16 registered participants regularly in attendance.

A friendly, welcoming, warm space makes for a great opportunity to meet up with friends or make new ones whilst enjoying a range of 'table' games, followed by a hot lunch and a cuppa.

These sessions allow people to come along without prior booking,

- Everyone's welcome! The more the merrier!



Wellbeing Support



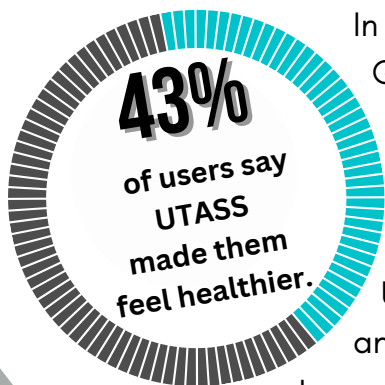
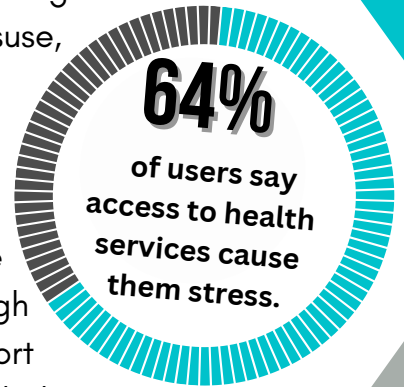
The demand for our well-being support saw significant increases throughout 2023. Our **Resilience Support** workers, June and Melanie, have had another busy year and, with their wide range of backgrounds in counselling, mental health social work and nursing, they were able to offer evidence-based support for a wide range of emotional issues including bereavement, anxiety, depression, alcohol misuse, impacts of long-term illness and in supporting people at the end of life.

UTASS Support and Wellbeing services complement those already available through the NHS. The Durham Resilience Service, which was initially commissioned to support people recovering from the impacts of the Covid Pandemic, is funded and managed through an NHS and voluntary sector partnership to offer early support and to prevent people's difficulties from deteriorating with the inevitable costs to the individual, their families, and the community.

The Parish Nursing Service for the Durham Dales was similarly envisioned to improve the emotional wellbeing of rural communities with the additional element of spiritual support where this is sought by the client.

In summer, we welcomed our **Parish Nurse**, Gladys, when she joined the wellbeing team. Gladys is a registered nurse funded by the Anglican Church and offers counselling and emotional support.

The Support and Wellbeing workers based at UTASS work closely together pooling experience and supporting one another in what can, at times, be harrowing work. Our team approach allows for considered responses to crises and our impact is increasingly recognised by local health professionals and importantly by the community itself.



Get to know our Resilience Support Workers:

June:

June specialises in supporting people and families affected by more severe mental illness.

Melanie:

Melanie is particularly experienced in supporting local farming families and working with families affected by life threatening illness and loss.

Wellbeing Support

“May I thank you for the kindness, generosity and for your time and effort.

Also, thank you for gifting us coats ready for any oncoming cold weather we might be exposed to this winter.”

Client

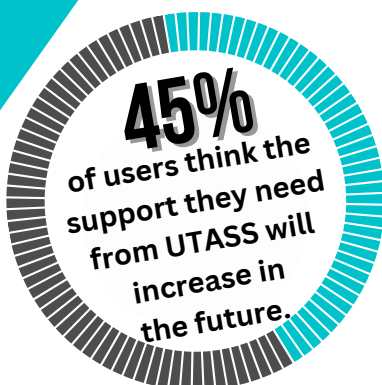
Our aim is to see people quickly, especially if they are in crisis, and then we will work to involve other members of the UTASS team and statutory agencies if needed.

Our team works flexibly with people of all ages, including children and young people, whose emotional wellbeing has deteriorated since the pandemic, and with rural families who

have lived in the Dales for generations or those who have moved into the area more recently to retire.

Since the pandemic, many services have limited the availability of face-to-face appointments and moved almost entirely to telephone or internet support. Whilst this approach is valued by some clients for offering flexibility, many of our clients specifically mention the benefits of seeing us face-to-face.

As well as working with individuals, the team have also worked with the Chat & Craft sessions at UTASS, and also within the local primary school focussing on mental wellbeing.



Working Together



We know UTASS opened its doors over 20 years ago, so it's easy to assume that everyone in the Dales knows who we are and what we do. This certainly isn't the case though and, as our services have expanded over the years, it's important that we keep everyone up-to-date with what goes on in "the building next to the Co-op". With this in mind, in September we held a **'UTASS Open Day'** in September to showcase the wide variety of services that UTASS offers.

With a smoothie bike and crafts for the kids, information on our resilience service, support for farmers and up-to-date training opportunities, we were able to represent UTASS as a whole.

We were also joined by external organisations with whom we have strong links, including Scouts, Brownies and Citizens Advice.

It was great to open our doors and welcome new people in, but it certainly doesn't stop there and we are always here should anyone need support, advice, local information or even just a cup of tea!



87

volunteers supported our work in 2023

Volunteers are essential to help us to do what we do!

UTASS regularly offers trips and events for the community which are enjoyed by a wide range of people.



From music events, Middleton Mart Christmas Fair, cinema trips, open days and crafting sessions, we have lots going on and so much to get involved in. Volunteers are what make all of this possible and we're always so grateful for any involvement. In February we held a celebration to recognise all the incredible work volunteers do and, to say a huge thank you on behalf of the Teesdale community and from everyone at UTASS.

Food, drinks and memories were shared as volunteers from across the Dale gathered to share stories from the variety of events and activities they'd so selflessly donated their time to. If you've ever thought about taking part, there are a variety of exciting opportunities that will allow you to meet new people, share your skills and give something back to the community you love

- **get in touch to find out how to become part of the team!**

Volunteer time during 2023 is valued at **£67,717**

thank you

Time Together Teesdale is a Volunteer Companionship Project that was started in October 2023.

This is a pilot project run jointly by UTASS and Teesdale Day Clubs, the first time both organisations have worked together.

The project aims to provide friendship, social connections and community involvement by recruiting volunteers to act as companions to isolated and lonely people in Teesdale.



A Project co-ordinator, Janet Dodson, was appointed, she is employed by UTASS and line managed by Teesdale Day Clubs.

The project got off to a good start with the recruitment of a number of local people who responded to a newspaper article and expressed a desire to offer some of their free time in companionship to isolated people living in the Dale.

Further recruitment campaigns were held at Middleton Mart Christmas Fair, and with talks to other interest groups, such as the WI and Church congregations.



TEESDALE DAY CLUBS

"Adding Some Sparkle to our Local Communities"

“Research has identified that social connection is key to our having good mental wellbeing and this project provides an opportunity for both volunteers and people who use the service to benefit from that connection, with the additional support from a coordinated project.

“The experience that both Utass and Teesdale Day Clubs can bring to this new service means we are very hopeful that we can attract funding to continue after the initial pilot stage.”

**Andrea Hobbs,
Strategic manager for Teesdale Day Clubs**

1st Middleton-in-Teesdale Scout Group



had another good year, with the group growing to 35 children over the three groups, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts.

UTASS is used as a base during the colder months, with meetings covering such topics as a Coronation party, cardboard castle construction, knot work, cooking, games and making lanterns for the lantern parade in Barnard Castle. Through the

summer months, we had many adventures at Bowlees, sleepovers at the Hub and Beamish and a number of activity days provided by the AONB throughout the valley.



1st Upper Teesdale Rainbows



had 12 girls, aged between 4 and 7 years of age attending Rainbows sessions on Wednesdays during term time. They followed a varied program of activities as they worked towards Bronze, Silver and Gold awards. In 2023 four girls achieved their Gold Award Badges, which were presented to them by our District commissioner at the time, Debbie Brown.

They had off site trips to the cinema in Richmond, a picnic in the play park and a trip to the ice cream parlour and castle at Brough.

At Christmas they had a silent disco for their Christmas party which was enjoyed by everyone especially the leaders!

Let's Learn Moor

is an annual event which sees more than 2000 primary children visit one of seven 'classrooms' set up in upland outdoor areas to learn from those who work to preserve them.



Becca & Emma were again asked to attend the 2023 event, held locally in July, where they met 280 children

across two days. It was an opportunity to 'plant the seeds' in the young, and those who educate them, about the Countryside Code and keeping safe when out and about in the uplands. Emma brought along some sheep with lambs for the children to see up close, and the lambs stole the show every time!



The committee which formed in 2022 to plan Jubilee celebrations had no idea that less than 12 months later they would be meeting again to plan **Coronation celebrations** for His Majesty King Charles III.

In January the group got together and threw lots of ideas around! However it was an 'old-fashioned' street party idea that won the vote! Lots of outdoor locations were considered, but it was felt that moving the party indoors took away the need to have a 'wet-weather plan' and also made the party much safer for little ones to have freedom, parents to not worry, and essentials such as toilets and kitchen facilities all readily available.



The programme of events was laid down, food arranged, entertainment booked and Teesdales' very own commemorative glasses were designed and ordered.

The day was a huge success, and the effort the team had put in was greatly appreciated

- One to be forever remembered!



The same saying goes for UTASS staff member Grace, who was lucky enough to witness the celebrations in the capital from right outside Buckingham Palace.

Her invitation came from The Royal Countryside Fund, who Grace has worked closely with for our Farm For The Future programme.



Working Together



Our partnership with the **Middleton Christmas Lights** committee strengthened and continued in 2023. The committee took the decision to change their usual lights Switch-On event format and joined forces with UTASS to make the 11th **Middleton Mart Christmas Fair** bigger and better than ever before!



Over 60 stallholders attended bringing a huge range of local goods and produce, some of which have attended every year, giving visitors the opportunity to 'shop local' at Christmas for every member of the family... including the pets!

The number of visitors in attendance hit record levels, all of who were met with the tempting smell of mulled wine and bacon

butties served up by Middleton Scouts, who do a marvellous job every year looking after visitors and stall holders alike.



The Christmas Lights committee were a welcome band of volunteers, helping to set up in the days prior, and the ideas and activities that they brought to the event were very well received.

In the ring, they had a wonderful photo opportunity set up, with Santa's Sleigh as well as a lantern-making station; jam jars could be adorned and lit up with beautiful bright lights as well as tickets available to purchase for their Grand Christmas Raffle. The lights committee also brought a new addition for 2023; a Santa's Grotto!

Mr & Mrs Claus arrived on their quad bike lit up with fairy lights, before taking shelter in their amazing grotto, designed and decorated by the UTASS Chat & Craft ladies. They provided the most magical



'Santa Experience', assisted by two wonderful young ladies, Abbie Spry and Lilia Hodgson, who volunteered to be elves for the day. They worked their magic keeping the scores of queuing families happy!

The buzz at the mart shifted to the car park for the annual switch-on event. As mulled wine, mince pies and hot sandwiches were enjoyed, carols were sung with the Silver band and choir, with the earlier made lanterns the perfect accessory as the carnival queen switched on the lights, officially starting Christmas in the Dale!

Working Together

Our **Rural-Watch group** has, again continued to expand

- The WhatsApp group, the first of it's kind in the area was our response to a spate of targeted localised crime back in 2018. The concept has now been replicated and adopted by various Rural-Watch groups (formally known as FarmWatch).

Emma, who set up the initial group is a member of many other local groups which enables her to share information succinctly and ensuring all members across the various groups receive relevant information and updates.



UTASS Rural-Watch
Residents & Police working together



“ UTASS makes a significant difference. Every member of staff is approachable, amenable and always willing to help.”

Teesdale & Weardale Rural Watch Chairman

Durham Constabulary are proud to boast, brag, and advocate the Rural-Watch WhatsApp group, with reactions and sightings from it's members resulting in stolen property being recovered, missing people be found and criminals arrested.



The group helps to keep our communities feeling safer and endeavours to make them look less attractive areas to criminals.

61%
of users say UTASS helps them feel more involved in the future of the community.

Utass are pleased to be associated with and to support **Teesdale & Weardale RuralWatch** assisting them in applying for various funding streams. They also use the building to hold their Annual General Meeting of members as well as regular trustee meetings.

In November, we teamed up with them and invited members and farmers to a meeting at UTASS to speak directly to Durham Constabulary's Firearms licensing team. The meeting also had a chat, via video call, to hear from an on duty officer, who has access to the WhatsApp groups and thinks they are such a fantastic resource.



Our oil buying group saved it's members £20,845 in 2023.

Our **oil buying group** continued to grow with 40 new members joining the scheme, taking the group total to over 390 households and businesses benefitting from discounted prices.



Oil prices continued to fall in 2023, although still high compared to prices prior to the war in Ukraine. The rise in the

cost-of-living has also seen members be more cautious, with many opting for the minimum quantity of 500 litres. The discount throughout the year ranges from 2.5p to 6.5p per litre.

“ It reminds us to order oil, also the lower cost makes a difference to household budgeting..”

Oil Buying Group Member

Young People



2023 saw another busy year for **Young People's** sessions, the changes made last year to have mixed drop-ins continued to ensure the sessions remain inclusive. On both Mondays and Thursdays evenings we serve hot food, with the sessions being based around the 5 ways to wellbeing, promoting a wholesome lifestyle:

CONNECT

BE ACTIVE

GIVE

TAKE NOTICE

KEEP LEARNING



“I love coming to UTASS, it’s always fun and I get to see my friends, the staff are kind, helpful and thoughtful.”

UTASS Young Person

“As a family with two children who have daily struggles and additional needs I couldn't be more thankful that we have an amazing local support group for them. All of the UTASS staff have always provided fantastic support to the children and myself and an amazing understanding of my children's needs and struggles. Both of my children love the school holiday trips and activities and through lockdown the team came weekly and left activities, cooking recipes & ingredients and treats on the doorstep which the children loved.

We feel so lucky to have UTASS youth group!”

The Manser Family

29
Young People in attendance every week

98

registered young people attending the youth sessions





Young People

Our Youth Team:

Adele Dickeson
Amy Kinchley
Gina Richardson
Jacqui Nutter
Melanie Lee

Sessions were youth-led with extra planned activities including, Taekwondo, gel nails, Leon's Exotics (which gave everyone a chance to get up close and personal with spiders and reptiles), baking and biscuit decorations, discos and Nerf battles, den building, team games and VR gaming sessions.

This year, a total of twenty-five fully-funded offsite activities took place which started in February half term, continuing throughout the year during school holidays. Durham County Councils' Fun and Food funding provided regular trips (due to popular demand) to Rof 59 for bouncing and climbing, and Planet Leisure for bowling and mini golf, The gaming hideaway, Go Karting and Eggleston play park. Sport England funded Teesdale Sailing club to provide a 6-week rotating programme for us of sailing, kayaking and paddleboarding at Grassholme Reservoir.

Young people were also treated to fossil and crystal hunting at Coldberry and their annual pantomime trip.

Tees-Swale provided a 6 week programme at Bowlees Visitors Centre and included river dipping, den building, fossil hunting, pellet dissection, trail walks, a visit to Low Force, campfire building and a visit to Bowlees Education farm.



"I find the sessions really useful for the children, with the variety of sessions that the team put on. My two boys have some additional needs so I always accompany them when coming to the sessions and it's nice to help out with anything needed and see the children all happy. We are always made welcome and the other children and staff are brilliant with the boys. We all have a lovely time when coming to UTASS for sessions both in the building and the trips out. The staff are amazing and always go above and beyond for everyone. Definitely an amazing service for the Children."

Parent of Young People who attend the sessions.

"We love the service that UTASS youth group provides, the staff are lovely and friendly and fantastic with the children who attend, the activities are appropriate and engaging and the setting is perfect for this type of group. When our daughter first attended the group she was very shy, and as she grows she is coming out of her shell and I believe that is in part due to attending the group and mixing with the staff and children there."

Parent of Young People who attend the sessions

Training



2023 was another busy year for **training**, with over 240 training places provided, with funing wherever possible.

Well being for Life started off the year, providing a Mental Health First Aid Refresher course and a Basic Mental Health Awareness course.



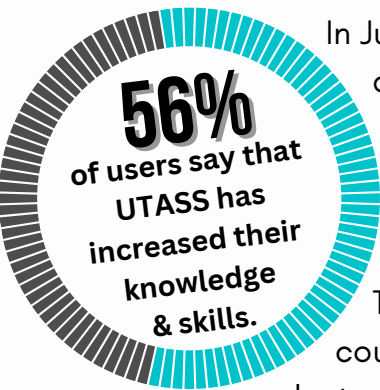
Emergency First Aid Work and Paediatric First Aid both proved

popular again, with many now understanding the importance of these courses.

Due to demand, we were able to offer several courses at venues in Weardale this year; two of which were Level 2 Food Safety in Catering courses which saw 23 people gaining skills and their qualification.

“Hopefully I won't have to use the skills very often, but much better prepared with what to do in certain situations. First aid is a skill that everyone should be taught..”
Emergency First Aid at Work Trainee

We had another great year with livestock based courses, as well as our usual NPTC Safe Use of Sheep Dips with Fiona from Flock Health Ltd and Bimeda, we also teamed up with Castle Farm Vets, and Flock Health Ltd again to deliver training and workshops based around the DEFRA Animal Health & Welfare Pathway for “Parasites Watch”, Faecal Egg Counting and “Fluke Diagnostics”.



In June, we held our annual two day British Wool Shearing training with one trainee achieving a “first” with a Gold Seal qualification!

Two MiDAS Minibus Awareness training courses were held, including 5 of our regular volunteer drivers all achieving this qualification.

In the summer, we had a busy run of courses including Rough Terrain Telescopic, Quad Bike, and Lantra Chainsaw & Cross Cutting courses. Half of the trainees from the chainsaw course returned later in the year to gain their NPTC Felling & Processing Trees up to 380mm qualification.





Training



Another popular course this year was for hedgelaying, with many attending both Introductory and Improvers courses.

“I had no experience of Hedgelaying, after completing the intro course, I now feel able to have a go and learn/improve as I go. I volunteer for a Woodland & Wildlife Project, I will be laying some hedges on the site soon..”
Hedgelaying Trainee

The annual Northumbria Dry Stone Walling Taster days were held in June and July, though the trainees had some dreadful weather meaning waterproofs were a must!



Thanks to funding from the Wellesley Trust Fund, we were again able to invite applications from young people living in the Durham Dales for funding towards a variety of driver training opportunities. In 2023, 14 young people were awarded £250 towards car driving lessons, two attended a fully funded quad bike training day, three were awarded a tractor test preparation session, and sixteen 13-15 year olds were awarded Lantra Tractor



Driving training.

In an isolated dale like Teesdale, funding such as this makes a huge difference to the younger generation and provides them with an opportunity to access wider education and job opportunities, also ensuring that drivers are fully aware of the Health & Safety implications. We are lucky to have been able to offer this funding for many years and hope to do the same in the next financial year.

“Yes, I knew how to drive a tractor, but not what everything does, what could happen and how dangerous they could be.”
13 - 15 Tractor Driving Trainee

Many Thanks to those who enable us to deliver our training locally and access funding.

Teesdale Area Action Partnership
Weardale Area Action Partnership
Teesdale Branch of the NFU
Wellesley Trust Fund
Northumbria Dry Stone Walling Association
Durham Hedgerow Partnership
British Wool Shearing
Tees-Swale: Naturally Connected

Funders



Funded by UK Government



DURHAM DALES
PARISH NURSING



THE
MERCERS'
COMPANY

Trustee of The Mercers' Charitable Foundation



DURHAM POLICE
AND CRIME
COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE



BALLINGER
CHARITABLE TRUST



Morrisons
FOUNDATION



NFU Mutual



Teesdale
Area Action
Partnership

We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has helped us to make a difference here in the Durham Dales throughout 2023.

We are so grateful to be supported by a huge range of fantastic donors, partners and funders. This year we have continued relationships with many of our existing supporters and have been delighted to have received new multi-year awards from The National Lottery Community Fund, The Mercer's Charitable Foundation, The Ballinger Trust, the Know Your Neighbourhood Fund supported by UK Government and Durham Police & Crime Commissioner's Office.

We also want to recognise the amazing contributions that our community makes towards the work we deliver- the Friends of UTASS, those who make personal or legacy donations and the groups and organisations who fundraise on our behalf.

We send you all a heartfelt thank you!
We simply couldn't do what we do without you!

Ballinger Charitable Trust

County Durham Community Foundation

Durham Community Action

Durham County Council

Durham Dales Parish Nursing

Durham Police & Crime Commissioner's Office

Joseph Strong Frazer Trust

Know Your Neighbourhood Fund supported by UK
Government

Middleton Educational Trust

Morrisons Foundation

NFU Mutual Office Barnard Castle

Funders



The National Lottery Heritage Fund via the North Pennines AONB Partnership

Pioneering Care Partnership

Ralph Gowland Trust

Sir Tom Cowie Charitable Trust

Teesdale Area Action Partnership

Tesco Community Grants

The Mercers' Charitable Foundation

The National Lottery Community Fund

The Royal Countryside Fund

The R&H Woods Charitable Trust

Tyne & Wear Community Foundation

UK Community Foundations

Virgin Money Foundation

Weardale Area Action Partnership



SIR TOM COWIE CHARITABLE TRUST



Our Staff



Our staff team continued to grow in 2023 as we expanded our reach into wellbeing within the community and appointed a finance officer to oversee our increasingly complicated funding.

The overwhelming majority are local people and as a consequence know a lot of the people we serve personally, and are also in tune with local issues.



Adele Dickeson
Youth Support



Alli Brown
Finance Officer



Amy Kinchley
Youth Support



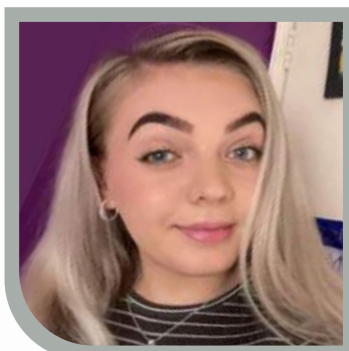
Anne Scott
Finance &
Admin Support



Becca Melville
Admin Support &
Volunteer Support Worker



Bob Danby
Manager, Treasurer &
Company Secretary



Caitlin Dent
Admin Support



Charlotte Fletcher
Admin Support &
Agricultural Secretary



Emma Spry
Social Media &
Admin Support



Our Staff

I've no hesitation in saying I have never worked with a more dedicated and supportive team both inside and outside of the organisation.

I'm proud to be able to support them to deliver the service people deserve.

Bob Danby
UTASS Manager



Gina Richardson
Youth Team Lead &
Community Engagement



Gladys Mugambi
Parish Nurse



Grace Crawford
Funding & Strategic
Development Officer



Jacqui Nutter
Youth Support



Janet Dodson
Time Together
Teesdale Co-ordinator



Julia Stephenson
Training Co-ordinator



June Wainwright
Resilience Support



Melanie Lee
Resilience Support
& Youth Support



Richard Betton
Farmers Liaison Worker

Our Trustees & Governance



The UTASS Financial Policy outlines procedures and safeguards to ensure reasonable assurance against fraud or error and compliance with Charity Law.

On a monthly basis Trustees are presented with information regarding spend, current/savings account balances and investment values.

In accordance with Charity Law, accounts are submitted for independent examination by a suitably qualified person.

It is the policy of the trustees to hold free reserves for between 6 and 12 months normal activity (£130k - £260K).

UTASS is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It is governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association which were adopted in Dec 2006.

It is under the control of a board of 11 trustees, chosen, from a variety of backgrounds and occupations to give a diverse skill set.

Trustees are appointed by ordinary resolution in accordance with the articles of association.



Caroline Colling
Farmer



Sarah Elton
Hon. Professor



Philip Lamb
Accountant



**Hon. Secretary
Louise Dalton**
Farmer



Fay Hutchinson
Citizens Advice
Technical Debt
Supervisor & Farmer

Our Trustees & Governance



Steve Lumb
Retired GP

All trustees are committed, with strong attendance at meetings, none take any expenses or payment in relation to their support.

Six trustee meetings are scheduled per year, though this number can vary according to need. In 2023 eight were held in addition to the AGM.

Meetings are held face to face but with the benefit of a Zoom option for trustees not able to attend in person. They are well supported with 70% trustee attendance.

There is a staffing sub-group consisting of Richard Matthews, Prof. Sarah Elton, Louise Dalton and Amanda Simpson.

Other working groups are established for specific purposes, if and when required.

Ian Tallentire and Roy Oxby, both longstanding trustees stood down at the 2023 Annual General Meeting. Both will be missed and we extend our grateful thanks to them for their valued support over many years.

Also at the 2023 Annual General Meeting we were pleased to welcome Caroline Colling, a farmer, and Stephanie Markwick, the Middleton in Teesdale Surgery Practice Manager, to the UTASS trustees team.



Stephanie Markwick
Managing Partner



Chairman
Michael McGarry
Solicitor



Vice-Chair
Richard Matthews
Veterinary Surgeon



Amanda Simpson
Farmer



Carl Stephenson
Farmer

A summary of the financial position is shown below.

A full copy of the accounts is available by request from UTASS or alternatively on the Charity Commission's websites.

UTASS **Financial Summary** **For the Year ending 31st December 2023**

Income

Donations	31,048
Grants	137,209
Income from charitable activities	215,417
Investment income	<u>11,601</u>
	<u>395,275</u>

Expenditure

Staff costs	269,906
Project costs	54,468
Other costs	<u>75,119</u>
	<u>399,493</u>

Investment Gains	72
Deficit for the year	(4,146)

Assets and liabilities at 31st December 2023

Fixed assets including investments	43,680
Current assets including bank accounts	364,500
Current liabilities	<u>(10,600)</u>
Net assets	<u>397,580</u>

Funds

Restricted funds	106,782
Reserves	209,303
Other unrestricted funds	<u>81,495</u>
Total funds	<u>397,580</u>



The "Last Word"!

I say it every year but that doesn't mean it's any less valid this time, 2023 has absolutely flown over and here I am again with our Annual Impact report. 2023 has seen several additions to the services at UTASS many of which have been outlined by our Chairman Michael.

My thanks to the small groups of people who came together to organise events for the village; for example the group that put on the celebration for the Kings Coronation and the dedicated group who again decorated the cenotaph for Remembrance Day.

We were also pleased to work alongside the Christmas Lights Committee helping each other to organise the Christmas Fair and Lights Switch on. Moving forwards, I would like to see UTASS supporting them, and other more formal groups such as the carnival committee. As the saying goes many hands make light work.

My thanks to UTASS staff who stubbornly persist in going far beyond what is required. There's not enough space to mention everyone here, but I'd like to personally thank them for all that they do. Caitlin Dent joined us at the end of 2022 and despite being a lot younger and more energetic, has managed to tolerate all of us old folk so far. She has quickly developed into a valued member of the team with a maturity and ability well beyond her years.

I'd also like to mention and thank all of the volunteers who assisted us in providing support to the residents of the two dales, Teesdale and Weardale.

And last but not least as the famous saying goes; thanks to the eleven trustees for devoting their time free of charge to govern our charity.

I'd like to close by telling you about an unsolicited comment made by the Chairman of Wear and Tees Rural Watch at our AGM in March 2023. In praise of UTASS he said "Every time I go into UTASS, I come out a little happier". It's amazing how the most simple comments resonate with you. I took this as one of the most meaningful compliments paid to UTASS, and it struck me that nothing more needed to be said about an organisation to demonstrate its worth.

**Bob Danby CMgr MCMi UTASS
Manager, Company Secretary
& Treasurer**



Upper Teesdale Agricultural Support Services

Registered Office:

9-11 Chapel Row,
Middleton-in-Teesdale,
Barnard Castle,
County Durham,
DL12 0SN

Telephone: 01833 641010

Email: info@utass.org

Website: www.utass.org



Facebook: @UtassUpperTees



Twitter: @UtassUpperTees



Instagram: @utass_upper_tees

UTASS Objects/ Mission Statement:

"To promote the benefit of the inhabitants of the community of the rural area of Upper Teesdale and the neighbourhood thereof through the advancement of education and the provision of facilities in the interest of the social welfare for the recreation and other leisure time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants".

UTASS Aim:

"UTASS works with and for the communities across the Durham Dales, helping people gain access to the services, advice and resources that they need so they feel supported, valued, happier and more able to cope "

Registered Charity number: 1120120

Company Limited by Guarantee number: 06054331