

# **Phoenix Farm Open Door Project**

## **Annual Report 2020**



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Registered Charity: 1098333

### **Chair of Trustees Report**

It has been another very busy year for The Ark. Thanks to grant from Nottinghamshire Cooperative Society and Nottinghamshire County Council Community Improvement Scheme Capital Fund we have been able to refurbish the premises. This has enabled the building of a second advice office which will enable expansion of our services, new LED lighting, new flooring and further redecorating. A grant from Nottingham City Transport has enabled us to begin renovating the outdoor toilet and washroom which will compliment our newly landscaped garden and outdoor space. Our Garden Group have already created a beautiful outdoor space which can be used by Ark users for a variety of supportive activities. The Ark's registration with the national 'Place of Welcome' scheme is providing a haven for people in difficulty. Over one thousand advice appointments were made over the year and the Friendship, Craft, Job Clubs and cafe continue to thrive. We have also kindly been awarded a three-year funding grant from the Methodist Church which will very much help with our salary costs.

The Ark would not exist without the fantastic support of its volunteers. We presently rely on the help of 13 volunteers who help in a variety of ways and we are in the process of carefully enabling volunteers to support in an advice role. It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of Margaret Moore, a much loved and valued volunteer and Trustee. Margaret was a founder member of The Ark and a great advocate for its work. I pass on our condolences to Margaret's family and friends.

Trustees are a legal requirement of a charity such as the Ark. However, their role goes much deeper than this. They provide stable support for the workings and wellbeing of The Ark and together with the Project Manager Joel, plans for its future development. Trustees also help with volunteering duties on a regular basis. We are always on the lookout for folk interested in helping either as a volunteer or trustee. If you are interested in helping in any way you can, please contact either Joel or one of the trustees.

Following the General election last December, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Vernon Coaker for all the support he has given to The Ark since its inception over 17 years ago. We wish him well and look forward to working with our new MP Tom Randall.

The Ark would not exist without the kind generosity of the many donations and grants it receives and I would like to thank all who have contributed over the past year. If you would like to contribute financially to the work of The Ark on a regular basis, information is available in this report.

Finally, without the firm faith foundations that underpin the Ark, it would not thrive, and I leave the final words to Holy Scripture from the Book of Micah: 'He has told you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?'

**John Tattersfield**

### **Local Churches that support the Ark**

**Phoenix Farm  
Methodist Church,**  
Wollaton Avenue,  
Gedling

**Gedling Road  
Methodist Church,**  
Gedling Road,  
Carlton

**Westdale Lane  
Baptist Church,**  
368 Westdale Lane

**All Hallows Church  
of England,**  
Rectory Drive,  
Gedling

**St James' Church of  
England,**  
Marshall Hill Drive,  
Mapperley

### **The Aims of the Ark**

To increase the feeling of community in the area and decrease social isolation.

Enable people to take more control of their lives

Enable people to get employment.

### **The Activities at the Ark**

Provide an advice service open to all.

Provide basic skills training

Provide a meeting place with café facilities with a safe friendly environment

Undertake social activities, and support activities of other organisations, to increase a sense of community.

Provide a base for other advice agencies that would contribute to a sense of community

# Project Manager's Report



Former U.S Senator, Robert Kennedy gave a speech in Cape Town in June 1966, in which he said 'There is a Chinese curse that says, 'May you live in interesting times.' Kennedy goes on to say, 'Like it or not we live in interesting times. They are times of danger and uncertainty...."

Kennedy could have been speaking to us today. The only certainty we have about the times we are living in is that they are 'uncertain and dangerous times.' I have never experienced such a time as the present, the Coronavirus pandemic is dictating every single aspect of our lives and throwing all our established patterns, routines and practices into disarray. We are all faced with the massive question, "What do we do now?"

This report is supposed to be a review of the year just gone and this year like every year the Ark, through the dedication and compassion of our volunteers and the support of generous and empathic benefactors has been able to serve people facing poverty and hardship in our community.

I think about the people who have used the Ark's services in the last year and I consider how nearly every person who has come to us has an urgent need. For people who didn't know where their next meal is coming from, the Ark was there. For people who became so unwell that they were unable to continue working and suddenly were unable to pay their rent or meet their mortgage commitments, the Ark was there.

For people whose child has a disability and could not afford to pay for their care, the Ark was there. For people who were victims of the impractical rigidity of the government's welfare system that could have cost them both their childcare and consequently their employment, the Ark was there.

But, to me last year feels irrelevant when society is facing its biggest crisis in at least the length of my own life. Like everybody else, the Ark is faced with that same question, "what does the Ark do now?" Or to put it another way "how do we continue to serve our community in the face of such great adversity?", how can we still be there for people in need when the level of need is much greater than before.



I only gave you half of a sentence from that Robert Kennedy speech that I began with. The full sentence was 'They are times of danger and uncertainty... **but** they are also more open to the creative energy of people than any other time in history.' His speech was titled the "Ripple of Hope speech".

In times of adversity it is the human response that gives us hope. We are uplifted by the ability of people to show care for one another through creative expressions of generosity, kindness and solidarity. Indeed, we are already seeing inspiring moments of all those virtues that are giving us hope. One example is the nationwide applause for those serving on the front lines in this fight to save lives, another are those parent/teacher/superhero combinations entertaining and educating their children at home and there are all those sacrificing visits to elderly loved ones. There are many more examples.

People are pulling together and in doing so are trouncing this pandemic's ability to cause despair and instead are raising a banner of creativity, courage and hope those eminent marks of the human spirit's indefatigable capacity to overcome.

In his letter from Birmingham jail Martin Luther King wrote, "Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of people willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right."

The Ark is continuing to find ways to be there for people, the present situation is one that means we need to get creative and think differently about how we operate. We have already found ways to give assistance and advocacy over the phone and email, we are still able to keep contact with, and reach out people who are vulnerable and isolated, our volunteers are still finding ways to serve the community and we continue to think of new ways to meet the challenges the present moment gives.

Now hope feels like a ripple, or perhaps a trickling stream, but we continue to work and serve because a trickling stream can become a torrent and a torrent of hope eventually becomes a deluge of joy. We want to be riding that wave when as this storm ends and a new day begins.

Yours,

Joel Baldry

# The Ark's Coronavirus Response



In these difficult times we are all having to change our approaches to the things we do on a daily basis, the Ark is no different. I am pleased to report that The Ark remains operational albeit slightly differently.

## **Universal Credit**

More people than ever are applying for universal credit and for many people this is a daunting process and one they do not feel capable of undertaking alone, even if they have access to technology. Through our telephone service (**07735-060345**) we are able to walk people through the application process, including assessing their eligibility and payment rates. Universal Credit has become infamous for being plagued with issues and where these arise we can intervene and advocate on a claimants behalf.

## **Welfare rights service**

The welfare rights advice service is now available by telephone on **07735060345**. We are able to give advice on a variety of social issues, including employment related benefits like universal credit or disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance or PIP. We can also offer advice on housing and employment. We are offering a form filling service by telephone. We are able to provide response to welfare rights queries on **Whatsapp on 07735060345 and by email at theark@thearkgedling.org.uk**. These services help to protect the people who are unemployed, or likely to become unemployed and those on the lowest income (or no income at all) from the most severe financial implications of the virus.

## **Job Club**

We have been running a job club in which people can get access to using a computer for job searching and receive advice writing applications and updating CV's. We can still run a form of this service by email and telephone.

## **Advocacy service**

There are times when advice and assistance is not enough to ensure that people's rights are protected and they are supported in the way that is most correct. In these times a person will sometimes need a third party with more expertise to take up their case. The Ark has always been able to provide this service face to face, but we are now providing the same service but over three way telephone calls and when appropriate over email.

## **Friendship + activity groups**

Although the Friendship and activity groups cannot meet face to face members have been able to remain in close contact with each other through frequent telephone calls. This allows people to feel connected and to raise concerns if they are unable to get provisions that they require.

## **Place of Welcome**

The Ark has been a place of welcome and has received many guests looking for companionship and conversation. Even in better days we had a significant number of people using our service because they were lonely or isolated. The sad irony is that at the time people need companionship and support more than ever it is harder to access than ever before. Even so, our volunteers are maintaining contact with those we know are vulnerable and isolated, by telephone calls, text and sometimes even good old fashioned royal mail. We are able to take referrals from outside agencies, including mental health teams and carer's hubs to add more vulnerable, lonely and isolated people to this list.

## **Food bank**

The Ark has been both a donation point and referral point for local food banks. At the present time we cannot accept food bank donations. Any residents who are in need of support can ring the Nottinghamshire County Council 'golden number' on 0300 500 80 80 or visit [www.gedling.gov.uk/givingforgedling](http://www.gedling.gov.uk/givingforgedling). Any residents who want to volunteer or make a donation can also do so at the same website.'

# The Ark's 2019-2020 activities



## A review of the activities and developments of the Ark during 2019-2020.

### **Community Café**

We provide a community café, staffed by volunteers which provides tea and coffee free of charge (taking only donations), and gives away a significant volume of biscuits each year. The main aim is to provide a warm and welcoming environment and by encouraging people to use the café we have a significant impact in overcoming social isolation for people. The Café is part of a national initiative known as "places of welcome" ([www.placesofwelcome.org](http://www.placesofwelcome.org)). Volunteers have also been giving computer assistance to people who are not computer literate.



### **Friendship Group**

We have a group that meets every Monday afternoon for friendship, games, laughter and learning. During these times the café area is a hive of activity and liveliness with many cakes and biscuits consumed as well as plenty of thoughtful conversation topics discussed and debated.

From time to time specialists in their field come to enlighten and inform the group. At other times the group will arrange for somebody to come and teach them a specific skill. It is open to all and everyone is welcome.

### **Craft Club**

On a Thursday afternoon we are host to a craft club. This is a group where anyone is welcome to bring along their own craft activities and do it in conjunction and community with others. Nobody need craft alone. This is a popular group that has lots of fun and discussions as well as making excellent craft items.

### **Community Garden**

The community garden is a reflective space in which people can enjoy a spot of tranquility and peace. It is maintained by volunteers.

### **Foodbank**

If a person comes to us in state of emergency and will not be able to provide their next meal. We are a referring agent for all the local foodbanks (as well as those further across Nottingham) and through this avenue we can meet their immediate need and we can then help them find more stability in the long term.

### **Building work**

The Ark has undergone some vital redevelopment in the last year. Through funding acquired from Co-op local community fund and Nottinghamshire County Council Local Improvement scheme we were able to build a second consulting room. This consulting room allows us to increase our ability to take on appointments and increases the general utility of the centre. Alongside this, the funding allowed for us to do some much needed maintenance on the outside toilet area and to acquire and lay new flooring in the café area and kitchen.

supported by



### **Job Club**

In early 2020 we began running a fortnightly job club in association with HOPE Nottingham (another Nottingham based charity). This job club is open to anyone who wants assistance finding new or different appointment. It is delivered by volunteers who are able to help with job searching, maintaining and updating CV's, writing applications and applying to training courses.



# Finance



## Treasurer Report

At the start of 2019, the balance of the Community account was £18221.82, ending on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 at £12354.62.

Over the course of 2019 we have managed to secure £15501.90 from our original 5 churches, charities and foundations and £7379.47 from our sponsors and anonymous donors. We received £2471 from our regular givers and Gift aid refunds brought in £3136.59. Shop takings brought in £4296.48 which was £888.22 up on the year before. Fund raising like raffles and sponsored events, brought in an amazing £616.33 and our participation at the Gedling Gala, together with the numerous focus services and appearances highlighted the work of the Ark and the need for the community's continued support.

We have made considerable strides in the improvement of the premises by finally building the new office, completing the gardening project, the acquisition and installation of three laptops and the overhauling of the lighting to make the premises more inviting to the many residents of the Gedling area, who rely on the services provided. It is no wonder, with the building costs and equipment acquired, that the Ark has made a deficit of £6881.66 throughout the year although most of the funds (£5443.19) had been ringfenced from the year before to cover the building work and computers.

Going forward, we are looking to acquire a computer and furniture for the new office. We are also continuing to apply for funds from charitable organisations, set up focus services, organise sponsored events and raffles to keep the Ark running for the forthcoming year.

As always, a special thank you goes out to all our regular supporters, sponsors, volunteers and Trustees without whose dedication to the Ark and support of Joel, our project manager, has resulted in another successful year.

You will find the account statement overleaf.

Denise Mear

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### Donations

**Just giving:** Just giving is a quick and easy way of making donations towards the work of the Ark. Donations can be made as one off payments or set up as longer term standing orders. If you would like to make a donation by this method please visit;

<https://www.justgiving.com/phoenixfarmopendoorproject>.

Thank you.

Member of

**advice** UK



# Finance — Account Statement



The Ark Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019			
2018			
	<b>Receipts</b>		
£		£	£
<b>14,495.00</b>	Charities and foundations	<b>7,688.52</b>	
<b>6,598.72</b>	Church donations/collections	<b>7,813.38</b>	
<b>2,166.00</b>	Regular standing orders	<b>2,471.00</b>	
<b>577.95</b>	Irregular individual gifts	<b>7,379.47</b>	
<b>831.50</b>	Fund Raising	<b>616.33</b>	
<b>3,408.26</b>	Shop takings	<b>4,296.48</b>	
<b>3,250.36</b>	Sundries (interest, gifts and refunds)	<b>3,136.59</b>	
<b>31,327.79</b>	Total Receipts		<b>33,401.77</b>
	<b>Payments</b>		
£		£	£
<b>6,501.62</b>	Rent, utilities, phone, internet, & insurance	<b>6,481.64</b>	
<b>438.40</b>	Repairs and building costs	<b>7,266.83</b>	
<b>749.98</b>	Equipment, fixtures and fittings	<b>1,400.74</b>	
<b>19,403.15</b>	Salaries and personnel costs	<b>20,223.97</b>	
<b>773.56</b>	Insurances	<b>565.60</b>	
<b>1,763.85</b>	Sundries	<b>4,344.65</b>	
<b>29,630.56</b>	Total Payments		<b>40,283.43</b>
<b>1,697.23</b>	<b>Excess of Receipts (Payments) for the year</b>		<b>(6,881.66)</b>
	<b>Balance brought forward at 1 January</b>		
£		£	£
<b>18,072.79</b>	Barclays Bank Current Account	<b>18,221.82</b>	
-	Barclays Bank Business Premium Account	<b>1,500.20</b>	
-	COIF Charities Deposit Fund	<b>4,283.16</b>	
<b>4,263.79</b>	Cash in hand	<b>28.63</b>	<b>24,033.81</b>
<b>24,033.81</b>			<b>17,152.15</b>
	<b>Balance carried forward at 31 December</b>		
£		£	£
<b>18,221.82</b>	Barclays Bank Current Account	<b>12,354.62</b>	
<b>1,500.20</b>	Barclays Bank Business Premium Account	<b>120.17</b>	
<b>4,283.16</b>	COIF Charities Deposit Fund	<b>4,307.54</b>	
<b>28.63</b>	Cash in hand	<b>369.82</b>	
<b>24,033.81</b>			<b>17,152.15</b>
	<b>D E Mear</b>	<b>R I Clarke</b>	
	<b>Hon Treasurer</b>	<b>Accounts Examiner</b>	