Beach Wheelchairs
Annual Report 2017

www.beachwheelchairs.org
Beach Wheelchairs has pleasure in presenting their report together with the financial statement for 9 December 2015 to 4 April 2017.

Reference and Administrative Information

Charity Name and No:
Beach Wheelchairs
Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC046190

Registered Address:
North Berwick Community Centre, Law Road, North Berwick, EH39 4PH.

Charity Trustees
Robin Black (chair) – resigned April 2017
Melanie Kay (vice chair and Interim chair)
Alison Brown (secretary)
Karen Sinclair (treasurer)
Bryony Capaldi
Len Groom
Debbie Gibb
Dave Gibb
Fergus Watson

Bankers:
The bankers for Beach Wheelchairs are The Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) Bank.

Structure, Governance & Management

Legal Status and founding document:
Beach Wheelchairs is registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) and as such is governed by a written constitution.

The structure of the organisation consists of:-

a. The MEMBERS – who have the right to attend members’ meetings (including any Annual General Meeting) and have important powers under the constitution; in particular, the members appoint people to serve on the board and take decisions on changes to the constitution itself;
b. The BOARD – who hold regular meetings, and generally control the activities of the organisation; for example, the board is responsible for monitoring and controlling the financial position of the organisation. The
people serving on the board are referred to in this constitution as CHARITY TRUSTEES.

**Purpose**

The purpose of Beach Wheelchairs is set on in our constitution as follows:

To provide beach wheelchairs and supporting facilities with the object of improving the conditions of life for wheelchair users by allowing them to access the beach.

The provision of beach wheelchairs for hire at no cost will provide relief to those in need by reason of age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage.
Chairs Report

It is hard to believe we are at the end of another year at Beach Wheelchairs. Due to personal circumstances Robin our Chair stood down earlier this year so I have stood in as Interim Chair until our AGM.

I am really impressed by the commitment and enthusiasm that has been shown this year from all the Board Members and our fantastic volunteers. A huge thank you to those people who have trained as volunteers for Beach Wheelchairs. Your time and dedication is amazing! I am very proud to say I have been part of it and hopefully contributed in some small way.

The following report will fill you in with what the year has held for Beach Wheelchairs and outline some of our plans for 2018. I hope you find it interesting and gain an insight in to what we do, who we help and how the hard work of all our volunteers and supporters make Beach Wheelchairs the success it is today.

This year has seen a period of huge growth and expansion for Beach Wheelchairs. We have had over 12 enquires from other coastal areas wishing to start their own projects and we have gladly supported them and guided them. One of the major achievements this year has been the launch of Portobello Beach Wheelchairs. The year has brought many challenges to those involved so we applaud their patience and drive to get the planning permission, container and wheelchairs in place.

Attached to this report is a financial statement which shows how supported we are by the local community. We are inspired by all that use the current service and everyone that supports us and hopefully 2018 will see us to continue to expand the work we do and help to get more people with disabilities back on the beach!

Thanks

Melanie Kay
(Interim Chair)
Len Groom
October 21st 1928- October 13th 2017

Len was involved with Beach Wheelchairs right from the beginning. Rain, hail or shine he was at the Beach Hut whether it was painting it, doing hires or just chatting to passers-by. He took such great pleasure in helping individuals get back on the beach as a man who had such a great love of nature and the outdoors.

Len was also an invaluable Trustee on the Board, often contributing his calm and measured reasoning to any debate!

He was a true gent and his memory will live on through the many lives he touched. We hope to place a bench near the Beach Hut in his memory.

Len will be greatly missed by us all at Beach Wheelchairs and the wider North Berwick community.
North Berwick

Customers

We have continued to expand and optimise our service in North Berwick and through marketing we have continued to spread the word about what we are doing. This has resulted in an increase in the number of users using the service and the frequency of returning visitors. We have had several regular bookings through the spring, summer and autumn and feedback has been glowing and extremely positive.

Since starting up in July 2015 we have now hired out our wheelchairs over 250 times in North Berwick. These hires have been to individuals and families from near and far, children on school trips and after school activities, adult groups, and day centres. We also had 3 hires on Christmas day to allow families to enjoy a traditional festive walk on the beach together.

In August we added an XL hippocampe to our fleet. This wheelchair is suitable for teenagers and smaller adults. This means our fleet is now 4 beach wheelchairs and a beach walker in North Berwick. Having a range of wheelchairs allows us to have the best type of wheelchair we can to meet individual needs.

We continue to have our wheelchairs available all year and allow them to be used at other beaches and beyond!

“Thank you for making the impossible possible”

Lovely thank you message from the Royal Blind School – ‘Thank you all so much for the most memorable and fantastic time. The young people had the most fantastic fun’

“You have made my day, my year. I’ve never been on the beach with my kids before and today I did just that thanks to Beach Wheelchairs. Thank you from the bottom of my heart”

Volunteers

Our volunteers in North Berwick are just fantastic! Everything that happens in the charity is done on a voluntary basis – from those that hire out the wheelchairs at the Beach Hut, to everyone on the Beach Wheelchairs Board who work tirelessly to make the service work and look at ways of improving
and now extending the service and all those that also contribute their expertise in helping with the website, our logo and providing expert advice all free of charge.

We are really proud to report that the feedback on our volunteers at the Beach Hut is always glowing – they all go the extra mile to greet our customers with a friendly smile and warm welcome. All our volunteers receive training on the equipment, the paperwork and customer care. The photo below is of a recent volunteer get together, organised by Bryony our fantastic Volunteer Coordinator.

‘I have worked for over 30 years in industry and being a volunteer with Beach Wheelchairs has been one of the most rewarding things I have done. Being able to help and give something back to the local community and the users of the service leaves a warm glow in the heart’ Fergus, Volunteer and Trustee

Events

The end of 2016 saw the Beach Wheelchair Board put on a wonderful get together down at North Berwick Harbour. We were delighted to be supported by so many people from the local and wider Community, the charity FACE (Fight against Cancer Edinburgh) and Rotary Club of North Berwick. We welcomed Santa into the Harbour with a chorus of singing and smiles of pure delight. The support and feedback from the evening was amazing and quite unexpected so back by popular demand we will be hosting this evening again on the 14th of December.

Events such as Disabled Access Day in March brought much interest and enquires to our hut. The added bonus of having Therapets and Trossachs Mobility attend the event brought much excitement to the harbour. We were
also pleased to model our fab new Beach Wheelchair t-shirts, designed and produced by MADSURF, a local company who has supported us massively throughout the year.

We were pleased to hear in March that Beach Wheelchairs was acknowledged and recognised in a Scottish Parliamentary debate on inclusive tourism. Great to hear the impact we are having and awareness we are raising. Shortly after this Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs came to visit us and she was very interested and impressed at what we had achieved for accessible tourism and our plans to support a group expand into Portobello.

**Future plans for North Berwick Beach Wheelchairs**

Beach Wheelchairs continues to be ambitious about providing the best service we can at North Berwick. We continue to work with East Lothian Council to identify ways to improve the ramp access onto the beach. We have funded a feasibility study and looked at engineering options to make the improvements required and hope that this will see works carried out prior to the summer of 2018.

We also continue to have ambitions for a powered all terrain wheelchair available for use. We hope to see a prototype and work with Adventure Mobility on a powered wheelchair option. Although we will also need to think creatively about a power source before we could offer this service!
Portobello

Project Start Up

The Portobello Project is now up and running. The project is run by a separate project group, chaired by Cara McCormick but is part of the Beach Wheelchairs charity. The project report to, and are supported by the Beach Wheelchairs Board. 2017 has seen a massive jump forward in this project with a secure container now in place on land leased from Edinburgh City Council with two beach wheelchairs – a Nomad suitable for adults and a large hippocampe suitable for children and small adults. There is a separate booking line for customers to hire wheelchairs from Portobello and the marketing is now gathering momentum to advertise this project.

Customers

Beach Wheelchairs Portobello has started hiring out their beach wheelchairs to customers. Although the number of users has been small to date the feedback has been fantastic and as we publicise and engage more with the local community we are sure we’ll get more people on the beach. The photo below shows the beach wheelchairs being used in an ArtWalk event in September. There are many community events that take part on the beach in Portobello and we hope that the use of the wheelchairs will make these events accessible to a wider audience.
Future Plans for Portobello

2018 will see the Portobello project doing up the container using the results of an Art Competition held in partnership with Towerbank Primary School. 2018 will also result in a volunteer recruitment push to ensure that the wheelchairs can be available to customers at times that suit them. The project will also keep under review the use of the beach wheelchairs and what other equipment is needed at this site to make the beach accessible to as many people as possible.
Seton Sands

Beach Wheelchairs, Haven, East Lothian Council and local residents are working together to bring a beach wheelchair hire scheme to Seton Sands. We are delighted to announce that Haven have agreed to store and hire out a hippocampe style beach wheelchair for both their customers and to members of the public. East Lothian Council will upgrade the access to the beach. Beach Wheelchairs will part fund the hippocampe wheelchair, maintain the wheelchair, provide training to staff and market the scheme. The remainder of the funds have already been donated by local resident Marlene Love. We are very excited about working together in such a collaborative way, this will allow hiring of the wheelchairs within the current infrastructure of the hire scheme at the Haven site. We are planning for this scheme to launch in March 2018.

Fundraisers and Funding

We have had a phenomenal amount of money raised by the local and wider community this year and to name them all would fill this report so I wish to extend my warmest thanks to everybody who fundraised on our behalf. Your money is vital in maintaining our charity and supporting our future plans so we can reach more people.

We would like to highlight 3 events which were quite prominent in our calendar this year and particularly made an impact.
The first of those is our former Treasurer Elizabeth. Elizabeth made the brave decision to cut her hair off before her illness took it from her. She decided to raise money for Beach Wheelchairs in the process which was match funded by HSBC. So glass of fizz in hand she had her very long locks cut off. Amazingly she raised a total of £2000 doing this and we are so humbled by that. Thank you Elizabeth and we wish you well on your road to recovery.

The second donation was through the Bags for Help award, Tesco are running. We entered this fund for both the North Berwick and the Portobello projects and were lucky to be selected for both. In North Berwick we received the overwhelming majority and won the top award of £3000. I do believe we broke the token machine at one point!!! Thanks to all who voted for us in North Berwick and look out for the blue token machines in a variety of Edinburgh stores which will support the Portobello project.

The third was our 2nd year anniversary celebration at the Marine hotel. Supported by over 100 people we enjoyed a lovely afternoon together and is was perfectly rounded off with an outstanding performance by Rhona from Drake Music Scotland, a charity that supports children and adults with additional needs to make and create music.

Thanks again from all of us on the Board to everyone that has donated to Beach Wheelchairs.
Financial Update

Below is a summary for the period 9 December 2015 to 4 April 2017. This is our first financial year as agreed with the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR). The detailed accounts, previously considered by the Board, are now being reviewed by the agreed external examiner. Once these have been signed off and submitted to OSCR they will be available on our website.

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**SURPLUS FOR YEAR** 36,067

The new financial year income and expenditure has been in line with budgets. In particular the Portobello project has seen a considerable expenditure but has been in line with our projections. As of 1st November 2017 our current bank balance was £31,621.49.

Future planned spend includes the upgrade to the ramp access in North Berwick which is projected to be £10,000, the purchase of a fully insured hippocampe for the new project in Seton Sands which will be in the region of £4,000. This leaves us with a projected surplus which we will use to support other projects to get more individuals on the beach.

Karen Sinclair