



AVON RIDING CENTRE
Achievement through Riding
THE CASE FOR SUPPORT





We work with people
living with over

30 different forms of
mental and physical
special needs

115 of our regular riders have
learning difficulties

79 have neurological conditions

22 suffer from sensory disabilities

25 are diagnosed as being on the
autistic spectrum

A CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE FOR OVER 30 YEARS

Avon Riding Centre (ARC) provides the positive experience and proven therapeutic benefits of horse-riding to hundreds of children and adults with a wide range of complex special needs each year. Set amidst one hundred acres of pasture and ancient woodland, the Centre offers a calm, relaxing space in an apparently rural setting – yet it is located only fifteen minutes from the centre of the city of Bristol, the economic hub of the South West.

Founded over 30 years ago by far-sighted individuals and health professionals, Avon Riding Centre is recognised as a 'Centre of Excellence' for disabled riding regionally and throughout the UK. Each year, the Centre enables over 280 disabled children and adults to benefit from a carefully structured programme of riding sessions – amounting overall to 7,500 rides annually.

Underpinned by sound financial management, boosted by the generosity of individual donors and the support of grant-making trusts, ARC has fulfilled its core mission of improving the lives of disabled children and adults through the provision of therapeutic riding lessons for the past thirty years.



All of us at ARC are determined to sustain its vital work. The challenges are considerable, but so is the opportunity for enabling the Centre to deliver even greater benefits to our core clients and the wider community. Please help us achieve that vision.

**Tania Honey, Chief Executive
Avon Riding Centre for the Disabled**

VALUED AND ‘WELL-USED’, BUT UNDER THREAT...

There is no doubt that the Centre has been a very ‘well-used’ and valued resource for its core user group, as well as for the wider community. Thanks to the efforts of its small team of paid staff and the much larger body of volunteers.

But three decades of ‘good use’ have taken their toll. Major structural repairs and an expansion of the basic facilities of stabling and office space had already been identified as essential if the Centre is to continue to function effectively and safely, and also deliver its ambitions for the future.

Then in late 2011, Avon Riding Centre was confronted with a far greater threat to the continuation of its crucial work – the loss of the majority of the land upon which it depends to provide a safe outdoors learning environment for its riders and for the exercise and grazing of its 25 horses and ponies.

Without warning, ARC learned that nearly two-thirds of the 100 acres of open pasture and woodland, much of which it has rented for the past 30 years, was to be put up for sale on the open-market – with the very real risk of it being lost to the highest bidder. With that land would have been lost all that relies upon it – the achievements of the past three decades and all future ambitions undermined in a matter of months.

Through the rapid action and careful negotiation of the Trustees, the owners were persuaded to offer ARC the land as sole purchasers on the basis of an independent and agreed valuation.

Avon Riding Centre is enormously grateful to Triodos Bank, Bristol City Council and The Riding for the Disabled Association for their generous and rapid responses to the Trustees’ approaches, in the form of urgently needed bridging loans, which enabled the agreement to be followed through – averting the immediate threat of the loss of land. **But only in the short-term.**

Those loans have to be paid back.

After annual interest payments and legal fees have been taken into account the sum owed will amount to nearly £500,000. Half a million pounds on top of the £350,000 that had already been costed in for carrying out repairs to and refurbishment of the indoor arena, stabling and office block.

Repairs that are overdue and urgently needed if the Centre is to be ‘fit for purpose’ – for meeting the growing demands on its services for a further three decades.

25 horses and ponies

7 full-time and

4 part-time staff

assisted by **181** volunteers

provide

7,500 individual rides

for **280** clients

aged from **4** to **78**



"I cannot speak, but the smile on my face tells my mum how much I love coming to the Centre."

Response from a young rider to ARC's user survey 2009, as expressed by his mother.

THE VISION

The Trustees had the foresight to see that the urgent necessity of repairs and refurbishment offered an exciting opportunity to develop the potential of ARC not just as a Centre for Excellence for riding for the disabled, but also for environmental sustainability – reinforcing the broader aims, values and ethos of Avon Riding Centre.

This aspirational Vision for maximising the economic, environmental and social outputs available through the structural and physical assets of the Centre is grounded in economic sense – outline costings by the Centre for Sustainable Energy indicate energy cost savings of £180,000 over 25 years and an annual income of £56,000.

The outlay cost for repairing the roof and at the same time fitting the first-stage elements of the sustainability project (solar energy and rain-harvesting systems) has been estimated at roughly £350,000. Following through the carefully researched plans to make the Centre and its environs into an exemplar of an educational resource for sustainability would add a further £150,000 (see ARC Sustainability Project document for full details).

In 2011, ARC achieved an annual income of just under £340,000, spending £310,000 of that delivering its core mission. The organisation holds a modest sum of £50,000 in the bank as reserves to cover any unanticipated increase in its operating costs and to meet obligations to its staff in the event of any more serious impact upon the viability of the Centre (see ARC Annual Accounts 2011 available separately).

But as the most recent accounts make plain, Avon Riding Centre does not have sufficient contingency funds to draw on to repay the loans that it has taken on to secure the short to medium-term survival of the Centre and all it provides. Nor to carry out the essential repairs needed to ensure its safe functioning and meet the increasing demand for its services. Nor to realise the full potential of the Centre for delivering the greatest benefit to its core users and the wider community.



ARC raises **£120,000** each year
from lessons for able-bodied riders, helping
reduce the cost to disabled riders

Lessons for disabled riders
are charged at **£13**
per three quarters of an hour for each rider
although actual costs are over **£18**

Harvesting hay from our fields saves
£4,500 – £5,500
each year on feed bills

Green technology proposed for the
Centre (solar energy, biomass boiler,
rainwater harvesting) has been estimated
to provide a net income of
over **£250,000** over 25 years
from savings on energy bills plus anticipated
annual payments from on-going 'feed-in' tariffs

A SECURE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Therefore, Avon Riding Centre is launching the most significant Appeal of its 30 year history to raise £1 million in order to:

- Secure the vital services ARC currently provides and meet the increased demand for that programme of work.
- Maintain its core mission as one of the country's leading Centres of Excellence providing horse-assisted therapy to both adults and children with a wide range of special needs.
- Fulfil its huge potential as a sustainable educational resource for the local community and schools, making best use of the assets and environment of the Centre.



£500,000 to secure the land and all the benefits it provides for the long-term.

£350,000 to ensure the Centre is 'fit for purpose' and to meet the increasing demand for its services.

£150,000 to deliver the comprehensive Vision for ARC as a Centre of Excellence for both therapeutic riding and as an educational resource and exemplar of sustainability.

There is no shortage of statistics confirming the value and effectiveness of the Centre's work – but the clearest endorsement of the benefits ARC provides comes in the comments made by those who use the Centre,

“Progress externally may seem slow to others, but I know I would decline without the weekly sessions. I've seen improvement in my fitness, core stability, balance and muscle tone. It stimulates me neurologically; retraining the pathways in the brain that have been damaged.

It's challenging just staying on the horse! Then add in following the instructions and getting your body to do what you say and the horse as well ...memory, concentration, eyesight, coordination, balance are all exercised.

I wasn't really a horsey person beforehand, but now look forward to it, miss not being up here at the Centre, the wonderful volunteers – and I love Roddy to pieces!”

Caroline Georghiou, diagnosed with Multiple sclerosis, rides 'Roddy'.



Over **60**
children and adults
with special needs
are currently on
the waiting-list

new applications
are received
almost daily



WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

There are many ways in which you can help us secure a sustainable future for Avon Riding Centre, whether as an individual, a business or a grant-making body.

By making a donation directly to our Appeal you can:



Secure an acre of land forever

The 15 fields we rely on for exercise and grazing vary in size from around 7 acres to 1 acre. Their use in perpetuity can be secured for the Centre for sums ranging from £50,000 to £1,000.



Put a roof over our heads - literally!

Renovations to the Centre's roof to make it weather-proof and able to support green technology (so cutting energy bills and generating an income) have been estimated at £350,000.



Sponsor a horse like Roddy

Sponsor one or more of our 25 horses and ponies – each of which costs the ARC £4,000 annually to look after.

GET INVOLVED

Donate services or equipment

ARC needs all the various services and equipment that any rural business or land-based establishment relies on: standard office and IT systems; equestrian equipment; specialised machinery for field and arena management.

Volunteer time and skills

Assist with riding lessons; back-office support; routine maintenance of the grounds and facilities from hedge-cutting and fence-painting to offering electrical skills.

Use the Centre

Hire the Centre as an events and conference venue. Or come and take part in staff team-building and corporate challenge days.

Donate to the ARC Appeal

Make a BACS payment direct to us:

Bank name: Triodos

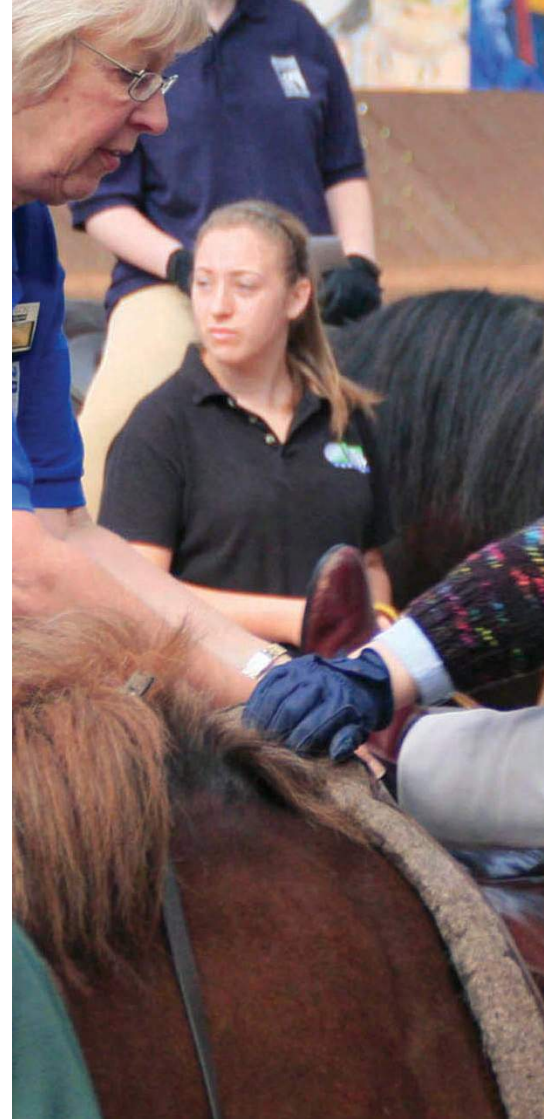
Account name: Avon Riding Centre for the Disabled Ltd

Account number: 20338511 Sort Code: 16-58-10

Please get in touch

Avon Riding Centre, King's Weston Road, Henbury, Bristol, 0117 959 0266

www.avonridingcentre.org.uk





“Triodos recognises the hugely valuable service Avon Riding Centre provides for the community. The positive impact on the lives of the hundreds of disabled adults and children it provides horse-assisted therapy to each year is clearly evident; but it also offers a rare refuge for wildlife and people amidst a busy urban environment, and has real potential to become a unique educational resource for sustainability for local schools and the wider community.”

Neil Hewitt, Social & Cultural Team Manager, Triodos Bank.

THE HORSE AS HEALER

Simply sitting high-up on a pony and looking down for the first time on other people is a novel, empowering and joyful experience for a child that up until that moment has been confined to a wheel-chair.

Here at the Avon Riding Centre, we work with adults and children living with over 30 physically or mentally challenging conditions including Attention deficit disorder, Autism, Asperger's syndrome, Cerebral palsy, Dispraxia, Down syndrome and Multiple sclerosis.

Therapeutic riding involves teaching the necessary skills and techniques required to ride a horse as independently as possible. The emphasis is not only on the physical benefits of riding, but also on development. It is used to improve the balance, coordination, focus, independence, confidence, motor and social skills. Therapeutic riding is known to benefit people with a wide-range of physical, mental or learning disabilities, as well as helping relieve more general conditions of stress or anxiety.¹

Horse riding has long been recognised as offering outstanding therapeutic qualities for humans. There are references to the benefits of therapeutic riding as far back as 600 BC, when Socrates wrote of 'riding's healing rhythm' for both mental and physical improvement. Horses were also used in the rehabilitation of wounded soldiers after World War II and that healing role is being looked to again for those wounded in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A horse can produce over one thousand movements in three-dimensions over ten minutes - so requiring and enabling the rider to achieve and hold balance, to improve their posture and muscle tone and generally increase their sense of self-esteem.

A 2006 study from Brazil found markedly improved levels of self-esteem in a group of 6-9 year old boys with development disorders, both through weekly sessions of therapeutic-riding, but also through simply being in the presence of the horses.² Published research also shows that equine-assisted therapy resulted in significant improvements in confidence, self-perception and motivation in children with Cerebral palsy.³

“The multidimensional movements transferred from the moving horse challenge the rider’s balance and postural control. Learning riding skills encourages social integration and speech development as well as offering possibilities for sport and recreation. The competitive element offers further impetus for improving fitness and body awareness.”

Lynne Munro MSc MCSP, Chair of the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Therapeutic Riding and member of the RDA Coaching Committee.



“I am delighted to support the Avon Riding Centre for the disabled appeal. This is a splendid project which can truly help a wide range of individuals with all sorts of different disabilities, adults and children alike. Avon Riding Centre does fabulous work and I wish them every success!”

Professor Neil J Scolding, Burden Professor of Clinical Neurosciences, Frenchay Hospital, Bristol.

References

- ¹The health benefits of horse riding in the UK, University of Brighton and Plumpton College
- ²Equotherapy as a means to improve the self-esteem levels of children with a history of learning disabilities, Vera Horne, Vandete Lima, Associa Nacional De Equoterapia (ANDE-BRASIL), 2006
- ³A Study of Therapeutic Effects of Horseback Riding for Children with Cerebral Palsy 1995, Physical & Occupational Therapy in Paediatrics, Vol. 15

Also available:

- ARC's Sustainability Project, business plan
- ARC Annual Accounts 2011

AVON RIDING CENTRE

Achievement through Riding

7,500 lessons, **280** individual riders, **33** different special needs

Acute episodic neurological disturbance (XY); Arthritis; Asperger's syndrome; Ataxia; Epilepsy; Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); Autism spectrum disorders; Brain tumour; all types of Cerebral palsy; Cerebral hypoplasia; Congenital kyphosis; Depression; Developmental delay (general); Down syndrome; Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD); Dyspraxia; Dystonia; Epilepsy; Foetal alcohol syndrome; Friedreich's ataxia; Head injury; Hemiparesis; Hypermobility syndrome; Learning disability (general); Macular degeneration; Multiple sclerosis (MS); Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); Proprioceptive and Vestibular systems problems; Rare neurological syndrome (balance, learning disorder, coordination problems); Retinitis pigmentosa; Spinal muscular atrophy (SMA); Stroke; Williams syndrome.

An independent charity in its own right, Avon Riding Centre is a full member group of the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA), the umbrella body for some 500 RDA groups in the UK. ARC does not receive any statutory funding, but relies entirely on its own fundraising efforts and the generosity of individual supporters, trusts and corporate sponsors. Avon Riding Centre is one of the top five purpose built centres for riders with disabilities in the country and is regularly used by RDA National for training volunteers and instructors from other smaller groups, as well as an exam centre for those wishing to achieve qualifications as instructors and coaches.

www.avonridingcentre.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 281648
Company Ltd by Guarantee No: 5010395
Avon Riding Centre, Kings Weston Road, Henbury, Bristol

Written by Robin Maynard and designed by Sam Allen 2012
Photographs by Emily Waldron, Chris Hiron, James Barke and Robin Maynard



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**