

Chairman's Report for the year ending 31st March 2012

I wrote in my Chairman's Report for the year ending 2011 that "there is recognition amongst Trustees that the next year will be critical for our charity in terms of on-going change on every front." But I promised: "We have a determination to position GASP in a way that makes us adaptable and receptive to market demand."

Twelve months on, it is a source of some pride to the Board of GASP Motor Project that we have successfully weathered the changes that engulfed the landscape of youth services provision in Surrey over this period. We have done so by reviewing and remodelling our strategic direction and by starting to expand the charity in response to market demand. We also took the decision to become a full member of the Youth Consortium Surrey & Borders, to strengthen the charity's ability to bid for Surrey County Council contracts. Along the way, an increasing number of young people have benefited from the GASP model. We end the year with a far more dynamic and focused operation, fit for purpose and increasingly recognised as an example of best practice by our service users, stakeholders and funders.

Appointment of Chief Executive Officer

Much of this success stems from the strategic decision taken by the Board in Q2-3 2011 to appoint a permanent part-time Chief Executive to take control of operations. We were fortunate to appoint Andy Finch – formerly Regional Director with Business in the Community and before that Head of Public Affairs at WH Smith – to the post in October 2011, initially on a 2.5 day per week contract.

His previous career route had seen him developing innovative education-based programme for disaffected young people, often partnering with the corporate, public and charitable sectors in these programmes. Taking up his new role, Andy Finch quickly proved the value of this experience in helping to shape the future direction of GASP as we grow the charity both in its reach and impact. The Management Committee ceased to function by January 2012. Instead the Board makes policy decisions and gives direction to the Chief Executive at the bi-monthly Board meetings, to which he reports, and the Chairman has regular meetings with him in the meantime.

Board of Directors

I pay tribute to my fellow Directors who have taken some brave decisions over this year under report in order to secure the future of GASP Motor Project and position it for further expansion. We now have a well-balanced Board with a synergy of skill-sets to support the operational team. We welcomed Louise Blakeborough to the Board in January 2012. Louise has worked for 30 years in communications and has already started to bring her marketing and public relations expertise to GASP.

Thanks must go to Anthony Cassidy for so diligently leading on the planning and development of a new Workshop for GASP (more of which later), and to our Company Secretary, Bob Brown, for giving us expert counsel around negotiations to buy out the GASP interest in advance of the end of lease date at the old Gomshall Workshop and preparations for a new base at Albury. Peter Lebus has also shared his knowledge of the local area in these negotiations. Michael Taylor, our Treasurer, has proved a proficient adviser on all matters financial; he also supported our CEO in negotiations with the Queen Elizabeth Foundation for a temporary workshop base from July 2011.

We are indebted to Richard Wheeler for sharing his wide experience in the global business area: Richard continued to lead the charity's ongoing strategic review, the development of the business plan and the appointment of the CEO. Lady O'Connor (Louise) has contributed her expertise in education, accreditation and working with special needs groups to our strategic discussions and worked closely with Richard Wheeler and the Chair on the development of the business plan and appointment of the CEO.

Again this year, we benefited from Trustee David Davis's wide knowledge and contacts within Surrey County Council and the youth network across this county. Similarly, our Board Adviser, Henry Curwen, was able to provide invaluable information on the direction of travel of the Surrey Youth Development Service. Both men have advised on our Child Protection Policy.

Strategic review and Business Plan Development

During this year, the Board continued with its fundamental review of strategy and the development of a robust business plan, led by Trustee Richard Wheeler.

All of this focused on the premise that GASP develops practical and interpersonal skills for young people in motor mechanics within a vehicle

workshop environment. Its purpose and vision is to enable young people, often including those who are disaffected and marginalised, to maximise their potential. GASP does this by: helping young people change behaviours to support them in making a successful transition to adult life; preparing them in a practical way for the world of work; enabling them to experience the value of teamwork, focusing on personal, social and emotional development.

The evolving GASP business plan agreed within year ending March 2012 focused on: significantly increasing the number of weekly sessions, to double operations within a two year period; a focus on three specific groups; the need to develop and implement a strategy to attract new funding and build a higher level of activity with new client groups on a sustainable basis; and a plan to ensure GASP has the appropriate organisation and resources, and logistics (including workshop site and mobile provision) to deliver its agenda going forward.

Workshop and Mobile provision

The start of this financial year saw Trustees locked in tough negotiations with the Franciscan Order at Chilworth and the Alexandrian Copts, purchasers of the Gomshall site upon which the first GASP Motor workshop had been built. Ultimately, a settlement was reached with the new owners, who contracted to buy out the GASP interest for the sum of £25,000 in advance of the end of lease date. Agreement was reached that GASP would vacate the workshop by July 2011.

Simultaneously, the GASP Board entered into negotiations with the Chair and CEO of the Queen Elizabeth Foundation and were delighted to secure agreement to rent a modern motor workshop on the QEF site at Leatherhead for a six-month period from July 2011. This enabled GASP to continue delivering daytime sessions, and one evening session each week. In December 2011, this contract was extended to run until June May 2012. On behalf of the Board and operations team at GASP, I extend our grateful thanks to the QEF for supporting our charity in this way. Without this assistance, GASP might have been forced to 'go dark' for 11 10 months, and our future might have been very different as a result. This has proved an excellent example of charity partnership.

Alongside this, the Board was actively seeking a permanent site for a new purpose built Workshop. We first entered into dialogue with the Northumberland Estate and, in particular, Estate Manager Michael Baxter in the previous financial year. The result was an agreement whereby the

Northumberland Estate would erect a workshop to GASP specifications on The Sand Pit site (currently the SITA landfill at Albury) and would charge GASP a special rate rent over a 25-year period. Anthony Cassidy progressed an application to Guildford Borough Council, successfully requesting letters of support from influential parties both locally and more widely in the county. Three year temporary planning permission was granted in summer 2011 and work started on site in November 2011. Building Regulation approval followed in January 2011 and erection of the steel structure commenced in early 2012. By the end of this financial year, indications were that the building would be completed by May 2012, with occupation soon after.

As part of our strategy to take GASP to client groups across Surrey, Trustees agreed that a Mobile provision be added to the charity's portfolio of services. In March 2012, agreement was reached that an ex-Surrey Ambulance Service vehicle be acquired, because of its interior space and the hydraulic lift or ramp for go-karts and materials transported to each location. Two new go-karts were also acquired to transport within the mobile provision and engage students instantly. The mobile provision is due to go live in Q1 of the next financial year.

Adaptable Workshop team

Our Workshop Manager, Barrie Birchmore, is to be congratulated on the manner in which he has adapted to changing circumstances, a redefined operational hierarchy and three different locations over the course of this year. He has continued to lead the sessional team and volunteers with quiet authority, delivering a varied and challenging alternative learning programme to a broad range of abilities across the differing cohorts of those referred to the programme. We are grateful to them all, most especially for their positive response to the expansion of sessions and the new direction for GASP.

Exploring new funding streams

Our fundraising activity has developed significantly in this financial year, led principally by the CEO and Chair. Towards the end of the period GASP received confirmation of an £18,400 grant from the Government's Community Action against Crime Innovation Fund: £9,000 for January to March 2012 and £9,400 for year ending March 2013. The initial funding has been used to source the mobile vehicle, go-karts to stock it and other mobile equipment. The remaining £9,400 will support the delivery of mobile sessions to Youth Justice Service clients (or a similar target group).

The agreement by Wates Foundation to award a grant of £5,000 towards core cost – and the positive visit to our workshop by the Wates Director and one of the Wates family Trustees – gave GASP encouragement that our Strategic Plan for the next three years was sending the right messages to such a well-regarded funding body. Funding was also secured via Localgiving.com, Guildford Voluntary Grants Panel, ExxonMobil UK, the Police Property Act Fund. Right at end of this financial year, we met with Schutz Engel Trust and the Michael Varah Memorial Fund and were hopeful that a substantial combined bid to those two grant givers for £24,000 would be successful.

We look forward to receiving the final grant from Surrey County Council (SCC) Youth Development Service, which was initially given to support the GASP evening provision. We are indebted to SCC for this annual funding stream, which will end in April 2012 with the restructuring of young people's services at the county council.

Alongside grants from third party organisations, our funding streams have grown in this year as the CEO worked hard to build links with potential service users, to identify where user groups have sufficient funds to pay for GASP sessions, and to bid for Surrey County Council contracts as a member of the Youth Consortium (YC). GASP successfully tendered for the Local Prevention Framework within the YC tender and won £10,000 to deliver a programme of school holiday courses (from the GASP mobile) in school holidays at Elmbridge and Guildford boroughs. A series of Special Schools have agreed to funded sessions, and discussions are ongoing with the Youth Support Service.

Building the brand profile

A series of decision makers and existing and potential stakeholders have visited GASP through this year, principally at the temporary workshop at QEF, Leatherhead. Whilst it was difficult to tell the complete 'GASP story' in this location, the CEO and Workshop Manager and his team still succeeded in impressing visitors as they delivered sessions to a variety of user groups.

Once the new Workshop opens at Albury, there are plans to orchestrate an Official Opening and to invite key decision makers within the county, stakeholders, funders and user groups. Plans to update the website, in the next quarter, and to produce a Case for Support document are well advanced.

The year ahead

These are exciting times for GASP Motor Project as we look to the next 12 months and the promise of a new Workshop location, new Mobile provision, an expansion of session delivery and grants from more funding streams. Support for our alternative learning provision, which provenly makes a real impact on the lives of sometimes disaffected and underachieving young people, grows ever stronger, and we are encouraged by this. Our path is set firm for 2012-2013 and all the signs are that what started as a small local charity delivering an evening youth provision will morph into a countywide charity delivering effective accredited training to young people who respond best to vocational learning. The benefits to them can be exceptional.

None of this could be achieved without the professional delivery and specialist knowledge of the management and operational teams, the workshop volunteers and our Trustees. It is energising to work with them all and I thank them profusely.

Sally Varah, DL
Chair of Trustees
May 2012