WABC Wallingford Accessible Boat Club
Registered Charity No. 1179179

Newsletter

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RECORD SEASON AHEAD FOR WALLINGFORD ACCESSIBLE BOAT CLUB



It looks set to be another record-breaking season for Wallingford Accessible Boat Club, with all the signs pointing to an exceptionally busy summer.

Even before the first passenger trips on WOW-one, our fully accessible Wheelyboat, were underway in May, bookings were already stretching well into August. Encouraged no doubt by the glorious spring sunshine – and by the growing awareness of this much loved local club – enquiries are being received in greater numbers than ever, keeping our Booking Coordinator, Kate Wingfield exceptionally busy.

A highly successful winter volunteer recruitment campaign has enabled the club to train and deploy more crews on the water, allowing more trips for people of all ages, including wheelchair users and those who find getting around more difficult. Plans are also in place for evening trips during the height of summer.

Passengers can also expect even greater comfort on board this season.

An upgraded bimini with optional side panels offers improved protection from the sun and rain, and reduces the chill from the wind - making every trip on WOW-one even more enjoyable.

After a record-breaking 2025 season, 2026 is shaping up to be even more successful, so book a trip today so you don't miss out – visit **www.wabc.org.uk** and click on **BOOK NOW**.

Your chance to make a difference!

Do you like to give yourself a challenge? It could be a run, a swim, an endurance effort of some sort or perhaps something as simple as a knitting challenge.

You can turn your effort into impact by raising much-needed funds for Wallingford Accessible Boat Club. We'll support you with social media promotion and a fundraising webpage, and you'll earn a trophy as a proud WABC Community Champion. So go on, step up, get sponsored and help improve people's lives – **one challenge at a time!**



What some of our volunteers and fundraisers say

We asked what makes supporting the club such an enjoyable and rewarding experience? **Here are a few of their comments...**

I love being out on the river, and to enable people who may find it hard to access the river to enjoy it too is so rewarding.

Sally Feaver, Volunteer Crew

WABC isn't just a charity. It's volunteers giving their time to make life a little brighter for others. They give people the chance to experience something many of us take for granted, the peace, freedom, and joy of being out on the Thames.

Sarah Eastwood, Community Champion

I feel proud to be involved with this charity, bringing joy and relaxation to our lovely passengers, whilst working with professional and dedicated volunteers.

Andrew Tyler, Volunteer Crew

So, if you fancy volunteering or fundraising for WABC, please get in touch – you won't regret it!

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

We are very fortunate to have so many friends in the community who go out of their way to take on a challenge to raise funds for us. We reward these amazing people through the Community Champion scheme where they receive a special trophy as a symbol of our gratitude.



SARAH EASTWOOD, SINGING SUPERSTAR AND KEEN LIDL SHOPPER!

Here's her story...

"On a very cold, gloomy Saturday morning outside Lidl, I met two people collecting for a charity I had never heard of before.

"I was immediately intrigued, as the primary carer for my disabled brother, who absolutely loves boats and the river, and I'm always aware of how precious the simple joys in life can be, and how easily they can be out of reach for many.

"We got chatting, sharing a few laughs in the cold, and I quickly realised just how special this charity is.

"I jokingly said I didn't have any cash on me to donate, but I could sing for them instead. Since that cold morning, I've been proud to 'lend' my voice to a number of WABC events. It's a small thing to give, compared to what they offer others."

FUNDRAISING

Wallingford Accessible Boat Club is really pleased to welcome Judi Byrne as our Fundraising Lead. Judi is bringing her experience, energy and commitment to help make boating accessible for everyone. She'll be working with other volunteers to raise much-needed funds so the club can keep growing and helping more people enjoy getting out on the water.

Welcome Judi Byrne



Judi will be chatting with local businesses, supporters and the wider community, to help raise awareness and support for the club. As Judi explains, "from equipment and training, to fun trips on the river, every bit of fundraising helps make a real difference. Everyone is welcome to get involved and help keep the amazing spirit of Wallingford Accessible Boat Club going strong".

If you would like to raise funds to make the River Thames accessible for everyone, you can contact Judi via the Fundraise page on our website **www.wabc.org.uk**

THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

Judi got off to a flying start, securing a £13,273 grant from The National Lottery Community Fund, so we'd all like to say a huge thank you to everyone who plays the National Lottery.

PICTURES PAINT A THOUSAND WORDS...









Thank you Waitrose shoppers!

WAITROSE & PARTNERS

We are once again indebted to Waitrose for operating the Community Matters 'Green Token' scheme at its Wallingford branch in December last year.

The scheme offers three charity options for a customer's green tokens which they gather at the till, so it's up to Waitrose shoppers where the donations go. The charity with the most tokens at the end of the month wins. We're delighted that WABC came out top and we are now £1,500 better off. And, on top of that, our bucket collection outside Waitrose on Saturday 9th May raised over £800. Thank you Waitrose ... but, most of all, thank you Waitrose shoppers!

CALLING ALL CARE HOMES!



Our specially designed, fully accessible Wheelyboat, gives hundreds of people of all ages, including wheelchair users and those who find getting around more difficult, the chance to experience the River Thames in a way that might not otherwise be possible.

However, we know from experience that for residents of Care Homes – we have in excess of 30 Care Homes within a 10 mile radius of Wallingford – these trips are particularly highly valued.

Here's a kind message we received recently: "We are The Old Vicarage, based in Moulsford, and this is exactly the kind of opportunity that makes a real difference to our residents' wellbeing and quality of life. It brings so much joy to them. This is something we would be thrilled to support – whether through donations, volunteering, or getting involved in other ways."

Our Chairman, John Jenkins MBE, replied, "thank you, The Old Vicarage, and we look forward seeing a lot of your residents out with us on the water this summer, and if you can help with our fundraising that would be marvellous".

So, all Care Homes, wherever you are, get in touch and share the joys of the River Thames with us.

A huge thanks to all our supporters...

Thanks to Wallingford Town Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and the Oxford Community Foundation for your unwavering support; thank you Waitrose and Lidl for hosting our extremely rewarding bucket collections; and a huge thanks to all our sponsors whose financial help adds great stability to our operation – you are all so good to us.

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WABC Wallingford Accessible Boat Club

Making the River Thames accessible for all

Get in touch

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RYA AFFILIATED

FR Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

Benson Weir reopens

The Benson Weir footpath and walkway officially reopened on April 1, restoring the Thames Path between Benson and Wallingford. Closed since November 2022 due to structural safety concerns, the crossing features a completely new, wider walkway and revamped weir gates.

Scan the QR code to find out more and book

Scan the QR code to donate and support us