



Three Year Strategic Plan 2024 to 2026

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1. Introduction

We hope that this strategy will provide the framework to ensure that the organisation continually develops and that our work makes a vital contribution to both animal welfare and our local community. To that end this strategy will concentrate on what we want to achieve and why we want to do it. How we achieve these goals will be documented in the operation plans for each individual year, published in a separate document.

The plan provides information for the following stakeholder groups:

- For the management and staff of Brockswood, it provides a basis for the decision making process and therefore a mechanism by which decisions can be analysed to make sure that the direction taken by the organisation is not drifting from that of its core vision
- Provides external stakeholders (e.g. local authority, partners and collaborators) with viability of the long terms aims of the organisation
- A mechanism to share the aspirations of the organisation with its volunteers, visitors and supporters
- Provide potential funders with the confidence that the organisation knows exactly what it wants to achieve and how it will realise its aims

2. Background

Brockswood at Cotwall End (trading as Brockswood Animal Sanctuary) is a non-profit making company limited by guarantee. This means that all of our profits are put back into the organisation and used to care for our rescued animals, maintain and improve the site, and develop an educational and engaging visitor attraction.

Brockswood is set in the beautiful Cotwall End valley, adjacent to the Cotwall End Nature Reserve. The site is 16 acres in total and is the former site of Cotwall End House, known as Cotwall End Nature Centre. Brockswood took over in 2005 with the intention of establishing an animal sanctuary and associated educational facility. Historically, there has been an animal facility on the site (in one form or another) for many years, in fact since the early 1960's when it was known as Cotwall End Nature Centre and was operated and funded by the local authority. Unfortunately, over time and for many reasons, it had slipped into a state of considerable disrepair.

When Brockswood took over the site we knew it would be a huge project and we still require a lot of support and funding before we can bring the site back to its former glory. Since we have been here we have had to repair fences, replace water supplies and drainage systems, re-wire the buildings, rebuild walls, repair pathways, rebuild enclosures and much, much more!

For many years we have stated that we would like to bring Brockswood back to the former glory of the place so many of the local people remember from childhood visits. What we would actually like to do is become even better than that, as since being here we have come to realise that the site has the potential to not only help to improve the lives of mistreated and unwanted animals but also have a positive impact on the lives of people who live and work alongside us in the Dudley

borough. However, it is going to take a lot of work and resource to achieve. This work continues each day, as we face new challenges and problems to overcome, all whilst caring for our rescued animals.

This strategy, simply put, is a document designed to articulate our aspirations and how we believe they will be achieved.

Aerial view of the Brockswood site



3. Governance & Structure

Brockswood at Cotwall End is a company limited by guarantee which has been the structure of the organisation since its inception. However, the Brockswood management intend to review the organisational structure in the first half 2024 to determine if becoming a CIC (Community Interest Company) or a registered Charity (or any other structure) may be beneficial in realising our aims.

The organisation is managed by two Directors on a day-to-day basis, supported by 7-10 paid staff which varies due to the seasonality of the organisation income.

Brockswood also utilises volunteers in a range of capacities, and will continue to do so as they play an important role in the activities of the organisation.

4. Vision, Mission & Values

Our **VISION** is to create a flagship animal sanctuary that empowers people to learn and develop as individuals through engagement with animals and nature.

Our **MISSION** is to use the setting of an animal sanctuary to also deliver educational, recreational, and therapeutic activities to the community as a whole.

This will be achieved by the following Aims:

- To provide a safe haven for sick, injured and unwanted exotic, wildlife, and agricultural animals within an educational and affordable family visitor attraction.
- Ensuring sound husbandry techniques that meet in full the physical and psychological requirements of the various species at the sanctuary, and therefore ensuring the well-being of all the animals in our care.
- Using the site as a whole to develop formal and informal educational programmes that aid development of both students and the community.
- Support and develop local conservation programmes that will assist in the protection of native species.
- Supporting ethical scientific research that furthers the knowledge and understanding of animal welfare and husbandry.
- Maintaining a stimulating and affordable visitor experience that educates the public with regard to issues of animal welfare and ethical treatment of animals in captivity.
- Actively engage the local community by increasing the capacity for local people to participate in direct volunteering, events, and social activities

Our **VALUES** are based on a few core principles.

- We believe that **respect** for our animals and all the people that we work with, has to be at the heart of everything we do.
- We value the **diversity** within our local communities and recognise and appreciate the **contribution** to society that all members of these communities can offer.
- We strive to work **creatively** and take an innovative and resourceful approach in our work.
- We aim to work in ways that creates positive sustainable changes within communities through **empowerment** of the members of that community.
- We actively seek to **collaborate** and work in partnership with other organisations to achieve greater results
- We hold **professionalism** in high regard and endeavour to be a responsible and efficient organisation

5. Realising Our Ambitions

The strategy for realising our aims and ambitions has to be realistic while at the same time challenging enough to promote growth and development of the organisation. Unrealistic and therefore unachievable aims will only serve to demoralise staff and volunteers and also have a potentially detrimental effect on the organisation's credibility with external stakeholders such as visitors, supporters, funders and collaborators.

The following are the areas we have chosen to concentrate on over the three years of this strategy. Some of the aims are interlinked so there is inevitably some overlap and duplication where a planned improvement will work towards realising one or more of our ambitions

AREA 1: FACILITY ENHANCEMENTS

We aim to be a focal point for the local neighbourhood and greater Dudley area communities by creating an exceptional visitor experience with wide ranging activities that local people can both be involved with the provision of and will want to visit regularly.

Areas to focus on Include:

- Retain low cost affordable entry thereby allowing access for all income ranges
- Explore the possibility of free or financed group visits for those on very low incomes
- Continue with the current ongoing improvements to the material fabric of the site (detailed in the operations plan)
- Ensure good accessibility to all facilities and improve disabled access where necessary
- Renovate the existing toilet block
- Create more hand washing areas
- Enhance the play area
- Review the refreshment options offered in the cafe in terms of ethical food production and healthy eating choices
- Upgrade of cafe facilities for use by other groups (dementia cafe, book clubs etc.)
- Explore potential funding to create a community room adjacent to the play area that can be utilised by local groups, clubs and individuals
- Continue upgrading the pathways around the site to improve accessibility
- Make the site safer and more secure from damage due to trespass and vandalism

AREA 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Over the last three years we have worked with various groups and organisations who have wanted to utilise the site for a number of reasons including educational visits, obtaining work experience, personal volunteering, structured organisational volunteering (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Awards), and corporate/business volunteering days to name a few. These activities have been on an ad-hoc basis with the interested parties approaching Brockswood to enquire about the availability of such activities and then Brockswood accommodating wherever possible.

This strategy aims to turn this situation around by creating planned and structured activities for these various groups, then proactively engage these groups (and the greater community) to increase awareness of the availability of these offerings and the benefits to both the user and Brockswood.

Areas to focus on Include:

- Engage with local businesses so as to better understand their needs and provide more structured ‘corporate volunteering’ days that are mutually beneficial
- Explore potential relationships and collaborations with other organisations to expand volunteering and social opportunities on site
- Expand the work experience provision to include areas other than just animal care
- Investigate the potential for a Community Engagement Team. A group of volunteers that actively engage all sectors of the community to promote the benefits of volunteering, seek to understand needs and create tailored volunteering opportunities; thus creating an environment in which new volunteers can be led and inspired by volunteers.
- Create supported volunteering opportunities (see Health & Social Care below)
- Examine the potential for volunteering opportunities for young people (under 16 years)
- Enable volunteers to participate in an exciting programme of activities
- Exemplary volunteering procedures and practice
- Provide a programme of events that attract, reflect and involve local people.
- Act as a venue for others to host their events
- Increase the diversity of people involved in our activities
- Take positive steps to engage minority communities
- Explore potential to act outside the site boundaries (eg outreach services)
- Developing a vision for the local area – participating more in planning and shaping of the neighbourhood

AREA 3: ENGAGING WITH & EDUCATING PEOPLE

Brockswood already provides both formal and informal learning opportunities in the form of collaborations with local colleges (formal) and with the use of activities, signage, and social media (informal).

Areas to focus on Include:

- Production of structured educational visits for schools covering various aspects of animal welfare and natural history based around the animals on site, local wildlife and nature, all based around Key Stages 1 & 2 of the National Curriculum
- Complete the recreation of a Viking Settlement on site and produce a range of activities around it to engage the public and provide an immersive learning environment for school groups to learn about this period in history and its relevance to local history
- Improve interpretation signage regarding the animals, and create a programme to produce environmental and conservation signage around the site
- Establish strong relationships with schools (resources, activities, partnerships)
- Develop the educational messages in the café around positive food choices.
- Utilise the woodland and natural areas on the site to create a facility for outdoor learning
- Review the possibility of on site accredited courses (eg BTEC, C&G, NVQ etc) with accreditation bodies
- Produce an enhanced range of entertaining and engaging activities for families

AREA 4: HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

It is well documented that working with animals and nature can have a huge beneficial effect for those suffering from a range of physical and mental illnesses. Whilst Brockswood has no ambition to become a full blown care centre it does aim to develop a range of activities that complement and aid existing therapy or recovery for people in need.

- Improve our understanding of local needs and use this to create supporting and complementary activities
- Ensure supported volunteering opportunities are available in all areas of our activity
- Build more relationships with other organisations that can deliver support services for people in need from the Brockswood site
- Development of the accessibility and activities for older and disabled people

AREA 5: CREATE A ROBUST & SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATION

We aim to create a flagship animal sanctuary with high welfare, environmental, conservation, and social standards, that is engaging and accessible to all.

- **Finance & Funding** - We will continue to raise funds via direct trade with individuals and businesses as our primary source of income as this is currently considered to be the most stable and reliable form of income. Fees for goods and services will still be calculated to create a balance between the need for the organisation to create the necessary funds for survival and growth and the aim to be as accessible as possible to people with lower incomes. Other activities/income streams to be considered for the future are:
 - Enhance the offering within the on site cafe so as to generate more income
 - Increase numbers of events held throughout the year
 - Explore community fundraising as an additional income stream
 - Utilise the features of the new 2020 website to enhance direct trade and the creation of an ethical bespoke product line
 - Continue to decrease the closure periods and therefore create a longer ‘open season’
 - Open an on site ‘Charity’ shop to sell upcycled and donated goods
- Sustainability
 - Improve the environmental credibility of the organisation
 - Creation of purpose specific recycling and composting areas and improve water harvesting across the site
 - Review the technology infrastructure and working environment/practices to enable more efficient working
 - Ensure that sustainability is built in across all organisational activities by conducting a site wide sustainability audit and creating a long term implementation plan
- Staff and board
 - Become a ‘Real Living Wage’ employer
 - Explore the potential for a staff well-being programme
 - Initiate a professional development plan for permanent staff
 - Seek to increase the numbers and diversity of the Board of Directors

6. Measuring Our Success

The following details the areas and types of measure we will be monitoring:

- **General Performance Indicators**
 - Animal welfare standards (zoo licencing & veterinary inspections)
 - Cafe & food service (hygiene rating (Local Authority) and customer feedback)
 - Accurate footfall monitoring
 - Numbers of repeat visits in a season
 - Visitor satisfaction surveys
 - Assessment of level of social impact (SROI)
- **Facility enhancements**
 - Performance measured against operations plan
 - Visitor feedback
- **Community engagement**
 - Volunteer recruitment and retention (volunteer records)
 - Diversity of volunteers (volunteer records)
 - Structured events & activities (variety, viability, community involvement)
- **Engaging with & educating people**
 - Uptake of school offering (number of sessions/students)
 - Quantity and quality of school visits (operation plan & feedback)
 - Number and variety of informal activities and their quality (customer feedback)
- **Health & social care**
 - Range and quality of activities offered (ops plan, individual development & feedback)
 - Number of supported volunteering places created (volunteer records)
 - Number of collaborators/partners
- **Create a robust & sustainable organisation**
 - Financial stability (survival ratio)
 - Staff retention, remuneration and professional development levels (personnel records)
 - Measures environmental impact (Green Tourism Award)

7. MONITORING & REVIEW

- The above measures will be continually reviewed via a quarterly Strategic Development Meeting
- A status report will be produced at the end of each calendar year and circulated to relevant stakeholders

Any queries or requests for further information regarding this plan can be obtained by contacting Neil Swann (Director) on 01902 884390 or by email on neil.swann@brockswood.org.uk