

Each month, one of our small charity members is celebrated for all the hard work they do for their beneficiaries as well as being an engaged FSI member. The December Member of the Month is Hope Pastures Horse & Donkey Sanctuary—congratulations to Kim and team!

Name of organisation: Hope Pastures Horse & Donkey Sanctuary

What is your charity's mission? To rescue, rehabilitate and re-home horses, ponies and donkeys. Within this, to educate on animal welfare and provide a place where people can meet horses and donkeys.



How do you achieve this? We keep our overheads very low, relying on an army of volunteers to deliver our mission with us. We have only eight (totally dedicated) FTE members of staff, but are supported by over 100 hard-working volunteers, as well as hands on trustees. This means that for every £1 donated to us 95p is spent directly on rescuing the animals. We're very proud of this percentage and our team work super-hard to make this possible.

What are your successes to date? Successes are all animals which we have rescued from pain, maltreatment and squalor and then re-homed into a loving family, where they can have a second chance and a useful and fulfilling life. I have attached a couple of 'before' and 'after' pictures (of Bessie and Hope) to show you examples of these.

We're also proud of our success in making the sanctuary a centre for the local community. Contact with equines is very therapeutic and we're open to the public free of charge every day. Our city-based site means people can visit on foot and by bus as well as by car. We run popular sessions for families and groups, such as OAP groups, brownies, schools and special needs children. The latter find great benefit in spending time with the animals.

What challenges do you face as a small charity? There is a national equine welfare crisis, with far more animals needing rescue than there are charities who can take them. One of our biggest challenges is managing which animals can come to the sanctuary and when and organising rescue by others of those which we cannot take if we are full.

Staff and volunteer burn out is also a potential issue, as our team works very, very hard and we manage this by rotating the work we all do and by having a supportive team ethos.

Ensuring costs are covered every month. Many charities receive about 80% of their income from legacies. Due to historical issues, for Hope Pastures, legacies only account for no more than about 15% on average. We're working on changing this, but it puts a huge pressure on our fundraisers to ensure we generate sufficient funds to cover the running costs of the sanctuary day in and day out, and on our yard team to ensure they keep costs to the absolute minimum.

What is your relationship with the FSI? The FSI provides us with a chance to interact with other small charities, learn about best practice and gather information to ascertain how well (or otherwise) we are doing and whether our issues/successes are reflected in the charity sector more generally.

What does winning member of the month mean to you? We're very proud to win member of the month. Burrowing away, with heads down, hard at work every day, it's a great to have the chance to take time out to evaluate what we're doing, and to celebrate the successes we've had, with people who understand the effort which goes into making these things happen.