Planning a sustainable future

The Wheels Project – our background and context

40 years of service…

The Wheels Project Limited is a registered Charity based in Bristol and since 1979 has been delivering education programmes in motor vehicle studies to disadvantaged and disaffected teenagers who live in Avon. Since then we have developed, adapted and changed a range of services to suit the changing needs of these young people and their communities. We work primarily with young people who are failing in mainstream education, show low aspirations, low motivation and challenging behaviours.

The Wheels Project seeks to unlock the potential of these young people by creating opportunities for them to channel their energy and build their confidence to promote their social inclusion for the public's benefit.

We have a small dedicated and highly skilled team of Staff and Trustees who are committed to making a difference to the lives of these young people through the delivery of practical programmes which meet their needs and that of their communities. Young people are at the heart of our work and what we do.

We work in collaboration with a wide range of organisations with which we share common values and goals in equality, diversity and inclusivity.

We aim to:-

- **Engage** with and motivate disaffected and at risk young people to help them feel they have the capacity to achieve their potential.
- **Educate** young people in vehicle use, repair and maintenance to enable them to make a positive contribution during and complete educational courses, leading to positive outcomes.
- **Encourage a behaviour change** in young people, building upon their increased sense of achievement and self-esteem so that they reduce previous risky behaviour and contribute positively to society.

Our context…

We work with individuals and groups from across the Avon area, taking referrals from mainstream schools, pupil referral units, and other youth agencies.

During our 40 year history we have adapted our service offering to keep pace with the changing needs and demands of our referrers.

The last decade has seen us adapt and flex as our partners and referrers have grappled with the challenges of financial austerity, as well as a period of stagnation, and in some cases decline, in the numbers of young people.

We offer a range of programmes, including our karting programme, our servicing programme and our community vehicle programme. We also support groups through the British Schools Karting Championship.

We are funded through contributions received from our referrers, as well as from the generous support of a number of Trusts, many of whom we have long and continuing associations with.

As an organisation we have benefitted hugely from the continuity of service and association with a number of key staff, especially our General Manager who has been with us since the creation of the project. The next few years will present us with both opportunities and risks, as we look to appoint the next generation of staff through whom we will continue to support young people across Avon.

The Wheels Project – contextual facts and figures

A growing demographic

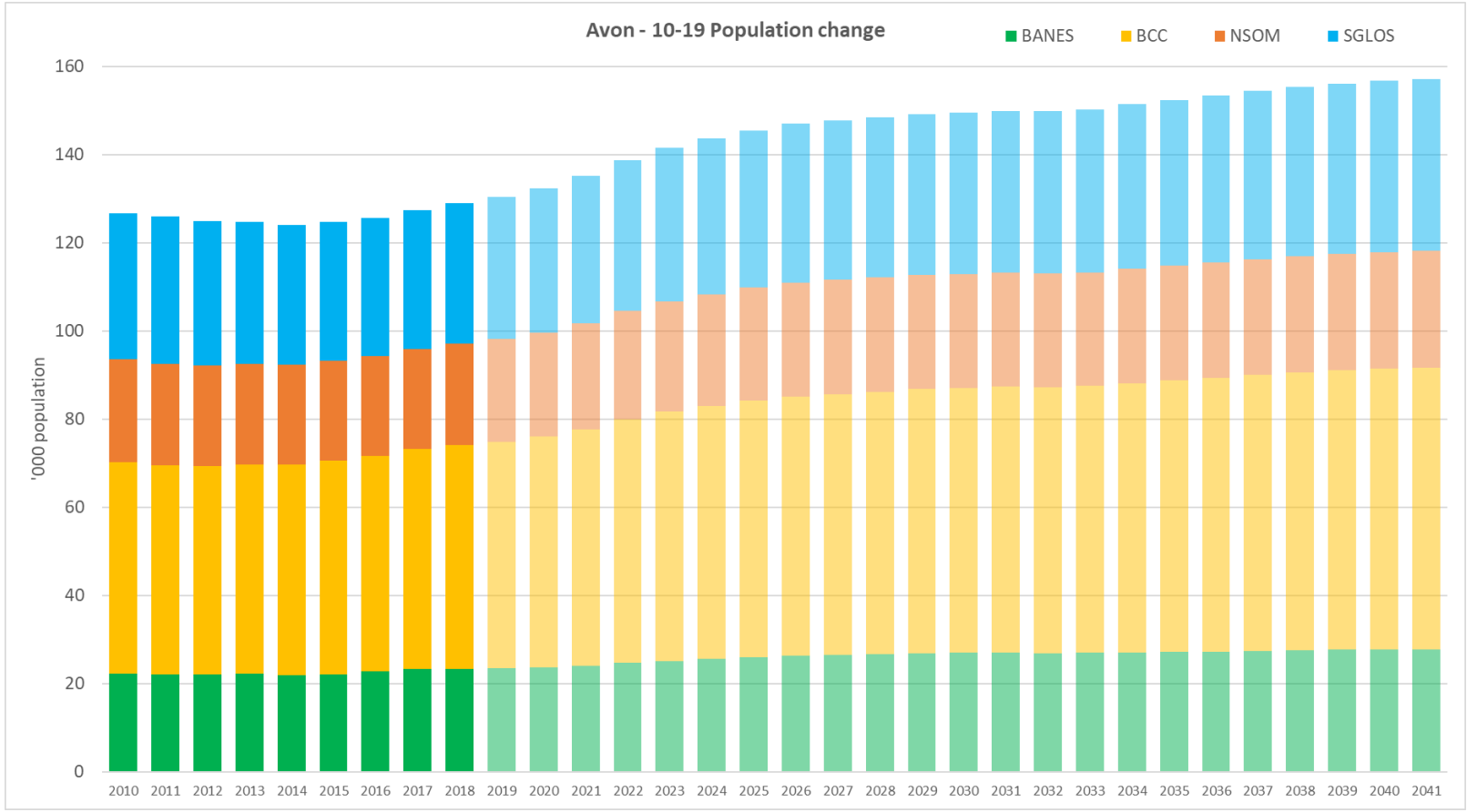
After a period of stagnation, and even a small decline in the overall population aged 10-19, the forecasts suggest we can expect to see significant growth across Avon.

The current population is 129,000, and by 2025 this is expected to have grown by 12.8% to 146,000.

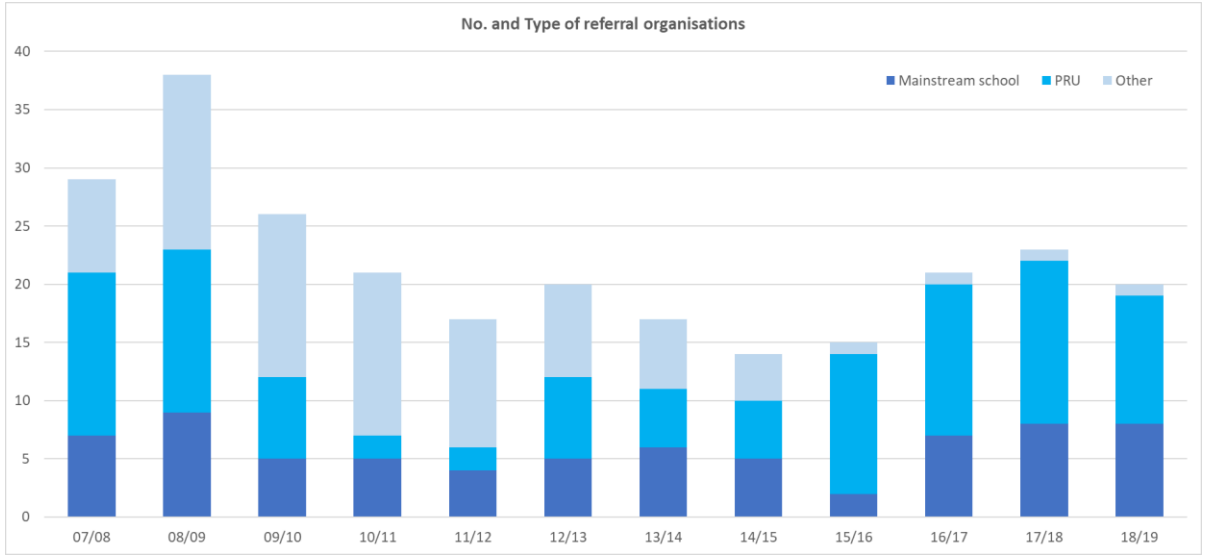
All of our local authority areas are expected to see double digit growth in their 10-19 population by 2025:-

- BANES +11.1%
- Bristol +14.8%
- North Somerset +10.8%
- South Gloucestershire +12.3%

Whilst population growth alone does not translate to a growth in demand for the services Wheels provides, it is a good indicator that demand for our services is unlikely to dissipate any time soon.



The Wheels Project – operational facts and figures



Referral organisations

Over the course of the past decade we have seen the number and profile of our referral organisations change. There has been a significant drop off of referrals from other organisations (youth offending teams, social services, probation) which is perhaps reflective of the wider changes which have impacted on these types of organisation.

Our referrals from schools has stayed relatively static during the period, reflecting the fact that we have maintained strong working relationships with a good cohort of our local schools despite the changes and challenges they have been through during this time.

Referrals from PRU's has been more volatile, but currently they account for the largest number of referral bodies we work with – reflective of the fact that our service offer is meeting the needs of these agencies who are under less pressure than mainstream schools to retain individuals within a school setting.

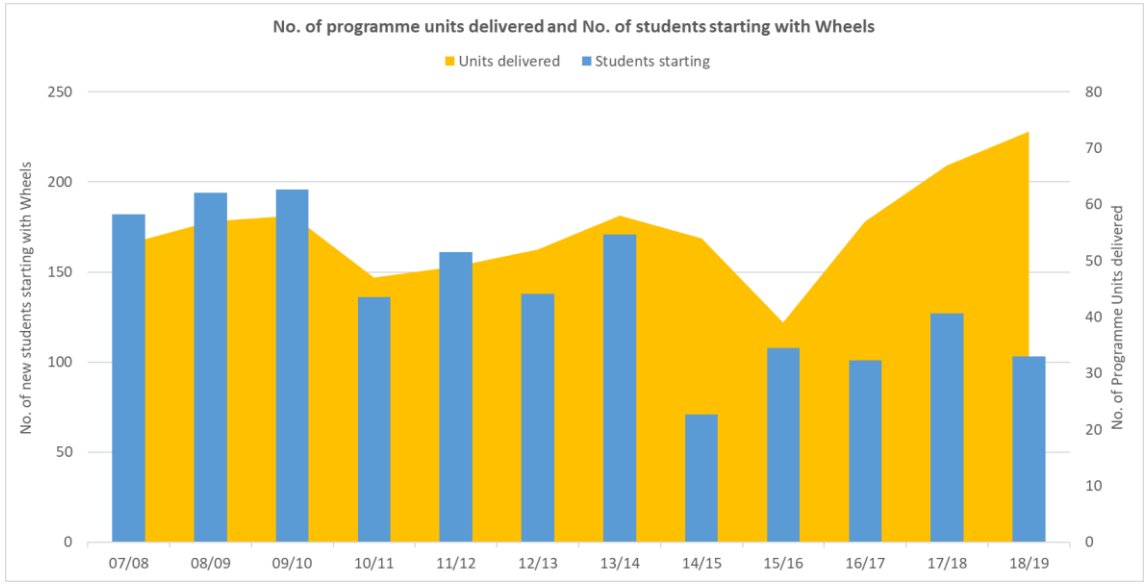
Students and Programme Units

During the past decade we have seen a decline in the number of new students starting with Wheels, whilst at the same we've been able to grow the number of programme units being delivered.

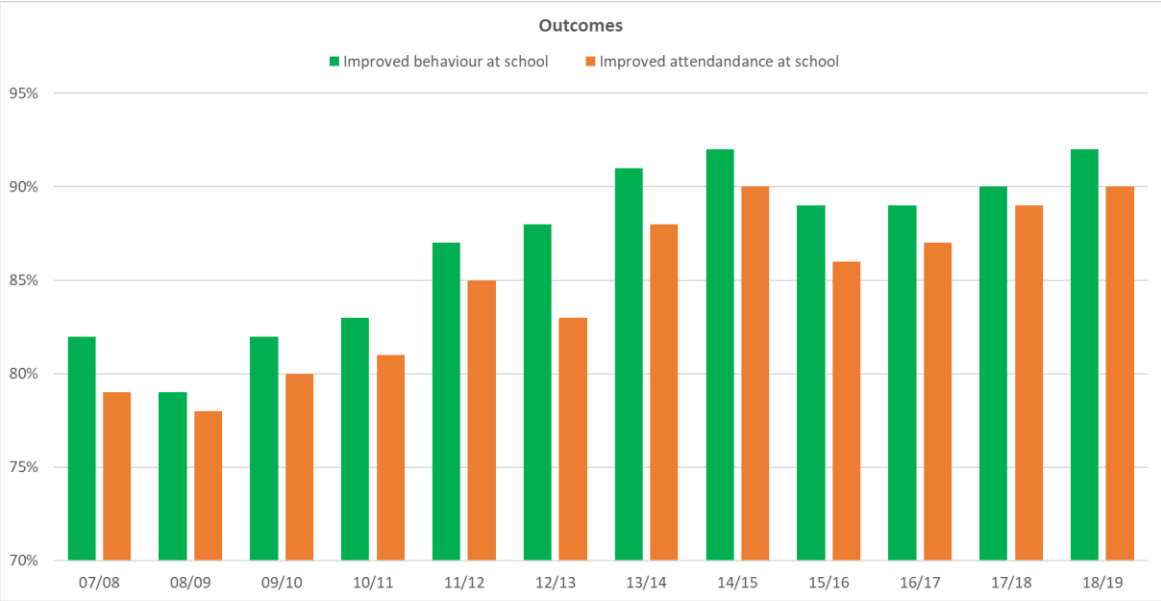
In 2018/19 we delivered 73 individual programme units, the highest delivered at any point during this period. During the same year we had 103 students starting with us – one of the lowest numbers at any point during this period.

This reflects the increasing trend in students completing multiple programmes with us. In 2007/08 a student would complete an average of 1.8 units with us. In 2018/19 this figure stood at 3.7 units.

This development through our programmes (for example from karting programme to our community vehicle programme) is a measure of the progress being made by students during their time with us – their return to us is an endorsement of the success we're achieving.



The Wheels Project – operational facts and figures



Delivering outcomes

Through feedback received from our referrers we know that we continue to meet both their needs and the needs of our students. We measure stats for both of these and neither has dropped below 90% since 2007/08, with satisfaction in 2018/19 at 97% for referral organisations and 98% for students.

The outcomes of our students have remained high throughout the last decade, with improvements in behaviour and attendance at school being reported for the vast majority of our students, as well as a encouraging number going into further education once they have left school.

In 2018/19 92% of our students showed improved behaviour at school, 90% saw improved attendance at school, and of those who left school 88% went into further education.

Community impact

Since 2007/08 we have gifted **44** community vehicles that have been repaired and put through their MOT by our students. We have supported a large range of different community organisations through this programme…

youth moves
'Starting Journeys, Inspiring Lives'

AVON riding centre

Keynsham foodbank

Carers' Centre
Bath and North East Somerset

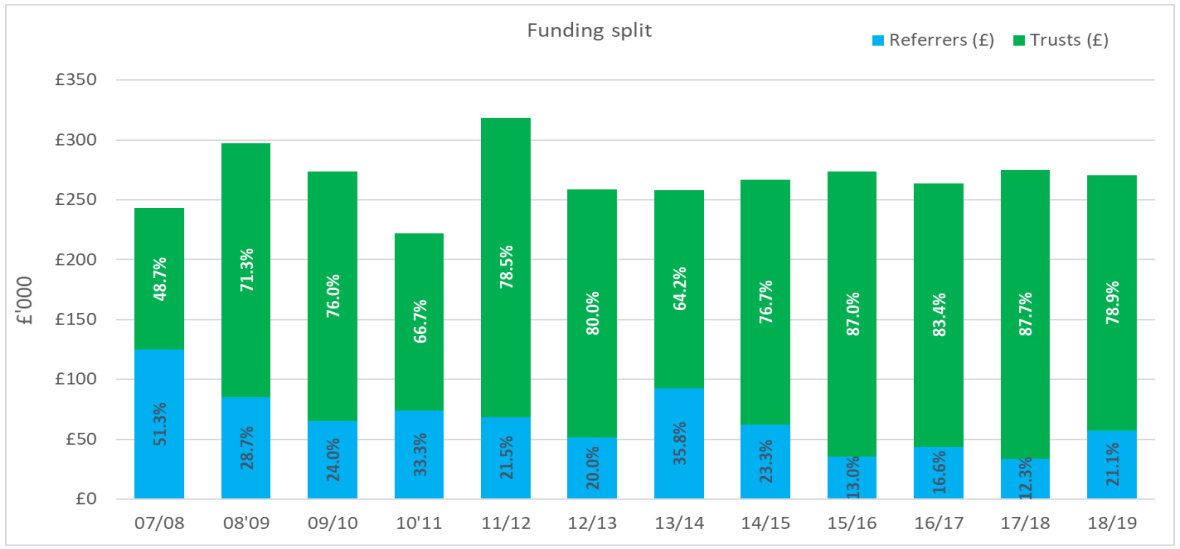
Scouts
1st Banwell

HOLLY HEDGE
Animal Sanctuary

We Foundation
The Specialist Centre for Visual Impairment

UNIQUE VOICE
USING CREATIVITY TO EXPLORE, EDUCATE & EMPOWER

The Wheels Project – financial facts and figures



Funding shift

Since 2007/08 we have seen a significant shift in the sources of funding into the Wheels Project. In 2007/08 51.3% of our funding came from referral organisations, and yet by 2018/19 just 21.2% of our funding came from these sources.

This shift reflects the tighter financial constraints within which our referral organisations are now having to operate. Budgets within education have seen reductions in real terms, with increasingly the system weighted towards retaining pupil numbers on roll and in school.

The average funding received from referral organisations for each student has therefore declined over the past decade. In 2007/08 we received from referral bodies an average of £685 for each student. In 2018/19 we averaged £554 per student (in 2017/18 the average was just £266).

In order to cope with the reduction in this source of funding, we have had to increase the funding from Trusts. In 2007/08 48.7% of our funding came from 9 trusts, whereas by 2018/19 78.9% of our funding came from 18 different trusts (in 2017/18 87.7% came from 27 different trusts).

We are lucky to retain the support of a number of repeat funders, with all of our 18 funders in 2018/19 being repeat funders from previous years. However, sometimes Trusts will limit the length of time they can offer support. This requires us to continually try and identify new funders.

THE STONE FAMILY FOUNDATION

John James Bristol Foundation

The Binks Trust

Commissioner's Community Action Fund
Police Community Trust

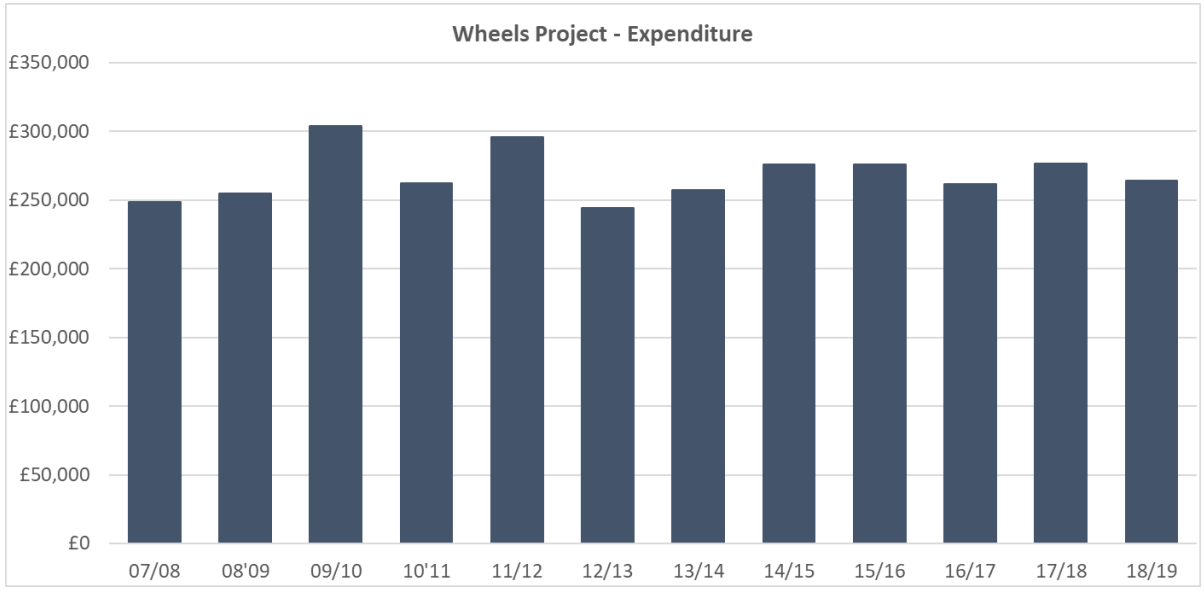
The Henry Smith Charity
founded in 1628

The Spielman Charitable Trust

St.John's Foundation
Est. 1174

THE NISBET TRUST

The Wheels Project – Financial facts and figures



Controlling Costs

Our shifting funding, against a backdrop of austerity, has required us to maintain tight cost control over the past decade. During this period our most expensive year was in 2010, where our expenditure was just under £304k. However, this year saw us move premises incurring exceptional one-off costs.

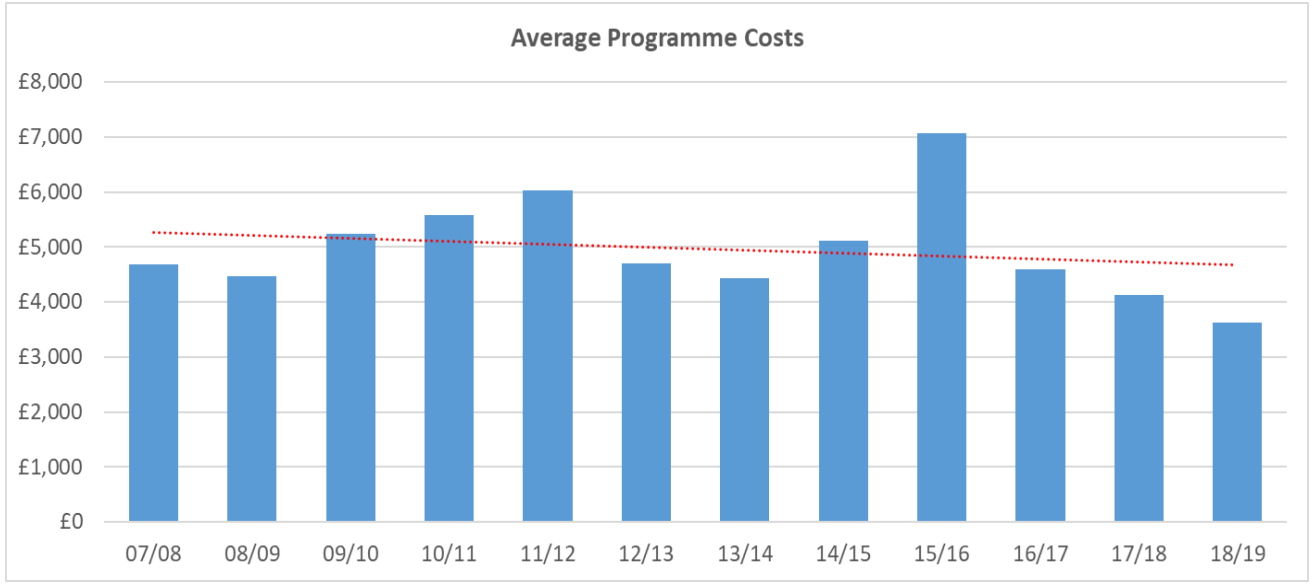
Our costs in 2018/19 was just over £264k. This was just £15.8k more than in 2007/08, an increase in costs of 6.4% in 11 years.

Staffing accounts for our biggest cost at approximately 57% of our spend, with premises costs our next biggest at 22.5%. Both of these cost areas have been kept under tight control over the past decades, with cost increases largely being seen in relation to driving activity costs (where our development of our BKSC programme has seen increased costs) and our fundraising activity (where our need to grow funding from trusts has resulted in increased need in this area).

Average Programme Costs

During the period in which we have maintained tight cost control, we have also seen an increase in the number of programme units being delivered. This has resulted in a reduction in the average cost per programme unit over the past decade. In 2007/08 the average cost was £4,687, whereas in 2018/19 the average cost was £3,619 – a reduction of 23%.

Despite this tight control over our costs, we have not always been able to balance our budgets. In 6 of the last 11 years we have recorded a financial loss, and in 5 we have recorded a surplus. Overall across these 11 years we have achieved a small surplus of £14.9k – enabling us to retain reserves at the end of March 2019 at £154k ensuring we are able to sustain ourselves against some of the financial uncertainty we face.



The Wheels Project – looking ahead – A SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Established and stable organisation with consistent track record of success, as demonstrated through outcomes tracking and user/referrer testimonies
- Good policies and procedures in place
- Fit for purpose premises, well located for our wider catchment area
- Committed, and dedicated team driven by desire to fulfil our mission
- Adaptability has meant we have stayed relevant to referrers and students
- Good contacts maintained with local referrers
- Good relationships maintained with funders, as demonstrated through repeat funders
- Good financial resilience – c. 50% annual budget held in reserve
- Good cost control – 6.4% increase in past 11 years
- Grown capacity beyond premises – karting programme delivered off-site

Weaknesses

- Hand to mouth existence - 6 of last 11 years in deficit
- Referrers not great at identifying alternative funding – onus on us to do this
- Loss of funders creates pressure to replace with existing/new funders
- Provision of services during term-time – funding statutory provision?
- Knowledge concentrated in one or two individuals – single points of failure
- Proximity of our site to bus stop and lack of other means of transportation – accessibility may be off putting for referrers and students
- Perception of high costs per unit driven by low group sizes
- Lack of formal accreditation for achievements in programme completion

Opportunities

- Population growth of 10-19 year olds within the local area
- Increasing numbers of exclusions from school might increase demand
- Serious violence focus from government could lead to opportunity where Wheels able to be seen as a diversionary, early intervention option
- Advent of electric vehicles offers chance to develop new programmes
- Development of programme utilising bikes (e.g. Julian House example)
- Recruitment of new team may bring forward new opportunities
- Development of accreditation for achievements
- Establish closer relationships with FE – providing path for future development

Threats

- Key staff nearing retirement – loss of contacts with referrer organisations
- Key staff nearing retirement – loss of support from funders concerned
- Change in approach from funders – supporting fewer organisations with more
- Failure to attract new staff - stability/prolonged handover etc…
- Changes in automotive industry may lead to less interest in motor engineering
- Pressure to retain pupils in school setting may lead to less referrals
- Pressure to take larger group sizes may dilute the impact we can have
- Affordability of transition – do we have the funding to see us through

The Wheels Project – looking ahead

A pivotal point…

The Trustees of the Wheels Project recognise that we face a pivotal period over the coming years. The next five years in particular will see:-

- The **retirement of key staff** from the Project;
- The continued **shift in the wider automotive industry** towards new technologies (electric vehicles, autonomous driving);
- The continued **pressure on schools**, both in terms of financial control and educational attainment;
- The expected **growth in the 10-19 year old population**, suggesting continued strong demand for the services of Wheels and other such organisations.

Whilst much of our success to date has been in our ability to be responsive to changing shifts in our operating context, we recognise that the next few years in particular will require careful management and planning to ensure we make the right decisions to achieve a sustainable future.

The Wheels Project – Planning for the future

We have therefore developed a forward plan which we believe will help us navigate through the next three years sustainably. Details of this plan are set out below:-

Strategic Objective	Outcome	Milestone	Due Date	Responsible Lead
Sustain demand for the services of The Wheels Project	**Introduce new referral organisations -** Develop relationships with referral organisations resulting in 6 new organisations referring pupils to us over the next three years.	Introduction of 2 new referral organisations	Dec 2020	General Manager
		Introduction of a further 2 (4 in total) new referral organisations	Dec 2021	General Manager
		Introduction of a further 2 (6 in total) new referral organisations	Dec 2022	General Manager
Develop course and programme options to ensure remain relevant to referrer and student needs	**Bike programme** – Develop a plan for the introduction of a bike maintenance programme for consideration by the Board.	Plan to be presented to Board (further milestones may be agreed following board decision)	Mar 2020	General Manager
	Electric vehicles programme – Develop a plan for the introduction of electric vehicle programme, identifying the implications and costs associated with this move, for consideration by the Board.	Plan to be presented to Board (further milestones may be agreed following board decision)	Mar 2021	General Manager
	Out of term time – Introduce course to run outside of term time, thereby maximising our use of the facilities and staff during the holiday period.	Introduction of 1 holiday activity	Summer 2020	General Manager
		Introduction of a further 1 (2 in total) holiday activity	Summer 2021	General Manager
Ensure The Wheels Project continues to demonstrably deliver effective outcomes	**Review our 'Theory of Change'** – Undertake review in conjunction with referrers, to ensure our outcome measures demonstrate individuals progress, meet referrer objectives, and evidence the value that the Wheels Project offers.	Outcome of review to be presented to the board (further milestones may be agreed following board decision)	Mar 2020	General Manager
	Accreditation – DO WE WANT TO INCLUDE ACTION TO FORMALLY CONSIDER OPTIONS TO DEVELOP ACCREDITATION?	??	??	??
Ensure The Wheels Project secures the right people with the right skills to deliver and develop the services it offers	**Staff skills** – Introduce an annual report to Board detailing the current skills compliance of all staff within the project, and planned activity over the next 12 months to ensure that this is maintained and developed.	Introduction of annual skills and training report to Board	Jul 2020	General Manager

The Wheels Project – Planning for the future (continued)

We have therefore developed a forward plan which we believe will help us navigate through the next three years sustainably. Details of this plan are set out below:-

Strategic Objective	Outcome	Milestone	Due Date	Responsible Lead
Ensure The Wheels Project secures the right people with the right skills to deliver and develop the services it offers	**Succession planning** – Recruit and on-board a new General Manager in good time to enable an effective handover from the current General Manager prior to his intended retirement.	Introduction of new General Manager	??	Chair of Trustees
	Board skills – Introduce an annual review of Board skills and competencies, and develop training plan and/or recruitment plan to close any gaps identified.	Introduction of annual review of Board skills	Mar 2020	Chair of Trustees
	Increase capacity for fundraising – Secure additional fundraising support beyond our existing capacity, to help in the identification of new funding streams and opportunities.	Introduction of additional fundraising support	Nov 2020	General Manager Trustee – Finance Lead
Ensure The Wheels Project maintains an effective and sustainable financial position	**Increase income** – Target an increase in income of 15% over the next three years, enabling a surplus to be generated which can be used to increase reserves and/or support investment in areas of development.	19/20 – Target +5% - Review total funding compared to costs	Jun 2020	General Manager
		20/21 – Target +10% - Review total funding compared to costs	Jun 2021	General Manager
		21/22 – Target +15% - Review total funding compared to costs	Jun 2022	General Manager
	Referrer fees – Achieve sustained level of income from referrers at 25% of total income over the next three years.	19/20 – Review level of referral fees achieved	Jun 2020	General Manager
		20/21 – Review level of referral fees achieved	Jun 2021	General Manager
		21/22 – Review level of referral fees achieved	Jun 2022	General Manager
	Trust funding – Identify and secure the support of new charitable funders, with target of introducing 2 new multi-year funders over the next three years.	Introduction of 2 new multi-year funders	Nov 2021	General Manager
	Maintain effective cost control – Manage core costs (i.e. excluding planned approved investments) to see increases no greater than CPI (as measured at September each year).	19/20 – Review actual core costs compared to prior year	Jun 2020	General Manager
		20/21 – Review actual core costs compared to prior year	Jun 2021	General Manager
		21/22 – Review actual core costs compared to prior year	Jun 2022	General Manager