

Annual General Meeting 2025

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) for Thornton Rose RDA will take place on:

- *Saturday, the 4th of October 2025, 2 pm at Thornton Rose RDA, Thornton Farm, Rosewell, EH24 9EF. And online via MS Teams*

Agenda

1. Welcome to Members (Becca)

2. Attendance and Apologies (Charlotte)

Apologies from Lorna, Kay M, Lynn Walker, David Learmonth and Amanda Noble

Attended (in person) Carol Perry, Sheila, Dani, Mags, Helena, June, Beth, Alister, Connie, Ella, Charlotte, Becca, Fiona as well as remote attendees (Fi Brown, Ian Macdonald)

3. Minutes of the last AGM, Monday 5th October 2024 (Charlotte)

Proposed by Becca

Seconded by June

4. Chair's Report for 2024/25 (Becca)

Trustees report read by Becca:

As we come to the end of another successful and busy year at Thornton Rose Riding for the Disabled the annual general meeting gives all members and associate members the opportunity to reflect on the last year together.

This year has seen a significant increase in fundraising activities across the period. Our second and final Ooni pizza oven raffle brought in an incredible £330 and saw lots of interaction across our community on social media. At Christmas last year in particular fundraising efforts were extensive across our network, from our calendar sales kindly sponsored by Lothian Glass, Harbro and TNC electrics, mug, and merchandise sales as well as our festive feed fundraiser. The feed fundraiser spread awareness amongst our volunteers, participants, and community of the varying and increasing costs that we face as a charity, as well as the individual needs of our horses and ponies particularly as they age. We raised a total of £425.18, the equivalent to 328 feeds for our horses over the winter months.

Social media has become a key tool for our fundraising efforts and increasing awareness within our community of what Thornton Rose RDA is doing and capable of. The continuation of specific, regular, and targeted posts across Facebook and Instagram is a vital tool for our ongoing success and growth. Our new website set up by Alister and June has produced similar results, creating an adaptable framework that can update interested parties about our work and function as a base to access documents, information about our charity and current or previous activities in an accessible form. These tools are essential as

we ensure that Thornton Rose RDA is prepared and participating in the digital world that is only continuing to grow around us, for us to continue to grow we must participate.

Community is essential to our group, and we have continued to strengthen relationships with vital services who allow us to run, particularly through the care and welfare of our horses. We have continued to be supported and work with our vets Central Equine Vets, who have also provided learning opportunities for our horse welfare team and volunteers to learn more about conditions that may impact our horses, our equine physiotherapist Laura Hamilton, our farrier Lee Murray and our saddle fitter Holly from Grange Saddlery have similarly provided opportunities for learning and observation in addition to their support of our horses welfare. Maintaining these important professional links within our community are vital to the maintenance of our horse's welfare which is a core pillar of our work as without our horse's health and welfare being paramount, we would not be functional as a charity.

Our horse's welfare as discussed is always an important consideration every day, as well as our regular physio, farrier, and vet visits, although sometimes the vet visits as happens with horses can become suddenly more regular due to injury or illness. We have also been supported by all these parties in addition to Thornton Rose RDA's horse welfare team to make the decision that our wonderful horse Panda should retire after 10 wonderful years as an RDA horse. A calm, dependable and patient presence in our group for so long his impact

was significant and celebrated at two retirement parties this summer before his move to Fionas house. Panda is now living an even more luxurious life with Fiona, however, he is still trying to work out whether his sheep field mates are friends yet or not!

We have been lucky enough to bring Blue on loan thanks to our trainee coach Fi, he has adapted very well to RDA life and is well loved amongst our participants and volunteers. The charity was also grateful to be in receipt of a grant from the Wooden Spoon Foundation for a horse, we were able to after a long and challenging search find a horse this summer. Flo is so far enjoying her training and settling in well, if everything goes smoothly it can be hoped that we can bring her into RDA in 2026. Pie, Ollie, Willow, and Rinca continue to work as excellent RDA ponies alongside working with their sharers to keep them fit and healthy.

Fundraising, grants, and initiatives are also an important aspect of our presence in our wider community. The support of volunteer groups from RBS have continued to contribute to the maintenance of our site and connection with these individuals. Their support resulted in RDA being able to use a grant from Screwfix to weatherproof our barn, creating a safer and more secure space that has shown its worth through the considerable number of storms we have experienced, including one last night! Our new signs from Signs and Styles have also held up well, making it clearer where we are within the local area as well as making the barn more professional. RBS also kindly invited us along to

their headquarters for a fundraising stall and most excitingly a visit from Willow who very much enjoyed her day out meeting their employees who showed interest in the charity as well as supporting us through their donations of over £400 that were matched by the organisation, reaching a final total of £800. We have also had support from the Co-op who have raised significant funds and provided support through their community initiatives, we hope that as a charity we are able to work with both organisations again in the coming year.

Fiona one of our coaches and trustees participated in an exceptional hike of Ben Nevis in August in memory of her friend Heather, raising a total of £2,667.83 not including gift aid, 25% of these funds have come to our group to be used for the support of wellbeing sessions for families to enable them to get support. This effort was tremendous, making it into newspapers including the Scottish Farmer and it has been suggested that the next activity is climbing “Fiona’s” a categorisation of mountains across Scotland for a 2026 fundraiser.

Local car boot sales, events and bake sales have all been vital in bringing in smaller but essential amounts of money that all make a difference, through continuing activities on a smaller or larger scale Thornton Rose RDA as well as through posting on our website and social media we are able to make ourselves more prominent to funders as an essential part of Midlothian as the regions only RDA group.

Our participants as ever have been an essential part of our group, we have heard from many about what they enjoy about RDA, their favourite horses and what

activities they enjoy, as well as interaction via the committee and coaches of key points relating to experience and development of our RDA group. We continue to welcome this interaction which is crucial as participants like our horses and volunteers are key pillars of our charity. Thanks to funding from Midlothian council, we have been able to continue running our summer mental health support programs. Additional participants have been brought in in ridden on the ground and mental health support capacities. Shelia one of our participants who competes in dressage has once again found success at regional, virtual, and national competitions, flying the flag of Thornton Rose RDA whilst competing with the support of groups including Borders RDA and Saxon RDA for their provision of horses who can travel to compete. We are continuing to look into more effective ways of organisation and communication with our participants to help things run smoothly, particularly in times of poor weather which unfortunately have impacted us fairly significantly over the last year, with the realities climate change impacting sessions beyond typical periods in January or February.

As RDA national continues to adapt their aims as a charity as voted for in favour by our members Thornton Rose RDA will continue to do the same, this will allow us to expand our services not only within our current remit but beyond as we look into the inclusion of activities including endurance, working with schools and mental health support through sessions that focus on Equine Facilitated Learning. These activities will not only allow us to continue

supporting our current participants but support those in need of support from across the quickly expanding Edinburgh and Lothian's region which means the services Thornton Rose RDA can provide are as needed as ever.

To support our current and future activities our coaches have been regularly attending CPD training held by RDA regionally and nationally, in addition to accessing fee paying opportunities with companies such as Equi Scotia whose services we have been able to access to an extent due to grant funding which we will continue to seek over the coming year. Our trainee coaches and activity leaders have had similar access to these training opportunities. All three of our coaches continue to be certified and it is looking positive for some of our trainee coaches to continue their learning over the next year and hopefully become qualified as RDA coaches. The training and time spent by these teams in their voluntary capacity at RDA sessions and beyond often spending their evenings or weekends to continue developing their skills that are vital to ensuring that we can continue providing accessible, effective, fun, and therapeutic activity to our participants.

Our volunteers as always are vital to our day to day functioning as well as the running of our twice weekly sessions. We continue to constantly recruit volunteers, with our teenage and adult volunteers taking part in a range of activities from horse care, side-walking and leading to more speciality roles within mental health support because of training. Our volunteers have been celebrated during volunteer week and our new "volunteer of the month" series

that aims to celebrate everyone's unique contribution to Thornton Rose RDA. Participating in all activities from fundraising, daily horse care that is often time consuming and at times challenging due to weather or circumstance, to session times and all that goes on behind the scenes from organisation to communication, every volunteer makes a difference and allows for us to run Thornton Rose RDA effectively.

Our trustees who are also all volunteers have also been celebrated through Trustees week and regular recognition as well as thanks, without our trustees there would be no Thornton Rose RDA. The role is often intense, takes skill and time but it is all worth it for what our charity can achieve, which we have reflected on just some of today. It would be impossible to detail every up, down and success of the past year in one chairpersons report, but what has been discussed details a clear representation of what we are doing and what we are capable of in the challenging world of running a charity, particularly one that at its core is not only volunteer run but is reliant on our wonderful RDA horses Pie, Ollie, Willow, Rinca and Blue to be present every day as a service vital to our local community in Midlothian. We hope everyone can celebrate the re-election of our trustees today as well as what we have achieved over the last year together at Thornton Rose Riding for the Disabled.

Thank you for listening.

Rebecca Maitland

Following the meeting, Trustee Lorna Curtis responded to the Chairperson's report:

I hope everyone is well. I was very sorry to miss the AGM due to being away on holiday, but I've now had the chance to read through the Chairperson's Report and wanted to share my thoughts.

Firstly, I want to extend my thanks and congratulations to Becca for capturing such a significant and inspiring year for Thornton Rose RDA. The report reflects the incredible breadth of activity and dedication across the charity—from fundraising and horse welfare to volunteer development and community engagement.

It's particularly worth highlighting Becca's leadership in spearheading the changes to PVG check procedures, ensuring we remain fully compliant with evolving regulations. This proactive approach is just one example of the thoughtful and forward-looking work that has gone into making this year such a success.

Thornton Rose continues to be a welcoming and friendly place, and it's clear from the report how much of an impact the charity makes on so many lives. It's a real privilege to be part of such a committed and compassionate community.

Looking ahead, I'd like to suggest we could explore the following in our next meeting:

- **Expanding our digital presence**, perhaps through short videos or participant stories to further connect with our community. #Midlothian
- **Developing a mentoring scheme** for new volunteers to support retention and confidence. The team set up seems to be working well so far and this can continue to be developed
- **Exploring weather-resilient options** for sessions, given the increasing impact of climate change. I missed Storm Amy, in Tenerife, but it was another example of the need to explore this for future.
- **Strengthening partnerships** with schools and mental health organisations to broaden our reach.

Thank you again to Becca and everyone involved for your hard work and dedication. I'm looking forward to another exciting year ahead with Thornton Rose RDA.

5. Treasurer's Report (Carol & Dani)

Financial accounts delivered by Carol

Overview of accounts delivered by Dani

We are presenting the RDA accounts for the year ended 25 February 2024.

Our income over the year showed an increase from the prior year of almost £6,000 to £22,069. This increase was largely made up by an rise in membership income that has been achieved by an increase in the number of clients and also by a

Do it Together programme that ran over the summer of July August 2023.

We received restricted grant income of £7,377 which was £23 below the level of grant income received in the prior year. The grant income we received 23/24 included a generous donation of £3000 towards a new horse, £1770 from screwfix towards the upgrade of the premises, and £2000 from the Robertson Foundation.

Expenses in the year increased from £16,231 to £22,198. The main drivers for the higher costs were an increase in livery costs due to an additional horse, an increase in mileage expense payments, equipment costs and vet fees and the purchase of a new horse.

Overall the Rda made a loss of just over £1000 which was slightly less than the prior year loss of £1570.

The RDA finished its financial year with a cash balance of £22,856 which included restricted funds of £2459.

As of 3/10/25 :

Current account= 5018.63; Reserve account=13,450.76

This time last year, current account was £8035 so quite a bit lower which is concerning.

*What's noticeable is that the income from participants... which looks to be 21 (excluding 2 part-time clients) is ca. £11,000 (£540/yr *21) and fixed outgoings for livery, Blue and Rinca is ca £11,000.*

So all other costs such as vets, farrier, feed, bedding etc needs to be covered from other funds (fundraising/horse shares/grants).

I'm not sure how this compares to previous years.

We need to be clear how many participants we have per week and see if there are openings for more new clients.

Unsure when Flo will be starting with RDA and participants but presumably will bring in more revenue during upcoming year?

There seems to be lots of grants opportunities now so hopefully we will be successful in getting some and need to focus on bringing in funds.

Kay E asks- what is holding us back from increasing number of participants and increasing income stream?

-Becca, Fiona, Helena response: A combination of factors- coach and vol availability and reliance to run sessions, hope to adjust pony availability in future with the addition of Flo.

-A long waitlist of participants to work through and many applicants who are unable to attend the session that is offered to them.

-Unable to run additional sessions with current coaches or yard provisions

-As a group we are looking to diversify services to negate these factors

6. Review of Resolution votes and proposed amendments & 7. Election of Trustees

Resolution 2025.1- June Gay proposed, and Charlotte Smyth seconded that: We, the members of Thornton Rose RDA (charity number SCIO 28617), agree to review the purpose of our charity set out in our Constitution to take account of the Riding for the Disabled's change of purpose and any other relevant factors to enable us to remain aligned to the national charity, as far as possible. To do this, we are giving the Board of Trustees responsibility to bring forward proposed amendment/s to the purpose of Thornton Rose RDA for members to vote on by majority before the next Annual General Meeting and to submit to OSCR for their statutory approval.– 51 votes for yes for all 3 resolutions

Resolution 2025.2- Fiona Buchanan proposed, and Mags Gallacher seconded that: We, the members of Thornton Rose RDA (charity number SCIO 28617), agree to help the charity to continue to grow and remain financially secure during the cost of living crisis. To do this we are giving the Board of Trustees responsibility for developing and running of extra services for both members and non-members – for up to five years starting from this Annual General Meeting, to help the charity grow and stay financially secure.

*Resolution 2021.1 - Proposed by Rebecca Maitland and seconded by Fiona Buchanan:
We the members of Thornton Rose RDA, SCIO SC028617, resolve to re-elect the
Trustees: Daniela Gentile-Watt, Carol Perry, Charlotte Smyth, Helena Wood, June Gay,
Margaret Gallagher and Lorna Curtis.*

8 Close of meeting (Becca)

The trustees thank Becca for her time on the committee and present her with a small gift