

# ECHO

Better Choices, Better Lives.

ANNUAL REVIEW 2021



# WELCOME



CAROLINE ARTHUR



MAND HAMBLIN

This time last year, ECHO was reeling from the impact of the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of our activities were still online only, staff were furloughed or working from home, and most participants were shielding.

While the pandemic is far from over, the last 12 months have seen a gradual return to something like normal, thanks to the huge efforts of our wonderful staff and volunteers, and the fabulous way that our participants have been able to adapt. We would also like to thank Herefordshire Council for their money and practical support, without which we wouldn't have been able to keep going.

Staff and volunteers benefited from early vaccinations - which meant that most of our day opportunities were able to continue over the winter - and they have continued to take tests on a very regular basis. Participants have learned about mask-wearing, hand-washing and social distancing, and activities have been reorganised to keep everyone as safe as possible.

The year hasn't been without its challenges, of course, and the trustees really appreciate the commitment and creativity shown by our very dedicated staff team. Thank you for always going the extra mile to make sure our projects are a safe and happy place to be and we must not forget to thank Mike for his leadership and support for everyone as well. During the year we have said goodbye to some much-loved longstanding team members, but we have also recruited some excellent new staff, who are bringing lots of new energy and ideas to ECHO.

We both think we should be very proud that despite all the extra work and stress there has sometimes been, we have stayed committed to our principle of participant involvement, with Rep Group and Trustee Support managing to meet regularly on Zoom from various locations around the UK, something we never imagined would be possible!

Let's hope that our 2022 AGM sees us all back together in person again.



Chair of Trustees



Vice Chair

## CHIEF OFFICERS VIEW

Our second year with COVID continues to be difficult, but we are now much better prepared for living and working with it.

We have faced a number of challenges, such as finding funding, reviews to services and property issues that have added to uncertainty. ECHO has tried very hard to not let these things affect our services any more than they should.

Even with all these challenges, participants, staff and volunteers have all managed to work together to make sure that our projects are fun and still producing the high quality work that ECHO is known for. It can feel tough and a bit of a struggle at times, but it is great to see that people are still managing to smile and that everyone is here for each other, especially when someone needs a kind word or a bit of a boost to keep going.

A big thank you to all our staff, volunteers and participants who have worked so hard to make ECHO a place of fun and enjoyment even in the most difficult times.



MIKE COOK

Chief Officer

# What ECHO believes in

## OUR VISION

A society where all people with disabilities are heard, valued, respected and supported to make choices and flourish.

## OUR MISSION

We want to make a positive difference to the lives of people with disabilities in Herefordshire, supporting them to both feel and be valued members of the community.

## OUR VALUES

In all our work, ECHO believes that people need:

- To be recognised and treated as individuals
- To be valued in their local community
- To have friendships and relationships
- To have meaningful choices which enhance quality of life
- To have expectations of achievement
- To have the opportunity to be heard on issues that affect their lives
- To have support from good quality trained staff
- To take an active part in planning and decisions that affect their lives





**CHOICE:** To support our participants to be happy & healthy with a variety of stimulating choices

**SUPPORT:** To give the right support and encouragement to build confidence and teach skills that enrich our participants' lives

**COMMUNITY:** To support people to have a good social life, to help them keep in touch with friends and get involved in the community

**INVOLVEMENT:** To give the time, respect and support needed for our participants to be involved in the planning, decision making and the running of ECHO

**QUALITY:** To provide high quality services that are integrated, visible and have value to the community

**COLLABORATION:** To build connections with other organisations and support our participants to join their activities, giving them more opportunities

# CHOICE

Having choice is more than just about making a decision about what you want. Real choice is about having a proper say in how you live your life. We know that with the right support people can take control of what they do.

Due to COVID many of ECHO's activities went online, including many of our Social and Leisure activities. This meant that people could still attend fun sessions and see their friends but without leaving their home.

As they are popular, even though we can now meet, ECHO will continue to run some online activities for those who want them.

With funding we were also able to support people with getting online. Not only did we give people the support they needed, but we were also able to buy some tablets that we could loan out to those who didn't have them.

The Priory Centre is a great example of the choice that we offer our participants as the set up of the building allows us to run 3 different activities at once. This year participants have had a real variety of things to do. One group of participants have been attending the allotment at Eaton Barn on a weekly basis. There has been a Wednesday morning quiz and coffee morning that has helped the group to maintain their social and communication skills. There have been weekly dance sessions. Dancing is good for the mind and body and we are already seeing a difference in stamina and memory.

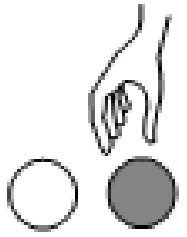
The Priory Centre also ran Tacpac sessions using touch and music to help those who have any kind of sensory impairment or communication difficulties. Tacpac focusses on singular stimulation and removes the pressures of sensory overload. Participants are supported on a 1-1 basis to explore and enjoy each aspect of these sessions.



Storytelling continued to be inspired by famous stories and this year was no different. The group really enjoyed Antony and Cleopatra and despite social distancing were able to role play different scenes. The Taming of the Shrew helped the group think about themes such as jealousy, conflict and disguise. Fairs and Fairgrounds celebrated rides, sights, smells, tastes, and sounds of fairs.

Though we are not able to sing as we did before, with the help of volunteers and participants the group devised new ways to learn by developing sound quizzes and other activities which help memory and encourage communication. In some ways it has been good to have to consider new ways to meet objectives while engaging group members in worthwhile, fun activities.

Friday Club has started meeting up with everyone having their own table. We all eat lunch together and then have individual activities that everyone likes doing. Halfway through the session we all do something together which everyone enjoys. Friday Club participants continue to make the plan of activities and the last few months has seen every type of bingo you can think of, the Wii, pool table and lots of quizzes including bullseye, the hit list, family fortunes, countdown, take your pick and lots more. The group also enjoyed a picnic with games on The Grange. We are lucky to have the continued support of two amazing volunteers who help run the activities and 1:1 support when needed.







# Support

Due to COVID the Clever Betsy project had to move out of the shop at West Street as it was impossible to run a project in the space with the number of participants who attend. Now that they do not directly run the West Street shop and have a lot more space to work in, Clever Betsy has a very calm atmosphere and much more focus and support for our participants. We have also been able to make some improvements to our building at Northern Lights Business Park. The extra time and support given to participants has definitely increased and is reflected in the quality of work they are producing.

Our volunteering team have been working hard over the last year helping volunteers to continue supporting our participants and projects. On January 5th, most volunteers withdrew from projects with the lockdown, but in the following months as more volunteers received their vaccinations and gained confidence with ECHO's COVID rules, along with weekly testing, they have returned to projects.



With the changes to Clever Betsy we have taken the opportunity to recruit and train 4 participant volunteers to help run the shop and gain new skills in retail work. With the shop developing as a showcase for all ECHO projects it will be great to have these brilliant ambassadors for ECHO working there and welcoming people to the organisation.





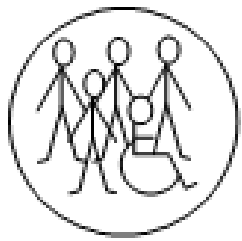
We are extremely lucky that we have such a great staff and volunteer team that supports the organisation. To support this team that has worked so hard over the COVID period (and before) we have invested in supporting their mental and physical health. For staff we have joined the AXA Employee Assistance Programme that offers advice and counselling for staff on a variety of matters. We are also really pleased to partner with the Yeleni Therapy and Support, a local charity and Health centre who have offered a 10% discount on all services to staff, volunteers and participants.



ECHO could not function without help from the support team in the office. Their work helps the projects to keep running by organising supplies, paying expenses and wages, carrying out health and safety, finding funding and promoting what we do. They are also often the first point of call for queries that participants and their families have.

Our regular project team is also supported by a great team of relief staff who we can call upon

to ensure that we can keep our projects running. Although they don't work with us every day, they show the same dedication and standards of care at whatever project they go into.



# Community

It is important that our participants are active in the communities where they live. For our participants this is an opportunity to help give something back and to show off all the great work that they do. For the community seeing people with disabilities having full and active lives increases diversity, understanding and a view of what people with a disability can achieve.



ECHO has also reached out to businesses and the community, many of whom support our work with funding or gifts in kind. September saw us hold a cocktail evening at Eaton Barn where we were able to invite many supporters and potential supporters to see the great work that happens there. Everyone who attended remarked on how impressed they were with the site and what has been achieved there. This included the new green woodworking area developed by volunteers over the last year.

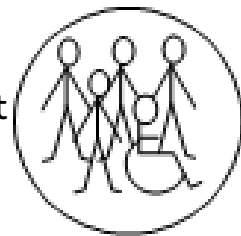


The evening was a great success and we were able to get some pledges of support for both the project and ECHO as a whole.

Community isn't just about people. We also look out for our animal friends and this year the team at Eaton have added an otter holt to the site in case a passing otter needs somewhere to rest!



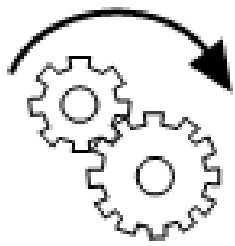




Lifelinks in Hereford have traditionally been a project that carried out a lot of work in the community, such as shopping for elderly residents. Whilst the COVID restrictions meant that they couldn't do as much outside as they used to, they have taken every opportunity to get out and about when they can. Trips out included a visit to the Knife Angel and trips to the local greenspaces that were used to inspire art and crafts. This resulted in a large collage which is on one of the walls at the United Reform Church in Hereford where Lifelinks is based. Wednesday Lifelinks made clay tiles for a community project being run by The Big Skill, who are making them into a mosaic at Saxon Hall. The participants rolled out the clay and did individual designs and signed their names on them. These tiles will be on display for many years to come.

The Saxon Hall Café couldn't run as normal this year as the community centre where they are based was turned into a vaccination centre. This didn't stop the group though - they became a lunch club instead- maintaining their cooking skills to create healthy meals to eat themselves!





# Involvement

We can't talk about ECHO's involvement work without mentioning Steph Baines who retired from her role as Participant Involvement Worker after many years leading on our involvement work. We were really pleased however to recruit Claire Mee who was one of our volunteer support team into the role. We are already talking about how we can improve what we do to get participants involved.

Rep Group continued to run throughout the year but many of their meetings have had to be on Zoom. Normally we run elections for Rep Group each year but COVID meant we couldn't do that. This year all the Reps decided to step down and put themselves up for re-election. In September our new Rep Group met for the first time, with 3 new participants joining the 5 who were re-elected.

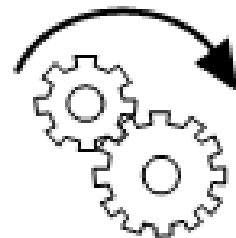
Our trustees have continued to do a great job steering the organisation through the last year. In addition to the main meetings they attend, trustees also supported Mike as Chief Officer throughout the COVID crisis with fortnightly calls.

Our participant trustees continued to meet on Zoom, but decided to meet up in person as soon as it was safe to do so to make sure everyone could be included.

Our trustees and Rep group members were also happy to do LFT tests before every meeting to help keep COVID out of ECHO.







ECHO prides itself on the way we involve our participants but we don't always get it right. This year due to COVID restrictions, we made a decision to stop running Yam Jams, one of our music sessions, but we didn't ask participants what they thought. This caused a lot of upset for participants, families and support staff.

When we realised our mistake, we made a survey to get people's views and had just under 90 replies. It was clear that people wanted Yam Jams back, but they also understood it would need to change to make it COVID safe. We have listened to this and have decided to bring Yam Jams back. Though we got it wrong in the first place it does show that ECHO will listen when we get feedback.

All ECHO projects involve their participants in planning the activities that they do and this year hasn't been any different. By involving participants we get some really creative ideas and everyone really enjoys what we do.

## Yam Jams Returns!



Rep Group help ECHO by giving their views on ideas we want to develop and by questioning us on our plans. They also answer questions from other organisations

Trustee support meets every week to help our participant trustees in carrying out their roles on the board. Trustees make decisions about how ECHO should run and guide the Chief Officer in managing the charity

If you would be interested in being on Rep Group or becoming a Trustee in the future, please call the office and speak to Claire Mee our Participant Involvement Worker



# Quality

The team at Studio Mirai have been working extremely hard this year and continue to breathe new life into furniture that might otherwise go to the local recycling centre.

The quality of the work that they do is always a high standard and this has been seen in their sales this year which are some of the highest we have ever had.

Studio Mirai has also installed a lorry-back in their grounds to safely store donated items of furniture; this has helped make a lot of additional workspace in the workshop and improved aspects of Health & Safety as it is now possible to provide uncluttered workstation areas. Five practical workstations and three painting/decoration workstations are now available for use which currently allow large scale projects to be worked on.



With a further relaxation in Government Covid restrictions in May, the Weaving Group were able to start meeting all day at the ECHO shop, using the space in the back room as well as some of the shop area.

The group have all been working really hard producing some lovely items to sell in the shop and completing some orders. They were also really busy weaving bookmarks on the inkle looms for the fundraising event at Eaton Barn. The group also had a go at spinning and made great strides in mastering this skill, spinning a bobbin full and then winding it into a skein on the 'niddy noddly'. One member has learnt to do a traditional Rosepath pattern and is including this into cushions.

We know that the work we do is of high quality, but it is great when others recognise this too. For the second year running Eaton Barn gained an 'outstanding' award from England in Bloom as part of their 'It's your neighbourhood awards'. The Priory who have worked hard to improve their raised beds and make the entrance to the building more welcoming were also recognised by Leominster in Bloom for their efforts.



It is important for ECHO to always try to improve what we do. To help with this and show that we take quality seriously, we work to a number of different standards that other organisations set.



The Disability Confident scheme supports employers to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to the workplace.

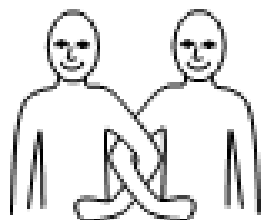
The Trusted Charity mark looks at 11 areas of a charity to check if it is well run. We were pleased to be awarded the highest level.



Registered with  
**FUNDRAISING  
REGULATOR**

The Fundraising Regulator makes sure that organisations follow best practice in fundraising, to protect those giving money to organisations like ECHO.





# Collaboration

ECHO believes that when you work together you can achieve more than you can individually. This is why we like to work with other groups and organisations.

To make sure that the voice of our participants is heard we ensure that we are part of groups that discuss issues relating to disability in the County. We are members of the Learning Disability Partnership Board that helps to oversee Herefordshire Council's Disability strategy.



Herefordshire Activities Together is a group of local providers who offer interesting things to do for anyone of any age or ability. Though we are all different and all work in different ways, we share information and support each other to make sure we don't duplicate services.

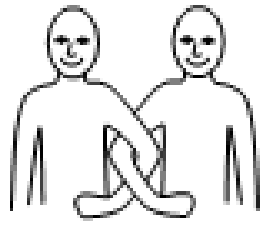
This year Herefordshire Activities Together has worked as a group to respond to Herefordshire Council's plans to review day services in the County.

Rose Tinted Rags is a project that we deliver in partnership with Green Eyed Monster in Hereford. Closed due to COVID the shop re-opened 3 days a week in April.

The group worked on self-portraits, graffiti art and casting in cement. They also created pieces for the Community Cabinet at the Museum and Art Gallery at the same time as the Grayson Perry exhibition. A number of external artists visited the group and passed on their skills to our participants; Cheryl Hewitt came and did a 4 week doll making workshop and Laura McCarthy an MA graduate did an Origami workshop.



The "Our Man in the Moone" project was an inclusive community arts project run by Rachel Freeman from Everybody Dance. ECHO was offered taster sessions and rehearsals for every About Face group and everyone who wanted to give aerial dance a go had the opportunity including staff. Some of our actors preferred to keep their feet firmly on the ground so they had other roles in the performance such as narrators or dancers.



It was a wonderful experience, working outside in the walled garden of the Leominster Council Offices with professional dancers and members of the community. The show was performed to family and friends on a perfect sunny Saturday in June. Jess our Artistic Director said 'I was very impressed with those that took part, it is not easy to fly through the air but the feeling of letting go after all the COVID restrictions felt amazing and joyful.'



# ECHO and COVID

ECHO has worked really hard to keep the effect of COVID to a minimum. Although the UK had a number of lockdowns, ECHO kept our projects open to those who needed them most. When people could get together again it was a pleasure to see the joy as friends were able to meet and work together again.

Staff have worked incredibly hard to keep everyone safe. This has meant additional work with extra cleaning and the need to wear PPE like masks and gloves.

We also have to say thank you to Herefordshire Council who have provided us and other social care providers with free PPE throughout the COVID pandemic. They have also provided a lot of advice and support to help understand the rules that we had to follow.

AS COVID is a virus it was impossible to keep it out of ECHO completely. Through the year we have had a number of staff, participants and volunteers who have caught it. The good news is that as most have had vaccinations, they have had mild symptoms and made a full recovery.

We need to learn to live with COVID and continue to protect everyone in the ECHO community. This means that we will keep up with our cleaning, social distancing and using PPE. Everyone can help and we ask people to get vaccinated if they can, test regularly and keep up with their hand washing.

COVID isn't the only illness and so when someone is ill we ask them to stay away from ECHO projects. It isn't nice to share germs and the last thing we want to do is shut projects because too many people are ill and we can't run it properly.



What we have learnt, is that our participants are strong and can adapt to new situations really well with the right support. Participants have learnt to use technology to stay in touch and have been amazing at following the new rules that have been put in place.

# ECHO'S MONEY

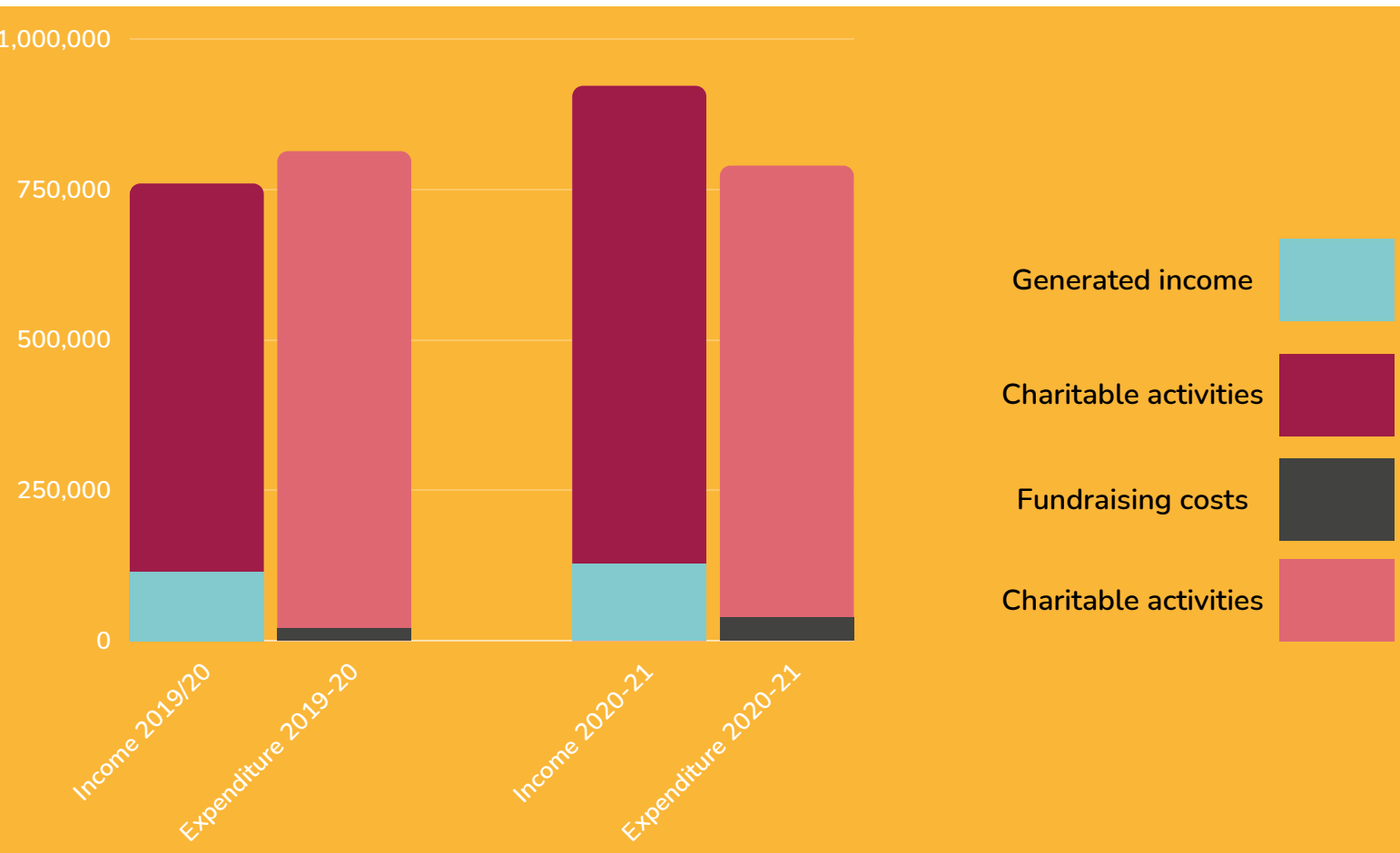
During the financial year, from April 2020 to March 2021 and the COVID pandemic, ECHO managed its finances very carefully through great uncertainty. ECHO secured funding through Herefordshire Council underwriting participant places and grants to support the charity and it's running,

We saved money by using the Government furlough scheme and reducing activity costs where services were closed or running a reduced service. By this careful management, ECHO was able to end the year with more money than we started with, finishing the year with £355,757. This is called our reserves. It is calculated as the unrestricted funds, less the designated funds and our fixed assets. Our target level of reserves is £294,446. This is the amount needed to meet 6 months' core salaries and running costs.

The effect of COVID is going to continue and we predict that 2021 could be harder financially than during the height of the pandemic. This is because:

- Some funders have changed their priorities, whilst others have less to give away.
- Social distancing in projects means we can't have as many people as we used to.

We expect to need the increase in our reserves to see us through the next year.





# STAFF

## Senior Management

Mike Cook  
Angela Ayliffe  
Cath Baker  
Maggie Percy (Until Aug 21)

## About Face

Jess MacKenzie  
Letty Flynn  
Suzie Owens (left)  
Juliet Strouken  
Nick Baker

## Clever Betsy

Rebecca Tabram  
Julie Baldwin (left)  
Liz Evans  
Lyndsay Maples

## Cookery Club

Jacqueline Stewart

## Eaton Barn

Sarah Powell  
Bev Waterfield

## Leisure and Social

Nick Baker  
Letty Flynn  
Lucy Tisdale

## Lifelinks

Pete Kerwood (left)  
Lyndsay Maples  
Juliette Stephenson  
Jacqueline Stewart

## Relief Team

Lucy Tisdale  
Zoe Bradley (left)  
Cheryl Hewitt  
Kim Holland  
Fiona McAlster  
Terry Miles  
Irene Novadieks  
Jean Singleton  
Claire Tolley

## Studio Mirai

Nic Bullock  
Sue Parkinson  
Dave Bordeway

## Story telling

Denise Kerwood

## Support Team

Steph Baines (left)  
Mary-Jane Bayliss  
Kay Beeden  
Jody Gorle  
Laura Marsh  
Claire Mee  
Louise Millard  
Penny Weir  
Lisa Woakes (left)

## The Priory

Kelly Holland  
Amber Davies  
Mary Hughes  
Ian Waterfield  
Terri Wilson

## Volunteer team

Denise Kerwood  
Roz Johnson

## Weaving

Maggie Percy



# VOLUNTEERS

ECHO couldn't do the quality of work it does without the kind support of our volunteers. Thank you!

## Trustees

Caroline Arthur (Chair)  
Blaise White (Treasurer)  
Chris Blum  
Bev Davies  
Mand Hamblin  
Joy House  
Rose Hunt  
Sue Nash (Stepped down)  
Jan Smith  
Jason Stuchbery

## Observers to the Board

John Bradford  
Jeremy Gray  
Matt Jones

## Rep Group

Nick Burt  
Bev Davies  
Melvyn Gardner  
Mand Hamblin  
Matt Jones  
Fran Panter  
Marianne Simpson  
Beth Smith  
John Stuchbery

## Volunteers

Thomas Arthur	Carole Hill	Colette Sinclair
Paul Baines	Jan Holbrook	Jean Singleton
Steph Baines	Flo Holder	Kathryn Smith
Joanne Ball	Susan Holland	Kevin Smith
Kevin Ball	Nicola Honey	Lesley Stewart
Ian Banks	Cathy Howard	Kevin Stuchbery
Anne Bellamy	Greg Howard	Ann Tether
Tara Black	Debbie Hughes	Colin Tether
Simeon Blackwell	Heather Hughes	Mark Thomas
Kevin Bound	Richard Hyde-Smith	Suzanne Thomas
John Bradford	Barbara Jenkins	Michelle Tilbury
Tracey Caine	Sarah Jenkins	Melanie Towler
Lama Choesang	Alison Jones	Peter Turner
Eleanor Chowns	Susan Jones	Emma Tustin
Carl Crippin	Kay Kenny	Martin Upshaw
Barbara Dowse	Bethany Layton	Mark Wakeman
Charles Ellis	Sara Lewis	Leslie Walker
Della Ellison-Smith	Sue Lindsay	Dan Wall
Steve Estell	Gavin Long	Margaret Wallis
Stacey Ewers	Pete MacKenzie	Jeanette Washington
Rachel Exelby	Cara McDermott	Vivian Webb
Vivien Geen	Peter McKay	Paul Weir
John Hales	Yvonne Mifflin	Deryn Welch
Nigel Hall	Ceri Morgan	Pip Westwood
Sue Hall	Darren Morgan	Tony White
Simon Harris	Maureen Morton	Hayley Williams
Mark Harrison	Godfrey Moss	Lauren Williams
Susan Harvey	Irene Novadnieks	Richard Williams
Janet Healey	Richard Pollard	Elaine Willis
Bella Hesbrook	Su Pollard	Oliver Wood
Cheryl Hewitt	Edmund Proctor	
David Robbins	Jeanette Reid	
Beth Sanderson		
Edina Sebok		

# FUNDERS

ECHO would like to thank all of the organisations that have supported us through the year

## Grants

Arts Council  
Baily Thomas  
Big Lottery Community Fund (Inclusive  
Volunteering & COVID)  
E F Bulmer Benevolent Fund (volunteer  
support)  
Co-op Community Fund  
Childwick Trust  
The Croft Trust  
The D'Oyly Carte  
Edward Gosling Foundation  
Elmley Foundation  
Eveson Charitable Trust

Gannet Foundation  
Herefordshire Community fund  
HSBC  
Kingsland WI  
Lets Get digital  
Lloyds Foundation  
Leominster Town Council  
NFU  
Rowlands Trust  
Royal Horticultural Society  
Screwfix  
Sport England  
Tackling Inequalities Fund

## Business Support

Many companies also make the decision to support local charities like ECHO to give back to the communities they serve. Whether financial support or 'In Kind' offers of help, donating to ECHO really makes a visible difference and we always welcome those who support us to come, visit our projects and get involved.

Clarnor  
Co-op  
Free Wheelers  
Harrison Clark Rickerbys solicitors  
Haygrove

HSBC  
Lloyds  
The Press Room  
TK Maxx

“Haygrove has been a friend of Eaton Barn since its early days and seeing it evolve into a top-notch project has been a great privilege. No doubt other business will similarly be inspired by the dedication and perseverance of the Eaton Barn team, and the impact that they make. The future is bright!” Chris Milson, Haygrove

# FUNDRAISING

As a charity ECHO relies on the money we can raise. Whilst we charge fees for our projects these only cover a basic level of service. Funding from other places such as donations, grants and events allow us to deliver more interesting activities and help us provide the right support for participants, staff and volunteers.

Regular giving where people donate each month to ECHO is an important source of funds for us. Knowing what funding we have coming in each month helps us to plan better

Many kind supporters have undertaken activities to raise funds for ECHO. Steph, one of our participants knitted hats which she sold, Terri held an 8 hour danceathon and groups have run quiz nights. Feeling a bit more daring? ECHO has teamed up with Skyline, a company that helps to arrange parachute jumps for charity. You will need to raise a minimum amount of sponsorship, but everything else is arranged for you. If you have an idea of something you would like to do, then please contact Penny at the ECHO office.



Some people decide to leave a lasting legacy to charities that have supported them or those that they love, by adding a gift within their wills. If this is something you would like to consider for ECHO, please contact us at the office.

<https://fundraising.echoherefordshire.org.uk/home>



