



A strategy for
**Youth Development,
Community Engagement
and
Heritage Stewardship**

Strategic Plan

2026-2029

Fort Purbrook

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Foreword

Over the past five years the Peter Ashley Activity Centres has continued to develop and strengthen its role as a place where young people can learn, grow and thrive. Guided by the Respond, Recover and Thrive Strategy (2021–2026), the charity successfully navigated a challenging period for the voluntary sector while continuing to deliver meaningful opportunities for young people and communities across Portsmouth and beyond.

During this time the charity has expanded its activity programmes, strengthened partnerships and secured significant investment in support of our conservation efforts at both Fort Purbrook and Fort Widley. These historic sites remain at the heart of the charity's identity, providing unique environments where young people can experience adventure, learning and personal development.

As we look ahead to the next phase of the charity's journey, we recognise both the opportunities and the responsibilities that come with operating such distinctive heritage sites while delivering impactful youth activity programmes. The Strategic Plan 2026–2029 sets out how the charity will build upon its strong foundations while responding to the evolving needs of young people, communities and partners.

At its core, this strategy focuses on expanding opportunities for young people, ensuring that our activity programmes remain inclusive and accessible,

strengthening financial sustainability through partnerships and safeguarding the historic forts that make our work possible.

This plan reflects the commitment of trustees, staff, volunteers and partners who all share a belief in the power of outdoor learning, community engagement and heritage stewardship to transform lives. We are grateful to everyone who contributes to the charity's work and supports its mission.

We look forward to working together over the coming years to deliver this strategy and to ensure that the Peter Ashley Activity Centres continue to inspire and support young people for generations to come.

Darren Bridgman
(Chief Executive Officer)



Executive Summary

The Peter Ashley Activity Centres (PAAC) exists to support the development of young people through inclusive outdoor activities, residential and community engagement, delivered within the unique historic environments of Fort Purbrook and Fort Widley.

Over the past five years the charity has been guided by the Respond, Recover and Thrive Strategy (2021–2026). During this period the charity successfully navigated the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, strengthened activity programme delivery and secured significant investment in the conservation of the historic forts.

As this strategy reaches its conclusion, PAAC enters a new strategic phase. The environment in which charities operate continues to evolve, with increasing financial pressures, rising operational costs and growing demand for inclusive opportunities that support young people's wellbeing and development. At the same time, the charity's stewardship of two Grade II* scheduled monuments requires continued investment, partnership working and long-term planning. This reinforces the importance of strengthening financial resilience and developing sustainable income streams to support the charity's long-term ambitions.

The Strategic Plan 2026–2029 sets out a clear direction for the charity over the next three years. It builds upon the charity's existing strengths while responding to the opportunities and challenges identified through strategic analysis and stakeholder engagement.

The strategy is structured around five strategic priorities:

Expanding Youth Opportunity

increasing access to meaningful developmental activities for young people.

Inclusion and Community Access

ensuring activity programmes remain accessible and inclusive for all.

Financial Sustainability and Partnerships

Strengthening financial resilience through diversified income streams and strategic partnerships.

Heritage Stewardship

conserving and enhancing the historic forts entrusted to the charity's care.

Organisational Strength

investing in staff, volunteers, systems and governance to support sustainable growth.

A central theme of the strategy is the development of structured partnerships

with organisations across the corporate, education, community and heritage sectors. These partnerships will support programme delivery, strengthen financial sustainability and contribute to the long-term stewardship of the forts.

Progress against the strategy will be monitored through key performance indicators relating to participation, inclusion, financial sustainability, heritage stewardship and organisational capacity.

Regular reporting to trustees will ensure transparency and accountability throughout the implementation of the plan.

Through this strategy the Peter Ashley Activity Centres aims to build on its strong foundations and continue delivering meaningful opportunities for young people while safeguarding the historic environments that make its work unique.

Our Ambition for 2029

By the end of this strategy period, the Peter Ashley Activity Centres aims to:

- Engage significantly more young people each year in developmental outdoor learning and activities.
- Expand inclusive programmes that support participation from young people facing barriers to access, including those with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Establish strong and sustainable partnerships with organisations across the corporate, education, community and heritage sectors.
- Deliver major conservation improvements that protect and enhance Fort Purbrook and Fort Widley for future generations.
- Build a resilient and capable organisation, supported by skilled staff, committed volunteers and strong governance.

Together, these ambitions will ensure that the charity continues to grow its impact while safeguarding the heritage environments that make its work distinctive.

1. Introduction

The Peter Ashley Activity Centres (PAAC) exists to help young people develop their physical, mental and social potential through inclusive educational and recreational opportunities delivered within the unique historic environments of Fort Purbrook and Fort Widley.

Over the past five years the charity has been guided by the Respond, Recover and Thrive Strategy (2021–2026). During this period the charity successfully navigated the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, strengthened activity programme delivery and secured significant investment in the conservation of the historic forts.

As that strategy reaches its conclusion, the charity enters a new phase of development. The operating environment

for charities continues to evolve rapidly, with increasing demand for youth services, rising operational costs and growing expectations around governance, safeguarding and impact.

At the same time, the charity's stewardship of two Grade II* scheduled monuments brings both opportunity and responsibility. The historic forts are central to the charity's identity but also require long-term conservation and careful management.

This Strategic Plan sets out PAAC's priorities for the period 2026–2029, providing a clear direction for the charity's development while ensuring that it remains resilient, impactful and true to its charitable purpose.



2. Vision, Mission and Values

As the Peter Ashley Activity Centres enters the next phase of its development, it is important to reaffirm and refine the core statements that guide the charity's direction and decision-making.

The Vision, Mission and Values set out in this strategy have been reviewed to ensure they reflect both the charity's enduring purpose and its ambitions for the period 2026–2029. Together, they provide a clear foundation for our work, shaping how priorities are set, how partnerships are developed and how success is defined.

The Vision describes the long-term impact the charity seeks to achieve. The Mission defines the charity's role in delivering that impact, while the Values establish the principles that guide behaviour, culture and decision-making across the charity. These values will be actively embedded through the charity's governance, leadership and charity's culture.

Collectively, these statements provide a shared sense of purpose for trustees, staff, volunteers and partners, ensuring that all activity remains aligned with the charity's objectives as it continues to grow and evolve.

Vision

"To be a nationally recognised centre where young people and communities thrive through inclusive activities, learning and heritage."

Mission

"To create opportunities that challenge, develop and inspire young people, safeguard our Victorian forts and build partnerships that strengthen communities."

Values

The work of PAAC is guided by five core values.

- **Inclusion**

Ensuring that opportunities are accessible to all young people regardless of background or circumstance.

- **Development**

Providing meaningful experiences that build confidence, resilience and skills.

- **Community**

Strengthening connections between people, organisations and local communities.

- **Stewardship**

Protecting and conserving the historic forts and natural environment for future generations.

- **Collaboration**

Working with partners to maximise impact and sustainability.

3. Strategic Context

The charity operates within an increasingly complex environment shaped by economic, social and regulatory pressures.

Across the UK charity sector, organisations face rising operational costs, changes in funding structures and increasing expectations around transparency and governance. At the same time, research continues to highlight growing concerns around youth wellbeing, social isolation and access to positive developmental opportunities.

PAAC is uniquely positioned to respond to these needs. The charity's combination of residential, outdoor learning, equestrian provision and heritage environments

creates a distinctive offer that is difficult to replicate.

However, the stewardship of historic sites introduces additional responsibilities, including conservation obligations and long-term infrastructure maintenance.

The strategy therefore seeks to balance three core priorities:

- 1. Expanding opportunities for young people**
- 2. Strengthening financial sustainability**
- 3. Safeguarding the historic forts**

These themes were identified during the strategic analysis undertaken as part of the development of this plan.



4. Strategic Framework

The strategy is structured around five strategic priorities which will guide the charity's development between 2026 and 2029.

These priorities provide a clear framework for decision-making, partnership development and resource allocation.

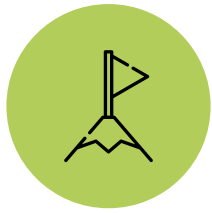
Vision *Young people and communities thriving through inclusive **adventure**, **learning** and **heritage***



Measuring success



Growing opportunity for young people while safeguarding out historic forts



Strategic Priority 1

Expanding Youth Opportunity

PAAC will increase access to high-quality developmental opportunities for young people.

The charity will continue to develop programmes that combine outdoor activity, residential opportunities, experiential learning and personal development. Particular focus will be placed on

strengthening structured pathways through offsite activities, equestrian opportunities and residential stays.

Partnerships with schools, youth organisations and community groups will be strengthened to ensure programmes reach young people who will benefit most.



Strategic Priority 2

Inclusion and Community Access

Ensuring that programmes remain inclusive and accessible is central to the charity's mission.

Over the next three years our charity will continue expanding initiatives that support participation from young people facing barriers to access, including those with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Programmes such as Limitless and Riding for the Disabled will remain central to this commitment.

The charity will also strengthen opportunities for community use of the forts, ensuring the sites remain vibrant community assets.





Strategic Priority 3

Financial Sustainability and Partnerships

Ensuring long-term financial resilience is essential to the future of the charity.

The strategy therefore places strong emphasis on the development of structured partnerships with corporate organisations, educational institutions, community groups and heritage bodies.

These partnerships will enable the charity to diversify income streams, expand programme delivery and strengthen investment in the forts.

Partnership development will focus on four areas:

1. corporate partnerships
2. educational partnerships
3. community sector partnerships
4. heritage and environmental partnerships

This approach reflects growing evidence that cross-sector collaboration strengthens long-term sustainability in the nonprofit sector. This will include a proactive and structured approach to identifying, developing and managing partnerships that deliver both financial and social value.



Strategic Priority 4

Heritage Stewardship

Fort Purbrook and Fort Widley are central to the identity of the charity.

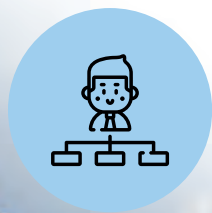
Over the period of this strategy PAAC will continue working with Historic England, Portsmouth City Council and other partners to ensure the forts are conserved and maintained to the highest standards.

Major conservation programmes will support the protection of these historic structures while also creating opportunities for heritage learning and community engagement.

The charity will continue to integrate heritage education into its programme

delivery, ensuring that young people develop an understanding and appreciation of the historic environments in which activities take place.





Strategic Priority 5

Organisational Strength

Delivering this strategy requires a resilient and capable organisation.

Over the next three years the charity will focus on strengthening its organisational capacity through:

- staff development
- volunteer engagement
- improved digital systems
- strong governance and safeguarding

These improvements will ensure the organisation remains adaptable and capable of delivering high-quality programmes.

5. Strategy Map

The strategy can be summarised through the following framework.

Strategic Priorities

1. Expanding Youth Opportunity
2. Inclusion and Community Access
3. Financial Sustainability and Partnerships
4. Heritage Stewardship
5. Organisational Strength

Strategic Outcomes

- Increased participation by young people
- Greater inclusion and accessibility
- Financial resilience through partnerships
- Protected and enhanced heritage assets
- A strong and capable organisation

Without strengthening financial resilience, these pressures present a risk to the long-term sustainability of both programme delivery and heritage stewardship.

6. Stakeholder Engagement

The success of the strategy will depend on strong engagement with the charity's stakeholders.

Key stakeholder groups include:

- Trustees
- Staff and managers
- Volunteers
- Young people and families
- Schools and youth organisations
- Community partners
- Heritage organisations
- Funders and sponsors

Engagement activities will include staff workshops, stakeholder meetings, beneficiary feedback and partnership discussions.

Meaningful engagement will ensure that the strategy remains relevant, achievable and widely supported.

The development of this strategy has been informed by stakeholder consultation, ensuring that it reflects the perspectives of those involved in the charity's work.

7. Implementation Roadmap

Delivery of this roadmap will be led by the Chief Executive, supported by the senior management team and overseen by the Board of Trustees.

The strategy will be delivered through a phased approach over three years.

2026 – Foundation

The first year will focus on establishing partnerships, strengthening programmes and improving organisational systems.

2027 – Expansion

The second year will focus on scaling successful initiatives, increasing participation and strengthening partnerships.

2028 – Consolidation

The final year will focus on evaluating impact, strengthening financial resilience and preparing for the next strategic cycle.

8. Measuring Success

Progress will be measured through five performance domains.

These indicators align with the KPI framework developed during the strategy proposal stage. These measures will be reviewed regularly to ensure the strategy remains responsive and effective.

Domain	Example Measures
Participation	Number of young people engaged
Inclusion	Access for disadvantaged groups
Financial Sustainability	Growth in unrestricted income
Heritage Stewardship	Conservation programmes delivered
Organisational Capacity	Staff and volunteer development

9. Governance

The Board of Trustees will retain overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the strategy.

The Chief Executive will lead delivery and coordinate the development of partnerships, programmes and organisational improvements.

Regular reporting, performance monitoring and periodic strategic review will ensure transparency, accountability and ongoing alignment with the charity's objectives.

10. Looking Ahead

The period 2026–2029 represents an important opportunity for the Peter Ashley Activity Centres.

By strengthening partnerships, expanding opportunities for young people and continuing to safeguard the historic forts, the charity can continue to deliver

meaningful impact for the communities it serves.

This strategy provides a clear direction for the charity while ensuring that it remains resilient, sustainable and aligned with its charitable purpose.





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