



## **NEWS RELEASE    embargoed until 8pm    13 May 2013**

### **Winchester Scouts grow at 5 times the national average**

**The 2013 Scout Association census shows growth of 10% in Winchester youth members. This compares with 1.9% nationally making Winchester District Scouts one of the fastest growing Scout Districts in the country.**

**The highlights** of the 2013 census were:

- 10% growth in youth members to 775
- 21% growth in volunteers to 155 for the 37 section leadership teams (both adults and Explorer Young Leaders)
- 9% growth in the waiting list to almost 200.

The number of 6-8 year old **Beaver Scouts** increased an impressive 19% to 191. This was on the back of new Beaver colonies at the 1st Winchester (Weeke and Littleton) and the 7th Winchester (St Cross) that is a 'satellite' of the 8th Winchester (Stanmore).

The biggest growth was in the number of older Explorer Scouts who have trained as **Young Leaders**. Their numbers increased by 57% from 42 to 66. Young Leaders are 14-17 year olds who volunteer to help adult leaders in the 33 Beaver colonies, Cub packs and Scout troops across Winchester. Young Leaders do this in addition to attending their own adventurous activities at 4 Explorer Scout units across the City.

**"Meeting the Demand"** is a huge challenge for Winchester Scouts. The *known waiting list* is one of the largest in Hampshire at some 200. This is a massive 25% of the current youth strength. Over 50% of the waiting list is for 6-8 year old Beaver Scouts, both girls and boys.

The plan is to tackle this head-on over the next year by opening as many as **7 new Beaver Colonies** across Winchester for up to 170 children. These new Beaver Colonies will either be in existing Scout Groups across the City or 'satellite' Colonies to seed additional Scout Groups. This was announced today at the District Annual General Meeting and presided over by Winchester Scouts President, The Mayor, His Worship, Councillor Frank Pearson.

Commenting on the plans, District Commissioner, Stephen Parker said ... "Every young person from aged 6 upwards should be able to join Scouts if they and their parents want that. To achieve this we need some help - from more parents, from Councillors, Council officers and the heads of the City's primary schools. With some coordination, we can offer many more young people the fun and adventure of Scouting."

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**Ends - see also Notes for Editors ...**

## **Notes for Editors:**

Winchester District Scouts exist to provide adventurous activities and personal development opportunities for young people aged 6-25. Scouting promotes the physical, intellectual, social and spiritual wellbeing of the individual, helping them achieve their full potential. The Scouting ethos is that young people develop most when they are 'learning by doing', when they are given responsibility, work in teams, take acceptable risks and think for themselves.

Winchester District Scouts, comprises 8 Scout Groups across Winchester City (for 6-13 year olds), 4 Explorer Scout Units (for 14-17 year olds) and one Network for 18-25 year olds). In addition there are 180 scout leaders and assistants, and over 300 CRB'd adult helpers in Winchester.

Each Scout Group is made up of sections for boys and girls. The Beaver Scout Colony is for 6-8 year olds; the Cub Scout Pack for 8-10½ year olds; and the Scout Troop for 10½-13 year olds. Some Groups also host Explorer Scout Units for 14-17 year olds that are provided by District as is Network for 18-25 year olds.

Every Scout Group is a charity with trustees in its own right. As such it is governed by Charity Commission Laws and by the Policy and Rules of the Scout Association at Gilwell Park - the UK's largest voluntary youth organisation. Each Scout Group depends on two sets of adult support - an adult uniform side responsible for delivering scouting to young people; and a non-uniform or Executive side that oversees the functioning and the infrastructure of the Group.

Winchester Scouts is one of 27 Scout Districts that comprise Hampshire County Scouts. The President of Winchester District Scouts is The Mayor, His Worship, Councillor Frank Pearson. Hampshire is the largest Scout county in the UK with over 17,000 young people.