

## LIGHTWAVES COMMUNITY TRUST

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### Overview:

- Lightwaves Community Trust (LCT or the Trust) is a registered charity ([Charity Commission registration no.1150892](#)) and a charitable company limited by guarantee ([Companies House registration no. 08227390](#)).
- The charity came into existence in 2012 when the Lightwaves building came into the Trust's control.
- LCT is governed by a Board of Trustees/Directors in accordance with charity law and Companies House reporting requirements.
- The current Board consists of 7 Trustees/Directors who make collective decisions about the governance of the charity. Trustees/Directors are not paid to act in their capacity as Trustees/Directors. All board positions are voluntary.
- A Trustee can be paid for services delivered to the charity (e.g., as an employee or contractor), subject to tight regulation. In charity law, Trustees can be paid for providing goods or services if permitted by the governing document, authorised by the [Charity Commission](#), or if they are acting in a professional capacity under the Trustee Act 2000.
- LCT acts in accordance with its legally agreed (with the Charity Commission) charitable objects, which are:

**"to further benefit the residents of Wakefield and elsewhere, without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or other opinions by associating together said residents and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to relieve poverty, advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare and for recreation and leisure time occupation with the object of improving conditions of life for the residents".**

#### Background to the Community Asset Transfer:

- In 2011 Wakefield Council designated the Lightwaves building as surplus to capacity as a swimming pool and leisure centre and decided to close it to save running costs of just under £900,000 per year.
- The building was then taken over by Lightwaves Community Trust as a Community Asset Transfer on a 25-year lease to serve local residents and communities.
- Since 2013 the Trust has invested approximately £330,000 of charitable funds in the building fabric and has not received any capital funding from Wakefield Council to invest in sustaining or improving the building.
- Today, the Lightwaves building needs somewhere in the region of £500,000 in investment to enable it to continue to serve the community for another 15-25 years.
- Wakefield Council is unlikely to have the necessary cash available to improve the Lightwaves building, and charitable funding to do this is very difficult to secure with ownership remaining with Wakefield Council and less than 12 years remaining on the existing lease.

- If the building were to revert to Wakefield Council and given the constraints of the site (construction, location, etc) it would be expensive to safeguard and demolish it for redevelopment.
- In the summer of 2025, the LCT Board collectively agreed to approach Wakefield Council officers to move from leasehold to freehold control of the building. This will enable the Trust to move forward with its strategic plans for adapting to the changing needs of our community.
- Since late 2025, the Trust and its legal advisors have liaised with Wakefield Council officers to progress gaining freehold of the building and its curtilage. These discussions have been positive and professional and the Trust is grateful for the seriousness and determination of all parties in taking the legal processes forward.
- Outline Heads of Terms have been discussed and agreed and, as requested, the Trust supplied a detailed Business Plan modelling the plans and finances for taking Lightwaves Community Trust forward in full ownership of the building.
- The Heads of Terms will ensure that use of the building and land must remain within the charitable purposes of Lightwaves Community Trust.
- In addition, there will be legal restrictions on the future use of the building to protect the Council's interests, and act in and with the needs of the community.
- The Trust is aware that any discussions with Wakefield Council officers will be subject to a consideration and approval by Wakefield Council Cabinet.
- In accordance with best practice, the Trust maintains a risk register and a register of all Board members outside interests and has robust policies and procedures in place to manage any perceived or actual conflicts of interest. The Trust's financial statements are independently examined and a matter of public record.
- There is no way in which any of the Trustees/Directors can benefit personally in any way, financially or otherwise, from the freehold transfer of the building.

### **Recent achievements of Lightwaves Community Trust:**

The Trust's charitable objects determine the activities that are carried out by the Trust on a daily, weekly and yearly basis and have done since late 2012.

The past 13 years' activities have seen a decisive and remarkable shift from a local authority operated leisure centre to a community-led and operated facility, and an indispensable resource for the local community. Charged with a complex and daunting range of structural and sustainability challenges, the Trust has shown remarkable resilience and capacity to survive and thrive against the backdrop of austerity and greater competition for resources available from the public sector and charitable foundations.

There is clearly great need within the local community for the range of service that the Centre is offering and has developed to meet need. As shown in 2021 Census data Wakefield East communities have lower education, poorer health and higher unemployment than Wakefield District and England averages.

The challenges of COVID galvanised Wakefield's voluntary and community sector into establishing some very important and lasting positive legacies. Thus, Lightwaves Centre became

part of a system of local hubs delivering services to local communities around supporting peoples' physical, emotional and financial well-being. The Trust continues this work with partners, building on and adapting lessons of flexible, rapid and deep response to local residents' needs. The Trust has focussed on providing services tackling:

- Money concerns (budgeting, benefits, vouchers),
- Energy worries (help with utilities),
- Housing related concerns (rent and accommodation),
- Jobs and related issues (training opportunities, CV help with job applications),
- Health and family concerns.

The Lightwaves building is currently used by around 40 local groups and organisations, as well as individuals and families from the local community. The building provides facilities ranging from advice and support on social welfare, a very active community food pantry, recreation and leisure activities - all aimed at improving the conditions of life for the local community.

The charity also has also attracted a very active group of volunteer helpers who assist the paid staff with running the centre. Volunteers operate across the breadth of activities in Lightwaves and account for 96.5 person hours per week. This is a vital contribution and part and parcel of the social capital that the Trust adds to the city's social and economic well-being.

Research on poverty in the UK by York-based Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows persistent and deepening poverty in the country. The latest data indicates over 21% of the UK population, approximately 14.2 million people, live in poverty, with child poverty at 31%, and persistent and deep poverty reaching record highs, especially among ethnic minorities and vulnerable groups. Furthermore, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's researchers found poverty is flatlining and that there has been little, or no progress in the past 20 years on reducing absolute poverty. The factors driving absolute poverty include: high living costs, particularly for housing and energy, insufficient income from employment or benefits, and economic instability and rising inflation. The Absolute Poverty level is a measure of how many people cannot afford a set standard of living, constructed on the Department for Work and Pensions' definition calculated from the living standard that an average income could buy in the foundation year ending in March 2011, and where if your income is 40% below this, after adjusting for rising prices since, then you will be classed as living in absolute poverty.

This is the backdrop to the daily lives of many of the families and individuals around Lightwaves and it underlines the ongoing importance of the Lightwaves Community Pantry as a vital lifeline for many in the local community. The evolution from a food bank to a food pantry was very much driven by the challenge of delivering what people in persistent poverty most need. The Community Panty is open every Friday and its successful operation is both a reflection of the level of need in the local community and the Trust's response to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis hitting local communities.

Typically, 4 to 5 volunteers support the Community Food Pantry Co-ordinator on Fridays, which is especially helpful for the service's functioning as well as appreciated by the Food Pantry members for the kindness, checking in and discussions about cooking the various items at the sessions.

The Trust delivers sport as a preventative intervention, not simply a recreational offer. In communities such as those around the Centre, which face high levels of physical inactivity, poor mental health and social isolation, accessible sport provides a low-cost, high-impact means of improving well-being before problems escalate. By removing barriers such as cost, lack-of-confidence and exclusion, and embedding sport within a trusted community hub that also provides welfare, social prescribing and cost-of-living support, Lightwaves uses physical activity to improve health, reduce loneliness, build routine and resilience, and lessen future demand on health and social care services.

Regular participation in accessible, community-based sport plays a proven preventative role by:

- Reducing the risk of long-term physical health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, obesity and diabetes
- Improving mental well-being by reducing stress, anxiety and depression
- Combating loneliness and social isolation through structured, social activity
- Supporting resilience, confidence and routine, particularly for people facing unemployment, displacement or trauma

In this way, sport at Lightwaves functions as preventative social infrastructure; supporting healthier lives, reducing inequalities and strengthening community resilience; rather than simply providing individualistically-focussed leisure opportunities that typifies private gym membership.

Lightwaves also acts as a host organisation for the Young Lives Consortium (a charity which acts as a membership organisation of Voluntary Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) groups working with children, young people and families) and Next Generation (a not-for-profit youth and community organisation which runs weekly youth work/multi sports sessions).

We are proud of our considerable track record in serving the local community and look forward to doing so for years to come.

## **ENDS**

### **Nominated spokespeople:**

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