



Rock UK Adventure Centres Impact Report 2024



TRANSFORMING
YOUNG LIVES
SINCE 1922

SEPTEMBER 2023 → AUGUST 2024

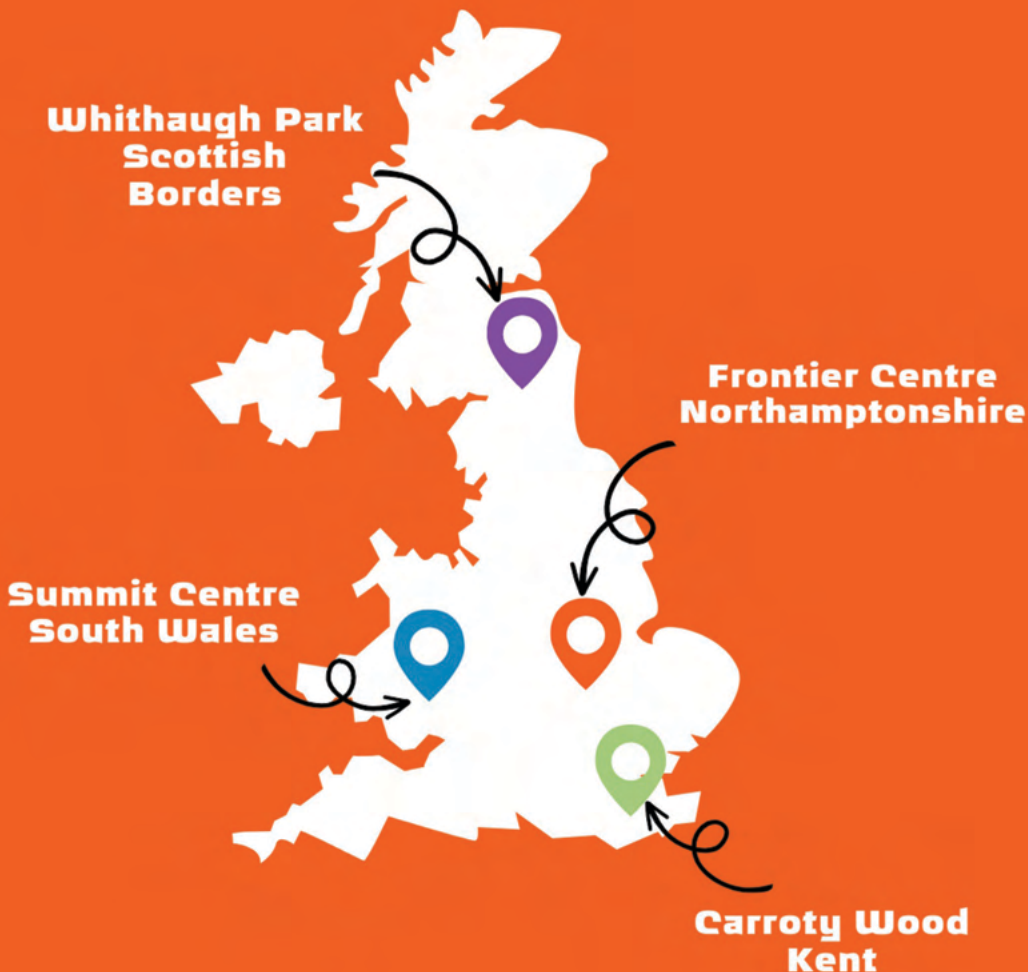
FOUR FANTASTIC ADVENTURE CENTRES

**BETWEEN
AUGUST 2023 &
SEPTEMBER 2024,
WE WORKED WITH:**

**376 SCHOOLS
13,453 INDIVIDUALS**

**171 CHURCH GROUPS
7,392 INDIVIDUALS**

19 UNIFORMED GROUPS



CONTENTS

1	WELCOME FROM OUR CEO	PG 4
2	WHAT WE DO	PG 5
3	ADVENTURE FOR ALL	PG 6 - 7
4	CARROTY WOOD	PG 8 - 9
5	FRONTIER CENTRE	PG 10 - 11
6	SUMMIT CENTRE	PG 12 - 13
7	WHITHAUGH PARK	PG 14 - 15
8	ROCK UK BURSARY FUND	PG 16 - 17
9	RAISING YOUNG LEADERS	PG 18 - 19
10	WHERE ARE WE GOING?	PG 20 - 21

WELCOME FROM OUR CEO

I am delighted to share our 2024 Impact Report with you. At Rock UK we have been offering young people the opportunity to take part in outdoor activities for over 100 years. We have seen the difference it makes to take young people away with their peers to spend time in a new environment. As a parent of three boys I know how important it is in this digital age for young people to unplug and spend time in nature taking part in real experiences! Visiting our centres allows young people space to be children; to climb trees, to build dens, to take ride on a bike or go on a walk. The time they spend with us can have a huge impact on their well being and build confidence and resilience as they head back home.

In this report we will share stories from across our four centres and I hope you will be as encouraged as I am to hear about the adventures young people have had at Rock UK. Each of the centres is unique but we have a shared passion to offer both safe and exiting adventures to the young people we work with.

We have been encouraged by the support we have received to fund our Bursary programme and in 2024 we have helped more children than ever before to ensure that no child is left behind because of financial constraints. We hope to increase this even further in 2025 building new partnerships to allow even more young people to experience the benefits of outdoor adventure.

The enthusiasm and dedication of our team is vital in making each experience at Rock UK special so we will also share with you about our Instructor Training Programme, developing the next generation of outdoor education providers.

We have achieved so much in 2024 but there is more to do. We are excited to share with you our plans for 2025 and beyond and would love to welcome you to one of our centres to see for yourself the work we are doing.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report and for your support of our mission.

MALCOLM MACLEAN,
CEO



WHAT WE DO

IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN CANOES AND CLIMBING WALLS

As visitors arrive at our sites their eyes may be drawn to our climbing towers or aerial adventure courses, but our work is about more than canoes and climbing walls. Adventure is our way of connecting with young people to draw them out of their comfort zone allowing them to try something new or push themselves further than they thought possible.

We know that young people today face many challenges, coming to Rock UK can be a respite as they leave those pressures behind. For some young people staying away from home for the first time is a huge achievement. Children develop independence as they take ownership of sorting out their kit, making their bed, clearing away after meals and so on. They build deeper friendships as they mix with classmates in a new context. Trying new activities, trying, failing and trying again can inspire them to try new things when they return to school whether that is solving a maths problem in the classroom or joining the netball club after school. In feedback from group leaders 97% believe that the young people leave Rock UK with greater self-confidence.



97%

NOW HAVE A STRONGER
SENSE OF SELF BELIEF



Our mindset is key, it's not "here we go again". For us it's not just another group, to us, these are treasured individuals. It is important to us to learn the children's names and try to really get to know the young people. Teachers love the patience we demonstrate with the young people, as they watch our team come alongside a nervous child on the climbing tower, they often say things to us like "I'd just push them off". They comment on the energy our instructors bring and the way we adapt the activities to the young people. We don't have just a set way of running a canoeing session, we have different games and techniques to make the sessions fun and to adjust them to the needs of the group we are working with.

**SARAH KING,
SENIOR INSTRUCTOR**

ADVENTURE FOR ALL

At Rock UK we are passionate about making outdoor adventure accessible for all. In 2024 we have made progress in acquiring accessible equipment and training the team to accommodate guests with additional physical or learning needs.

Summit has hosted an Adaptive Climbing Club each month which was subsidised by a local government grant. This funding came to an end in December 2023. With a grant from the Hargreaves Foundation the team have been able to continue to subsidise the group but also to go further training up parents, carers and volunteers to support the climbers and enable the volunteers to run the Adaptive Climbing Club themselves ensuring it is sustainable. Having the additional volunteers not only reduces the cost of running the session but also means that young people can have more turns at climbing each session with 1:1 or 1:2 support. We have been able to install textured tiles for those with visual impairments so they can feel their way along climbing routes. The funding also provided the funds to install more ergonomic hand holds which are useful for those who additional learning or physical needs.

One of the young people who has benefitted from the changes at our Whithaugh Park centre in Newcastleton is Charlie who has cerebral palsy. He was able to use the sit in harness so he could join in the activities with his classmates. His mum, Melanie emailed us saying:



I wanted to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to all the staff and instructors at Rock UK who made this a wonderful experience for Charlie. The effort you went to, in order to make it inclusive, was amazing. I really appreciated the purchase of the harness to take part in the zip line. This was definitely his favourite. Charlie was very nervous before the camp, but your staff reassured him, made him feel safe and very much included. What a great experience.

Charlie, will be the first of many to benefit from Rock UK having this equipment so thank you for making this possible.

We are currently looking for funding to construct an accessible ramp which will make access to the zip wire easier for wheelchair users.

Whilst Frontier Centre already had an accessible harness, with the funds from the Alchemy Trust we were able to purchase a transfer sling and head support to improve the experience of individuals with mobility issues. In this photo two of our instructor team, Jo and Moses are practising using the equipment on our indoor climbing wall.

We have just been awarded a grant by North Northampton Council which will provide 50% funding for two all-terrain wheelchairs and a hand-cycle so that those with mobility constraints can have greater freedom around our extensive site and take part in Mountain Biking activities with their peers.

In 2025 Rock UK will strive to find more ways to be inclusive across our sites and accommodate young people with additional learning or physical needs so that they can experience the benefits of adventurous activities.



CARROTY WOOD

Carroty Wood in Tonbridge, Kent is one of our busiest centres located just 20 minutes from the M25 making it an ideal location for those in the south east. The accommodation blocks are each set in their own glades within the woodland site.

Jayne Laker from Slade Primary School in Tonbridge, Kent brought Year Six children to Carroty Wood in July 2024. 11 of the children were given a bursary enabling them to take part. For many of the children Jayne told us “This was the first time they had been away from home and this wouldn't have been possible without the funding. The children enjoyed the range of adventurous activities and being able to try new things. They enjoyed being able to spend time with their school friends outside of the school environment.” The children's memorable moments included kayaking, the leap of faith and the great escape. We asked Jayne as their teacher in what ways have you seen this trip to Rock UK make a difference to your pupils back at school? She told us:

I have noticed the children are more confident in their own abilities and this has had a positive impact upon their self-esteem. The children have also developed friendships with more of their peers as a result of the team building activities.





96%

ARE NOW MORE ADVENTUROUS

As well as hosting 124 schools this year, Carrotty Wood has welcomed many youth groups. Over the summer XLP, a youth charity working with young people in London's inner city estates, brought three groups of young people to Carrotty Wood. "The young people we work with often struggle with issues such as family breakdown, unemployment and educational failure, and live in areas that experience high levels of anti-social behaviour and gang violence." One of the group leaders was Daniel, he said:

Many are young carers who have never been outside their housing estate so to bring them away from their environment to a safe space and experience the outdoors & the beach for the first time is life changing. We see them develop and open up more in these few days away than we do working with them over several months at home. The bursary is more than financial support it helps us deliver our vision of providing opportunities for young people to achieve something which nurtures the belief that things can change.

Thanks to two grants we were able to purchase new mountain bikes for Carrotty Wood in 2024. Taking part in a mountain biking session at Carrotty Wood can help children to develop their balance and coordination. Biking is a great form of exercise working core muscles and improving fitness. Through these sessions we hope to inspire the young people to dust off their bikes back home and get out with their family and friends. Learning to ride can give young people a sense of independence as they learn to navigate their surroundings.

FRONTIER CENTRE

Frontier Centre has over 120 acres of open space and lush woodland to explore near Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire. The site overlooks Stanwick Lakes which is a site that has both SSSI and SPA status due to the high numbers of overwintering water fowl, bordering on the centre with the river Nene creating the boundary. Frontier Centre is home to a great variety of wildlife including Muntjac deer, hares, badgers, foxes and rabbits as well as a wide variety of birds. To help Frontier Centre to be a better steward of the land we have, we are working in partnership with the charity A Rocha, under their PIA (partners in action) scheme. They provide guidance and advice as we review current practices with a view to improving how we manage the land including rewilding areas to help protect our environment. As an example, Frontier Centre has started planting hawthorn hedges instead of installing fences around our new bouldering wall and archery courses. We have also modified some grounds maintenance by allowing wildflower meadows to establish and grow instead of cutting them and sharing with visiting groups about how they can care for the environment too by providing information boards about what we're doing at the centre.



The new bouldering wall is available for all groups to use, free of charge. Bouldering is a great first access point to climbing (now an Olympic sport) as it allows participants to have a taster-session so they can learn about the physical activity without the height. For many people who are scared of heights they can still achieve the benefits of climbing by trying bouldering which builds up both physical skills and mental problem solving skills, in an outside location which also contributes to mental wellbeing too.

As well as utilising our Bursary Fund to support disadvantaged young people, thanks to a recently received grant, Frontier Centre has been able to purchase waterproof jackets to lend to those who need them. Hilary, Chief Instructor at Frontier Centre said:

Quite often we find children don't have a waterproof coat or one that is substandard... where they don't have a coat they are likely to be cold and wet and hide in the shelter rather than getting stuck in with the activities. Providing waterproof jackets helps increase participation.

One of the schools that visited Frontier Centre this year was Braunston Primary School in Daventry, Northamptonshire. The group leader, Tracey Fisher, told us that as a result of visiting Rock UK "friendships strengthened and levels of independence increased; children got to participate in a wide range of activities that some would not get to do otherwise." Whilst the children loved all of the activities "Raft building was a clear favourite... many memories were made and they talked for a long time after getting home in such an animated way." For Tracey one of the key things the children learned was how to work with others. These transferable team building skills will also be useful for the children in other areas of their life. Thanks to our supporters five of the children were awarded a bursary;

The bursary enabled children to take part in an adventure that would never have been possible without the bursary, due to their individual circumstances



95%

**ARE LESS LIKELY TO GIVE UP
ON THEIR FIRST ATTEMPT**

SUMMIT CENTRE

Summit Centre in Treharris, Merthyr Tydfil in the heart of the Welsh Valleys is overlooked by stunning hills and is home to one of the largest indoor climbing walls in Wales.

As well as hosting schools and youth groups Summit Centre runs courses teaching children and adults to climb and allowing people to take part in the National Indoor Climbing Award Scheme. Summit Centre hosted the Welsh Climbing Cup in July 2024 as well as hosting a range of climbing competitions throughout the year.

Climbing has many benefits for children and young people helping them to develop their spatial awareness and motor skills. It can also help with increasing focus, developing memory and problem-solving skills. For children with additional needs or disabilities climbing can be beneficial because it increases body awareness which can help with internal regulation.

Our team really value the opportunity to invest in young people over the long term.

NICAS clubs helped me widen my friendship group and also was one of the main things that helped me flourish into a confident teenager. All of the instructors that taught me through NICAS were so supportive and pushed me to be the best version of myself not only in climbing but also shaping me as an individual.

**AMELIA,
NICAS CLUB ATTENDEE**

87%
**GAINED GREATER
INDEPENDENCE**



Rock UK is passionate about making climbing accessible to all and with the support of two grants has been able to run an Adaptive Climbing Club taking parents and carers through the 'Learn to Climb' course so their children can continue to climb independently outside of the monthly club. We have also taken volunteers through the 'Indoor Learning Assistant' and 'Climbing Wall Instructor' courses to allow the Adaptive Climbing Club to be hosted by Rock UK rather than led by Rock UK staff.

It's been a great year for the Adaptive Climbing Club, not only has it been able to continue but now the young people get to climb more in each session as we can offer 1:1 or 1:2 support using the newly trained volunteers, rather than them having to wait their turn for the Rock UK Instructor to be available, it means they can build more confidence and progress more quickly. Two of the young people have achieved their NICAS Level 1 certificates.

**JOE LEWIS,
HEAD OF ACTIVITIES AND LEISURE AT SUMMIT CENTRE**

Funding also enabled us to install textured tiles for visually impaired climbers so they can feel where best to hold and larger climbing holds that are more ergonomic for climbers to grip.

The position of Summit Centre allows us to offer offsite experiences such as gorge walking, Cwmaman Primary is one of the groups that have taken advantage of this unique opportunity. Mr P Morgan, Head teacher said that the experience helped the pupils with "team building along with supporting each other. As individuals, the pupils are motivated to reach their potential and push through fears."

85%

**UNDERSTAND THEIR STRENGTHS
AND WEAKNESSES BETTER**



WHITHAUGH PARK

Whithaugh Park is a woodland retreat in Newcastleton in the Scottish Borders, the accommodation is arranged differently to our other sites with log cabins set among the trees. Attracting groups from across Scotland and the North of England we have had some of our most deprived groups visiting Whithaugh Park including this school who visited in June 2024 from Newcastle upon Tyne, where 32 of the children required a Bursary to attend. Laura, the group leader could see a range of benefits to bringing the children to Rock UK:

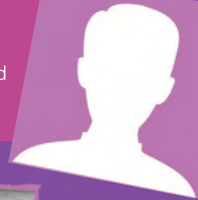


CHILD ONE - IS AUTISTIC & HAS ADHD

He is currently going through quite a lot as his parents are separated and he has been more withdrawn. This trip enabled him to excel and find his confidence again.

CHILD TWO - HAS AN EHCP AND IS AUTISTIC

He benefited from having the opportunity to try a range of new activities and experience a night away.

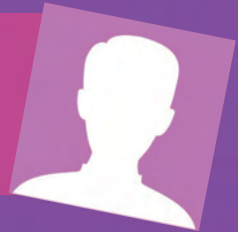


91%

**NOW TALK TO THEIR PEERS
MORE CONFIDENTLY**

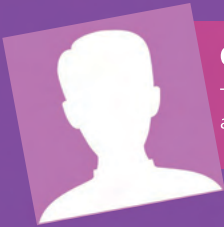
CHILD THREE - HAS AN EHP & IS FROM A LOW INCOME FAMILY

Some of his siblings also have additional needs. He requires a lot of support and is on a speech and language programme. This trip helped him develop social skills and trying new things he'd never usually have the chance to do.



CHILD FOUR - IS A YOUNG CARER

This trip provided some respite and meant he could think about being a child and pushing himself to try new things in a safe environment.



CHILD FIVE - NEW TO THE SCHOOL

She hadn't formed many friendships so this was an opportunity to bond with peers.



On their return to school she noted positive outcome from their time away that Child two had "Confidence to try new things and push himself out of his comfort zone. Taking on a speaking part in our leavers' performance!" She notes that Child one "Is becoming more independent and is willing to help others more and work in a team". While Child five "Now has a more established group of friends and is developing her social skills." Child three "Smiled throughout the whole trip and was so proud of himself for completing the zipwire. He couldn't wait to tell his mum when getting off the bus!"

What comes across again and again when reading the feedback from teachers is that children who often struggle at school thrive as they step out of their normal environment and exceed their own expectations.

I loved the trip to Whithaugh Park. It was our best trip in primary school because we did so many different activities and sharing a cabin with my friends was loads of fun too.

Determination and resilience to not give up - that's how I got to the top

It OK to try new things and it doesn't matter if you're not the best

ROCK UK BURSARY FUND

1,069

**BURSARIES AWARDED
(2023 - 2024)**

ENSURING 'NO CHILD IS LEFT BEHIND'

Finances can be a major barrier to young people participating in sports and activities. By offering a bursary of up to 50% of the trip cost Rock UK has helped over 5,000 young people take part in activity days and residential trips since the Bursary Fund was established in 2013.

IN FEEDBACK FROM GROUP LEADERS BELIEVED THAT AFTER THEIR VISIT TO ROCK UK THE YOUNG PEOPLE HAD:

- ✓ GREATER SELF-CONFIDENCE
- ✓ AN INCREASED SENSE OF ADVENTURE
- ✓ GREATER RESILIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE
- ✓ IMPROVED COMMUNICATION SKILLS
- ✓ INCREASED SKILLS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING
- ✓ STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS AND TEACHERS



We were aware that all families will be feeling the impact of the increased in cost of living so we didn't want to pass on the costs of bursaries to other visitors. We have been delighted by the donations we have received this year which has allowed us to support more children and young people through the Bursary Fund than ever before. We have been able to reach out to other charities and youth groups working with children with particular needs to enable trips to take place that wouldn't have been possible without funding. For example, we hosted Oasis Women's Refuge at Carrot Wood allowing families who have experienced domestic abuse to have a weekend away in a safe and supportive environment. Likewise at Whithaugh Park we were able to support Kirby Moor School to bring children with additional needs to visit. We are so grateful to every individual and trust for making this possible.

**SUZANNE JAMES,
FUNDRAISING MANAGER,
ROCK UK**

We have experienced growing demand for bursaries year on year and this trend is expected to continue as both our centre costs increase and more families face financial challenges. The Rock UK Bursary Fund has been a lifeline in allowing students to experience the benefits of an outdoor residential. Whilst we are delighted with what has been achieved there is more to do.

In addition to our current bursary programme for schools and youth groups, in 2025 Rock UK aims to partner with local youth providers to deliver programmes for over 500 young people in the following categories: Young carers, care leavers, young people affected by domestic abuse, young people affected by poor mental health and young people affected by poverty. Residential visits to Rock centres will offer these young people complete respite from their home lives and the chance to be children, whilst boosting their ability to cope when they return.



98%

**STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS
WITH BOTH PEERS AND
TEACHERS**



RAISING YOUNG LEADERS

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING PROGRAMME

Adventure is our vehicle to bring change. Our activity instructors are crucial in transforming young lives through the interactions and conversations they have with young people. Be that on the top of an abseil tower where they take time to encourage a young person to learn how to trust, or as they paddle a canoe together on a lake connecting young people to nature or as they sit around a campfire reflecting on the memory making moments that have happened during the day.

As part of our mission each year we recruit 24 voluntary workers to take part in our Instructor training programme. This action-packed full-time course is for one or two years involving discipleship, learning and adventure. Throughout the programme the young people learn whilst working, gaining essential experience in youth work and leading groups whilst living in a Christian community.

It's the best experience you'll ever do. My favourite activity to instruct is abseiling, because you get to see the kids conquer their fears it's most rewarding. I had someone who was absolutely petrified and wasn't really able to get their harness on and then by the end of the session she was abseiling from the 9m high abseil.

**COURTNEY,
TRAINEE INSTRUCTOR**



It's a really good experience and it helped me to grow as a person in terms of my faith and in my ability to adult. It's a really good opportunity to put skills on your CV and to have faith and confidence put in you ...I really enjoy seeing the joy and energy you can bring to kid's lives, a lot of these kids don't often see the outdoors or aren't outdoorsy types and it's really great to just throw them into activities and watch them thrive...It's very rewarding and it's great fun

**ABRAHAM,
TRAINEE INSTRUCTOR**



They develop skills to plan, run and instruct activity sessions such as kayaking, archery and high ropes as well as team building sessions. The trainees are engaged in a range of challenging outdoor activities and a series of workshops and seminars. As part of the training we help our team understand how different people learn and acquire the skills needed to teach, lead and run activity sessions. They learn to rely on one another physically and mentally through challenging outdoor activities. By the end of the programme they will have gained recognised qualifications in First Aid, in outdoor pursuits such as Archery, Paddlesports and Climbing. But they will also be equipped to confidently communicate our Christian ethos, mission and vision to guests; at all times with respect to the views and beliefs of others.

There is no course fee. We provide the trainee instructors with accommodation, utilities, activity kit and food whilst they are with us. An overseas mission trip is included in the second year. Rock UK invests over £150,000 each year in its Instructor Training Programme. Whilst some of the trainee instructors choose to remain with Rock UK once they have qualified, others have gone on to university or to work in a range of industries. Whatever career they pick next, they are equipped to work as part of a team striving for excellence in all they do.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

1 INCREASING BURSARY SUPPORT

THE 2024 GOAL: growing the financial aid we offer to ensure more young people can benefit from our programmes.

During the summer of 2024 our bursary committee simplified the application process and our fundraising team had been working to increase the level of funding available to provide more bursaries and bursaries of a greater value. In the year ending 31st August 2024 we had secured £88,000 of funding from Trusts and Foundations towards the bursary. In 2025 we are aiming to raise £102,000.



2 EXPANDING CAPACITY

THE 2024 GOAL: improve utilisation, develop our infrastructure and people to allow us to work with more young people.

With thanks to SEMLEP (South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership) and the Benefact Trust 60% funding has been secured to establish a tented village at Frontier Centre providing 40 extra beds during our peak season.

We continue to work towards securing funding for the redevelopment of Rowan Lodge to create 40 additional beds year round.

At Whithaugh Park, we are seeking to expand our 9 bedded lodges to 14 beds including ensuite facilities for group leaders which will allow us to provide an additional 50 beds.

3 ENHANCING COMMUNITY IMPACT

THE 2024 GOAL: strengthening our engagement and positive impact within the communities we serve.

We are running a community consultation on the redevelopment of Carroty Wood swimming pool. Summit has established a new Over 60s NICAS climbing club, run monthly 'Pizza' nights with social climbing sessions and installed a Soft Play area with funding from the Welsh Church Act Fund.



4 IMPROVING SUSTAINABILITY

THE 2024 GOAL: ensuring our operations are functioning well in order to deliver financial sustainability and reduce our impact on the environment.

Through a wide range of initiatives we seek to increase bookings to Rock UK to increase our income and to allow us to work with more young people.

We have secured 50% funding from Northampton North Council to insulate Oak Lodge at Frontier Centre to improve energy efficiency and reduce our carbon footprint.

In 2025 we will be making applications to install air source heat pumps and a solar array at Whithaugh Park to increase our green energy producing and reduce our carbon footprint.



Can You Help?

The inspiring experiences and the needs of young people shared in this report are only made possible thanks to the generosity of our supporters. We rely on donations to fund the growing number of young people who need to experience a Rock UK adventure and other important aspects of our work. This includes the development of our centres, growing the skills of our instructors and increasing other areas of knowledge, training to ensure positive and safe outcomes, our sustainability and our understanding of our social impact!

If we are to reach significantly more young people, we need the support and funding from people like you, who share our belief in the transformative power of getting young people outdoors to have an adventure.

To find out how you can help, please contact me – Suzanne James.

Thank you

Contact:

 Suzanne James
 suzanne.james@rockuk.org
 03333 44 66 52 (option 9, extension 211)

Our Centres

Whithaugh Park
Newcastleton,
Scottish Borders,
TD9 0TY
whithaugh@rockuk.org

Carroty Wood
Higham Lane,
Tonbridge,
Kent,
TN11 9QX
carroty@rockuk.org

Frontier Centre
Addington Road,
Irthlingborough,
Northamptonshire,
NN9 5UH
frontier@rockuk.org

Summit Centre
The Old Drift Mine,
Treharris, Treharris
South Wales
CF46 6RD
summit@rockuk.org

Contact Us

info@rockuk.org
03333 44 66 52
rockuk.org

Rock UK,
Frontier Centre, Addington Rd.,
Irthlingborough, N.hamptonshire,
NN9 5UH, U.K

Charity No. 1107724 (England & Wales), SC040118 (Scotland)



**TRANSFORMING
YOUNG LIVES
SINCE 1922**