



Ready to roll: Youngsters Jonty, left, and Jacob enjoying wheelchairs bought with help from my-AFK.

When a wheelchair can make all the difference

Becky Dann, who lives in East Finchley and who had to raise funds to buy her own wheelchair, reports on a charity that helps people in the same situation.

Disability can affect people in different ways, but still, the first word it brings to mind for a lot of people is 'wheelchair'. The word is so common in our lives that the disabled spaces, accessible toilets and even emojis on our phones feature wheelchairs.

Surprisingly, wheelchairs are not always easy to come by for many physically disabled people in the UK. The NHS can no longer be expected to supply one automatically, especially to people with more complex needs.

In the UK, one in four families goes without specialist equipment for their disabled

child either because the NHS cannot provide equipment that meets their needs or because the strict assessment criteria exclude them. For example, disabled people who can walk a few steps independently or who can walk holding onto furniture within the home are not provided with wheelchairs to get out and about.

Wheels for the young

A wheelchair can mean freedom and independence, but for many this basic human right can only be achieved by reliance on charities and the ability to self-fundraise. my AFK is a charity based in Hornsey that helps by making

contributions for people up to the age of 25.

In its 27 years, my AFK has received 2,294 applications from people who were turned away from the NHS wheelchair services. They currently have 22 people on their waiting list, with over £120,000 needed to be able to provide all of those people with their freedom and independence.

You can help towards someone receiving a wheelchair by making a donation. Please visit the donation page at www.my-afk.org/donate or text MYAFK followed by the amount to 70085. Thank you.

Gate dispute puts volunteers at loggerheads

By John Lawrence

Volunteers at Long Lane Pasture are locked in a dispute over access with their neighbours at Pointalls Allotments, which they claim could threaten the future of the established wildlife haven opposite Finchley Fire Station.

Disagreements over the use of a gate connecting the allotments to the pasture arose between the Pointalls management board, who are themselves volunteers, and long-time pasture volunteers Wayne Armsby and his wife Elsie Price, whose Long Lane home backs on to the allotments. These led to the board taking back their allotment plot and terminating the gate licence.

ment storage on the pasture site itself. "The future of the Pasture could be in jeopardy if a solution is not found to this dreadful situation," they said.

Volunteer Linda Dolata told *The Archer* that the pasture is the source of several springs and has always had a problem with flooding. "We had this under control by pumping the worst of the water into the sewers but now we no longer have access to the power that we need to work the pump," she said.

Response from Pointalls

Paul Hendrick, chair of the board of directors at Pointalls Allotments, said under their lease with Barnet Council only current ploholders were allowed to have gate licences, which no longer applied to Wayne and Elsie.



No access to equipment

In turn, this means the pasture team no longer have direct access to the tools and heavy equipment they use to maintain the two-acre site throughout the year. It has always been stored in a workshop behind Wayne and Elsie's house, close to the connecting gate.

Pasture trust chair Donald Lyven and vice chair Harriet Copperman told supporters in a letter that their current lease with Barnet Council does not permit them to build any equip-



Left and above: Photos of flooding at Long Lane Pasture taken by one of its volunteers.

He said the issue of power for the water pump had not been raised directly with the board and questioned why equipment could not be moved from their workshop to the pasture's main entrance via Long Lane.

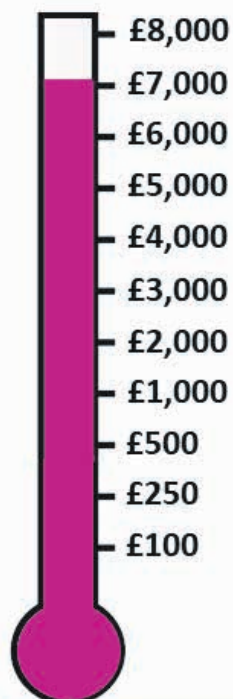
He added: "I stress we have no argument with the pasture's trustees. They have written to us with an outline proposal for an alternative arrangement for access. Our response was that we had no objection in principle but we needed to see a detailed proposal which met their needs but at the same time did not compromise our site security and was at no cost to Pointalls. We are awaiting their response."

East Finchley Festival's crowdfunding campaign will close on 8 February, but the team of volunteer organisers will only receive the pledges if they have reached their funding target.

As *The Archer* went to press, the total sat at just over £7,000, with just over a week to go.

To pledge please go to www.spacehive.com/east-finchley-festival.

Last chance for festival fundraiser



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