

The year ahead: Richard Greenwood on creating an inclusive, equitable and diverse future in Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire

The new Rotary year has begun, bringing with it the opportunity for Rotary clubs to look afresh at new activities and approaches to supporting communities and people, and also reflect on how current approaches can be done in a different way.

For Richard Greenwood, the District Governor for Rotary in Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire for the next 12 months, his role is a balance of bringing forth and implementing new ideas as well as building consistency.

“My primary responsibility must be to the 2000 members in the 92 clubs and to support their endeavours, primarily in local community projects. However, we must always be mindful that achieving our ambitions for ‘doing good in the world’ cannot be achieved without members,” he says.

“I’m working with the two District Governors that follow me, so that we approach the future of District 1040 as a collective of three people—where we all agree what the future is or how it should look, or changes that need to be made,” says Richard in a phone call with me a week before he officially took his post as District Governor for the 2024-2025 year.

Richard is a member of Bradford West Rotary, an active group with a strong membership across its traditional style club, E-Club, and the recently created Rotary Community Corps (a joint effort between Bradford West Rotary and the Rotary Adventurers passport club). [Our article from January gives an overview of these different styles of clubs and groups.](#)

Since the start of the Rotary Community Corps in December, four have become Rotary members. Most of these members joining Rotary Community Corps are young. They are enthusiastic about supporting causes in their community and are invested in [Rotary’s causes](#).

For Richard, a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) lens is essential. “You are not going to recruit young people into Rotary if you are not diverse, equitable and inclusive.”

With Bradford awarded UK City of Culture 2025, this is a big opportunity for Rotary in the District. Richard is working with several civic leaders to develop greater social and intergenerational cohesion within the city’s diverse multi-faith population, with particular emphasis on young people.

With Rotary’s focus on DEI, and a growing number of 18 to 30-year-olds involved in projects and coming up with new ideas, Richard and other Rotary members are

acting as mentors and providing guidance to ensure the Rotary ethos of Service Above Self remains central to any work.



As part of Refugee Week in June 2024, Bradford West Rotary, Rotary Adventurers, and the City of Bradford Rotary Community Corps joined forces in Peel Park, Bradford to provide free Mendhi hand painting and face painting to local children. Photo credit: Richard Greenwood on behalf of Bradford West Rotary

In his address to attendees at June's District handover, he used the term "destigmatize" to describe how he wants to change the public's perception of all Rotarians being "well-heeled retired businessmen." Instead, he hopes to build on the hard work of so many people and clubs in previous years to change this notion. The goal is to not only get to a place where everyone is welcome, but where everyone in the community feels that they are welcome as well.

"True diversity celebrates the contributions of people of all backgrounds, across age, ethnicity, race, colour, disability, religious faith, socio-economic status, culture, marital status or sexual orientation as well as differences in ideas, thoughts, values and beliefs," he says.

"Young people are our future and if we wish to attract them into Rotary, we need to show them by example that Rotary not only talks about DEI but adopts it in a way that is reflective in how it runs. It was therefore with particular pride that I informed

the gathering at District handover that one of our clubs had recently inducted three new members under the age of thirty, dispelling the myth that Rotary will never be attractive to young people.”



Richard Greenwood (second from left) and other Rotary members in his family, including one Rotarian friend, and one of his grandchildren. Photo credit: Richard Greenwood

Richard also highlights the [importance of North Star, a membership-focused initiative throughout Rotary in Great Britain and Ireland](#). The initiative provides a template to improve recruitment and retention throughout Rotary. “We are looking to swell our numbers through the development of Corporate members, essentially businesses with up to ten employees. Each town and village across Great Britain and Ireland has a myriad of such businesses, and by example the small town of Alwick currently boasts more than a dozen such small businesses who proudly display their ‘Corporate’ Rotary membership plaques on their premises.”

To set a foundation and continuity for this and all the other plans and initiatives in the next 12 months, he is working closely with the next two District Governors: Anne Sutcliffe (District Governor for 2025-2026) and Susan Rogers (District Governor for 2026-2027).

“We have two modernising upcoming District Governors to help in the task, as well as a plethora of District officers, notwithstanding the thoughts and views of all our Rotary members whose perspectives are always very welcome,” says Richard.

In the lead up to beginning his governing year, Richard visited several traditional-style clubs (clubs where members meet in person on a weekly or fortnightly basis, usually over a meal). He's reported on the "vibrancy of these clubs and the wonderful work they are continuing to do in their local communities. Some of them are even reporting new members." Keeping these clubs healthy, along with creating and maintaining new and different avenues for participation is top of mind for the new District Governor.

The Rotary International Assembly in Florida in January brought together the incoming District Governors of Rotary around the world to share their ideas and experiences. Under the banner of *The Magic of Rotary*, the key messages from new Rotary International President, Stephanie Urchick, find a balance between continuity and change, and work for peace.

"Peace comes in many guises," says Richard, "and as Rotary leader in my District I am looking to support sustainability and social cohesion in our local communities, bringing together people of all ages and faiths."

"When Rotary International President Stephanie visits our District in March next year, I am optimistic that we can provide evidence of a vibrant, modernising District, one in which we are all part of making our communities a better, safer and more harmonious place both for ourselves and for the benefit of future generations," he says.

In my few conversations with Richard over the previous months, I can feel his enthusiasm through the phone, in every conversation, in every anecdote and example he gives. His attitude is infectious, and I find myself somehow energised after long work days and weeks. But that's Richard in a nutshell—a motivator committed to the cause, opening opportunities for people to take part no matter who they are.

"I'm a changemaker," he says. "I want people to change with me and grow with me, for the good of us all."

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