

Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group (Registered charity No. 1176233)

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group CIO to be held at the Mulberry Suite, Brighthouse Sixth Form Centre on Wednesday June 5th, 2024 at 7.30pm

1. Welcome

Simon welcomed everyone to the meeting. 25 members attended the meeting.

2. Introduction and Chairperson's report

Simon delivered the chairperson's report. A summary of the speech is listed below.

As a charity, the past year has seen us go from strength to strength and there are numerous factors which bear this out. Visitor numbers to our Visitor Centre have increased, particularly those discovering the reserve for the first time. Volunteer numbers continue to increase with seven individuals joining the midweek work parties since last Christmas. The number of 'followers' on our Facebook page is approaching 4,000 and there are almost 2,500 'followers' on our 'Community' page.

Memberships continue to increase and the charity has received several substantial donations from local organisations. By the time the schools finish for summer we will have welcomed 41 class visits, an increase of 11 on the previous year.

These figures don't happen by accident, so why have we achieved such success? It is my firm belief that every organisation sets its own standards and it is very clear that everyone, in whatever capacity connected to CBWG, strives to achieve the best in whatever area they volunteer. Some examples are:

- The quality of workmanship and repairs on the reserve

- The thoroughness of the work completed
- The quality of our publications, particularly our bi-annual magazine
- The professionalism in communication to our members and the public, particularly the monthly newsletter
- The purchase of robust items for the Visitor Centre for display or storage
- Monitoring our finances, mutual respect at Trustees' meetings and the professionalism of the recorded minutes
- The expertise displayed in specific areas such as Information Technology

The most important factor in our success is teamwork. We are all from different backgrounds in terms of our careers and expertise and when you bring this all together into a culture of informality, enjoyment and utmost commitment then these are major factors in our success. Most importantly, we are buoyed by the appreciation of what we are aiming to achieve from both the public and local organisations.

Underlying all of our work is the understanding that, ultimately, we are doing it for the wildlife on the reserve and for the benefit of the public who visit Cromwell Bottom. We can take great satisfaction from what has been accomplished but should never lose sight of why we do it. It is important to stress that much of what we do is in partnership with the Countryside Service Department of Calderdale MBC.

However, the year has not been without its challenges. The major project on the reserve, the sustainability of the lagoon continues to be a source of frustration due to a lack of funding. The lagoon is once more the natural centre piece of the reserve. This is, in part, due to the large amount of rainfall over the year but also because of the months of hard work by volunteers clearing reeds and encroaching vegetation. As a

result there has been a visible increase in waterfowl which enhances the experience from the viewing platform

We had major problems for several weeks with the disposal of waste from the toilets and visitors had to use portaloos.

We were also obliged to construct a barrier to restrict vehicular access to parts of the compound during school visits.

SECURITY/CCTV

We have installed CCTV cameras along part of the Visitor Centre which are linked to a screen in the office. The screen is also linked to a camera placed in the barn owl box but, unfortunately, at the moment there are no barn owls nesting within the box.

WORK ON THE RESERVE

I can't thank enough the volunteers who turn up every week in all weathers to work on the many projects we have undertaken.

- Our main achievements this year have focused on the restoration and improvement of two crucial and sensitive habitats on the reserve, namely the lagoon and the sphagnum bog. The lagoon has been partially cleared of encroaching saplings and reeds enabling huge swathes to be opened up.
- This has had a significant impact on the number and variety of waterfowl which are now being regularly spotted and recorded by members of the public.
- Similarly, the sphagnum bog has been cleared of encroaching saplings and is now in its natural state as befits a very rare habitat.
- Both bird viewing areas which are open to the public have been revitalised enabling a better viewing experience for birdwatchers and photographers.
- Another lengthy project was to undertake coppicing and fence removal in a remote area of the compound to reduce the density

of vegetation. This was a particularly challenging project due to the strength of the fence and the depth of the mud.

- My thanks go to the many volunteers who attend weekly to undertake the routine jobs which need doing to keep us on top of things.

ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY

School Visits

- We've had an increase in school visits over the last year. August was the only month when no school visited the reserve.
- It has been great to welcome new primary schools including Mount Pleasant, Carr Green, All Saints and Ash Green.
- The barn owl life cycle session has been very popular, along with requests for river studies and identification of wildlife in different seasons. Every effort is made to link the experience to the curriculum studies that the children follow at school.
- Since the closure of the educational provision at Jerusalem Farm, CBWG is the only provider of this type of outdoor education in Calderdale. It is very rewarding to introduce children to what a nature reserve is and the abundance of wildlife which can be seen, especially as it is an unfamiliar but hopefully unforgettable experience for many children.

Community Links

- We have led many guided walks over the year for several organisations including walking groups, church groups, local

charities and given several presentations to various societies. Our monthly Saturday themed walks for members have continued.

- Once again, we were delighted to support Calderdale College Media Studies students in gaining their Level 2 qualification. Their work was again based on the reserve which resulted in a range of merchandise now on display in the Visitor Centre. Mugs, T shirts and nature activity sheets for different age groups are all available.
- Our links with Halifax Children's Library Services continued with two stories and activity events held in the summer holidays. Both sessions were over-subscribed.
- We have become a partner organisation in the 'Wilder Calderdale' project which aims to target habitats and key species within the borough.
- The reserve is part of the 'Visit Calderdale' passport scheme aimed at encouraging visitors to Calderdale to visit its key tourist attractions.
- We have strengthened our links with Halifax Scientific Society and hosted many themed events including bat nights, moth breakfasts, a talk from Leeds Swifts group, an otter workshop and a newt night. We are now hosting regular meetings of the Calderdale Bird Group.
- The group held another very successful Open Day in August
- We warmly received a visit from Alex Sobel, MP for NW Leeds in his capacity as shadow minister for nature.

DONATIONS AND FUND RAISING

- We have been very grateful for the donations given by some of the organisations requesting a guided walk.
- Brighouse and District Ladies Inner Wheel kindly donated funds to enable the group to purchase eight portable microscopes.

- Brighthouse and Fixby WI, plus Happy Dog House UK enabled us to fund a new bird identification board in the main bird viewing area.
- We have held three guided walks raising funds for Overgate Hospice resulting in several hundred pounds being raised.
- As a charity ourselves, we are committed to raising funds for other charities. We raised hundreds of pounds by taking part in the Macmillan coffee morning appeal and with the support of some of our regular visitors donated many items to the Salvation Army Christmas Toy Appeal.
- Donations are what charities rely on to keep going and to that end we remain extremely grateful to the public who enter our Visitor Centre and give so generously. Our aluminium drinks can appeal is already very close to achieving its target and we expect to exceed it before the end of the calendar year.

POLICIES

This year the group has created the following policies;

- Our sustainability policy is a general statement promoting our commitment to sustainability. Our recycling of aluminium drink cans and the building of a compost bin are examples of actions we have taken.
- For school visits we have adopted the OAEP national guidelines to complement our existing protocols for school visits.
- Policies have also been agreed for Social Media and Financial Reserves.

PUBLICITY

Once again, thank you to all contributors to our bi-annual magazine and to the newsletter team for the outstanding publication this year.

THE FUTURE

We are eagerly awaiting a summary of an ecological survey report which will determine what is to be done to develop habitats on the reserve over the next fifteen years or so. CBWG is in the process, as part of a group of Rastrick based organisations, funded by 'Rastrick Big Local', of hopefully having solar panels installed, showing our commitment to sustainability

In conclusion, I am compelled, as Chair, to express my huge appreciation and deep thanks to everyone connected with our fantastic charity. This includes Trustees, Sunday Visitor Centre crew, midweek volunteers and everyone else for their valuable contributions over the last year.

3. Financial report and accounts

Robin Owen-Morley opened his report by saying that the full copy of the accounts had been sent out to all members prior to the AGM and that a copy, signed as approved by the independent examiner and accepted and signed off by the trustees, was available to view. He had distributed a concise summary to all members on arrival at the meeting (see Appendix A) and talked through the key points of interest.

- Income from Grants and Donations was £8,486 for the year, down from £15,152 in the prior year. No grants had been received in the current year whereas the previous year had seen a grant of £3,300 and a legacy of £5,000 received.
- Visitor Income was £27,636, an increase of £5,754 on the previous year. There was a corresponding, but significantly higher

proportional, increase in Visitor Centre Consumables. Trustees have reported a very noticeable increase in food and drink prices, especially with the sort of food products stocked in the Visitor Centre.

- Tools and Materials were significantly higher in the current year. However, Robin pointed out that for almost two months of the previous year, all work was focussed on the replacement of the old cabin and all materials purchased were fed into the capitalised cost of the Visitor Centre, hence not classified as Expenditure.
- Depreciation had increased in the current year by £3,216 and the concise summary gave the detail of the Assets Acquired in the Year, totalling £10,219, which accounted for this increase.
- Total Income was £39,278 (p/y £40,459, down £1,181) and Total Expenditure was £32,901 (p/y £22,637, an increase of £10,264). This left the Net Income for the Year as £6,377 (p/y £17,822, down £11,444).
- Adding the Net Income for the Year of £6,377 to the funds balance brought forward of £51,477, the funds balance carried forward are £57,854.
- The funds balance carried forward are represented by
 - £26,093 of Fixed Assets
 - £30,708 of Liquid Funds (bank accounts, deposit accounts and cash)
 - Debtors and Prepayments of £2,427
 - Less the current liabilities of £1,374

- Restricted Funds brought forward were £4,408 against which £3,159 was spent leaving just £1,249 remaining.

- Of the Liquid Funds held, the Trustees have put aside reserves for the following:-
 - £20,000 to go towards the future project of creating a feed to the Lagoon
 - £5,000 for our contribution (50%) to the repair of the footpath at Tag Cut
 - £3,000 as a contingency fundleaving approximately £1,300 as “free” funds

Robin invited any questions relating to the finances but there were none.

He went on to report the Membership Numbers which were 166 at the end of March 2024, an increase of 28 from the previous year.

A member asked if subscription prices, which have been the same for many years, should be increased. David Langley, Vice Chair, responded that the Trustees felt that membership fees were only a small part of the charity's income and that most Members contributed much more than their fee through donations in the Visitor Centre. An increase was therefore not seen as appropriate.

4. Appointment of independent examiners

Robin reported that, once again, he had received excellent support from the West Yorkshire Community Accounting Service (WYCAS) in the independent examination and ratification of the accounts and suggested they should be reappointed. This motion was proposed by Simon Day and seconded by David Langley and received unanimous support from the members. Simon thanked Robin for all his work throughout the year in his capacity as Treasurer.

5. Appointment and re-election of trustees

In accordance with the requirements of The Charity Commission the following individuals were reappointed to serve as trustees.

	PROPOSED	SECONDED
Simon Day	Allan Wolfenden	Alan Pullan
Tony Spilsbury	Martin Staples	Graham Haigh
Julie Jackson	Alan Pullan	Michael Henshaw
Jen Landells	Val Best	Richard Armitage

The reappointments were passed unanimously by the members.

**CROMWELL BOTTOM WILDLIFE GROUP
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024**

	23/24	22/23	CHANGE
Income from:			
Grants and Donations	8,486	15,152	(6,666)
Visitor Centre Income	27,636	21,882	5,754
Membership Subscriptions	1,895	1,715	180
Book Sales	70	410	(340)
Open Day	1,041	1,275	(233)
Bank Interest	150	25	125
Total Income	39,278	40,459	(1,181)
Expenditure on:			
Tools & Materials	3,568	1,735	(1,835)
Visitor Centre Consumables	7,114	4,376	(2,739)
Bird Food	1,892	977	(914)
Administration	588	240	(347)
Insurance	625	635	11
Printing	713	864	151
Projects	2,996	3,300	304
Meeting Expenses	100	61	(39)
Tractor and Trailer	800	25	(774)
Charity Donations	603	350	(253)
Training	908	300	(608)
Independent Examination	654	650	(4)
Depreciation	12,340	9,124	(3,216)
Total Expenditure	32,901	22,637	(10,264)
Net Income for year	6,377	17,822	(11,444)
Funds balance brought forward	51,477	33,655	17,822
Funds balance carried forward	57,854	51,477	6,377
RESTRICTED FUNDS			
Balance brought forward 23/24	4,408		
Expenditure on:			
Tools & Materials	370		
Bird Food	803		
Printing	354		
Projects	260		
Assets acquired	1,372		
Total Expenditure	3,159		
Balance carried forward 23/24	1,249		
Rastrick Big Local	1,240		
North Halifax Partnership	9		
	1,249		

