

Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group Registered Charity No, 1176233

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group CIO held at the Mulberry Suite, Brighthouse Sixth Form Centre on Wednesday July 16, 2025 at 7.30pm

Simon welcomed everyone to the meeting. The meeting was attended by 20 members.

1. Minutes of AGM 2024

The minutes were accepted and signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Chairperson's report

Simon delivered his report to the meeting. A summary of the speech is provided below.

Since the last report, CBWG has had another busy and productive year. The highlights of the last 12 months are as follows.

- The installation of solar panels, funded by Rastrick Big Local, has seen the group play our part towards a more sustainable future. The most recent estimate indicates they are contributing over 60% of our energy supply. Huge thanks to RBL for funding the project and for previous funding. This has now ended but the legacy of their investment in Rastrick will live on for many a year at Cromwell Bottom.
- Our financial target for trading in crushed aluminium drink cans was more than doubled by the end of 2024 with well over £1,000 raised. This amount should be repeated by the end of this year. A fantastic effort by all involved as well as the growing number of people and organisations who leave their cans with us.

- We enjoyed the company of four Exmoor ponies from mid-February for a few weeks as part of a grassland management scheme designed to stimulate future wildflower growth on North Loop. They became well known locally and even made an appearance on a 'Calendar' news bulletin.
- A significant step forward regarding dogs on leads on the reserve was made in June this year. Calderdale MBC has reviewed their position prompted by a growing number of complaints from visitors to the reserve and an increasing number of unpleasant incidents. The council's 'Public Space Protection Team' are putting in place arrangements whereby all dogs will be required to be on a lead at all times and in all parts of the reserve. The changes are planned to be brought in to coincide with a periodic review of all Public Safety Protection Orders, copies of which were sent to all ward councillors, the fire service and the police. It is hoped that prominent new signage and monitoring by PSPO wardens will persuade dog owners to respect the environment as a nature reserve by keeping their dog on a lead. We remain a dog friendly charity welcoming them to the reserve and inside our Visitor Centre.
- Another highlight was the audio tour project created and produced by Northern Broadsides Theatre Company. Over the final weekend of March 2025, 12 groups of people booked to participate in the arranged audio immersive tours of the reserve, a mix of narrated history, audio drama and wildlife personification. The weekend was a huge success and we are hopeful that eventually we will be able to offer the same audio immersive experience for the general public.
- Our very first calendar project was a huge success. It engaged enthusiastic photographers to submit some stunning photos of wildlife taken exclusively on the reserve. A small team had the unenviable task of selecting a photo for each month. It also gave the opportunity for local businesses to provide sponsorship. Almost all of the printed calendars were sold.

WORK ON THE RESERVE

- Thanks to the unrelenting efforts of our regular weekly volunteers, in particular those who take a lead, the annual maintenance programme has again been undertaken which has included the following operations.
- Autumn 2024 saw the annual reed cutting and clearance of encroaching vegetation in the lagoon. This paid great dividends due to the amount of prolonged rainfall which started in late 2024. The lagoon looked at its best in the early spring, thriving with waterfowl enjoyed by the many visitors to the viewing platform.
- Similar restorative work included removing sapling growth in the sphagnum bog, meadow cutting and coppicing willow growth in woodland areas. We also maintained the perimeters, cleaned and repaired nest boxes, cleared brambles, cleared gulleys as well as a multitude of repairs which kept the team busy in the winter months of 2024
- Spring 2025 saw the annual preparation for the increase of visitors including the deep clean of the Visitor Centre both inside and outside, repainting the outdoor furniture and regular cleaning of all the bird feeders. Some success has been achieved to deter grey squirrels from climbing on the feeders. A pulley mechanism together with the purchase of spring-loaded feeders has had the desired effect of enabling the smaller birds to feed uninterrupted. The purchase of spring-loaded feeders has also seen the loss of seed/nuts/fat balls reduce significantly, thereby incurring less cost.
- One ongoing task which wasn't anticipated has been the need to water recently planted areas as well as topping up the dipping pond and other wetland areas on North Loop to prevent them from drying out. Unfortunately, the tip pond did dry out but it did provide the opportunity to completely remove the invasive *Crassula*.

ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY

SCHOOL VISITS

School visits have been as popular as ever. Since the last AGM 30 classes from 9 different primary schools have booked sessions. Sessions have included birdwatching, river studies, bee studies, barn owl life cycle, seasonal guided walks, flower studies, mini beast hunting, pond dipping and den building. This success is largely due to an increase of new volunteers with a background in education. The feedback has been very positive from both children and staff as the sessions combine enjoyment with enriching their classroom-based learning.

COMMUNITY LINKS

The Visitor Centre has continued to be used regularly by community groups such as monthly visits from 'Staying Well' and by a number of local organisations including Calderdale Badger Group, Calderdale Children's Library, Bradford Botany Group and Calderdale Birds Conservation Group.

Guided walks have been held for rambling clubs, church groups, 'Access Calderdale', a bat night and during spring/summer a series of guided wildlife walks. The walks are led expertly and thanks go to all those who have taken part in them. Other visitors of note include Calderdale College, Greetland cubs, Wyke beavers, 'Friends of Judy Woods', Park Tennis Club and the annual 'Santa Dash' from Waters Edge Nursery.

We are delighted that men from Cygnet Lodge rehabilitation unit are able to continue volunteering on a fortnightly basis. We were also able to arrange a visit from the Calder Valley MP, Josh Fenton-Glynn.

More recently we have been approached by two local groups. 'Nature and Natter' is a relatively new walking group who would like to advertise guided walks around the reserve, increase their numbers and introduce new people to the Visitor Centre. The second group is a charity called 'Wayfinder Nature Wanderers' an organisation which supports parents

and carers with children who have Special Educational Needs. They wish to explore links with us through well-being activities around the reserve as well as time to socialise in the Visitor Centre.

Our annual Open Day in August 2024 attracted a high number of visitors largely due to the wide range of activities and exhibitors. Again, huge thanks must be given to those directly involved in the planning organisation and delivery of our primary showcase event.

PUBLICITY

The group prides itself on the quality of information we provide to the public, in particular the leaflets and booklets which inform first time visitors to the reserve. The monthly newsletter gives a comprehensive and up to date description of the previous month's activities and events. It is well received and professionally produced. Our half yearly magazine continues to be of outstanding quality as it is always full of interest and increasingly includes articles and photos from a wide range of contributors. Our Facebook and Community Page are always well maintained and successfully promote our events to the wider public. Current Facebook 'likes' total 3642, 'followers' total 4398 and the Community Page currently has 4,174 members.

Thanks to the installation of trail cameras, together with hours of painstaking editing, we are now able to screen a variety of wildlife clips from the more secluded sections of the reserve. Expectations were raised by recorded footage of a pair of barn owls who appeared just before Christmas 2024. They have periodically visited the barn owl box and we keep our fingers crossed that they might breed later this year.

FUNDRAISING FOR OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Once again, we supported the MacMillan Cancer coffee morning appeal and the 'Mabel's Meals' dog charity.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Several volunteers passed their EFAW first aid course and thanks go to those who professionally delivered the training. All our electrical appliances were PAT tested and a full electrical survey was completed and signed off. We also have several volunteers trained in using strimmers.

I'd like to thank all the willing Sunday volunteers, together with those who volunteer weekly in the Visitor Centre. They can always be depended on to serve the public so efficiently and always with a smile. Their contribution is immeasurable and my appreciation for what they do, together with the monthly organisations of rotas, cannot be overstated. Whilst we have been delighted to welcome several new Sunday volunteers, it was with great sadness that we learnt of the recent passing of Brian, one of our regulars.

Finally, I look back on the previous year's achievements with an enormous sense of pride due to the unrelenting efforts by individuals and teams. Teamwork is the cornerstone of our success. I know I say this every year but it's true. Everyone's contribution is equally valued which enables us, as a small charity, to punch well above our weight. Thank you to everyone for what you do and here's to the year ahead.

4. Treasurer's report

Robin Owen-Morley welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reminded the members that they had been provided copies of the formal accounts with the email announcing the details of the AGM and said he would be very happy to take any questions relating to them at the end of his talk. Robin presented the accounts page by page as a slide show highlighting items of interest and importance.

Trustees Report

- Robin noted that the composition of the trustees had not changed during the year.
- He highlighted the fact that Bath Building Society had joined the Dudley Building Society as a safe haven for deposit funds, having closed the Nationwide account.

- Most of the rest of the report had been covered by Simon other than the following.
- The **net income** for the year amounted to **£11,296**
- The **free reserves**, basically the bank and building society accounts, stood at **£45,549** at the year end.
- Of these free reserves **£30,000** was designated as the '**lagoon fund and £5,000 as a legacy fund**.'
- This leaves **£10,459** as the **remaining free reserves**.
- Later in the talk he clarified that the designated funds set aside were as follows. The 'lagoon fund' for a future project intended to provide a constant water supply to the lagoon and the 'legacy fund' to support the revitalisation of the original dipping pond.

Statement of Financial Activities

- Robin then proceeded to talk through the Statement of Financial Activities. He highlighted the following, noting significant changes from the previous year.
- Donations had risen by more than £11,000. Significant to this were the donation from a member's legacy of £5,000 and a grant from Rastrick Big Local for the solar panels totalling £5,700.
- The sale of calendars has contributed to a £700 increase in merchandise sales. (note that £370 calendar sponsorship is included in donations)
- Income from recycled aluminium drink cans had more than doubled to £1,085.
- On the **expenditure** side project costs had increased by more than £9,000, the main factor being £5,000 being spent to maintain a revetment.
- Other less significant costs to the change were:
 - £1,245. Transport for primary school children to the reserve
 - £1,340. To repair the septic tank.
 - £840. New trees and seeds.
 - £636. Aggregate for project works.
 - £638. Printing of the calendar.

- Overall **net income** had **increased by £5,549** in the year to **£11,926**. However, the £5,700 grant income for the solar panels had been included, as required by the Charity Commission, but only £1,340 of the cost (one year's depreciation) had been included, thus inflating the net income increase by £4,560. Exclude this and the increase on last year would be approximately £1,000.
- Adding the £11,926 to the funds brought forward from last year of £57,854 gives the **overall worth** of the charity as **£69,780**.

Balance sheet

Those funds of **£69,780** were made up as follows:

- Net Fixed Assets (after depreciation) of **£22,304**
- Bank and Building societies **£47,272 made up of**
- Dudley BS **£30,726**
- Bath BS **£10,100**
- Lloyds **£6,196**
- Cash **£250**
- Net debtors/creditors **£204**
- Giving **Net Current Assets** of **£47,476**
- Giving **Total Assets** of **£69,780**
- Of the Net Current Assets of **£47,476**
- **£35,000** is the 'lagoon fund', **£5,000** is the legacy fund' and **£1,927** is restricted for the use of primary school transport leaving **Free Reserves of £10,549**.

Notes to the Accounts

These cover Accounting Policies and the detailed breakdown of the various headings in the accounts, all significant elements which are noted in the above narrative, apart from the fact that we acted as agents in collecting for the following charities.

MacMillan Cancer Support. £474

Mabel's Meals £513

Following the end of the presentation Robin asked if there were any questions. There being none, Simon thanked Robin for the continued excellent work he commits to both the accounts and members.

5. Election of trustees

In accordance with the requirements of the Charity Commission the following individuals were re-elected as trustees.

	PROPOSED	SECONDED
Allan Wolfenden	Tony Spilsbury	Alan Pullan
Michael Henshaw	Richard Armitage	Martin Staples
Martin Staples	Julie Jackson	Michael Henshaw
Robin Owen-Morley	David Langley	Jen Landells

The trustees were re-elected unanimously by the members.

6. Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group Constitution

The original constitution was written in 2017 and the trustees felt there was a desire to change certain sections to represent who we are, as a charity, and to reflect our commitment to accessibility and sustainability. Members had been informed by email of the proposed changes prior to the meeting. The proposed changes were as follows.

- *Remove the current Objects clause and replace it with one more closely aligned to what we are about.*

The objects of the CIO are

To promote for the benefit of the public

- The conservation of the wildlife and wildlife habitats known as Cromwell Bottom Nature Reserve and North Loop.
- The protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the reserve and North Loop.
- The accessibility of the reserve for people who have a disability.

- The education and appreciation of all the above.

To operate in a manner that promotes biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource management and environmental protection. This includes, but is not limited to

- Sourcing materials from sustainable and responsible suppliers.
- Minimising waste and pollution
- Investing in technologies and practices that reduce environmental impact.
- Promoting biodiversity within its operations and supply chains.
- Engaging with stakeholders to advance environmental sustainability.

- *For clarity's sake, remove the existing Section 6 (benefits and payments to charity trustees and connected persons)*

Replace it with the Charity Commission's current Trustee Benefit- standard clause.

- *In section 9 (membership of the CIO) subsection 5 (members fees) replace with the following clause.*

'The CIO may require members to pay reasonable membership fees to the CIO. However, the CIO will not exclude those who are not able to pay the designated fee but want to support the ongoing work of the group.'

All the constitution changes were approved unanimously by the members.

7. Appointment of independent examiner

Robin reported that, was once again, he has received excellent support from the West Yorkshire Community Accounting Service (WYCAS) in the independent examination and ratification of the accounts. The motion to reappoint WYCAS was proposed by David Langley and supported by Simon Day. The motion received unanimous support from the members.

8. Lagoon project presentation by David Langley

David delivered an illustrated presentation about the progress of the lagoon project. He then answered questions from the members.

9. Any other business

There was nothing to report.