

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 June 7th, 2023 at 7.30pm

1. Welcome

Simon welcomed everyone to the meeting. 37 members attended the meeting

2. Introduction and Chairperson's report

Simon delivered the Chairperson's report. A summary of the speech is outlined below.

It has been another extremely busy but very rewarding year at the reserve. Open Day was particularly special as it was the occasion when the new Visitor Centre was officially opened. The event was a great success with the added attraction of our guest of honour, Maya Leonard, author of the 'Twitch' series of books, captivating a large and appreciative audience with a reading from 'Twitch'.

VISITOR CENTRE

- It is fair to say that the new Visitor Centre has exceeded all expectations in the way it is managed and maintained, serving the public in so many different ways.
- It is evolving all the time but has already become an important and popular venue for passing members of the public. Every week seems to attract first time visitors to the reserve and the Visitor Centre.
- Most encouraging of all is that the majority of visitors discover us through personal recommendation. In the cold winter months it has become an unofficial warm space and we are extremely grateful to all our visitors, both regular and occasional, for their continuing generosity through donations.

- Over the year we have created our own micro community where people visit regularly, sometimes three times a week, for socialising. Two regular midweek groups recently celebrated an individual's birthday, an event which demonstrates how much what we can offer is valued.
- It was fantastic to be able to hold our first official public event in the Visitor Centre recently. This was a fascinating talk from a member of the Leeds Swifts Group. Hopefully this is the first of many such events.
- We now have the facility to live stream activity from the barn owl box. There are currently two chicks in the box.
- Notable recent developments include improved security measures, lighting and installation of Wi-Fi. There will be further improvements in the coming weeks with the addition of external cameras and an internal alarm system. This was necessary as a result of a break in over the Xmas weekend.
- As a group we place great emphasis on our duty of care to the public. An extensive fire risk assessment has been carried out, our emergency procedures updated and safeguarding training has been delivered.

WORK ON THE RESERVE

- A large amount of work has been completed to open up the sphagnum bog by removing encroaching vegetation.
- Volunteers and contractors have been clearing away trees and removing reeds in the lagoon to expand the viewing area visible from the platform.
- Tree planting on North Loop has continued together with preparing part of the meadow for winter feed sowing.
- Several trail cameras have been operating for some time in a secluded location on the reserve. They have produced some fascinating footage of the diversity of wildlife on the reserve.
- Gillian Wrigley, Calderdale's Sphagnum Project officer, continues to propagate Sphagnum in the polytunnel within the compound.

ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY

- Our work with local primary schools has been a major feature over the last year. Almost every week, since Easter to the start of the school holidays, will see a visit of some kind.
- Every class from Old Earth Primary will have visited the reserve as well as individual classes from Sowerby New Road Primary, Longroyde Primary, Calder Primary, Moldgreen Primary and Lee Mount Primary.
- Our popularity is such that several schools have had to be disappointed so as to ensure we don't exceed our capacity to provide meaningful educational experiences.
- Visiting children have been given a memorable experience, whatever their activity, and the feedback from the schools, staff and students alike, has been extremely positive and complimentary.
- Our work with the public has also similarly increased. We have held events including small mammal trapping, bat nights, a newt night, bird spotting walks and guided walks held on the second Saturday of each month.
- We have also had requests for guided walks from local organisations which have proved very popular.
- I am delighted that the group has been able to work with local experts on restarting monthly moth nights.
- The group took part in the Calderdale Active Partnership 'Pole to Pole' challenge and were finalists in the 'Great and Green' section of Calderdale's Community Awards.
- We have had visits from Access Calderdale and Calderdale Children's Library Service delivering their popular nature themed story readings and craft events.
- Residents from Cygnet Lodge visit the reserve regularly to assist with filling the bird feeders.
- Our most recent project with Media Studies students from Calderdale College has been exceptionally successful. The students created a range of CBWG merchandise which has been

available for sale in the Visitor Centre. The products have been extremely popular with visitors as well as providing additional funds for the group.

PUBLICITY

- The recently redesigned website and You Tube channel are both up and running which showcase what we are about as a charity. They are both stunning and very professional additions to the information we share with the community.
- The bi-annual newsletter, another outstanding publication, continues to thrive with so many willing contributors providing engaging and informative articles.
- Anyone is now able to post their wildlife photographs and comments on our Facebook page and Twitter platform.
- The Facebook page also provides regular updates and photos from our volunteers about ongoing work on the reserve.

IN CONCLUSION

- Everybody here, as well as countless others, make a massive and much valued contribution to the sum total of what we do. These contributions are to be celebrated and never underestimated.
- My personal thanks are extended to all trustees and volunteers who donate so much of their time and considerable skills to the group.
- This ensures that every aspect of what we offer runs smoothly and effectively. There is always someone willing to do a task or cover an individual's absence.
- As Chair of the group it is very humbling to know that there are so many people willing to do their bit in so many ways. As a group, we wouldn't be who we are without you.
- There is no hierarchy within the group as everyone's contributions are equally appreciated and valued.

- I will finish by thanking Lynda and Barry, who have stepped down as trustees, for their contributions and to unofficially welcome Martin and Robin as their replacements.

3. Financial report and accounts

Robin Owen- Morley provided the members with a detailed explanation of the group's accounts for the financial year which have been scrutinised and approved by an independent examiner and accepted and signed off by the trustees. Copies of these accounts were made available at the meeting for members to study.

- Robin began by explaining why the accounting basis had been changed from considering 'Receipts and Payments' to instead focussing on 'Income and Expenditure'.
- 'Receipts and Payments' would have left us with a deficit of £10,500 reducing our funds from £33,000 to £22,500. This would not have accurately reflected the significant investments made in the Visitor Centre and other assets.
- However, on an 'Income and Expenditure' basis, which takes into account our assets, subject to depreciation over three and five years, this has created a £17,800 surplus increasing our funds from £33,000 to £51,000.
- Robin then highlighted specific details from the accounts and drew them to the attention of the meeting.
- The new Visitor Centre cost circa £42,000 which was made up of a grant donation from 'Rastrick Big Local' of £25,000 with a further £17,000 coming from CBWG's own funds. He expressed the Trustees gratitude to 'Rastrick Big Local' for their incredible support.
- He itemised other grants received during the year totalling circa £5,300 and expressed his thanks to the Community Foundation for Calderdale (£2,500), the North Halifax Partnership (£1,300) and 'Rastrick Big Local' (a further £1,500)

- Donations, not grant funding, totalled £7,881. Particular mention was made of the following individual donations:

Will Perrot (bequest in the will of Margaret Perrot)	£5,000
Tim and Carole Coleman	£500
Tracy Briggs in memory of Lee Whitlock	£301
Mrs. B Steele in memory of JDE Brown	£250
Brighouse and District Lions Club	£250
Recycling aluminium cans	£364

- Visitor Centre income increased by 75% totalling £21,882
- Membership has increased from 123 to 145 totalling £1,715.

- Amongst expenditure are the following:

Tools and materials	£1,735
Visitor Centre consumables	£4,376
Printing	£864
Project costs	£3,300
Charity donations	£350
Allowance for depreciation of assets	£9,124

Total income of Unrestricted and Restricted funds	£40,459
Total expenditure	£22,637
Net income	£17,822
Fund balances brought forward	£33,655
Fund balances carried forward	£51,477

Balance sheet as at 31st March 2023

Fixed assets	£28,214
Cash at bank and in hand	£22,680
Net current assets (after creditors/accruals)	£23,263

After the presentation questions were invited from the members. One of the questions raised the issue of the seemingly large surplus of funds available to the group. It was explained that, though seeming to be a significant amount, imminent spending plans and reserves held back for emergencies and future projects would see this total be considerably reduced.

At the year end, the charity had declared a reserve of £3,000 to cover six months of operating costs. Since the year end two further reserves have been established. The first being £8,000 to cover costs in relation to maintenance of the lagoon and £5,000 for the acquisition of new branded gazebos.

4. Appointment of independent examiners

Robin reported that 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 re-appointed. This motion was proposed by Simon Day and seconded by Martin Staples and received unanimous support. 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 appointed to serve as trustees.

	Proposed	Seconded
Martin Staples	Graham Haigh	Mike Henshaw
Robin Owen-Morley	Allan Wolfenden	Margaret Conroy

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

	Proposed	Seconded
David Langley	Mike Henshaw	Simon Day
Hayley Cottrell	David Langley	Robin Owen-Morley
Bruce Hoyle	Martin Staples	Alan Pullan

The appointments and reappointments were passed unanimously by the members.