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Birmingham Talking Newspapers
for the blind & visually impaired (BTNBVI)

Registered Charity (England) No. 1185917

Trustees' Annual Report
1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Section A

Charity's principal address

Strangford
Lichfield Rd
Hopwas
Tamworth
B78 3AG

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

David Gowdy - Chair
Danny Collman - VC (South)
Rob Halley - VC (North)
Kath Collman - Secretary

Ian Alexander - Treasurer
Brian Sansom - Webmaster
Alan Johnson
Marion Dance

Governance

BTNBVI is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation whose trustees are elected by its Members at each Annual General Meeting. Members are mainly volunteers who produce the recordings.

BTNBVI is affiliated to the national Talking Newspapers Federation (TNF) and to Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC)

Since 2020 BTNBVI has continued with the pattern of operations established by Birmingham Talking Newspaper Association (BTNA) over its 40 years providing a talking newspaper service.

Our trustees are mainly experienced senior volunteers but we do need to widen our skills base. We were successful in engaging several volunteers in a formal survey exercise, and were pleased to find significant in-house skills to undertake this work.

Charitable Objects

The object of BTNBVI is to relieve the blind or visually impaired in the Birmingham area by the provision of recorded material read primarily from newspapers and magazines.

In meeting its object and to provide public benefit, each week BTNBVI provides 3- 5 hours of recorded material which is distributed by post using USB memory sticks to blind and visually-impaired listeners across Birmingham. This is current material, mostly from local print newspapers, and therefore not readily accessible to visually impaired people. Recordings can also be accessed via our website: www.btnbvi.org, via smartphones using the BWBF Talking News app and via Alexa or similar smart speakers. The service helps reduce social isolation and listeners often comment on the companionship of familiar voices “in the room”.

This letter is a response from a new listener:

"I have listened to all 5 hours of the recording. I was impressed with intelligent and un-condescending presentations. It was good to have a variety of voices, both male and female, who spoke slowly and clearly so that the content could be absorbed. I particularly enjoyed the two historical items about Evesham and the Duke of Clarence.

We are enclosing £10 in appreciation and will set up a regular gift through stewardship.

I was delighted to be welcomed by name. Thank you so much, keep up the good work!"

We also received an unexpected £1000 bequest, another solid reminder that what we do is valued in ways we may not fully understand.

Section D

Performance

At year end we are serving up to 300 listeners, a reduction from last year. The pattern of usage is often irregular rather than a constant weekly turnover.

In early 2023 we completed a survey of listeners' opinions about our service. A survey of volunteers is in progress but has not yet been collated or analysed.

New referrals come primarily from hospital-based Eye Care Liaison Officers (ECLOs), specialist non-clinical staff who support people adjusting to changes in their visual acuity. They are able to recommend TN services but this is in a busy clinic still dealing with post-COVID backlogs. We may need to revise our publicity & support materials.

The BTNBVI website is now operational providing a new branding and a framework for information presentation. It includes online access to current TN material and signposts to the BWBF Talking Newspaper phone app and the various smart speaker services providing our TN content.

One major aspect of the website is its presentation of our various policies – the Charities Commission identify 13 to which we add Health & Safety and Data Protection. Taking this list, writing BTN-specific policies, procedures and training material is moving ahead rather more slowly than we would prefer.

Our service is provided 100% by our volunteers. We have about 80 people, most of whom work in teams to read and record material taken from local newspapers. We have begun to develop some new non-reading roles in areas like publicity, volunteer and listener support and training.

Towards year-end we had an unexpected notice to vacate our rent-free studio premises in Alan Geale House (by 5 April 2024). The notice triggered an immediate search for replacement premises and a more strategic review by trustees of how we deliver our charitable objects.

Section E

Finance

The Treasurer has continued to improve our money management and is preparing a Gift Aid submission to HMRC.

At present income donations do not fully cover running costs, leaving a small annual deficit that is offset from reserves.

BTNBVI bank accounts are with The Co-Operative Bank. The arrangements have now bedded in with most transactions handled online.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature

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Full name ALFRED DAVID GOWDY

Position CHAIR

Date 3 JULY 2014

Note: this report is presented in sections that align with the Charities Commission Trustees Annual Report CC16 template