

High Batts Nature Reserve

Report of the Trustees 2020 - 2021

Trustees serving for the period April 2020 to March 2021

Robert Adams
David V Beeken

Kathryn M Beeken (to 30th September 2021)
Peter Bowman (from 30th September 2021)
Brian Darbyshire
Peter Hills
Alwin Knowles

Terence Marsh (from 30th September 2021)
Patricia A Rumbold
Colin E Slator (Chair)
Roy Waite (to 30th September 2021)
Stuart Ward (from 30th September 2021)
Marian Wooding (from 30th September 2021)
Stephen P Worwood

High Batts Nature Reserve

Charity number 1151676

The Reserve is located off the A6108 between the city of Ripon and the village of North Stainley in North Yorkshire (Grid reference SE 300 764).

The address for all correspondence is:-

The Secretary, Mayfield Farm, Wilsill, Harrogate, HG3 5EB Tel. 01423 714910

Email: highbatts1@gmail.com

Trustees' Report

High Batts has existed since 1973 and has been a constituted body since 1994. In 2014 the organisation was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

The Trustees of High Batts Nature Reserve are responsible for ensuring that the objects of the Charity are achieved. These objects are:-

1. To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation and protection of the physical and natural environment through the promotion of biodiversity in particular by managing High Batts Nature Reserve and assisting with the conservation and protection of other significant environments in the vicinity of High Batts Nature Reserve.
2. To advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment.

We continued to achieve these objects by:-

- managing the Reserve in a way that promotes biodiversity and sustainability;
- offering membership of the organisation to all those interested in our work;
- engaging the public through public lectures, group visits and open events;
- offering volunteering opportunities in a range of activities;
- contributing to data collection and research through the recording and reporting of species.

Additionally through our project "In at the Start" we have extended our work to enter into a partnership with Hanson Aggregates to assist with the maintenance, monitoring and subsequent restoration of a quarrying site currently under extraction adjacent to the

Reserve. The aim of the project is the promotion of biodiversity and education and our leadership of this project is made possible through the specialist knowledge of our members and through the resource of our volunteer teams.

Covid 19 Pandemic

The Covid 19 pandemic had severe impacts upon our activities and progress during the year. The Reserve was closed during spring 2020 in line with the national lockdown requirements and almost all work on site other than the most essential stopped. From late May 2020 the Reserve was open to visitors again but with new procedures to meet the regulations for social distancing, and the hides remained locked and inaccessible. All planned educational activities for the summer were cancelled because of the restrictions on numbers able to attend. The Reserve closed again during the first three months of 2021.

Reserve Management

The Reserve is part of Ripon Parks Site of Special Scientific Interest, and until 2018 was managed in accordance with the agreement with Natural England under the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. This agreement stipulated the tasks to be undertaken to improve the biodiversity value, of the site. Although the agreement has ended, the general conditions of that agreement are followed in recognition of the SSSI designation of the Reserve and we continue to receive visits from Natural England officers and to work in collaboration with them.

In addition to the requirements under the agreement, work on the Reserve involves general upkeep tasks and the provision and maintenance of facilities for members such as access paths, hides and signage. This regular work on the Reserve is undertaken by a team of Conservation volunteers led by the Reserve Manager assisted by the Voluntary Warden and Assistant Warden, and this team works each Thursday. During the year we established a small Reserve Management Group in order to ensure good coordination and communication and this reports to the Trustees. Regular meetings with volunteers are also held but were not possible in 2020/21 because of the pandemic. The Conservation Volunteer team also gives assistance to nearby conservation areas outside the boundaries of the Reserve, by providing and managing bird feeding areas and undertaking other habitat management tasks.

Our conservation and management work was affected by the closures required by the 3 national full and partial lockdowns. Volunteer teams recommenced work in May 2020 after the lock down which began in March, but with new protocols to meet the Covid 19 regulations, and some volunteers were unable to return because of self-isolating or travelling issues. In addition to closures required by the Covid regulations, we again suffered some severe flooding in the Reserve on six occasions during which required closure and additional work to restore footpaths and repair damage.

Despite closures we managed to run 6 Members' Muck-in Mornings primarily during autumn and early winter, when we invited members to come along on Saturday mornings to help with routine annual tasks such as Himalayan Balsam and Bracken control, and autumn coppicing. As in the previous years, all the events were well supported and everyone enjoyed getting involved and learning about the Reserve, and helped with the considerable backlog of work caused by the unusual circumstances.

Unfortunately because of Covid restrictions we were unable to accommodate the usual programme of visits by volunteers from Open Country – a charity which works to provide opportunity for those with disability to access and work in the countryside.

Membership

Membership of High Batts is open to anyone interested in the work of the Charity, and membership is offered to individuals and to families. Our membership fees are modest (£11 for individuals, £15 for families and £5 for Juniors and Students) in order to provide accessibility for all and the Trustees decided to retain these rates for the foreseeable future. Membership entitlements include unlimited access to the Reserve for family and friends, regular newsletters and invitations to walks and talks and special events such as workshops and training days. The Reserve is open during day light hours all year round, apart from occasional one-day closure because of events on adjacent land that could pose a safety hazard for visitors.

Despite the lockdowns and the lack of availability of the Reserve for members, our membership levels remained stable with only a minor decrease of 8. At the end of the year the membership stood at 388 including 28 new members, 23 of which were family memberships. 36 memberships ended during the year as 2 members died, 11 resigned and 23 allowed subscriptions to lapse.

We kept in touch with members through three Newsletters were issued during the year, and we sent out monthly email updates to those members who signed up for the service, which is about 85% of the membership. We maintained our website as a public information source and members' resource and the Twitter feed begun as part of the "In at the Start" project also continued.

Educational Activities

Because of the Covid situation we were unable to run our annual Open Day or to accommodate the normal level of group visits and work with local schools. The programme of workshops, walks and talks which had begun in 2018 also had to be cancelled.

Species Recording

Visitors and those working on the Reserve are encouraged to submit records of their sightings of species so that we can measure the effectiveness of our management regime and contribute to the regional and national data relating to environmental changes. Records are kept of species seen on the Reserve and within a defined wider Recording Area surrounding the Reserve. A team of Volunteer Recorders collates, verifies and comments on these records and this information is published in an Annual Report which has a wide circulation. As well as being an historic and important record of changes over the years, the Report is important in publicising the work of the Reserve and we are very grateful to Hanson Aggregates for sponsoring its publication.

In addition to the records submitted by members, the Thursday Volunteer team continued their involvement in two bird monitoring programmes run by the British Trust for Ornithology, i.e. the Nest Record Scheme and the Wetland Birds Survey. These activities are yet another commitment for volunteers, but provide invaluable data to assist in achieving the aim of improving biodiversity on the Reserve, and to contribute to the national body of data. The "In at the Start" project is also generating additional records, through formal species surveying creating important environmental data which will be

used to inform the restoration proposals for the site, and add to the body of knowledge regarding the biodiversity and landscape impacts and opportunities presented by quarrying.

Volunteers

The Charity is managed and operated by volunteers and does not directly employ any paid staff. The Trustees are extremely grateful for the commitment and skills demonstrated by the volunteers who undertake a wide range of responsibilities and duties. We would particularly like to thank the Thursday team of Conservation volunteers who devote a day each week and especially our volunteer Warden, Robert Adams and Assistant Warden, Brian Darbyshire and our volunteer Reserve Manager Colin Slator. We are also most grateful to Raymond and Pat Rumbold for their work in organising our bird food supplies, and to our team of volunteer species recorders and record collectors. The bird feeding routine continued to be undertaken by the small Photographic Group of members and we are very appreciative of the regular help they are providing thus allowing the Thursday team of volunteers to concentrate on Reserve maintenance and species recording. Most of the volunteers who joined us in 2018 as part of the “In at the Start” project continued to in 2020.

However all volunteering was adversely affected by the restrictions resulting from the pandemic with much of our conservation and surveying work halted for various periods.

Structure and Governance

The AGM was held by post and email during September 2020 with 15% of the membership participating. Two long-serving Trustees, Kathryn Beeken and Roy Waite, stood down as Trustees, and four new trustees, Peter Bowman, Terence Marsh, Stuart Ward and Marian Wooding, were elected bringing a variety of new skills and experience, with an existing Trustee, Peter Hills being re-elected. Colin Slator continued as Chair of the Trustees, Alwin Knowles continued in the role of Secretary. Kathryn Beeken continued to act as Treasurer for the charity until the end of the year at which time Terry Marsh took on this responsibility. The Trustees held 3 meetings during the year but many management issues were dealt with via email or Zoom meetings during the lockdown.

In July 2020 we were delighted to complete a new 20 year lease of the Reserve from Sir James Graham of Norton Conyers Estate, providing us with real security for the future of the Reserve. In December 2020 we also received a draft 20 year lease from Lightwater Holdings from which we rent adjacent land (which is used by the Charity for access, car parking and a work area belongs to the Staveley family) although the final lease had not been completed by the end of the financial year.

Financial review

Expenditure for the year totalled £25,249.93, a reduction of approximately £5000 from the previous year which had been inflated by equipment costs of £5668 for the “In at the Start” project. Overall running costs remained on the same level but the major item of expenditure was the purchase of a second hand “Gator” vehicle at £9,600, to supplement the aging Dumper which can no longer be used for certain tasks. Printing costs increased significantly to £1711 but this was mainly the cost of the Annual Report which had been delayed from the previous year. Insurance costs doubled as a result of the recent flooding incidents. Rent increased from £51 p.a. to £851 as result of the increased rent required

under the new lease for the Reserve with payments for 2020 and 2021 falling within the same year.

Total receipts for the year were £22,379.30, a reduction of approximately £4000 from the previous year when income had included grant money of over £4000 in relation to the “In at the Start” project. Income from subscriptions of £4,890 remained at a similar level, and sponsorship of £1435 for the Annual Report increased our donations. We were able to reclaim £1734 in Gift Aid. During the year we continued the sponsorship arrangement with Hanson Aggregates in relation to the “In at the Start” Project and received the sum of £4000 in sponsorship to cover the costs of delivering the project in year 3.

Overall there was an operating deficit of £2,870.63 on the year resulting from the investment in the new vehicle.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by Colin E Slator (Chair of Trustees)

Accepted by the membership at the Annual General Meeting on 9th November 2021

**HIGH BATTS NATURE RESERVE SUMMARY OF
ACCOUNTS: 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021**

2019/2020 £	INCOME	2020/2021 £	
£ 5,049.50	Subscriptions	£ 4,890.25	
£ 3,521.58	Donations & Sponsorship	£ 5,353.70	
£ 7,025.34	Sales	£ 6,120.00	
£ 248.55	Bank & Building Society Interest	£ 107.97	
£ 43.61	Rural Payments Agency		
£ 1,738.34	Gift Aid	£ 1,734.36	
£ 4,000.00	"In at the start" project sponsorship	£ 4,000.00	
	Miscellaneous	£ 173.00	
£ 4,555.10	"In at the start" project - Grants		
£ 26,182.02			£ 22,379.30
	EXPENDITURE		
£ 66.00	Subscription costs		
£ 188.08	Lecture costs, Open Day & AGM		
£ 5,491.06	Cost of Sales	£ 4,466.27	
£ 339.27	Cost of bird food for Reserve	£ 739.81	
£ 437.60	Projects		
£ 127.27	Printing and Stationery	£ 1,710.67	
£ 457.08	Postage	£ 975.96	
£ 2,789.10	Materials and repairs	£ 2,906.05	
£ 1,109.32	Plant Hire	£ 1,397.23	
£ 414.96	Insurance	£ 935.14	
£ 51.00	Rent and Lease costs	£ 817.47	
£ 1,434.45	Miscellaneous	£ 121.50	
£ 5,688.79	In at the start expenses	£ 265.83	
	Cost of Gator vehicle	£ 9,600.00	
£ 1,435.20	Cost of provision of portaloo	£ 1,242.00	
	Pennycroft expenses	£ 72.00	
£ 20,029.18			£ 25,249.93
	Excess of expenditure over income	DR	£ 2,870.63
	Balance brought forward from 31.03.20		£ 43,158.00
			£ 40,287.37
	Petty Cash	£ 212.15	
		£ 40,287.37	
	Reserve Expenditure Fund	£ 20,000.00	
	Balance	£ 20,287.37	
		£ 40,287.37	

Prepared by K M Beeken
Treasurer
31st March 2021