

# High Batts Nature Reserve

## Report of the Trustees 2021 - 2022

### Trustees serving for the period April 2021 to March 2022

Robert Adams  
David V Beeken  
Peter Bowman  
Brian Darbyshire  
Peter Hills

Terence Marsh  
Ray O'Donnell (from February 2022)  
Colin E Slator (Chair)  
Stuart Ward  
Marian Wooding

### 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](mailto: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 a website, school visits, 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.

## **The year in general**

The year was a recovery period from the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic which had resulted in the cancellation or reduction of many of our activities in 2020/21. We concentrated on catching up on the backlog of our maintenance programme and revivifying our volunteer teams. By the end of the year we had consolidated our membership base and were back on track, though we had not been able to maintain our former levels of educational activities.

## **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. A small Reserve Management Group operates to ensure good coordination and communication and this reports to the Trustees. During the year there were 2 meetings of the full volunteer team to exchange information and gain feedback and all volunteers attended First Aid Training by an external agency. 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.

During the year there were 12 Members' Muck-in Mornings 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, the events were well supported and everyone enjoyed getting involved and learning about the Reserve. We also had a programme of 8 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.

Our membership levels remained stable. At the end of the year the membership stood at 388, an increase of 15 on the previous year. 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 90% 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 lack of capacity following the Covid 19 pandemic 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 put in abeyance.

### **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 be involved during the year.

## **Structure and Governance**

The AGM was held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021 attended by 45 members. Stephen Worwood, Alwin Knowles and Pat Rumbold stood down as Trustees after many years of service, David Beeken was re-elected as a Trustee but there were no other nominations for the remaining 3 vacancies. The Trustees held 5 meetings during the year and in February 2022 co-opted Ray O'Donnell as a Trustee. Colin Slator continued as Chair during the year, and Terry Marsh as Treasurer. Alwin Knowles and Pat Rumbold provided admin and secretarial support to the Trustees.

A pressing issue for the Trustees is the need for several Trustees, including the Chair, to stand down in 2022, and during the year there were discussion meetings to look at how we could adapt the management structure, to involve more volunteers and reduce the workload of others, all with the aim of building long term stability. Our intention is to implement the agreed changes during 22/23.

In July 2021 Trustees agreed a new financial control policy, including a move to on-line banking. Trustees also began discussions regarding the development of the Barn and work compound to provide better facilities for both volunteers and visitors and to address the issue of flooding which has become more frequent. Unfortunately these discussions had to be put on hold when the ownership of the leased land on which the facilities are provided could not be confirmed. This led also to delays on the completion of a new lease for the area in question. A small working group of Trustees began the planning of activities to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reserve in summer 2023.

## **Financial report**

Expenditure for the year totalled £16,583 with the main item being the cost of maintenance and repairs. Expenditure on bird food was £4,112 a reduction of some 15%. There was no publication of an Annual Report during the year meaning that expenditure on printing was reduced by some £1500 and postage by over £700. A new cost for the year was the charges levied for banking services which had previously been provided to us as a charity at no charge.

Total receipts for the year were £20,675. Subscription income slightly increased but there was a marginal drop in donations because of the lack of public events. All other income streams including Gift Aid at £1704 and sponsorship of £4000 for the In at the Start project were maintained at previous levels.

Overall there was an operating surplus of £4,092 and at the end of the year total cash assets were £44,379.

During the year the Trustees reviewed the financial procedures and agreed a new Financial Control Policy which included a move to internet banking.

**Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by Colin E Slator (Chair of Trustees) on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**Accepted by the membership at the AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

## High Batts Nature Reserve

### Summary of Accounts

<u>2020/21</u>		<u>2021/2022</u>
	<b>Income</b>	
£5,353.70	Donations	£3,845.60
£4,890.25	S.O. Subscriptions	£3,289.06
	Cash Subscriptions	£1,764.50
£6,120.00	Bird Food Sales	£5,280.40
£107.97	Bank/BS Interest	£16.78
£1,734.36	Gift Aid	£1,703.94
£4,000.00	IATS Sponsorship	£4,000.00
£173.00	Miscellaneous	£100.00
	Nest box sales	£675.00
<b>£22,379.28</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£20,675.28</b>
	<b>Expenditure</b>	
	Subscription Costs	£0.00
	Lectures, Open days, AGM	£206.00
£4,466.27	Cost of Bird Food Sales	£3,673.55
£739.81	Bird Food for Reserve	£538.75
£1,710.67	Printing and Stationery	£232.08
£975.96	Postage	£238.92
£2,906.05	Maintenance and Repairs	£6,321.92
£1,397.23	Plant Hire	£1,394.56
£935.14	Insurance	£958.65
£817.47	Rent and Leases	£461.00
£265.83	IATS expenses	£0.00
£1,242.00	Portaloo	£1,518.00
	Refreshments	£460.64
£121.50	Miscellaneous	£549.13
£9,600.00	Cost of Gator	£0.00
£72.00	Pennycroft expenses	£0.00
	Bank Charges	£30.20
<b>£25,249.93</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£16,583.40</b>
<b>-£2,870.65</b>	<b>Net Excess/Deficit</b>	<b>£4,091.88</b>
<b>£43,158.02</b>	<b>Balance at End of Last Year</b>	<b>£40,287.37</b>
<b>£40,287.37</b>	<b>Current Balance</b>	<b>£44,379.25</b>
	<b>Made up of:</b>	
	HSBC Main Account	£5,495.78
	HSBC Membership Account	£3,267.60
	Skipton Building Society	£34,480.33
	Petty Cash	£352.54
	Bird Food Stock	£704.00
	Debtors	£79.00
	<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>£44,379.25</b>