

# High Batts Nature Reserve

## Report of the Trustees 2022 - 2023

### Trustees serving for the period April 2022 to March 2023

Robert Adams (to 19.10.22)	Terence Marsh
David Beeken (to 19.10.22)	Ray O'Donnell (from 19.10.22)
Peter Bowman	Colin Slator (to 19.10.22)
Brian Darbyshire (to 19.10.22)	Stuart Ward
Peter Hills (to 19.10.22)	Marian Wooding
Alwin Knowles (from 19.10.22)	Stephen Woodward (from 19.10.22)

### High Batts Nature Reserve Robert Adams

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 or 07849 250077

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.

### **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. 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 10 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, hay raking 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 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. 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 increased during the year and stood at 413 in March 2023, an increase of 25 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**

We were pleased to be able to provide an annual Open Day on 9<sup>th</sup> July following 2 years during the Covid pandemic when it had not been possible. The event was well attended by

134 people, the second best attendance recorded, with more than 75% being non-members. There were 9 new memberships during the day, 5 of which were family memberships.

Unfortunately we were not able to resume our programme of workshops and talks during the year but we did host group visits, and the local primary school also visited the Reserve on 3 occasions.

### **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. Although the data for the year was collected it was not possible to produce a report for 2020 and work therefore began on a double edition covering 2021 and 2022.

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. We also use camera traps to monitor wildlife. The “In at the Start” project generates 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 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 19<sup>th</sup> October 2022 attended by 39 members. Colin Slator, David Beeken, Brian Darbyshire, Robert Adams and Peter Hills stood down as Trustees having served a full 9 year term. Only two nominations for trustees were received with both Ray O'Donnell and Alwin Knowles being elected to serve for a 3 year term. This brought the number of serving trustees to 6 with 6 vacancies. Stephen Worwood was chosen to serve as Chair during the year, with Terry Marsh as Treasurer, and Alwin Knowles as Secretary. Peter Hills continued to serve as Membership Secretary and Pat Rumbold provided admin and secretarial support to the Trustees.

It remains a concern that we are unable to recruit new Trustees and to build a management structure which can sustain the organisation into the future. Discussions held in 2021 regarding a possible new allocation of responsibilities and management structure had been intended for implementation during 2022, but this did not prove possible given the reduced number of trustees and other pressures.

A small working group of Trustees continued the planning of activities to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reserve in summer 2023, including a photographic competition which was launched during the year.

The Charity continues to operate without a formal lease for the land leased from the Lightwater Estate and used to provide access, car parking and work area. The lease expired during 2015 and negotiations with the landlord have continued since that time without success. A draft lease was provided during the year but required action to control wildlife which was in contradiction to our charitable objectives and was therefore not acceptable. Alternative proposals were made to the landlord and we await a response.

### **Financial report**

Expenditure for the year totalled £18,152 with the main item being the cost of maintenance and repairs at £5,802. Expenditure on bird food was £3,852, a reduction of £180 from the previous year. After a break in publication of the Annual Report because of Covid, this resumed in 2022 with an expenditure of £1,493 resulting in significant higher printing and postage costs for the year. New charges for banking resulted in a cost of £111 for the year.

Total receipts for the year were £20,493, marginally down on the previous year. Subscription income at £5414 increased by £360 reflecting the larger membership. However donations showed a significant reduction of £1328. All other income streams including Gift Aid at £1740 and sponsorship of £4000 for the *In at the Start* project were maintained at previous levels. Sponsorship of £1,493 was also received to cover the cost of printing the Annual report.

Overall there was an operating surplus of £2,340.79 and at the end of the year total assets were £46,720.

**Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by Stephen Worwood (Chair of Trustees) on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

**Accepted by the membership at the AGM on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

# High Batts Nature Reserve

## Summary of Accounts

<u>Last Year (2022)</u>		<u>This Year (2023)</u>	<u>Diff (+/-)</u>
<b>Income</b>			
£3,845.60	Donations	£2,522.72	-£1,322.88
£3,289.06	S.O. Subscriptions	£3,682.15	£393.09
£1,764.50	Cash Subscriptions	£1,732.00	-£32.50
£5,280.40	Bird Food Sales	£5,122.50	-£157.90
£16.78	Bank/BS Interest	£200.85	£184.07
£1,703.94	Gift Aid	£1,740.39	£36.45
£4,000.00	IATS Sponsorship	£5,492.50	£1,492.50
£100.00	Miscellaneous		-£100.00
£675.00	Nest box sales		-£675.00
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<b>£20,675.28</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£20,493.11</b>	<b>-£182.17</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
	Subscription Costs		
£206.00	Open days, meetings etc.	£371.16	£165.16
£3,673.55	Cost of Bird Food Sales	£3,851.93	£178.38
£538.75	Bird Food for Reserve	£611.73	£72.98
£232.08	Printing and Stationery	£1,651.40	£1,419.32
£238.92	Postage	£884.15	£645.23
£6,321.92	Maintenance and Repairs	£5,801.70	-£520.22
£1,394.56	Plant Hire	£1,493.32	£98.76
£958.65	Insurance	£982.86	£24.21
£461.00	Rent and Leases	£461.00	
£1,518.00	Portaloo	£1,435.20	-£82.80
£460.64	Refreshments	£420.49	-£40.15
£549.13	Misc	£46.38	-£502.75
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£30.20	Bank Charges	£141.00	£110.80
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<b>£16,583.40</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£18,152.32</b>	<b>£1,568.92</b>
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<b>£4,091.88</b>	<b>Net Excess/Deficit</b>	<b>£2,340.79</b>	<b>-£1,751.09</b>
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<b>£40,287.37</b>	<b>Balance at End of Last Year</b>	<b>£44,379.25</b>	<b>£4,091.88</b>
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<b>£44,379.25</b>	<b>Current Balance</b>	<b>£46,720.04</b>	<b>£2,340.79</b>

### Made up of:

HSBC Main Account	£8,539.47
HSBC Membership Account	£2,011.85
Skipton Building Society	£34,674.88
Petty Cash	£263.84
Bird Food Stock	£1,230.00
Debtors	
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<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>£46,720.04</b>
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Reserves	£20,000.00
Retained Income	£26,720.04