

## **High Batts Nature Reserve**

### **Report of the Trustees 2023-24**

**Trustees serving for the period April 2023 to March 2024**

Peter Bowman  
Alwin Knowles  
Terence Marsh  
Ray O'Donnell

Colin Slator (from 10.10.23)  
Stuart Ward  
Marian Wooding  
Stephen 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 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. Although this funding agreement has ended, the general conditions of that agreement are followed in recognition of the SSSI designation of the Reserve; tasks are undertaken to improve the biodiversity value of the site through the maintenance and creation of different habitats and the control of invasive non-native species. 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.

Work on the Reserve is undertaken by a team of Conservation volunteers led by the Voluntary Reserve Manager assisted by the Voluntary Warden and Assistant Warden, and this team works each Thursday. A small Reserve Management Sub-Group operates to ensure good coordination and communication and this reports to the Trustees. In addition the full volunteer team meets to exchange information and gain feedback. A Construction team undertakes the maintenance of the physical infrastructure of the Reserve and during the year undertook a major project to provide better drainage of the work area and barn in an attempt to mitigate the effects of the regular flooding to which the Reserve is subject. 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 11 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.

Members receive regular email communications about developments on the Reserve, forthcoming events and other relevant information. In addition a Newsletter is issued 3 times a year providing information on members' services, the work of the trustees, and feedback from events. A website operates for members and the public wanting to know more about our work. In January 2024 a Facebook page open only to members was established as a means of sharing information and photographs. This proved a huge success with membership reaching 95 within the first 3 months. We also have an X account (formally Twitter) which covers the work of our "In at the Start" project.

Membership increased steadily during the year, and with an additional spurt with the launch of the Facebook page in January so by the end of the year in March 2024 membership stood at 446, an increase of almost 8% over the 12 months.

### **Outreach work**

2023 was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Reserve and an Anniversary Arch for the entrance was designed and created with help from pupils at the local school. We marked the event with a picnic lunch in June attended by 96 people including the Ripon City Deputy Mayor; the keynote speech was delivered by Mark Cocker, naturalist and award-winning author and journalist, who subsequently wrote an article in the Guardian newspaper about the event and the significant contribution the Reserve makes to biodiversity. We also ran a photographic competition for members, photographs from which were published as a calendar; a second calendar featuring images from our 50 year history was also published.

During the year we hosted 6 visits by external groups plus visits by the local school. We exhibited at the Ripon Sights and Sounds Festival, and contributed information to the local website. We also participated in the work of two local environmental groups, established to improve co-ordination and collaborative working amongst the important wildlife sites situated along the Ure River.

### **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. This work was disrupted during the Covid pandemic but we began catching up on the schedule with the publication of a report covering both 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, and have a programme of moth trapping events. 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 also 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 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 particularly 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. The team of species recorders and the Annual Report editor also deserve mention for their expertise and dedication; our archive of records and reports go back to 1981 making the Reserve one of the most researched and recorded environmental sites in the north of England.

### **Structure and Governance**

The AGM was held on 10th October 2023 attended by 49 members. Peter Bowman, Terry Marsh, Stuart Ward and Marian Wooding were re-elected to serve a further 3 year term as trustees, and Colin Slator was elected as a Trustee, creating a board of 8 trustees with 4 vacancies. Terry Marsh continued as Treasurer, and Alwin Knowles as Secretary but it was decided not to appoint a Chair and to share these duties amongst Trustees. Colin Slator continued in his role as Reserve Manager, Peter Hills continued to serve as Membership Secretary and Pat Rumbold provided admin and secretarial support to the Trustees, with David Beeken as Newsletter editor.

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. In order to address this, the Trustees began a series of meetings to plan and implement changes to operations and responsibilities to address the issue of sustainability; 4 meetings were held towards the end of the year and this process is on-going. In addition there were 5 formal Trustee meetings during the year. Decisions included the allocation of individual responsibilities to Trustees, and the centralisation of records and improvement of communications via a Google Workspace, and the development of a new computerised membership system.

### **Financial report**

Expenditure for the year totalled £23,154, an increase of £4715, primarily related to the Anniversary celebrations. There were however increases in insurance and printing costs, and hire of meeting space, but a reduction in the amount spent on maintenance and repairs. Total receipts for the year were £21,357, marginally up on the previous year. Membership income remained steady though donations were down resulting in a smaller Gift Aid income. Sponsorship remained at the same level.

Overall there was an operating deficit of £1796 and at the end of the year total assets were £44,846, including a reserve of £20,000.

**Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by Colin Slator on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

**Accepted by the membership at the AGM on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024**

# High Batts Nature Reserve

## Summary of Accounts

<u>Last Year (2022)</u>		<u>This Year (2023)</u>	<u>Diff (+/-)</u>
<b>Income</b>			
£2,523.22	Donations	£1,071.45	-£1,451.77
£3,682.15	S.O. Subscriptions	£3,773.85	£91.70
£1,732.00	Cash Subscriptions	£1,593.50	-£138.50
£5,331.00	Bird Food Sales	£4,423.55	-£907.45
£200.85	Bank/BS Interest	£974.91	£774.06
£1,740.39	Gift Aid	£1,029.15	-£711.24
£4,000.00	IATS Sponsorship	£4,000.00	£0.00
£0.00	Miscellaneous	£2,000.00	£2,000.00
£1,492.50	Report print re-imburse	£1,650.00	£157.50
	Talks & Lectures	£70.00	£70.00
	Sales	£771.00	£771.00
<b>£20,702.11</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£21,357.41</b>	<b>£655.30</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
£0.00	Subscription Costs	£0.00	
£371.16	Open days, meetings etc.	£610.51	£239.35
£3,928.49	Cost of Bird Food Sales	£3,647.24	-£281.25
£611.73	Bird Food for Reserve	£1,113.35	£501.62
£1,651.40	Printing and Stationery	£1,940.02	£288.62
£884.15	Postage	£1,644.22	£760.07
£5,801.70	Maintenance and Repairs	£2,910.88	-£2,890.82
£1,703.32	Plant Hire	£1,758.39	£55.07
£982.86	Insurance	£1,127.52	£144.66
£461.00	Rent and Leases	£461.00	£0.00
£1,435.20	Portaloo	£1,435.20	£0.00
£420.49	Refreshments	£520.00	£99.51
£46.38	Misc	£2,112.30	£2,065.92
£0.00	Anniversary celebs	£3,719.43	£3,719.43
£0.00	0	£0.00	£0.00
£0.00	0	£0.00	£0.00
£141.00	Bank Charges	£153.60	£12.60
	0	£0.00	
<b>£18,438.88</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£23,153.66</b>	<b>£4,714.78</b>
<b>£2,263.23</b>	<b>Net Excess/Deficit</b>	<b>-£1,796.25</b>	<b>-£4,059.48</b>
<b>£44,379.25</b>	<b>Balance at End of Last Year</b>	<b>£46,642.48</b>	<b>£2,263.23</b>
<b>£46,642.48</b>	<b>Current Balance</b>	<b>£44,846.23</b>	<b>-£1,796.25</b>

### Made up of:

HSBC Main Account	£2,615.03
HSBC Membership Account	£5,874.79
Skipton Building Society	£35,601.70
Petty Cash	£276.76
Bird Food Stock	£827.95
Creditors	-£2,000.00
Debtors	£1,650.00
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>£44,846.23</b>
Reserves	£20,000.00
Retained Income	£24,846.23