

## Annual Report 2023-2024

This has been another eventful year in the history of the Saltburn Valleys CIO.

Newly elected member Sue Featherstone was welcomed on to the Board following the 2023 AGM which also confirmed David Stovell as a full elected Board member. David has taken on the role of Secretary to the CIO since the AGM and we thank him for undertaking this very important work.

There have also been some changes in organisational representation on the Board. Historic England has replaced Mike Collins, temporarily standing in for Chris Mayes, with Kristof Fatsar. Kristof is the Regional Landscape Architect for the North, working with Heritage at Risk Parks and Gardens in the geographical areas he covers, and his role on the Board is to help to advise and mentor the SVCIO, on behalf of Historic England. Redcar & Cleveland Council has replaced Kevin Wilson, who has retired from the Council after many years of valuable service. Robert Hoof, Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services, Growth, Enterprise and Environment has been temporarily represented by Jay Hosie but now sits permanently on the Board. Tees Valley Wildlife Trust Director, Jeremy Garside has retired and his temporary deputy, Mark Fishpool, who contributed much during his tenure, has been replaced by Alan Simpkin. All of whom are welcomed on to the Board, joining representatives from Tees Heritage, Stewart Ramsdale, Skelton and Brotton Parish Council, Margaret Whitehead and Saltburn, Marske & New Marske Parish Council, Drisc Wardle.

Unfortunately, during the year, the position of Community Development Officer was removed from the management structure of the Council so Tracee Hall-Young, who had been a strong support for the CIO over many years, sadly had to leave this advisory role. Jamie Reed, Place Development support officer left the Council to join a new combined authority on Tyneside. Jamie had been the Council officer responsible for liaising on the delivery of the Albert Memorial refurbishment project, the funding of which the CIO had secured from Tees Valley Combined Authority.

The work of the Board during the year focussed in part on recovery from the previous failed HLF bid, led latterly by Redcar & Cleveland Council. Members will recall that the inclusion late in the day of a Visitor Centre which had no Business Plan and the absence of a Council Valley Gardens Management Plan were the deciding factors in the turning down of the application.

Considerable time has been taken up with reassessing how progress could be made in finally removing the Valley Gardens from the 'At Risk' Register.

This has been an interesting journey and has introduced members to more officers from Historic England and the National Lottery Fund in the process.

Discussions have considered what level of requests should be being made to the Heritage Lottery and this has been tempered by the latest qualifying criteria. The current thinking is to apply for the 'up to £250,000' category.

In order to progress towards a bid several factors have to be in place, namely relevance to heritage, the needs of the project, sustainability and compliance with investment principles, which include protecting the environment, inclusion, access and participation.

Many of these are already being addressed through our activities which support our constitutional objectives, and a new application is hoped to be tendered by mid 2025.

Considerable working together has been engendered with Redcar Council during the course of the year. The Council's welcomed new strategy of Volunteer support and encouragement throughout the Borough has led to some positive developments with volunteer groups here.

The Valley Gardens Volunteers have engaged closely working together with Neighbourhood Team officers on practical day to day matters, but also in developing Risk Assessment procedures and undergoing training on hand tools and being provided with PPE. This involvement has extended across many of the volunteer groups who are active in Saltburn valleys. Building working relations is key to the future viability of the valleys. The vacuum which has existed in recent years is gradually being reduced. There remains much work to be done, however.

Many meetings have been held in the Community Hall and Library with relevant Officers and volunteers, and many walkabouts have been shared, with a focus for the time being on the Valley Gardens. This has laid the groundwork for further discussion and co-operation.

For all the consultancy work undertaken over many years, not all is accessible and much of the recommendations has not been implemented. The need for all documents to be identified and archived is an ongoing piece of work and this is similarly being pursued within Redcar Council itself through its Scrutiny process.

Some of the missing documents include Green Flag annual visit assessments. The non-compliance led to withdrawal of this recognition, and it is one particular aspiration to reclaim the award. The absence of an agreed up to date Management Plan disqualifies any reapplication.

With Board members also being volunteers in other organisations, such as the Valley Gardens Volunteers, the Countryside Volunteers, Saltburn in Bloom and Friends of Saltburn Valley an important holistic approach is engendered and the synergies arising from the working across organisations is quite apparent, although more work in this respect needs to be done.

The extent of the neglect of the Valley Gardens and the positive work done to date by volunteers is evidenced by the tackling of lack of management of some specific areas, the surroundings of the Albert Memorial, the Italian Garden bankside and Camp Bank. The separation of the management of the Valley Gardens and Rifts Wood between Countryside Services and Clean and Green is being questioned, the restriction on limits where RCBC staff are able to work, i.e. on slopes, is being challenged. Liaison with RCBC staff is steadily improving and the provision of training, insurance cover, PPE and tools is a significant progress.

Whilst the Albert Memorial restoration work was almost completed last year, the remaining snagging works and immediate approach path restoration has taken an inordinate time to address, with a considerable overspend. This remains to be resolved but we might almost be there, and it has just been advised that the main contractor will be returning to address the issues arising from the paintwork on the columns and façade.

The appointment of a new Arboriculture Officer, Graham Shaw, has assisted in the work that we have been engaged in, namely the management of woodland, in particular the Italian Garden area and at Cherry Tree Walk. The latter has seen forward planning in recent years with our initiative to provide for replanting in anticipation of diseased tree die off.

Unfortunately, the trees provided by the Council in early 2023 have proved to be the wrong species to sustain the particular tree features in this singular avenue. With the assistance of guidance from Kristof Falstar more appropriate species will be planted soon under Graham's management and so address the long term appropriateness of this feature of Saltburn valley. The attempt to establish a Tree Register three years ago was regrettably never successful but continues to be an aspiration. The planned tree survey due to be undertaken throughout the Borough in 2025 may be the stimulus to resurrect this piece of work.

The recent appointment of Naomi Green, Countryside and Ecology Manager, will see further working together. Projects in Saltburn Gill and in Hazel Grove are already, in such a short period of time, scheduled, and a walkabout this coming Monday will see an appraisal of what can be undertaken in our campaigning to have restoration work on pathways in the Valley Gardens.

Progress has not always been achieved at the pace we would prefer, and some other projects are taking much longer than anticipated. The Fitness Trail, led by Katie Sapphire-Starr continues in the development stage despite hours of consultation on its delivery. This is now renamed as a Healthy Heritage Trail in order to be compliant with new funding guidance and feedback from further advisory discussions. We shall persevere.

The Sensory Garden project has similarly been challenged by funding criteria and revaluation of practical constraints. David continues to lead on this supported by Pam Bennett.

David has also been instrumental in initiating and leading on another project of the Sound Walk. In discussions with Base Camp some £7,500 was secured to deliver this project involving close working with Borderlands. Delivered over two sessions in the Rose Walk, this experience has led Board members to consider the possibility of annual event.

Much support has been given to the Friends of the Lower Path in their continuing, much lauded, work to revitalise and sustain the magnificence of this section of Hazel Grove. Support has been given by Ross in accountancy and David and Stewart through planning guidance during the preparations for the mural installation on the storage building North West face. This is the old toilet block that Saltburn Valleys secured sponsorship of £6,500 for from Host and Stay and which was donated to Redcar Council for the alterations work carried out on the refunctioning of the building. Support has also been given by David and Stewart in discussions on the installation of a three owl sculpture.

Throughout the year Ross Weddell has provided excellent minute taking at the 8 Board meetings and has supported note taking at the regular Officers' meetings. Further he has established the Action Plan matrix to monitor progress on the decision making of the Board. Our grateful thanks are extended.

The heritage of the valleys is well documented by Tony Lynn who is a constant source of historical wealth, contributing wherever necessary and currently in the new brochure and the consultation stall at the Farmers' Market in a week's time.

The new brochure is again produced by Drisc and she and Stewart have provided the main narrative. A key tool in spreading the word on the work the CIO is undertaking and reaching out to the community to seek support for that work.

In reaching out to the community Ian Sproxton has continued to maintain and develop the web site and Robert Proctor has led on the CIO Facebook.

Newsletters are regularly published and thanks are recorded to Pam Bennett for continuing her association with the CIO and producing this important circular.

Membership has stagnated recently and currently stands at 339. This may be because of the failure of the HLF bid. Jane Burke continues to provide a very efficient service as Membership Secretary and is always keeping us right on protocols and data compliance.

The finances of the CIO are administered by Ross and these are set out clearly in his end of year statement. There are certain ring fenced funds and these are appropriated with the designation relating to the source of funding requests. Our grateful thanks are recorded to the two local parish Councils for their continuing financial support and encouragement.

There is no membership Fee to join or renew.

This is not a proposal being made in the short term to change.

However, during the year, in an attempt to raise funds for marketing and communication and for supplementing the proposed information Board costs for the new lectern at the Albert Memorial two appeals were made to members for funds. The response was very disappointing. Perhaps I can use this opportunity ask members to consider making a donation and providing resources which the CIO can put to good use.

In addition to the application to HLF other grant funding will be sought to support other projects as previously mentioned, and some matched funding is commonly requested. Funds for this use would be most welcome.

During the year successful application was made to become a member of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and discussions are ongoing with Tees River Trust.

At the last AGM agreement was reached to alter the constitution to require 25 members to be present at an AGM in order to assist with obtaining a quorum. The alteration to the constitution was duly made and the Charities Commission records to be updated.

With some members unable to physically attend every Board meeting the practice of hybrid meetings with a virtual attendance option continues and thanks are given to Ken Bladen for facilitating this IT offer.

During the year some notable happenings included the publishing of the eagerly awaited Biodiversity Strategy by Redcar & Cleveland Council, a document primarily compiled by Jeremy Garside. This will encourage the work being done in the valleys to maintain green spaces and support the collective interest in the community in preserving and enhancing the local biodiversity. The Countryside Volunteers notably continue to organise an annual butterfly survey and the Cleveland Bat Group, of which Katie is secretary, is looking to have an information board in the Valley Gardens about bats. The Saltburn Miniature railway transported record numbers of school children and relayed significant new lengths of track, sustaining its attraction as one of the must go to offers in the North East.

Further cleansing and maintenance of the War Memorial was undertaken and repairs to the Skelton Beck storm damage, although this repair took almost a year and a half to complete.

Updated drone footage of the valleys is being sought for the web site.

Requests have been received for plaques on benches in the valley gardens and discussions are ongoing about increasing the numbers of benches to an approved style. Policy guidance from the Council is awaited.

Alan has organised a Saltburn Gill walk recently, and it may be that this and other walks will be considered in the coming year.

The imminent Saltburn Valleys stall at the Farmers' Market on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November will seek to continue to publish the work of the CIO and consult on the valleys' usage and the two projects already mentioned, the Sensory Trail and the Heritage Fitness Trail.

At some point in the near future the final public opening of the Albert memorial will take place. With all snagging work undertaken and the new lectern in place we will close another chapter in the annals of the valleys.

At the opening we will again be privileged to consume some excellent cake baked by Margaret who provides refreshments at every Board meeting and looks after us all on every occasion.

The challenges we saw in the establishment of the Saltburn Valleys Steering group in 2008 and the formally constituted Saltburn Valleys CIO in 2017 remain evident today.

The support of members is pivotal in securing the future of the valleys and that is so much encouraged. With such support and encouragement, the Board will continue to aspire to deliver the Objects embedded in our Constitution.

Philip Thomson

Chair

Saltburn Valleys C.I.O. Accounts 01/04/2023 to 31/03/24						
INCOME	Charity No. 1174428		Barclays	20-59-43	13993485	
Date	Paid By		Unrestricted/£	Restricted/£	Bank Ref/£	Notes regarding use.
27/04/2023	Skelton & Brotton PC		200.00			
19/05/2023	SM&NM PC		1,050.00			
25/05/2023	Donation			100.00		FoLP Donation
17/07/2023	A.Mannion			5.00		FoLP Donation
27/07/2023	Paul Bowens			20.00		FoLP Donation
15/08/2023	A.Mannion			5.00		FoLP Donation
15/09/2023	A.Mannion			5.00		FoLP Donation
04/10/2023	Canavan M A			10.00		FoLP Donation
06/10/2023	V Dotchin			100.00		FoLP Donation
12/10/2023	David Taylor			10.00		FoLP Donation
13/10/2023	SM&NM PC			250.00		Lower Path
16/10/2023	A.Mannion			5.00		FoLP Donation
23/10/2023	Community			25.00		FoLP Donation
15/11/2023	A.Mannion			5.00		FoLP Donation
15/12/2023	A.Mannion			5.00		FoLP Donation
15/01/2024	A.Mannion			5.00		FoLP Donation
15/02/2024	A.Mannion			5.00		FoLP Donation
21/02/2024	Tees Valley Commity Fund			2,500.00		FoLP Grant
15/03/2024	A.Mannion			5.00		FoLP Donation
Carried	From last Financial Year		1,033.48	9,784.85		
Totals			2,283.48	12,844.85		
EXPENDITURE						
Date	Payee					
11/04/2023	Gbiz	DDR	22.80		Inv. 63334	SMNMPC x12
01/05/2023	SCAA	Bacs	16.00		92023	Hall Hire
05/05/2023	Geoff Harrington	Bacs		27.98		Lower Path Tools
10/05/2023	Gbiz	DDR	22.80			
08/05/2023	A.Bailey	Cheque		80.00	100080	Lower Path Plants
26/05/2023	Geoff Harrington	Bacs		120.00		Lower Path Plants
31/05/2023	A.Bailey	Cheque		48.00	100081	Lower Path Plants
12/06/2023	Gbiz	DDR	22.80		63823	
21/06/2023	Geoff Harrington	Bacs		48.40		Lower Path Plants
29/06/2023	SCAA	Bacs	16.00		422023	Hall Hire
10/07/2023	Gbiz	DDR	22.80		64060	
10/08/2023	Gbiz	DDR	22.80			
18/08/2023	Margaret W	Bacs	45.00			Albert Memorial
06/09/2023	Markeluk.com	Card	100.80			Insurance
11/09/2023	Gbiz	DDR	22.80		64475	
10/10/2023	Gbiz	DDR	22.80		64767	
17/10/2023	Jane Burke – expenses	Bacs	29.29			
31/10/2023	Geoff Harrington	Bacs		442.00		Lower Path Plants
10/11/2023	Gbiz	DDR	22.80		64955	
10/11/2023	RCBC	Cheque	234.00		100082	planning permission
11/12/2023	Gbiz	DDR	22.80		65237	
05/01/2024	Gbiz	DDR	22.80		65380	
08/01/2024	Paul Richmond	Bacs	19.39			First Aid Box
22/01/2024	Ian Spoxton	Bacs	59.99			Microsoft 23/24
24/01/2024	ICO	Card	40.00			
06/02/2024	Gbiz	DDR	12.00			
06/02/2024	Gbiz	DDR	22.80			
07/03/2024	Gbiz	DDR	22.80			
Totals			846.07	766.38		Restricted Fund
Balance	Restricted			12,078.47		War Memorial
	Unrestricted		1437.41			Hazel Grove Fund
Total				13,515.88		Cenotaph Planting
						Saltburn Gill
						Friends of Lower Path
						Restricted Total

12078.47