

## Annual Report 2024-2025

I started last year's Annual Report with the reflection, 'this has been another eventful year in the history of the Saltburn Valleys CIO' and so has that year continued into this.

We began with one of our reaching out stalls at the Farmers' Market in the town centre.

Telling our story and building support has been an ongoing continuing aspiration.

Membership has risen considerably from 339 to 476, even after the inevitable some 30 membership lapses. This ever increasing administration workload has been competently accommodated by Jane Burke.

Keeping in touch with the community is key to communicating what the CIO is doing and receiving thoughts from residents and visitors about the three valleys.

Further stalls have been held including at the successful Well Being event in the Saltburn Valley Tea Garden.

The continuing wish to improve the website has been aided by the interest shown by Katie Sapphire-Starr as has also the CIO Facebook.

Continued support from Pam Bennett in production of the Newsletter has been most welcome.

Much of the messages being carried highlight the vastly important contribution of volunteers.

The Saltburn Valley Gardens team, working every Tuesday, has addressed several of the abandoned sections of the Saltburn Valley Gardens, returning many areas to a level of maintenance not seen for many years.

Work by the Countryside Volunteers, under the guidance of a Council leader, are active weekly in Rifts Wood and occasionally in Hazel Grove, whilst the Lower Path Gardens volunteer team under the leadership of Geoff Harrington continue to work assiduously in sustaining that recaptured floral abundance. Saltburn in Bloom has retained its interest in looking after the bandstand area, Robert Proctor leads on looking after the War Memorial and area and Saltburn Friends of the Valley continues its wonderful management of the Woodlands Centre.

The actual maintenance of the War Memorial itself has reverted to the Borough Council, which has allocated funding to memorials across the borough. A watching brief is however, maintained.

Certain Board Members oversee specific areas of the valleys and report on issues that require addressing. Alan Simpkins and Margeret Whitehead looking after Saltburn Gill, Ken Bladen and Ian Sproxton, Hazel Grove, Robert Proctor the Valley Gardens and Jane Burke covering Rifts Wood. Our thanks are recorded for this ongoing work.

Alan, the formal representative of Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, has led two walks in the Gill and much has been learned from his long association with this valley, particularly in respect of his knowledge of the fungi found there.

Here the Council Countryside team has been active in maintaining public footpaths and preparing for bridleway bridge reconstruction in 2026.

That team has also been active in Hazel Grove constructing a narrow pedestrian bridge to allow continued access from the West entrance after considerable bankside wash away. This has been fortuitous in coinciding with the rerouting down Hazel Grove of the last section of the long distance Langbaugh Loop, away from the Windy Hill Farm and deteriorating cliff edge original route.

Robert Proctor in addition to overseeing the Valley Gardens has a specific interest in Saltburn Miniature Railway, which brings thousands of visitors to the valley in its own right and also maintains the rail track and all surrounding land, to such a high level that a Northumbria in Bloom Gold Award was made this year to SMR. Well done indeed.

Jane Burke oversees Rifts Wood. This area of ancient woodland is unfortunately continuing to experience intermittent anti-social behaviour with much littering and firing particularly in

the viaduct vicinity. Increased signage has been erected during the year to highlight the need for cyclists to dismount and respect the serenity of the footpaths through the valley.

Work is being considered to improve access at the Miners' Steps and rerouting the Cleveland Way exit on to Victoria Terrace instead of through Cherry Tree Walk on to Albion Terrace.

A prime focus during the year has been the continuing work to develop an appropriate bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to assist in creating an improvement in the Valley Gardens such that it can be removed from the Historic England 'At Risk' Register.

Whilst an aspiration to submit an appropriate bid by mid-2025 has not been achieved, work has begun and extensive discussion undertaken to consider a changing funding world and an ever changing prioritisation of land owner's resource allocation, namely that of Redcar & Cleveland Council which is financially challenged in its service delivery.

Currently work has been undertaken to prepare a Heritage Lottery Enquiry, prior to submitting an application for a stage 1 funding programme. This is a much smaller grant than previously applied for, having a ceiling of £250,000. The preparation for this has been well assisted by a Redcar & Cleveland Officer Jo Whistler, supported by a newly appointed Project Director Graham Shaw, both of whom have worked closely with the Board.

In preparation for the bid, close working with all volunteer groups within Saltburn Valley has been a prerequisite and together reaching out to the community to work together in once again beginning that journey to find funding to reclaim relevant aspects of heritage and improve accessibility for residents and visitors alike.

The initial emphasis has been, and will be, on the Spa Stone area and the Italian Garden, and seeking to create improved access overall.

In parallel, work has been ongoing to ensure that a Management Plan for the Valleys Gardens and ultimately all of the different sections of Saltburn valley, is in place, with one particular intention being the re-achieving of a Green Flag status.

This is a requirement now to ensure that a maintenance is in place for any works listed in any HLF bid.

During the year the Board has not operated at a full compliment with only 9 elected serving members.

The position of Treasurer remained vacant for a period, with Ross Weddell kindly providing a caretaking role, and was finally filled after the co-option of Colette Vanham.

Officers have met regularly, and Robert Proctor, Vice Chair, David Stovell, Secretary and Collette Vanham now form a good team. Our thanks to them for their shared leadership and support.

Thanks are recorded to Tony Lynn for continuing to provide valuable photographic archival support, which has been very helpful in our publications, brochure and banner and also in the much delayed information lectern for the Albert Memorial.

Ken Bladen has provided valuable technical support, particularly in facilitating virtual meeting participation.

Drisc Wardle, representing Saltburn, Marske and New Marske Parish Council, has a given continuing support in the production of marketing material, be it brochures or lectern art work. Margaret Whitehead, representing Skelton and Brotton Parish Council, has brought her catering skills to ensure Members refreshment needs are well catered for, at Board meetings and workshops.

Kristof Fatsar, Historic England's Regional Landscape Architect for the North, Stewart Ramsdale representing Tees Heritage and Robert Hoof, Assistant Director Redcar & Cleveland, Neighbourhood Services, Growth, Enterprise and Environment, have all brought different skills and experience to support the workings of the CIO and we are indeed fortunate to have such a diverse range of talent and experience.

Work on access to the Albert Memorial proved to be a continuing challenge and initial construction has required several remedial attempts to provide a permanent provision.

Planting out of the formal bedding areas, the remaining snagging works and a prevention of work on the surrounding land because of health and Safety restrictions have all contributed to the delay in installation of the long awaited information board. This has been further delayed by a requirement to have planning approval.

The results from the Borough wide tree survey are still awaited.

Replanting of the correct species of replacement cherry trees is awaited and much of the vista retention work is on hold, again through constraints of Health and safety strictures but also Borough tree team availability.

Work with the tree team and the Countryside team, led by Naomi Green has been positive.

Looking ahead, work will continue on web site development, particularly with new drone footage of the valleys covering all seasons.

A clear protocol does need to be established with the Council in respect of Risk Assessments, how they are carried out and what procedures for Method Statement production ensues, are set out and implemented.

David is working with Bluespace to secure funding for improved access and there is to be a new exercise in water sampling in Skelton Beck to monitor water quality.

Continuing funding from both Parish Councils is much appreciated and allows coverage of our administration costs.

A particular ongoing challenge is sustainability, not just in maintenance in the valleys but also in the active membership of the CIO.

Whilst membership is growing we do need to be encouraging greater involvement at volunteering level, both on the ground and in the meeting rooms.

All members are encouraged to consider what skills they have and what they can bring to the collective endeavours of existing volunteers to augment their efforts and also to sustain a viable presence in the years ahead.

Philip Thomson

Chair

<b>SALTBURN VALLEYS CIO 01/04/2024 - 31/03/2025</b>					
INCOME		Unrestricted	restricted		
4/1/2024	OPENING BALANCES	£ 1,437.41	£ 12,078.47		
<b>4/1/2024</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>£13,515.88</b>
	University of Teesside		£ 6,929.64		
	donations/PC Grant		£ 670.00		
	Donations		£ 60.00		
	Grant	£ 893.00			
	Donations	£ 312.83			
EXPENDITURE					
	website maintenance	£ 285.60			
	Microsoft 365	£ 59.99			
	Hall hire	£ 147.75			
	Lower Path Planting		£ 385.24		
	Markel UK	£ 100.80			
	Borderlands	£ 85.72			
	Brochures	£ 1,048.00			
3/31/2025	CLOSING BALANCES	£ 915.38	£ 19,352.87		
<b>3/31/2025</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>£20,268.25</b>

Borderlands			
Lower Path			
Albert Memorial			
SMNMPC			
Various			
Gbiz & Data		<b>Restricted use funds</b>	
	War Memorial	£	7,230.74
SCAA	Hazelgrove Fund	£	2,128.32
	Cenotaph Planting	£	97.02
Insurance	Saltburn Gill	£	100.00
extra expenditure	FoLP	£	2,807.15
Two Face Design	Borderlands	£	6,929.64
	Albert Memorial	£	60.00
			£ 19,352.87