

Birmingham Talking Newspapers

for the blind & visually impaired (BTNBVI)

Registered Charity (England) No. 1185917

Trustees' Annual Report

1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

Section A

Charity's principal address

Strangford
Lichfield Rd
Hopwas
Tamworth
B78 3AG

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

David Gowdy Chair
Daniel Collman VC (South)
Rob Halley VC (North)
Kath Collman (Secretary)
Ian Alexander Treasurer
Paul Bryce (retired Nov 2022)
Brian Sansom (from May 2022)
Alan Johnson
Marion Dance

Governance

BTNBVI is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation whose trustees are elected by its Members at each Annual General Meeting. Members are mainly volunteers who produce the recordings.

BTNBVI is affiliated to the national Talking Newspapers Federation (TNF) and to Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC)

Since 2020 BTNBVI has continued with the pattern of operations established by Birmingham Talking Newspaper Association (BTNA) over its 40 years providing a talking newspaper service.

One trustee, Paul Bryce, retired in-year. He got married and moved away from Birmingham. Brian Sansom became a trustee, retaining his webmaster portfolio. Our trustees are mainly experienced senior volunteers but we do need to widen our skills base. We were successful in engaging several volunteers in formal survey exercise, and we were pleasantly surprised to find significant in-house skills to undertake this work.

Charitable Objects

The object of BTNBVI is to relieve the blind or visually impaired in the Birmingham area by the provision of recorded material read primarily from newspapers and magazines.

In meeting its object and to provide public benefit, each week BTNBVI provides 3- 5 hours of recorded material which is distributed by post using USB memory sticks to blind and visually-impaired listeners across Birmingham. This is current material, mostly from local print newspapers, and therefore not readily accessible to visually impaired people.

Recordings can also be accessed via our website: www.btnbvi.org, via smartphones using the BWBF Talking News app and via Alexa smart speakers. The service helps reduce social isolation and listeners often comment on the companionship of familiar voices “in the room”.

*“Thank you so much for the wonderful news and magazine service you provide free to your visually-impaired listeners- it really has been a lifeline for mum!
With kind regards and grateful thanks”*

Daughter of listener

Section D

Performance

At year-end we are serving around 300 listeners, but their pattern of usage is often rather irregular, perhaps because they are still not back to a shopping-type routine or because postal services are still erratic. In the current year we, like many other TNs, have noted a reducing number of listeners. Most listeners are referred by local hospital eye clinics so we have, post-COVID, renewed our contact with the staff to encourage new referrals. We also have started a programme to contact lapsed listeners – but visual impairment is mostly age-related and we have an elderly listener population so the consequences of old-age lead to inevitable losses. We believe the proportion of listeners to the visually-impaired population compares favourably with newspaper circulation relative to the sighted catchment population. All valid requests for service are met.

The change to cio in 2020 was the first step on a governance and operational improvement path which is still continuing.

Our service is provided 100% by our volunteers. We have about 80 people who work in teams to read and record material taken from local newspapers.

Work is in hand to retire the old BTNA website and replace it with a BTNBVI version. Apart from the usual explanatory material the website will also provide a reference point for the organisation’s key documents –

constitution, policies, volunteer handbook etc. and will also be used to inform volunteer induction and training activities.

During the year Kings Audio ceased to trade. They had, for many years, supplied USB mp3 players designed for blind and visually-impaired users. We found that most commercial players are not as easy to use and lack some of the controls that assist listeners to navigate the 70-80 mp3 tracks we produce each week. We eventually found a replacement player that meets our needs. It has proved popular with listeners and is significantly less expensive.



Sovereign 2



Sonic

The Sovereign and Sonic players are no longer available. They have been replaced by the Prunus J725, which is smaller, about the size of a typical mobile phone



Prunus J725

Finance

In 2022/23 our new Treasurer has continued to tame the accounts and organise this foundational aspect of our work.

BTNBVI bank accounts are with The Co-Operative Bank. The arrangements have now bedded in with most transactions handled online.

A significant sum transferred to BTNBVI from BTNA in 2020. This sum provides BTNBVI with a reserve (sufficient to cover an unexpected loss of one of the two recording centres and its contents). At present income donations do not cover running costs, leaving a deficit that is offset also from this sum.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature

Full name

Position (Chair)

Date

Note: this report is presented in sections that align with the Charities Commission Trustees Annual Report CC16 template