



Birmingham Talking Newspapers

for the blind & visually impaired (BTNBVI)

Registered Charity (England) No. 1185917

Trustees' Annual Report

1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

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
Danny Collman - VC (South)
Rob Halley - VC (North)
Kath Collman - Secretary

Ian Alexander - Treasurer
Brian Sansom - Webmaster
Marion Dance
Alan Johnson (to Aug 2024)

Governance

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

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.

Our trustees are mainly experienced senior volunteers but we do need to widen our skills base. We were successful in engaging several volunteers in a formal survey exercise, and were pleased to find significant in-house skills to undertake this work. A “more than reading” initiative has been effective in developing a volunteer team to develop publicity efforts

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 or similar smart speakers. The service helps reduce social isolation and listeners often comment on the companionship of familiar voices “in the room”.

We continue to receive encouraging comments from listeners:

- Dear lovely people, Thank you for your entertaining Talking Newspapers. Unfortunately, this one appears to be blank;
- Please find enclosed cheque. Thank you for your prompt service;
- Thank you. This is my second BTN. Very informative and interesting. Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this recording. Thoroughly enjoyed it;
- Please accept this £10 cheque. Thank you for all you do;
- Thank you for the Talking Newspaper. I do enjoy the articles and the History talk. I enclose a donation and wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year;

and also a further significant bequest.

Section D

Performance

At year end we are serving fewer than the 300 listeners we had last year. Attention is being given to increasing our publicity efforts. The pattern of usage is often irregular rather than a constant weekly turnover.

A major disturbance across 2024-25 stemmed from the unexpected loss of the Alan Geale House [AGH] studio capacity which provided 50% of our operational capacity.

We were very pleased when the efforts of the South team identified new space in Bournville Village Trust [BVT] HQ building, available from June 2024. This is an excellent modern building, used free-of-charge, but lacks the storage space and single-user arrangements that were enjoyed in AGH. BVT staff have been exemplary in their welcome and support.

During the few months at the start of the year, before BVT was identified, the trustees considered the overall response and quickly agreed that BTNBVI could operate from one site if necessary, but struggled to translate that position to actuality. The obvious difficulty was the 50% redundancy implications for volunteers if one of the two centres closed. Trustees continue to review the position. From a governance position there is no justification for running an organisation that is twice as big as it needs to be, especially as the listener numbers decline.

One development that does need more people is the “more than reading” concept that encourages volunteers to support areas like publicity, training, listener contact. There is evident energy in areas like ECLO contact, but trustee support in terms of leadership and training is not yet secure.

Our long-running and repeated History programme material was replaced in Jan 2025 with a commercial podcast series (The Rest is History). Evaluation of this will be undertaken in early 2025-26 once people get used to the different format (a single female-voice enthusiastic lecture format has been overtaken by two “blokes” talking through the issues). So far we have seen criticism, both negative and positive.

Policy work continues, but slowly.

Progress in recruiting new trustees will be reported at the July 2025 AGM

Section E

Finance

The Treasurer has continued to improve our money management and is preparing a Gift Aid submission to HMRC.

At present income donations do not fully cover running costs, leaving a small annual deficit that is offset from reserves.

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

Trustees are keen to see a higher return on reserves than the 2.8% pa currently being achieved

Section F
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Section G

Declaration

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

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature



Full name ALFRED DAVID GOWDY

Position CHAIR

Date 8 JULY 2025

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