



Bradley Canal Restoration Society

Annual General Meeting – 20th April 2021

Chair of Trustees Report

General Update

Covid restrictions have affected us all and BCRS has not escaped. Whilst progress has slowed the trustees have been busily beavering away in the background. Thanks to their efforts we are now better established and getting better known and recognised. This is important as we go forward, we need to have a structure fit for purpose so that outside bodies, particularly funders, can see they are dealing with a serious body.

To increase capacity within the Board of Trustees, Bob Fox agreed to join us at the start of this year, thank you and welcome Bob. Whilst expressing thanks can I include Darren Clift for manfully maintaining our Facebook page, Gavin Hawkins for a lot of admin and producing “The Arm” and John Oakley for attending to membership matters. We have been meeting by Zoom and hopefully will be able to meet in the flesh shortly.

One item postponed was the BCNS spring cruise to Bradley replaced by a campaign cruise on May 13th/17th to Walsall overnighing en-route at Moorcroft Junction on the night of Friday 14th with a walk up the flight on the Saturday morning. The annual BCN clean-up was also cancelled where work here had been planned. We now have written permission to work here from CRT. This is important as one of the presentations of the annual IWA/CRT Restoration Conference held virtually (normally in Bilston...) was devoted to getting the correct permissions in place before physical work starts.

Catch up with these excellent talks on <https://www.youtube.com/user/waterwaysassoc>

We are currently working on, and need help with getting a risk assessment completed, survey of the utilities and access rights. Do please let us know if you can help with this.

A few weeks ago, mooring rings were installed by CRT adjacent to Glasshouse Bridge, which is the nearest access to Bilston Town Centre. This followed rings being installed at the end of 2020 by the lock-gate workshops at Bradley. This will encourage boaters to stay on the arm and one of the most popular guidebooks for the canals and rivers; the Nicholson's Guide, for this area is currently being revised. I have spoken with the editor who has agreed to mention the mooring facilities. The offside bank protection “Coir” rolls installed early in 2019 on the arm are now established and encouraging much more waterfowl.

In July flooding caused by downpours between Locks 7 and 8 inundated local houses and we were able to spur CRT into rapid action that resulted in some spot dredging being undertaken and the blocked culvert cleared. It now looks like a canal and with volunteer help could be easily renovated.

We have also met on site between lockdowns with WCC leaders to explain the project in detail. By Bradley Lane where CRT still own the open land adjacent to Atlas Trading Estate, we have measured the land and asked if the pending new lease may be modified to allow space for a canal channel. How to replace Tup Bridge across Bradley Lane, to connect with the remaining Bradley arm, is our biggest challenge.

How many people walk the existing canal? By reconnecting the two sections will this increase. Funders ask this. To collect data CRT have agreed to erect a counter near Highfields Bridge to produce some data for us.

To guide us through the various processes, we are using a template jointly produced by the IWA and CRT, the "Restoration Work Stages". We have almost completed the first three parts of Phase One, putting the necessary organisational structures and permissions into place.

The next phase is a transitional stage where we plan for project delivery. This will require us to raise funds for commissioning the necessary engineering, wayleave, and easement surveys for the whole scheme and whilst your help with a personal donation would be much appreciated, we will start applying for more substantial funding from appropriate organisations. The help of a volunteer qualified Civil Engineer/Quantity Surveyor in an advisory role would be extremely useful.

To further publicise our Society, we have a gazebo with which we plan to attend the Gnosall Canal Festival on the 16th/18th July and the Festival of Water at Worcester on August 27th 30th. If you can help, if only for a short time it would be appreciated. This will enable us to reach a wider audience and recruit more members.

Membership

Membership currently stands at 176 paid subscriptions (however a number of these are due for renewal). A further 16 individuals are supporting the Society via a personal donation rather than a formal membership.

It is hoped that physical attendance at events in the coming months will enable us to increase our membership significantly. All members should be receiving the regular newsletters, however if this is not the case please confirm your email (or postal) address with us.

Social Media

The Facebook page has been active since April 2019 and we have seen a fantastic rise in followers in that period with the number currently standing at 2040. Our Instagram following is also building with followers loving the wildlife photographs in particular.

Doubtless we have all seen how arguments and negativity can upset group members and become a real headache for the administrators, so it is great to run a page where we have seen virtually none of this type of activity. It does seem that most people are behind restoring this small stretch of canal.

Regular viewers of the page will have seen that support is also growing from important sectors of the community and beyond. Local MPs, Local Authorities, CRT, Inland Waterways and the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust are all getting behind this scheme to bring back this bit of canal that holds such historic importance for our area and indeed, this country.



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Financial Report

This report reflects the financial position since the opening of the Society bank account on 1st July 2019 until 31st March 2021. This is a longer period than would normally be the case due to the delay in formal recognition of the Society by the Charity Commission (several annual costs therefore appear twice). Future financial reports will span a 12-month financial period.

The accounts currently show little activity due to current restrictions, however we would hope to see an increase in subscription income (and expenditure) following the lifting of restrictions during the summer. Our Gift Aid claim has been started but is not yet complete, so will be reflected in the 2021-22 accounts.

The accounts have been externally audited but are currently unsigned due to Covid-19 restrictions. The accounts will be signed by the auditor prior to submission to the Charity Commission. Future financial reports will also show a year-on-year comparison of income and expenditure.

Statement of Accounts: 1st July 2019 – 31st March 2021

Income

Subscriptions	£ 1,751
Donations	£ 3,865
Gift Aid	£ 0.00
Amazon Smile/Paypal Giving	£ 121.29
Presentations	£ 50.00
Total	£ 5,787.29

Expenditure

Equipment	£ 239.76
Insurance	£ 99.31
Website Hosting	£ 244.80
Subscriptions	£ 276.33
Printing	£ 44.00
Rallies	£ 25.00
Display Board	£172.40
Total	£ 1,101.60

Balance **£ 4,685.69**