

# Birmingham Talking Newspapers

for the blind & visually impaired (BTNBVI)

Registered Charity (England) No. 1185917

## **Trustees' Annual Report**

23 March 2021 – 31 March 2022

Section A

### Charity's principal address

Strangford  
Lichfield Rd  
Hopwas  
Tamworth  
B78 3AG

### Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

Daniel Collman VC(South)  
David Widney  
David Gowdy VC(North) & interim Chair from 27 Oct 2022  
Paul Bryce  
Rob Halley  
Alan Johnson  
Kath Collman  
Lizzy Hunting Treasurer Resigned 20 Aug 2021  
Tim Badger Resigned 29 June 2021  
Algar Goredema-Braid Chair  
Co-opted 18 May 2021 Resigned 21 Oct 2021  
Ian Alexander Treasurer Co-opted 21 Dec 2021

## Governance

BTNBVI is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation whose trustees are elected by its Members at each Annual General Meeting. Members are mainly volunteers or listeners (beneficiaries)

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.

Although the number of trustees had increased at the start of the year, there have been some significant resignations in-year and currently there are 4 vacancies. Our trustees are mainly experienced senior volunteers but we do need to widen our skills base – using other existing volunteers on specific projects should help spread the load and accelerate our improvement plans.

## Charitable Objectives

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 approx 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](http://www.btnbvi.org) and via Alexa smart speakers. The service helps reduce social isolation and listeners often comment on the companionship of familiar voices “in the room”.

## Performance

At year-end we are serving around 300 listeners. 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 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 70 people who work in teams to read and record material taken from local newspapers.

A Volunteer Handbook has been developed mainly to help new volunteers but it will also include documents like the Constitution and key policies. It has been drafted as a paper document but will be more-readily accessed on the revised website when that project is completed.

## Finance

We engaged an Independent Examiner to work with us in completing the 2020-21 reports for submission to the Charities Commission. This clarified and simplified our overall approach and confirmed that a formal IE Report was not required (we had previously been advised it was needed). We have been able to adopt receipts and payments accounting procedures and have formally registered a merged relationship between BTNA and BTNBVI

BTNBVI bank accounts were opened and BTNA accounts closed, something which we had not been able to do over lockdown. Ian Alexander was co-opted as treasurer in Dec 2021 and has been finalising a finance policy and related accounting arrangements.

A significant sum from BTNA transferred to BTNBVI when it was formed. A Reserves Policy has been established and will lead to the development of a strategic plan to guide investment in prioritised improvement activities. These are likely to include listener engagement, new online technology and governance.

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

## Declaration

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

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)

Full name(s)

ALFRED DAVID GOWDY

Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc)

INTERIM CHAIR

Date

13 MAY 2022

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