

# **West Shropshire Talking Newspaper**

## **Annual Report 2019-2020**

Copies of this report can be obtained in  
large print on request.

Please address all correspondence to the studio.

Established 20 January 1976. Charity registration no 504996

A member of the Talking News Federation

Studio; Roy Fletcher Centre, Cross Hill, Shrewsbury SY1 1JE  
01743 364 726 (answerphone service)

## **Foreword**

Whilst this report deals primarily with the financial year 2019, it is impossible – given the circumstances under which it is compiled – not to make reference to the Coronavirus pandemic that has affected all our lives since the start of the year. Although the Roy Fletcher Centre has been operating – with changed arrangements – throughout the period, the trustees decided that, given the age profile of many of the volunteers and the potential health issues that some may have, it would no longer be possible to record the Talking Newspaper in the studio nor feasible to use the offices for the weekly despatch of the pouches. As a result, from the end of March, the weekly recordings were completed at home hubs by five pairs of individuals who acted as presenters, readers and tech-ops on a rota basis. Our thanks go to them and to all of the readers and contributors who have responded to the changed conditions so superbly. A number of new volunteers – parents or partners – have got involved as a result and we are grateful to Michelle Sutton-Jones, Donna Farrell, Tricia Harris, Paul Bisson and Carol Musty for their support in these difficult times. We're also grateful to our local radio station – BBC Radio Shropshire – and in particular Tim Page and Ian Howes from the BBC for the loan of equipment; this has enabled more contributors to remain involved and extended our interview coverage. Towards the end of March one final TN was issued using the pouches; this was sent out accompanied by a letter explaining why the pouch service was being suspended and the alternative means of hearing the TN in the immediate future. This message was reinforced by interviews with local media. It is gratifying to note that the usage of these other means – the website, etc – has increased but undoubtedly not all listeners will have been able to access these and we will face a challenge, once restrictions are relaxed, in getting the system back up and running. Throughout the trustees have been conscious of our duty of care to all those who volunteer and all decisions have been guided by this principle.

Turning to 2019 now, I'm pleased to be able to report that, financially, the year was much more successful; although a loss was still incurred, this was still considerably lower than in the past few years. Thanks are due to Stephen Stewart for all his hard work on the accounts and to him and John Wilson for the organisation of fund-raising activities. The WSTN has started to benefit from the Friends and our gratitude is due to Alan and Susan Wilding for their efforts on this front. One of the further challenges caused by the current crisis is that all fundraising activity has inevitably been suspended and this will inevitably impact on the financial results for 2020. Hannah Sherlock and I both attended the TNF Conference at Leamington Spa; it was a useful experience and several ideas for potential future development emerged from it. It is always a useful source of information about technological advances and other changes that may affect the WSTN in the future.

At last year's AGM we welcomed Steve Bristow back as a trustee. His remit was to help examine the current position of the WSTN and how the organisation develops into the future. His analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by the WSTN were illuminating and the process of starting to implement some of the proposed changes has started. Unfortunately, this work has come to a temporary – but inevitable – halt as we face the greater challenge of steering the TN through the current crisis. One more positive benefit has been the radical clear out of the studio and office; numerous carloads of waste were transferred to the recycling centre and the working environment in the offices and – if we were able to use them! – is massively improved. Thanks are due to all those involved in this work. The office environment has also been improved through the purchase of new chairs.

One of the highlights of the year was the Volunteers' lunch at The Abbey; this was a highly enjoyable occasion and allowed for us to meet up with fellow volunteers and some of

the new Friends in a very convivial atmosphere. Our thanks go to Hannah Sherlock for organising the meal. It had been hoped that a similar event could have been held in the spring of 2020 but again circumstances conspired against us.

Sadly, I have to note the passing of Brian Mason; although no longer directly involved with the WSTN, he was one of the founders of TN in 1976 and maintained his involvement over recent years with the East Shropshire Talking Newspaper. A number of volunteers have also decided to stand down – Lucille Connolly, who looked after the volunteers’ list, Eleanor Gillogaley, who edited the Women’s World track, Ron Iremonger, who contributed the monthly Nature spot, and Helen Salmon, who compiled the bi-monthly magazine with the assistance of Mark Salmon (on the technical side); our thanks are due to them all for their many years of support. We do get new volunteers, however, as well and during 2019 we welcomed one of our youngest volunteers, Tom Farrell, who assumed the role of Wem correspondent. Since the turn of the year we also have welcomed a number of volunteers from the Shropshire Wildlife Trust – Mavis Gulliver, Diane Monether, Ric Morris, Hermione Sandall, Quentin Shaw and Carol Wood – who initially got involved to provide the monthly Nature report but a number of whom have also become readers.

Sadly, at the AGM we are losing two trustees who have both decided to stand down. Firstly, one of two visually-impaired trustees – Brian France – has decided not to seek re-election. He has been involved with TN for almost two decades and his presence as a trustee, supported by his wife, Sue, has been invaluable to me and to my predecessors. I’m delighted to report that he and Sue will, however, continue to mastermind the despatch of the pouches from the Roy Fletcher Centre once we are able to reintroduce that service.

I am also sad to report that, after two years, Hannah Sherlock has decided to stand down as Secretary; her work over that period has been instrumental in seeing the TN obtain new sources of funding and engage with new sections of the community. I am also grateful for all the support that she has shown me over the past two years in sometimes difficult circumstances. At the time of compiling this report we are struggling to find someone to take on this pivotal role within the organisation.

The production of the TN would not be possible without the availability of content from the local newspapers – in particular *The Shropshire Star* – who allow us to reproduce their news stories and articles. At a time when local journalism is under threat – indeed the Covid19 pandemic has resulted in the suspension of the publication of the historic *Shrewsbury Chronicle* – its importance to the community more broadly as well to the TN specifically cannot be overstated.

Finally, we would not be here without the support of all of the volunteers who assist in the continuing production of the weekly Talking Newspaper and the bi-monthly magazine. For a variety of reasons 2019 was perhaps more arduous than previous years but the commitment and involvement of all was second to none. Our thanks, as always, must go to all those who work behind the scenes to make the WSTN the success that it is.

*Peter Waller*  
Chairman

## **Structure governance and management**

The West Shropshire Talking Newspaper, formerly called the West Shropshire Talking Newspaper for the Blind, was established on 20 January 1976.

It operates under a constitution agreed with the Charity Commission – registration number 504996.

A revised constitution, with a revised title, agreed with the Charity Commission, was adopted at the 2015 AGM.

- All recipients of the Charity’s publications and those who work to achieve its objects are automatically members.
- A committee is elected annually at the AGM, to which all members are invited. Two members of the committee must be visually impaired.
- All committee members are trustees of the charity.
- The officers of the committee, namely Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, are elected annually at the AGM.

The Committee for 2019/20 comprised:

Steve Bristow	2 Shelton Oak Priory, Shelton, Shrewsbury
Edna Evans	18 Greenacre Road, Shrewsbury
*Brian France	12 Oak Tree Drive, Bayston Hill
Mary Pascoe	29 Preston Street, Shrewsbury
Paul Pascoe	29 Preston Street, Shrewsbury
*Lindsey Rowlands	20 Rad Valley, Shrewsbury
Stephen Stewart (Treasurer)	6 Richmond Drive, Shrewsbury
Peter Waller (Chairman)	25 Monkmoor Road, Shrewsbury
Alan Wilding (Vice Chairman)	154 Longden Road, Shrewsbury
Susan Wilding	154 Longden Road, Shrewsbury
Hannah Sherlock (Hon sec)	16 Greenacre Road, Shrewsbury

\* denotes visually impaired member

A committee meeting is held every two months. The composition of the committee as far as possible represents the range of TN activities.

All committee members have a copy of their duties as described in ‘The Essential Trustee’ and annually sign a declaration concerning their fitness to serve as a committee member. The committee is also regularly informed about guidance issued by the Charity Commission and attention drawn to relevant issues for discussion.

WSTN is also covered by Indemnity Insurance.

## **Objectives and activities.**

- The West Shropshire Talking Newspaper’s stated objects in its constitution are to ‘relieve visually impaired persons as defined by the Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2002, and to those persons affected by some other incapacity that makes reading a strain or an impossibility, by the provision of recorded news and information.’

- The WSTN offers its services free to anyone in the West Shropshire area (SY Shropshire postcodes) who satisfies the objectives stated above.
- Where requested, the WSTN provides an audio-player free of charge.
- It produces a weekly audio newspaper. News stories come from the local press which is duly credited. Other internally produced material of interest to the listeners is included, as well as public service announcements.
- A bi- monthly magazine, based on ‘The Shropshire Magazine’ is also produced.
- A library of audio books is available.
- Listeners were offered free access to the Calibre Talking Books library – funded by The Ethel Leake Memorial Fund; however, this service is now free to users and so funding of new membership is no longer required.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

The West Shropshire Talking Newspaper has no paid staff.

It is fortunate in having a loyal and hardworking band of volunteers. It is very encouraging that new volunteers continue to join, as sadly others die or have to give up because of ill health or other commitments. In the year 2019/20 there was an average of 78 volunteers offering a range of support, some of whom have individual roles mentioned elsewhere in this report. (The current full list is appended to this report.)

New volunteers are always welcome; help is especially needed from those who would be prepared to take on the role of editor, technical operator, join the committee (including acting as an Officer) or provide IT/ computing support.

We would particularly like to hear from anyone who could help organise our charity collections and fund raising and / or take part in our store and street collections.

Please contact any committee member if you would like to help. Or use the contact details on the front page of this report.

## **Duties**

The duties undertaken by volunteers to produce and support the WSTN include

- Acting as editor
- Providing weekly or monthly features
- Operating the recording equipment for the weekly and bi-monthly recordings and providing technical support

- Presenting
- Reading
- Involvement in copying and distribution
- Helping with store and street collections
- Helping to staff the annual St Mary's Charity Card Shop.

Apart from the elected committee, (listed in the Governance section of this report,) many of whom carry out a number of roles mentioned elsewhere, the following also provide invaluable support for the WSTN's activities

- Charity collection organisers – John Wilson and Stephen Stewart.
- Readers/presenters roster co-ordinator – Sandra Kelly
- Editors roster – Steve Bristow
- Charity Christmas cards organiser – Jane Williams
- Office support, listener records and general administration – Edna Evans and Linda Croot

### **Long Service Awards**

The WSTN is very grateful for the many years of loyal service given by its volunteers, and this year we especially thank the following:

- 10 years service – Gareth Hardcastle  
Sheila Middle  
Ian Musty  
Robert Parsons  
Cynthia Phillips  
Sylvia Starkey
- 20 years service – Steve Bristow

### **Friends of the WSTN**

In 2019 the idea of forming a Friends Group was suggested to help provide a regular source of donations because supermarket and street collections were not realising as much as previously. We advertised our intentions in the media and gave talks to try and recruit people who wanted to support our charity but not in a hands-on way. A launch was held at the Roy Fletcher Centre in June 2019 where, after a talk, questions and refreshments, we were also able to provide a guided visit and demonstration in the studio.

Initially eight people became Friends, joined subsequently by another five, including two listeners, and we continue to be very grateful for their support. Their standing order donations have boosted our coffers in a completely different way to any of our previous fund raising. We hope this will continue for the future and maybe we can expand and recruit more people.

Some of the Friends attended our 2019 autumn volunteers' lunch which meant they were able

to meet and chat to volunteers. Because of the present situation we have been unable to organise any more social events; however, we decided to let the Friends know what was happening and how we are able to continue producing the newspaper. Three responded, sending thanks for our work and good wishes, and one of those three sent a large donation in addition to their monthly standing orders.

## **Achievements and performance**

Where possible, we try to respond positively to requests to give talks to local groups and organisations. These occasions offer an opportunity to publicise the WSTN, to distribute more leaflets and information, and have also resulted in some new recipients of the service as well as donations.

The WSTN continues to be actively involved in the annual Charity Christmas Card Shop held in St Mary's church Shrewsbury, particularly in supplying volunteer helpers. The cards sold there provide a useful source of income, as well as a 'show case' for our service, as the card shop has a very high footfall.

Our profile is also raised by the opportunity for collections at various local supermarkets throughout the year, as well as raising valuable funds.

The WSTN had a stand at the Macular Open Day in October 2019. Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus restrictions, the 2020 See Hear Exhibition, at which a stand was planned, was cancelled. Members of the Committee who staffed the former were able to meet a number of existing listeners as well as making some useful contacts.

We are amongst the most accessible of Talking Newspapers.

We currently offer five ways of listening:

- Memory stick delivered through the post, played back via the audio player we provide free of charge
- Sonata internet radio from the British Wireless for the Blind Fund
- Independently via our website through various internet devices onto which BWBF's Talking Newspaper app has been downloaded
- Local telephone listening service.
- Amazon's ALEXA, voice operated internet system.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to know exactly how many listeners the WSTN has; there are about 250 listeners on our postal mailing list. Data concerning hits on our website gives us some insight into those accessing from other sources. The telephone service offers some redacted data as does Sonata radio. We would welcome some feedback from anyone who listens in this way.

We also have anecdotal evidence that the memory sticks are listened to by more than one person, particularly if the recipient is in a care or nursing home. We have circulated nursing homes advising them of our service.

Membership forms are available to download from our website as well as being available in printed form.

The Committee receives regular feedback on any technical or other quality problems at the regular committee meetings. We monitor and respond to reports from listeners on the players and memory sticks we provide, and we try to resolve any difficulties as quickly as possible. New deliveries of the players are checked before issue and returned to the supplier for replacement if found to be faulty.

We adhere to the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of 2018. During the course of the year, we upgraded our method of data storage and our thanks are due to Pete Griffiths and Idonix for their hard work in ensuring the secure transfer of the encrypted data concerned.

We continue to monitor our output carefully and we are constantly trying to make our systems as robust as possible.

The quality of the weekly newspaper depends on the skill and hard work of the team of editors and thanks must go to Lalage Bown, Steve Bristow, Bill Curnow, Ian Musty, Averil Newell, Paul Pascoe and Alan Wilding. A comprehensive set of guidance notes supports this work.

Regular high quality recorded programmes depend on our small group of technical operators as well as on the studio hardware and associated recording software. The WSTN has been very well served by our volunteer technical team throughout the year and thanks are due to Steve Bristow, Alan Coplestone, Chris Lemon, Paul Pascoe, Mark Salmon and Alan Wilding.

The WSTN maintains a social media presence through a Facebook page and this has received an increased number of hits during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Whilst the basic format of the weekly newspaper has remained the same since the introduction of digital recording and distribution, the capacity of the memory stick means that we can vary the length according to the quantity of news on a particular week, and offer expanded coverage of key local stories. On average each issue runs to about ninety minutes of news and features. We continue to try to develop our use of original material, such as live recordings and interviews. We have also continued to include an 'Out of Area' track. We welcome any feedback on content and /or quality.

We continue to produce a bi-monthly magazine based on 'The Shropshire Magazine'. Since the end of the calendar year, production of this has passed from Helen, Mark and Sue to Steve Bristow.

We collaborated with the Shrewsbury colleges group. Student groups came up with a campaign to re energise the WSTN image. Work to implement some of their proposals comes within the overall discussions over the WSTN's future strategy.

There was also a SWOT analysis report started to explore the **Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats** of the WSTN. The report looked into the working practices of the WSTN.

WSTN Chairman Peter Waller and Secretary Hannah Sherlock attended the TNF annual conference of 2019.

## **Financial Review**

### **Accounts**

Appended are the accounts for the year ending 31 December 2019, together with the Independent Examiner's Report.

As ever we are grateful to Jonathan Rimmer, and to Messrs James, Holyoak and Parker, Chartered Accountants, for their examination of our accounts and financial records, and for waiving their professional fees.

### **Commentary on the accounts**

#### **Income and expenditure**

The WSTN depends entirely on donations, small grants and fund raising.

In accordance with the most recent (2016) Charity Commission guidelines on Reserves, the Committee takes the view that reserves should cover approximately three years running costs. This secures the WSTN in the medium term against any unforeseen drop in income, or unexpected costs. The current reserves meet this requirement.

The accounts show monies reserved for technical development, and service development, also in accordance with Charity Commission Guidelines.

At the request of the donors, the Ethel Leake Memorial Fund (ELMF) is money designed for use in special projects, as and when they arise.

The WSTN is very grateful to our generous donors and to those who gave gifts in memory of family and friends.

A list of donors is at the end of this report.

#### **Office costs**

Our major item of expenditure was as usual our rent and service charge. Nevertheless, the Roy Fletcher Centre continues to offer very competitive rents for our office and recording studio.

The BT contract for phone and internet services is kept under review.

## **Financial Risk Management**

All cheques and disbursements are subject to a double signature from the designated list of signatories, namely Secretary, Treasurer, Chairman and Vice-Chairman (excluding the payee). Receipts are required.

A debit card is held, and a protocol for its use agreed by the committee. The one card holder is currently the Vice-Chairman. Expenditure is authorised by the Treasurer. Bank statements are inspected by a non-cheque signatory member of the committee at each bi-monthly committee meeting. The Income and Expenditure Account is presented and discussed at each bi-monthly committee meeting.

The placement of the reserves and our banking arrangements have been reviewed in the financial year, and the Committee takes the view that they are secure and appropriate.

A fundraising protocol is in place as suggested by the Fundraising Regulator during the course of the year to cover the WSTN's on-street collections and those held, with permission, at local shops.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Our accounts show a deficit of £2,662 for the year, which is an improvement on the last two years, when the deficits were in excess of £4,000. Our reserves stand at a more than adequate £62,085.

Our Christmas cards performed well, raising £796 which is all profit due to prudent purchasing by Mary Pascoe in the previous year. We are also grateful to Hannah Sherlock for obtaining a grant of £1,000 from the Mid-Counties Co-Op. Through her initiative we also received £200 from the Mayor's Carnival Fund. Many thanks to Jane, Mary, Hannah and all who helped at the Christmas Card Charity Shop.

We are very grateful to our generous donors and those who gave gifts in memory of family and friends. We benefited this year from our Friends initiative, which raised £591 since its conception to the year end. Many thanks to Alan and Susan Wilding for all their hard work in setting this up and to the Friends themselves. Our fundraising realised £1,241 and many thanks must go to John Wilson and all our dedicated collectors.

Our expenditure remained pretty static, spending £10,221; approximately half of this – £5,244 – was spent on our rent and service charge.

Lastly, but by no means least, many thanks to Jon Rimmer and Messrs James, Holyoak & Parker, Chartered Accountants, for their examination of our accounts and financial records and for waiving their professional fees.

*Stephen Stewart,*  
Treasurer

### **List of Donors**

Mrs Frances Barlow  
In Memory Pamela Bird  
Bowmere Heath Women's Institute  
Dr Julia Brown  
In Memory Mr Geoffrey Cartwright  
Church Stretton Tuesday Centre  
Mr C. Clews  
Mrs Emily Crump  
In Memory Mrs Emily Crump  
Mr & Mrs M. J. Crump  
Parish Council of Culmington  
Mr M. Edwards  
Fellowship of Retired Ambulance Personnel  
Mrs C. Hughes  
Inner Wheel Shrewsbury  
Mrs R. L. Jarman  
In Memory Mr D. Jones  
Mr P. F. Lewis  
Ludlow Quakers Meeting  
Mid-Counties Co-Op  
Mrs D. N. Norton  
Mrs M. D. Priestley  
Mr D. Richards  
Rodington Ladies Club  
Mr Paul Roso  
Rotary Club of Shrewsbury  
W. V. G. Simpson  
Mr M. Slamo  
Mr C. Stewart  
Mr S. Stewart  
Dr Sarah Thomson  
Mrs M. Watson  
Mrs D. Woodvine

### Friends of WSTN:

Mrs F. Barlow  
Mr A. Cashmore  
Mrs J. Dodd  
Mr M. J. Dwyer  
Mr W. J. Elliott  
Mr J. A. Garrard  
Mr J. Goldsworthy  
Mr M. Harrison  
Mr & Mrs S. Herd  
Mr M. Law  
Dr S. Thomson  
Miss M. Thrower

## List of Volunteers 2019

Judith Al-Nasri  
Emma Bentley  
Harriet Bisson  
Lalage Bown  
Kath Bristow  
Steve Bristow  
Dirk Commerford  
Jennie Commerford  
Lucille Connolly  
Mo Cooper  
Alan Copplestone  
Linda Croot  
Bill Curnow  
Angie Davies  
Gordon Douglas  
Vicky Dwyer  
Geraint Dyfnallt  
Robert Elliott  
Tom Farrell  
Celia Forest  
Brian France  
Sue France  
Eleanor Gillogaley  
George Gunn  
Gareth Hardcastle  
David Harris  
Karthryn Heraghty  
Sue Hollings  
Sandra Hunter  
Rob Hutchings  
Ron Iremonger  
David Jenkins  
Sandra Kelly  
Aurora Kenny  
Chris Lemon  
Aiden McGinley  
Beryl McGinley  
Lesley Maydew  
Stephen Meyer  
Liz Merrifield  
Sheila Middle  
Janet Miller  
Jim Mould  
Ian Musty  
Averil Newell  
Eileen Norton  
Dilwyn Owen  
Robert Parsons  
Paul Pascoe  
Mary Pascoe  
Cynthia Phillips  
Allan Price  
John Richardson  
Pam Richardson  
Jennifer Roberts  
Gwyneth Rollins  
Lindsey Rowlands  
Helen Salmon  
Mark Salmon  
Hannah Sherlock  
John Siviter  
Malcolm Soutar  
Sylvia Starkey  
Stephen Stewart  
Margot Sutton  
Julia Taylor  
Margaret Thrower  
Genevieve Tudor  
Peter Waller  
Jonathan Walton  
Emma Wilde  
Alan Wilding  
Susan Wilding  
Jane Williams  
John Wilson