

Notes from Barrow in Bloom AGM Meeting 04
held on 14th January 2025
Parish Council Offices

Present: Barrow In Bloom Officers:

Annette Richardson - Chair, Alison Rushton – Treasurer, Alison Bowley – Secretary

Bloom Volunteers: Anne Freestone

Jerusalem Island Gardeners: Val Thompson

Nott Garden: Tilly Yates

Barrow Parish Council: Caroline Drake

Charnwood BC: Elenor Montgomery

Canal & River Trust: Linny Beaumont

Description

1. Welcome and Apologies: Annette thanked everyone for coming and introductions were made. Apologies received from Sandie Forrest, Claire Forrest, Alice Gardam – all Barrow Parish Council, Kaye Robinson – East Midlands Railways, Nicola Clarke – idverde, Andy Northcote-Smith – Bloom Volunteer.

2. Agree Notes from AGM03: The notes were agreed.

3. Summary of the Year to Date: Both Alison R and Annette provided written updates for the meeting as below:

Summary for Wild About Barrow – Alison R:

Bird Boxes: The bird boxes were cleared and inspected by Mark at the end of the season.

- 1 blue tit box at bottom of Holbourne Close on canal path was used
- The robin box on Mill Lane was not used, again
- Half of the starling boxes were used – 1 at Riverside View and 2 in KGV. (starlings are red listed birds)

Next year: we will take advice on installing further bird boxes from RSPB expert, Ross, at idverde.

Swifts: The project of installing swift boxes in the Holy Trinity Church tower, instigated by Wild About Barrow over 3 years ago and handed over to the church eco group, has resulted in 10 swift boxes being fitted. They worked tirelessly seeking permissions and collaborating with church authorities and idverde. A swift caller has also been fitted. This sounds for an hour after dawn and before dusk from May to July. This is essential to encourage swifts to occupy new nesting sites.

Bat Boxes: Following the bat workshop in August 2023, the bat boxes made by participants were installed in locations advised by Peter Proudlove of the Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find anyone licensed to assess their usage.

Cotes Road Verge: Four species of plug plants grown on from the previous year were planted, together with some foxgloves. Plug plants planted: Greater stitchwort, Dames' violet, Betony, Red campion. Lesley, our warden, worked hard keeping down the vigorous grasses and bind weed around them but sadly, she has resigned following medical advice. We thank her for her work to improve this area. A replacement warden will be sought in 2025. The verge was strimmed and the arisings removed in the autumn, as were all other wildflower areas. This decreases the fertility and improve conditions for wildflowers, which can't compete well with vigorous grasses. Next year we aim to have the verge strimmed at the beginning of the growing season as well, introduce yellow rattle, and if we can clear an area of grasses, sow some wildflower seeds.

Millennium Park: New Bed by entrance: Our warden, Kathryn, has regularly maintained the bed. The rest of the plug plants were planted along with some cornflowers and foxgloves. It gave a good display over the spring and summer. The bed has been resown with a wildflower seed mix (Restore and Enrich). Next year, we aim to add some bird's-foot trefoil and viper's bugloss as these are very good for wildlife.

Wavy Bed: The development of this bed has increased the biodiversity of the bank from 8 to 22 species. We now seeking permission to extend the bed towards the hedge as this will improve connectivity for

species as well as creating a larger wildlife habitat. We hope to arrange for rotovation of the area to be developed this spring, followed by seeding with a wildflower seed mix.

Species Count: A species count was undertaken of 4 wildlife areas in the village. Most areas increased their species count except Coates Roads but this was most likely due to the substantial reduction in area covered. A further species count will be done in the summer.

Summary for Barrow in Bloom – Annette:

Awards, Presentations and Workshops:

2 amazing awards – in July we were awarded the **Green Flag Award** for our riverside area around Deep Lock and Riverside View – our 3rd year running. And in September we won the **East Midlands in Bloom Gold Award** for Small Towns & were also awarded **Best in category** with 96 points, and I was also very privileged to have won the Committees Award. Many, many thanks to all volunteers who helped to ensure we had a successful judging day, whether they helped on the day itself, or on the run up with admin support – thank you all.

Presentations – Barrow Station Adoption Volunteers were asked to present at this year's EMR Conference in Nottingham in October. We also held a 2-day presentation about our winning Bloom entry at Barrow Community Library also in October.

Volunteer Badges – In May volunteers that have completed 100 hours or more of volunteering were all invited to attend an awards presentation in the village. 18 volunteers were awarded 100 hours, 8 were awarded 200 hrs, and 2 for 500 hours. This will hopefully be an annual presentation.

Art Workshops – in November and December the Barrow Station Adoption Volunteers held 2 workshops at Barrow Community Library for other volunteers from the village community. These workshops created 60 individual wooden flowers to be added to the new wildlife scenes at the Railway Station in early 2025.

Thanks to our Partner Groups

Barrow Parish Council: Thanks for continued support throughout the year, in terms of insurance, encouragement and funding.

Charnwood Borough Council & Idverde: Thanks for all the community bins and waste bags provided and collected, for our footpaths and litter picking groups, as well as the woodchip provided for our community green spaces around the village. Thanks for the funding from both of our Councillors, and the support and advice given to our EMIB entry.

Canal and River Trust: The increased work the volunteers have been able to undertake is also very much also down to the CRT staff we directly interact with who ensure we can work safely alongside the waterways, by providing tools and materials, support, and water safety guidance – thank you.

East Midlands Railway & Community Rail Network: We learned in our first 2 years, 2022 & 2023, that getting approval to undertake any new work at the station takes a very long time, but the team at EMR continue to plug away in the background to get our latest proposals approved, as well as providing funding alongside Community Rail Network – thank you. Our Special Thanks goes to Alexa from EMR who retired in December but has supported us since April 2022.

None of this could have been done without:

Our Amazing Volunteers turn up week after week, in all weathers and for all types of tasks. A really great group of people to work alongside Thank you.

Group	Hours	Group Tasks	# Different Volunteers	Bags/Bins etc
Litter Pickers	425.5	13	26	187 bags of rubbish
Footpaths	675.5	24	24	68 bins
Bloom projects	544	59* inc WW	30	*1 Community Bin
Pennywort	96.5	11	14	30-40 tonnes
Station Adopters	632.25	38* inc WW	19	40+ bags leaf mulch
Wild about Barrow	57.75	4	5	*2 editions of Nature Notes
Admin	430.5	N/A	19 * Inc EMiB	
Total	2861.75	149	59	

59 different volunteers taking part in group events. 2862 hours - more than any other year – again.

149 group tasks – this includes all the work undertaken by the Footpaths Group, Litter pickers, Station Adoption Group, Wild About Barrow Team, and The Pennywort Team.

It also includes all the work done by our Bloom project teams at Riverside View, Deep Lock, King George V Sensory Garden, and at the Railway Station . Lots of this work is done every week from spring to late autumn.

Alongside this we also have all the solo tasks that volunteers have taken upon themselves - the solo litter pickers, the strimming team, the ivy removal, and the artwork at the station.

Thank you all for making 2024 a great success.

4. Financial Report: Alison updated the meeting on the funding situation - We had total income of £5,119.52 for our financial year commencing on 1st November 2023 to 31st October 2023. The closing balance was £3,022.20.

The main income was a donation of £2,204.52 from the Gardening Club. Note*The donation is ear marked for 2 benches at Willow Road once the adoption process has been completed.

Other substantial funding of £1600 was received for various projects at the Railway Station: For the Artwork Project £400 was received from both East Midlands Railways (EMR) and Community Rail Network, along with £200 received from both Barrow Gardening Club and Barrow Conservative Club. EMR also funded £327 towards plants, Tools and the Routes of Remembrance plaque, and a private donation was received for £73.

Charnwood Borough Councillors Members Grant (£500) and a Barrow Parish Council Grant (£500) was used towards new planting, tools and materials for various green spaces around the village. Expenditure for these areas also included grant funding from a previous Charnwood Borough Councillors Members Grant of £357.

Barrow Parish Council also donated £105 towards Hi-Vis safety vest for volunteers. £210 was received as private donations towards general Bloom outings.

Many thanks to all who provided grant funding or donations.

5. Re-election of Officers: Annette, Alison R and Alison B were all happy to be re-elected in their current roles and were unanimously voted in.

6. Future Plans:

• **East Midlands in Bloom Competition 2025 - Britian in Bloom 2025**

The Steering Group consulted various volunteers involved in EMiB entry for 2024 that were part of the project teams looking after the green spaces. Due to damage at the Railway Station caused by test holes being drilled for the electrification of the line – which is still ongoing potentially for another 6-12 months, and the major undertaking in spring of cutting back hard the honeysuckle in King George V Sensory

Garden, it agreed **we would not** enter EMIB 2025 or take up EMIB on their offer of entering Britian in Bloom 2025.

- **EMIB 2024 – Judges recommendations – and how do we implement them?**

All of the judges' comments/recommendations were read out and discussed in detail. Actions needed to progress them will be taken through normal group activity where possible. Other local community groups may be approached if advice is needed, i.e. addressing air pollution

- **Funding requirements and Planning with Partner groups for green spaces**

Draft plans were discussed in detail. Further meetings will be needed to confirm these along with any funding requirements identified.

Riverside View / Deep Lock Approach Wall Repairs – work will continue to try to identify who the wall belongs to so we can get permission to cosmetically repair it. CBC have previously stated the wall is a silent boundary between CBC and CRT. Linny (CRT) has spoken with the Environmental Agency (EA) who also states that the wall does not belong to them and will chase a letter from them to confirm this. CRT are willing to meet with CBC to discuss this again and help provide a way forward for repairs to be done.

- **Planning for group tasks**

Continue with our existing work load for regular Group Tasks including supporting the various green spaces around the village when extra volunteer numbers are required, and supporting all the watering and weeding teams at our various green spaces already mentioned.

7. Any Other Business:

Vat T mentioned that new volunteers for Jerusalem Island are always welcome – an advert in Barrow Voice is expected during the year, but it was also suggested Scouts and Guides, and Dof E students may be interested if appropriate.

Dead Hedges – After creating one at home Val T mentioned the tremendous benefits for wildlife and asked if they are used anywhere in the village? Annette stated that we have informal dead hedges in Piets Close but use twig/thatch mounds as habitat piles in Millennium Park which bring similar benefits.

Alison R asked if the mowing schedule for Millennium Park wavy bed area for this year would to allow for the grass here to continue to grow longer – 1-2m from path as in 2024. It was confirmed that it would.

Anne F is a new volunteer joining in 2024 and said that communication about volunteering tasks is good and she thanked Annette.

Linny B mentioned that the Baldwin Trust has requested better access across the car park at Barrow Boating for wheelchair users and asked if any local business would be able to advice on possible cost-effective solutions. Annette will put her in touch with businesses that have previously supported the group. It was also suggested that contact be made with Amy Tebbs at British Gypsum.

Annette closed the meeting by again thanking all for attending and there ongoing support.