

Notes from Barrow in Bloom 5th Annual General Meeting Tuesday 20th January 2026 Barrow Parish Council Offices

Present: Current Officers of the Scheme (Steering Group)

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

Volunteers:	Karen Libby, Julie Binch, Nick Thomas, Terri Davies, Anne Freestone, Andy Northcote-Smith, Tilly Yates
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Invited external Groups	Parish Council: Alice Gardam, Caroline Drake Charnwood Borough Council: Julie Byrne Idverde: Nicola Clarke East Midlands Railway: Sam Smith
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Apologies	Volunteers: Bill Hinds, Andrew Willis Canal & River Trust: Linny Beaumont Leicestershire County Councillor: Hilary Fryer
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Description

Item 1 - Welcome and Apologies: Annette thanked everyone for coming and introductions were made. Apologies received from Bill Hinds, Andrew Willis, Linny Beaumont and Hilary Fryer.

Item 2 - Agree Notes from AGM 04: The notes were agreed.

Item 3 - Summary of the Year to Date:

From Annette - **Awards, Workshops and Special Events:**

Green Flag Award: Deep Lock, and the Deep Lock Approach area / Riverside View retained the Green Flag Award for a 4th year. This is part of the Canal and River Trust sponsored 42km section of The River Soar and GU Leicester Line - Loughborough to Kilby Bridge. The route includes all the towpath surrounding the village. Thanks to all volunteers involved in various tasks to maintain the areas, especially Karen and Brian Libby who look after Deep Lock, and the Riverside View watering and weeding team.

Volunteer Badges Awards Day: Held on 26th June at the Hunting Lodge. We had 5 different levels of badges awarded, 100hrs, 200hrs, 500hrs, 1000hrs, and 2000hrs. Massive congratulations to those receiving their awards and special thanks to the Hunting Lodge for donating some gorgeous nibbles for volunteers to enjoy.

Artwork and Art Workshops: Workshops were held on 8th and 22nd March at Barrow Conservative Club where 42 more flowers were made. All these flowers, plus leaves, made by Pre-School Children from Lime Tree Nursery, and extra bushes and 2 village scenes (Jerusalem Island and Holy Trinity Church) were all added during 2025. Special thanks to Barrow Conservative Club and Barrow Gardening Club for funds towards the artwork, and to Stewart Pawley and Nick Thomas for all the extra hours of preparation time that went into making this happen.

Great British Spring Clean: Held on 1st April to clear along Barrow Road whilst it was closed for resurfacing, we had 23 volunteers taking part, including volunteers from Quorn.

Railway Station Action Day: Held on 19th September. 10 Volunteers were allowed to paint the Station metalwork infrastructure alongside 3 staff from EMR.

Crocus Bulb Planting: Held on 13th October at King George V Park, we had 8 volunteers help to fulfil this special request from BUSCA to plant over 1500 bulbs, most of which were donated by the community.

Wall at Riverside View: After lots of requests over the previous 4 -5 years from Barrow in Bloom, permission was finally given by both Charnwood Borough Council and The Canal and River Trust to begin work on cosmetic repairs to the wall. Volunteers and staff from the CRT carried out the repairs during September and October. More may be done in 2026. Many thanks to those involved.

Replacement wooden planters at Deep Lock: Using recycled wooden planking, our volunteers replaced many of the wooden planters at Deep Lock that were first installed in spring 2021.

Paths and a new planter at Riverside View: In July Volunteers were able to top up the paths with fresh grano. A new planter was also installed. Special Thanks to David Batey of Bespoke Landscaping and Fencing for getting all materials donated by local suppliers including JRC Landscaping and Driveways, LawMac Fencing, Derries Nurseries Cossington, and Wanlip Sand and Gravel.

Barrow Voice Articles: 4 articles highlighted the work Bloom volunteers do and the areas they look after.

New Group: We started a new group in 2025 – Himalayan Balsam Bashers. Alongside Pennywort, this is an invasive, non-native plant that is spreading very quickly along our riverside banks and paths. The team find the plants, rip them out of the ground, twist of their roots and leave them to rot down in situ. We report the actions back to CRT.

Thanks to All Our Amazing Volunteers: Our 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	Notes
Footpaths	695	28	23	84 Community Bins ordered
Bloom Project Teams	755.5	131*	33	Weekly watering and weeding at KGV, HTC, RCV, and DL. Also, PW, HBB, and Strimming tasks
Station Adopters	712	56*	21	Group tasks, Leaf sweeping, artwork and weekly watering and weeding
Litter Pickers	355.75	38	29	Over 350 bags of rubbish removed from green spaces and roadside verges
Wild About Barrow	52.5	4	6	More on WAB from Alison to follow.
Admin	118.75		8	
Totals	2,738.5	257	58	

** Includes Weekly Watering and Weeding tasks which can be 2 or 3 times each week for each task listed.*

Special Thanks to our Gardening Teams at Barrow Railway Station and King George V Sensory Gardens: They are few in number, but between them, they turn out at each week for at least 9 months of the year to care for the plants. They are Julie Binch, Honor Neale, Jane Johnson, Bill Hinds, Andrew Willis and Anne Freestone – Thank you.

Also – A Huge Amount of Thanks to The Wild Women Outdoor Club - from Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre, especially Amy. The Wild Women Outdoor Club have provided on-the-water support to our volunteers in our never-ending objective to remove as much pennywort weed from our waterways as possible. Week after week during the summer, autumn and into the winter months, they have provided paddleboarders to help us reach the places our land-based volunteers just cannot reach – Thank you

Barrow in Bloom would also like to say a very sincere Thank you to the Volunteers that have been gardening on Jerusalem Island for the last 20-25 years. Jerusalem Island is a huge welcome symbol for our village and has been a major part of our East Midlands in Bloom competition in our previous entries. New volunteers are being recruited, and we look forward to meeting them soon.

Thanks to our Partner Groups:

Barrow Parish Council: Barrow Parish Council provide our Public Liability Insurance for when we undertake tasks and events in and around the village. This year that cover was extended to include the Strimming Team's tasks – Thank you.

Charnwood Borough Council & Idverde: We receive support from Charnwood Borough Council with the regular provision of Community Brown bins and the provision and collection of rubbish bags from sites around the village, and we receive support from Idverde with horticultural advice – Thank you.

Canal and River Trust: We receive a different type of support from The Canal and River in the form of materials and provision of more specialised tools for the tasks we carry out along the towpath and river side – Thank you.

East Midlands Railway & Community Rail Network: We are very grateful to our New Community Ambassador at EMR, Sam Smith, who has supported our requests to enable volunteers to carry out work to make improvements to the station – Thank you.

Barrow in Bloom has had another very successful year due to the continued collaboration between Volunteers, Partner Groups, and our Community – Thank you all for making 2025 a great year.

From Alison R, Wild About Barrow Report

We have:

- maintained the 3 wildflower areas
- sown wildflower seeds on all areas
- cut & removed growth in the autumn to try to reduce soil fertility.
- sown vipers bugloss for planting in all areas.
- conducted a species count in all 3 areas
- monitored the use of bird boxes
- begun to advertise the Pollinator Pathway

In June I undertook a spp count and found:

Cotes Road Verge

Floral spp = 26 (22 last yr)

Fauna spp = 11 (4)

Total spp = 37 (26)

There has been a significant change of wildflower species over the last 4 years.

When we adopted this verge, NatureSpot conducted a survey and graded it as a medium quality meadow with a good species diversity and providing a valuable wildlife habitat. Since then, the size of

the verge has significantly reduced to a more manageable size and this has affected the diversity of spp and their abundance.

We've unfortunately lost the 3 spp which indicate a quality meadow.
(Autumn Hawkbit, Black Medick and Red Clover).

However, all is not gloom and doom. As a result of the spring seed sowing, there has been a small increase in spp on last year. There has been a good increase in the variety of insects since last year (26 to 37) although the abundance appeared to have decreased.

The NatureSpot report said that many spp added artificially tend not to thrive and mostly disappear within 2 – 3 years.

However, we will continue to manage it to reduce fertility and will keep adding seeds and plants with our fingers crossed.

Millennium Park

New Bed:

Flora spp = 24 (22 for 2024)

Fauna not counted (none seen)

I'm pleased to report that over the last 3 years, the spp diversity has increased steadily by 2 each year – and this year didn't include the spring flowers so it would have been even more. This June it stood at 24 spp. 8 new spp are present, including 3 that were planted. (Greater bird's-foot trefoil, red campion, black medick). We will check the spring flowers next year and assess whether we need to improve it.

Wavy Bed:

Flora spp = 15 (19 2024)

Fauna spp = 8 (4)

Total spp = 23 (23)

The floral count has decreased from 19 last year to 15 this June. However, there was a greater range of insects found – which goes against the national trend. This makes the total species count the same as last year. (23) We have cut and removed the growth and sown more wildflower seeds in the hope of increasing the biodiversity here.

Pollinator Pathway Project: I wrote an article in BV to get residents interested in participating in this. It was featured on Gardeners' World last Autumn and aims to increase the insect population which has dropped by 60% in just 20 years. Not a lot of response so far.

Bats: We have tried on several occasions to get a licenced bat person to assess the use of the bat boxes made in 2022 but can find no one qualified to do so. We will try again next year with the help of Idverde. It can take several years before the boxes are used.

Swift boxes: This was begun by WAB and then handed over to the Church Eco group when that formed. I am delighted to say that in this, their first year, 2 were populated which is amazing: one on the south face and one on the north.

Bird boxes: Awaiting report from Mark Munroe on the use of existing boxes this year.

We have been in touch with Ross of Idverde to organise more bird boxes. Their preferred way forward is to produce boxes for red listed birds, particularly swifts and wish to do this through individuals putting them on their own houses.

Jobs for next year:

- To continue to increase the biodiversity through planting seeds, bulbs and plug plants
- Reduce soil fertility by cutting and removing the arisings
- Work with Ross from Idverde and Annette to establish more village bird boxes
- Write articles to publicise the Pollinator Pathway and get it underway

Julie B thanked Alison R for the report and the hard work.

Annette read out a statement on behalf of Linny Beaumont from Canal and River Trust: I would like to formally thank Barrow in Bloom for the fantastic work you have all done over the past year to care for the towpath and surrounding areas. We truly appreciate all you have done to keep on top of litter, vegetation and pennywort as well as for all the additional repairs to the towpath and the wall. You have been pivotal in building strong partnerships, especially with the LOPC Wild Women group which has made a significant impact on tackling the pennywort which I hope you will continue to lead on.

The Canal & River Trust would like to thank you for all your support, and we look forward to continuing to work together with your group and our Towpath Teams to care for this beautiful waterway and maintain the Green Flag Award again this year.

Item 4 - Financial Report: (Please refer to the Financial Report attached to the end of these notes) Treasurer's Report for 5th AGM Barrow in Bloom For the year 1 Nov 24– 31 Oct 25

We had £3,022.20 carried forward from last year and an income of £2,572.

This was from 4 sources, the largest being from East Midlands Railway of £1,500. We received a grant of £750.00 from Charnwood BC. Barrow Parish Council gave us a grant of £145 for Hi-Viz jackets, thank you.

And we received donations amounting to £177.

Our expenditure was as follows :

Of the CBC Grant, £658.05 was spent on various tools, leaving a balance of £91.95. We spent £199.66 on green spaces around the village on tools, plants and seeds, leaving a balance of £158.15. From the Gardening Club donation of £2,404.52 , £200 was transferred to the railway funds.

Railway Station

Part of the income for the railway was for compensation for damage caused by work they carried out at the station, so plants were replaced. Other expenditure was for costs involved in making the artwork which now adorns the station. The total expenditure was £1,567.04, leaving a balance of £392.81.

Donations

£234.25 was spent mostly on bedding plants for Deep Lock and Riverside View and 2 pruning saws. It leaves a balance of £98.76.

After another busy year, we have a balance of £2,946.19 which has been carried forward to Y6 to help make Barrow look even more fantastic.

Annette stated that a large portion of the available funds (£2,204) was a donation from Barrow Gardening Club which is set aside to purchase 2 garden benches for Willow Road Park Area. Alice stated

that further delays had recently arisen due to Miller Homes holding back the transfer due to the Bloor Homes proposed development at the same site. It was suggested that the issue is discussed directly with the Parish Council.

Item 5 - Re-election of Officers/Steering Group: Annette has agreed to remain as Chair, And Alison B has agreed to remain as Secretary. Alison R stated prior to the meeting that she was willing to step down if another volunteer was interested in taking on the role of Treasurer. Nick Thomas offered to become the new Bloom Treasurer. This was proposed by Annette, seconded by Alison B, and voted unanimously by those in attendance. Annette welcomed Nick to the Steering Group.

Annette thanked Alison R for all her help and support over the past 5 years and hoped that she will continue with her hard work leading the Wild About Barrow Team for many more years.

Note: The Constitution will be updated to reflect these changes.

Item 6 - Future Plans:

Planning for group tasks

Continue with our existing workload for our regular Large Groups:

- Footpaths – every 2 weeks, rising to weekly if required during some summer months
- Litter picking – monthly, 1st Monday of each month, but groups tasks generally stop during summer due to excessive grass growth in fields
- Station Adopters – monthly, last Sunday of each month for large group tasks once approval has been granted.

Continue with our existing workload for our regular Small Groups:

- King George and Holy Trinity Team – Most Mondays from early spring into the winter months
- Railway Station Gardening Team – at least twice weekly for watering and weeding during spring to late autumn. Some monthly meetings to discuss other issues as needed.
- Riverside View watering and weeding Team – 2 or 3 times each week from early summer to late autumn
- Deep Lock Team – 2 or 3 times each week from early summer to late autumn
- Strimming Team – 2 or 3 times each week from early summer to late autumn
- Himalayan Balsam bashing team – once a week during June/July
- Pennywort - ideally every week throughout the year if conditions allow, and weed is accessible.
Note* Additional waterside support is required.
- Station leaf sweeping – approx. 8-10 weeks in late autumn
- Wild About Barrow – continue to maintain and improve the existing 3 wildflower areas

Plans and Funding requirements and Planning with Partner groups: *All the plans mentioned below are subject to further discussion and approval with each partner group.*

Barrow Parish Council Areas:

King George V Sensory Gardens - Mapping and labelling of the plants to continue. Overgrown plants to be trimmed on a as needed (and agreed) basis. Some planting is expected to be moved around to make better use of space available and size of existing plants. Some new planting may be required if plants have been lost over winter. Continue to discuss managing the removal of the Woodchip piles which may have honey fungus. Idverde are still waiting confirmation from their experts that photos of the fungus do show that its honey fungus. If it is, then the woodchip shouldn't be used near trees as it could help to spread the fungus further.

Millennium Park – All wildflower areas to be maintained by volunteers as agreed with BPC. Some spending on selected seeds may be required.

Funding from BPC – BiB currently have £158 of remaining funds - No further funding for the above activities is expected for 2026. Some Hi Vis safety clothing may be needed for any new volunteers.

Charnwood Borough Council Areas:

Riverside View – Maintain benches and planters using funds received in 2025. Volunteers will continue water and weed the plants between May and September. Confirm use of pesticides around mature trees

Holy Trinity Church – Rose Beds - Volunteers weed the area monthly and feed the remaining roses during this task. The roses will also be pruned as appropriate. The berberis hedgerow alongside the gravestones are cutback by volunteers annually and will now be undertaken in early spring rather than late autumn.

Funding from CBC – BiB currently have £61 of remaining funds to cover tools and materials. Some new funding for bedding plants and plant feed may be required, although Barrow Conservative Club has agreed to provide some funds.

Canal and River Trust areas: To retain Green Flag Award

Deep Lock - our volunteers will continue to water and weed the planters and border areas each week, and to mow the grass there and at Deep Lock Approach every 2 weeks.

Deep Lock Approach - continue to maintain the planting and start to split and divide/move some into the wider areas less prone to flooding.

Pennywort Clearance - our volunteers will continue to remove as much as they can with support from Wild Women Team at LOPC – Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre, however, more land-based volunteers are needed to continue to do this safely due to the heavy workload and nature of the task.

Himalayan Balsam Bashing – the test sites will be assessed in 2026 to see if there has been any reduction in quantity and spread of plants. More areas and more tasks later in later summer may be needed, but confirmation of land ownership for some areas is needed.

Funding from CRT– CRT have previously helped with provision of materials and tools for any tasks undertaken in lieu of direct funding.

East Midlands Railways - Barrow Train Station:

An updated Station Plan to be drafted in late January to be agreed with our Community Ambassador but will hopefully include the following:

Continue with planting on Platform 1 – Some replacement plants and lots of bulbs to be added with funds from SPL (NR contractors). EMR/NR are still expecting works for Electrification at the station to go ahead during 2026-2028 so some disturbance to the planters is expected. Low-level willow fence is to be extended – hopefully along the full length of the planters.

Assessment of the water damage to the artwork on the fence on Platform 2 – If it can be repaired to last until the end of 2026 it will be so alternatives to marine ply can be investigated. If damage is too much, it may need to be removed sooner. Identify a new local artist to help continue the project.

New artwork and possibly new fencing around the bicycle parking area is still being considered by both NR/EMR. Electrification may also impact any decision.

Community involvement – restart investigating working with schools and/or Scouts to introduce Rail Safety briefings.

Funding from EMR/SPL - BiB currently have £392 of remaining funds, approx. £160 for plants only, and £232 for artwork and/or general station improvements. Some additional funds may be needed later in the year once assessments for artwork have been made. Sam S stated that EMR Community Funds would be available from April.

East Midlands in Bloom Competition 2025 - Britain in Bloom 2026 / 2027

EMIB 2024 – Judges recommendations – What have we still to do in 2026/27

Section A - Horticultural Excellence

- *Use decorative plant labels for the plants to enhance knowledge and interest:* The railway station has been mapped but not labelled. KGV will be mapped during early 2026 and various labels (none plastic) tried to see what works well, and what doesn't. Discussions on the most suitable format of 'information boards' for each site are then needed.

Section B - Environmental Responsibility

- *Installing new accessible water butts where practical:* Sites around Holy Trinity Church tbc
- *Undertake surveys for flora and fauna at each site:* including the potential to train some volunteers about what to look for, and how best to improve the biodiversity: Work tbc
- *Addressing air pollution from trains and roads:* Work tbc – we would need to seek advice from Partners to confirm what actions are being taken at their level in response to this issue.

Section C - Community Participation

- *Carry on building Partnerships:* Engagement with Leicestershire County Council through their Parish Pilot Scheme: This request to LCC has been on hold for many months with no progress – BiB will continue to ask for a partnership agreement of some kind to be developed.

Volunteers representing Bloom areas were asked their preference to entering the 2026 or the 2027 EMIB Competition. **It was agreed by all that we should enter the 2027 competition** to allow current plans to mature and a committee to be formed prior to June. Tilly agreed that Nott Garden would be part of the judging route.

Annette to form a new committee from the following volunteers: Anne F, Alison R, Karen L, and Julie B.

Post Meeting update: Sue Sharpe has agreed to help to produce a Portfolio. Nicola suggested the committee start work as soon as possible and that she would be happy to take part. Barrow PC and CBC also agreed to be part of the committee. Sam S would provide support from EMR if needed and happy to meet the judges. The upcoming changes to local government, and potential changes for available funding was also discussed.

Item 7 - Any Other Business: No other business was raised.

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

Barrow in Bloom

Financial report for the year ended 31st October 2025

	2025	2024
Income:	£	£
CBC Small Grant	750.00	-
Members Grant 322	-	500.00
Deep Lock Approach	-	-
Railway Funds	1,500.00	1,600.00
BPC Green Spaces	145.00	605.00
Donations	177.00	210.00
Gardening Club	-	2,204.52
	2,572.00	5,119.52
Expenditure:		
CBC Small Grant	658.05	-
Members Grant 308	-	357.68
Members Grant 322	-	500.00
Deep Lock Approach	-	178.75
Members Grant 22-23 (265)	-	-
Railway Funds	1,567.04	1,182.69
BPC Green Spaces	188.67	432.38
Donations General	234.25	118.94
Donations BFG	-	32.40
	2,648.01	2,802.84
Suplus for the year	- 76.01	2,316.68
Balance brought forward	3,022.20	705.52
Balance carried forward	2,946.19	3,022.20

I confirm that the above Income and Expenditure accounts is a true representation of the income and expenditure of Barrow In Bloom for the year ended 31 October 2025 and is in accordance the books and records provided.

A J Hurd FCCA

13/01/2026

Ask Accountancy

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