**Developing Volunteering in Baildon**

**October 2023**

**Overview of volunteer involvement at Baildon Town Council**

In addition to a paid staff team at Baildon Town Council (BTC), the Council could not operate without the involvement of volunteers. A team of twelve elected, but unpaid, town councillors oversee the work and direction of the organisation to ensure that its work reflects the needs and interests of Baildon and improves the quality of life for people in the local area.

In addition, Baildon Town Council coordinates projects in the community where volunteers are integral to their delivery, including Bracken Hall Countryside Centre and Baildon Library.

Baildon Library volunteer coordination was awarded the People Can Volunteering Quality Standard Award by Community Action Bradford and District (CABAD) which recognises good practice in the management of volunteers. This award is valid until 2025.

**Volunteer-led Services in Baildon**

There are a considerable number of volunteer-led services in Baildon; some of which are part-funded by BTC in order to deliver their services. Although the delivery of these services is dependent on volunteers, many organisations have reported reduced numbers of volunteers in the years following the pandemic.

At the Annual Meetings of the Town Council on Monday 25 April 2022 and Tuesday 9 May 2023, every volunteer-led group/ organisation in attendance expressed a need for volunteers and the difficulties being faced in recruiting new volunteers. On both occasions, the Town Council was asked directly by a member of the audience whether support could be provided by BTC to address this need.

**Feedback from Volunteering Fair at Baildon Community Link (Sept 2023)**

In September 2022 and 2023 Baildon Community Link, as a response to the issues raised at BTC’s Annual Meeting, led two Volunteering Fairs to promote volunteer-led organisations and their volunteering opportunities in Baildon. Both events were funded by Baildon Town Council. In 2022, 20 volunteers were recruited by the organisations present. In 2023, details of 25 potential volunteers were recorded by the organisations present, and a further 46 general enquiries were also reported.

The volunteer coordinator attended the event in September 2023 and gathered feedback from the volunteer-led organisations in attendance.

1. **Issues being faced by organisations in Baildon:**

The volunteer coordinator spoke to representatives from Wesleys, Walkers are Welcome, Baildon Carnival, Denso Marsten Nature Reserve, Baildon in Bloom and a local scouting group and received the following feedback:

* Lots of people have stopped volunteering following the pandemic, older people are less likely to get involved.
* Existing volunteers are getting older. Organisations need to attract younger volunteers to ensure their survival.
* When younger volunteers are recruited, they often then move on to university or into paid work which adds to the constant cycle of recruitment.
* Finances are tight for a lot of people; they are not as able to take on other commitments. Volunteering cannot, and should not, leave them out of pocket.
* Some projects require specific skills which make it harder to recruit.
* People find the DBS check to be intrusive and it deters some from applying.
* In the current political climate, people are looking after their families and do not have as much will to give their time to others.
* Some roles are physically strenuous which can be a deterrent for potential applicants.
* For annual events where volunteers are needed, regular communication is needed with the existing team of volunteers to keep them interested and on board, which can pose a problem when the event is coordinated by people who are volunteers themselves.
* It can be costly to train the volunteers.

1. **Suggestions made on how to improve the current situation:**

* There needs to be a central point that promotes volunteering opportunities in Baildon and this needs to be in various formats, e.g. website, social media, library window, for example.
* People need someone to speak to when finding out about volunteering opportunities in the local area; they prefer the 1-2-1 interaction.
* Networking events are useful and enable groups to make links with one another. The Volunteering Fair is a perfect opportunity for this, and held annually would be ideal.
* Sharing volunteering experiences and stories is very beneficial in order to promote roles in the community. It helps people to understand how they, in turn, can benefit from volunteering.
* In order to attract younger volunteers, there needs to be contact with the local schools, or to promote the benefits of volunteering for those looking to develop work-related skills.
* More organisations need to in a position to be able to support younger volunteers, in particular for short-term volunteering requirements like the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. DBS checked supervisors are needed which creates a significant obstacle for organisations that are purely volunteer-led.

**Existing Volunteer Recruitment Support in Bradford and District**

*Community Action Bradford and District* (CABAD, [www.cabad.org.uk](http://www.cabad.org.uk)) are the support hub offering services to voluntary sector organisations in the local area, e.g. support with marketing, payroll, funding applications etc. In 2022, they were awarded all the voluntary sector support funding from the Local Authority.

They do not, however, offer a brokerage service or signpost potential volunteers to opportunities available in different groups and organisations. They do not actively promote the activities of different projects and organisations in a public forum.

*Volunteering Bradford* ([www.volunteeringbradford.org](http://www.volunteeringbradford.org/)) used to offer a brokerage service for Bradford and district, but since losing Local Authority funding in 2022, are now focussing on providing bespoke support for people facing disadvantage who wish to get involved in volunteering.

CABAD offer a basic 1.5 hour long general training session on how to recruit, involve and supervise volunteers several times a year. They do not currently offer any specific training or support for involving younger volunteers.

**Potential for Developing Volunteering in Baildon**

The volunteer coordinator has identified six areas (see below) where there is potential for further development both within Baildon Town Council and to provide support to organisations in Baildon.

1. **Develop and improve the current volunteering offer at Baildon Town Council**

There is a great deal of potential to develop new volunteering roles to support the work of BTC, for example, the coordination of the benches and other environment projects, Bracken Hall and the delivery of Baildon at Christmas.

There is also scope to ensure that the model of good practice used with Baildon Library volunteers is adopted by all projects coordinated by the Town Council to create an organisational standard. This would ensure that all BTC volunteers have a consistent volunteering experience across the organisation.

1. **Develop a Volunteer Brokerage Service for Baildon**

A Volunteer Brokerage Service for Baildon would provide a central point for promoting all volunteering roles in the local community. The majority of people who are likely to volunteer and support organisations based in Baildon will be from the local area.

The information can be communicated via the BTC website, social media platforms, using the library noticeboards, in addition to providing a face-to-face service for those interested in finding out about volunteering opportunities.

This would also strengthen links with the volunteer-led organisations in Baildon.

According to a national survey, ***Time Well Spent 2023***1 (p.14), non-volunteers say that they would be more likely to participate in volunteering if someone asks them to get involved (15%), and if they know what volunteering opportunities are available to them (12%).

1. **Work with local organisations to ensure that they are providing a positive volunteering experience and to identify areas for improvement.**

Baildon Library has a recognised model of good practice for recruiting, training and supporting volunteers that can be made available to other organisations in Baildon. In particular, there is potential for BTC to work with organisations that receive BTC funding to offer guidance and support in adopting best practice methods of recruiting, inducting and supporting volunteers. This could result in a lower turnover of volunteers and a higher degree of volunteer satisfaction in the role, as well as adding assurance that BTC grants are being well spent within organisations who are taking a sustainable approach to managing their volunteers.

1. **Work with existing organisations to develop volunteering opportunities for younger people in Baildon**

There is a need to promote the benefits of volunteering to attract younger volunteers (e.g work-related skills development) and to promote a life-long interest of getting involved in their community.

In addition, there is a need in the local community to provide short-term volunteering experiences for school students undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) award. BTC could work with local organisations to ensure that they are in a position to support the students and to meet DofE requirements. This is a new area of work but one which would provide a solid foundation for the future of volunteering.

1. **Ensure that an annual Volunteering Fair takes place**

Baildon Community Link already have a good model for coordinating and delivering a Volunteering Fair that focusses on volunteer recruitment and is a useful networking event for local organisations. Funding could be provided annually to ensure that this event continues to take place.

1. **Explore the potential for developing a pool of volunteers that can be called upon to support community events:**

It would be beneficial to develop a team of trained volunteers that can be called upon, when required, to support local organisations and/or events that require marshalling, road closure management, environment type work etc. Regular and ongoing communication is also required to ensure that the volunteers remain engaged with their community in between events.

**Benefits to Baildon Town Council**

Further work to develop volunteering in Baildon would:

* improve the profile and reputation of Baildon Town Council in the local area;
* provide a clear overview all of the volunteering opportunities available in the local area;
* lead the development of a sustainable approach to working with volunteers in Baildon;
* create improved communication networks between volunteer-led services/ groups in Baildon;
* promote volunteering and its’ benefits in Baildon;
* support younger people in the local area to access volunteering;

**Next Steps**

If Baildon Town Councillors would like to pursue this proposal, the volunteer coordinator would like to suggest the next course of action:

1. A small working group comprising a town councillor, Clerk/Deputy Clerk, Volunteer Co-ordinator and possible co-optees (e.g. if the DoE idea was being developed a lead teacher from a local school) to be set up to provide more detail on the costs and practicalities of these six areas for development.
2. Consideration to be given to determine how this would fit in with current staffing responsibilities, scope and funding requirements to be explored.
3. Whilst not all 6 areas for development may be ultimately pursued, there may be opportunities for a pilot period to trial some ideas.

An action plan can then be drafted to identify exactly how this would work in practice and the time scales required to set it up.

***Report compiled by Rachel Gallagher, Volunteer Coordinator (October 2023)***

1Kanemura, McGarvey and Farrow (2023) *Time Well Spent 2023: a national survey on the volunteering experience [online].* National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/time-well-spent-2023/#/>