



## COUNTY DURHAM TALKING NEWSPAPER

CIO Charity: Registered No.1159940

Foundation House, St John's Road, Meadowfield, Durham DH7 8TZ

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### ANNUAL REPORT FOR PERIOD JANUARY 2020 - DECEMBER 2020

**Trustees:** Stephen Prior (Chair); Alice Severs; Linda Johnson; Leita Prior (Managing Editor)

#### **Charitable Objects:**

*To relieve blind and partially sighted people, or those labouring under some temporary or permanent incapacity or disability which makes reading a strain, in County Durham and the surrounding areas by the provision of audio resources in particular, but not exclusively, a talking newspaper.*

#### **A FREE AUDIO RESOURCE FOR COUNTY DURHAM'S VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

This report marks the completion of CDTN's sixth year of operation. The County Durham Talking Newspaper was set up at the end of 2014 to ensure continuity of an established service provided by a previous charity that was about to close down. Aware that the loss of this resource would be badly missed by those who had enjoyed it for 15 or more years, volunteers from the closing charity set up CDTN to keep it going. With many of the same volunteers still recording today, our listeners benefit not only from what the talking newspaper itself provides, but also from a sense of familiarity and stability. The charity has no employees; it is run entirely by volunteers.

**CDTN** serves more than 100 blind and visually impaired people. Most of our listeners are in their eighties. The service, which is provided entirely free of charge, gives the sight-impaired access to the County's latest news stories and features published by the region's newspapers. The object is to keep our listeners in touch with County Durham's community events, incidents, crime stories, official business and so on. The recordings also provide entertainment and food for thought through a selection of regionally published articles which include nostalgia and history pieces, a quiz, opinions on current affairs, features on famous people, and so on. A great deal of sub-editing is required to achieve a wide representation of the news content; this is overseen by a qualified NCTJ journalist. CDTN is a member of the Talking Newspaper Federation.

The recordings - on CD or memory stick - travel through the post inside a wallet with a reversible label. In order to receive the next edition, recipients drop the wallet back into a postbox with the label reversed to show our address; no postage is necessary as these wallets travel free by first class post under the 'Articles for the Blind' concession.

#### **UNBROKEN SERVICE THROUGHOUT COVID 19 LOCKDOWNS**

Until 2020 our talking newspaper was despatched weekly. When the pandemic forced us to make changes to the way we worked we were able to do so without loss to our listeners.

By April 2020 we were already alert to (a) the possible spread of the virus via the surface of the postal wallets; and (b) the difficulties our elderly listeners faced in returning their wallets. (Many rely on a visitor or family member to drop it into the post, especially in winter.) The postal service itself was also erratic.

To deal with the potential danger of virus transmission on our plastic postal wallets we overwrapped them in paper envelopes so listeners could carefully rip the outer cover off and feel confident they were handling an uninfected object. (We also followed all hygiene guidelines during the copying and despatch processes.)

At the same time we moved from the weekly despatch of one talking newspaper to a fortnightly despatch of one talking newspaper plus an extra recording of other material. For the latter we serialised six locally written autobiographies (amongst them famous artist Norman Cornish's 'A Slice Of Life' and veteran journalist Mike Amos's 'Unconsidered Trifles'). These were much appreciated, especially during those periods when hard copies of audiobooks from national sources were made unavailable. Most of our listeners are unable to access online audio material.

## **OUR VOLUNTEERS**

Of our 20 volunteers, only eight have had the opportunity to be active throughout 2020. From April we visited our studio/office only when necessary: to process wallets, copy the recordings and despatch them. The editors' scripts were emailed to a small pool of readers with the necessary skills to record at home and their audio emailed to the technician for final production. We are pleased that this arrangement allowed us to avoid any break in our service. But it is unfortunate that around 12 of our excellent volunteers were, in effect, made redundant. All have given great service, some of them for two decades —for CDTN and the County Durham charity that preceded us. How we proceed in the future has yet to be decided.

## **THE FINANCES**

(See Receipts & Payments Accounts in Appendix below)

Our expenses include rent, CDs, postal wallets, insurances, newspapers, USB sticks, USB players, maintenance and purchase of recording and copying equipment, PAT testing; office supplies, computer data protection, telephone and internet.

We receive no grant aid and never ask for donations from our listeners. Our operating costs are met by: (a) the remains of a legacy from former charity VIPS in County Durham upon its closure in December 2014; (b) payment for recording services provided to Durham County Council ; and (c) public donations. In 2020 we refrained from asking for support from our usual generous benefactors (e.g. Brandon and Byshottles Parish Council) sensing that they would be facing more urgent covid-related demands. However we still received unsolicited donations from The Rotary Club of Durham, Fred Henderson Ltd, The Shakespeare Temperance Trust, Durham University's St Cuthbert's Society, several listeners and/or their families, two private benefactors and Forest Carbon Ltd.

Our reserves policy requires that we should keep at least 6 months' running costs in reserve (to serve notice on our rented accommodation and pay any outstanding volunteer expenses, newspaper bills, etc.). At present this figure would be around £4,000. We have no employment obligations.

Trustees declare they have approved the trustees report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees



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Stephen Prior (Chair of Trustees)

21 October 2021

**APPENDIX: RECEIPTS AND PAYMENT ACCOUNT**  
**(January 2020 – December 2020)**  
**COUNTY DURHAM TALKING NEWSPAPER**  
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NB All figures to nearest £.

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Endowment £	Total £	Last year £
<b>Receipts</b>					
Donations	3,750			3,750	3,125
Legacies				-	-
Recording Income	700			700	1,796
				-	-
<b>Sub total (Gross income for AR)</b>	<b>4,450</b>			<b>4,450</b>	<b>4,921</b>

<b>Payments</b>					
Office (includes rent, insurance, communications)	4,288			4,288	4,180
Recording (includes distributed consumables)	773			773	1,219
Recording and reproduction equipment	-			-	364
Advertising	-			-	-
Volunteer expenses	1,349			1,349	1,089
Newspapers	603			603	643
				-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>7,013</b>			<b>7,013</b>	<b>7,496</b>

<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>			-	2,562	2,575
<b>A5 Transfers between funds</b>	-		-	-	-
<b>A6 Cash funds last year end</b>			-	13,682	16,256
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>			-	11,120	13,682

Cash funds			Endowment £	Total £	Total £
CAF Bank Account			-	11,120	13,682
			-	-	-
<b>Total cash funds</b>			-	11,120	13,682

Assets retained for the charity's own use			Endowment £	Total £	Total £
4 x PCs			-	-	-
Recording equipment			-	-	-
Audio reproduction equipment			-	-	-
Furniture			-	-	-
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
<b>Total</b>			-	-	-



Signed by Chair of Trustees: ..... Stephen Prior, 21 October 2021