



## BRITISH WIRELESS FOR THE BLIND FUND

KEEPING BLIND PEOPLE IN  
TOUCH WITH THE WORLD

**BWBF provides free specially adapted audio equipment to visually impaired people across the UK.**



# Foreword

Margaret Grainger, CEO

## Welcome to British Wireless for the Blind Fund's Impact Report 2016-2017.



What a year it's been! This time last year I hinted that our team was working on something big and we are delighted to now

be in a position to announce the launch of our audio app, Bumblebee. We have developed it to make listening on the go as easy and accessible as possible for visually impaired people.

For almost 90 years, we have been providing equipment to those with sight loss and in recent years this technology has started to change. Our radios have become digital and the last new set we launched was an internet radio.

Now technology has moved on even further and we hope Bumblebee shows we have been working hard to keep up with the changing ways people are accessing audio content. You can read much more about Bumblebee on pages four and five.

While much of our focus has been on the app, we have of course also been busy with our usual activities and have

given out almost 3,100 radios to visually impaired people in the last year.

The importance of radio to someone blind or partially sighted has not diminished since we launched in 1928, and we will continue to be mindful that the needs of the people we support are varied. We understand not everyone will want the latest technology, and we will make sure all those who access our service are provided with the most suitable equipment for them.

As you know, we receive no government funding so are entirely reliant on your generosity. We had a record year with our Christmas fundraising appeal, which brought in more than £30,000 and we hope to continue that success this year.

I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to each and every one of our valued supporters, donors and volunteers. As we move into this new era of technology, we hope you will stand by us and help us continue to provide our service to those who need it. Enjoy reading our Impact Report - we hope it makes you as excited about the coming year as we are.

*Margaret Grainger*

# From our Chairman

## Daniel Smith



As ever BWBF remains committed to providing the best possible listening solutions to visually impaired people across

the UK. In the past year, we have been working tirelessly to keep our services up to date with technological innovation and are pleased to launch our new product Bumblebee. Developed by our team, Bumblebee is an easy to use app, specially designed to unlock the digital world for those with sight loss.

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**We're delighted to be adding an app to our current range of products and it is amazing to see how far we have come since the first radio we offered in 1928!**

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While we have been focused on making sure Bumblebee is ready for release as soon as possible, we also remain mindful that as a charity funded solely by the great British public, we have a responsibility to look after not just our recipients but also the organisation itself.

Given the rather negative media coverage some charities and their fundraising activities have experienced of late I, and my fellow trustees, want to reassure all our supporters and benefactors that we take the governance of British Wireless for the Blind Fund very seriously. We remain committed to ethical and responsible fundraising and spending while striving to ensure there are always enough funds to continue supporting those who need us.

As we head into our 90th year, Bumblebee brings a truly exciting time for British Wireless. We can be proud that we have supported so many people with sight loss over the years, while feeling inspired about the future direction we are heading in.

As always we are immensely grateful to our donors, volunteers, partner organisations and patrons without whom we would not be able to continue our work. Therefore on behalf of the Chief Executive, the Trustees and all the team, please accept our most sincere thanks for all your support.

# Introducing BUMBLEBEE

POWERED BY  
BRITISH WIRELESS FOR  
THE BLIND FUND



For the past 12 months our focus has been on the most ground-breaking project we have ever undertaken – the launch of our audio app Bumblebee.

It has changed the way we work, having been developed by our own in-house experts to create a new, improved way for the visually impaired people we support to access our streamed service.

Bumblebee has brought us into a new era of audio technology and is designed to alleviate the frustration blind people can feel while navigating smart devices.

As a charity with a mission to support the UK's visually impaired people who most

need it, we have always been committed to researching and developing new assisted technologies to suit changing listening needs and ways in which to access content.

While the equipment we have issued has changed over the years, moving first into digital and then internet radio, our aim has remained the same – to provide companionship in what can sometimes be a lonely life for those who cannot see. Bumblebee does this, while also providing a huge range of audio content in a modern, handy device.

## **More about Bumblebee...**

Bumblebee has been specially designed to give listeners with sight loss simple, portable access to a huge range of internet audio content including talking newspapers and magazines, radio stations, podcasts, audio books and much more.

It has large, simple menus which can be viewed in a variety of contrasts, including yellow and black so they stand out to those with residual vision. Combined with audio description of each menu item, it is also user friendly for people with very little or no sight.

Paralympic athlete Tim Prendergast, who is visually impaired, was given a preview of Bumblebee and said it answers so many of the issues he has when trying to access online content. He is passionate about radio and using the internet

and said he finds the app easy to navigate and particularly likes how easy it is to find podcasts and said the way content is sorted is great. As a New Zealander, Tim was also delighted to find a couple of his favourite native radio stations!

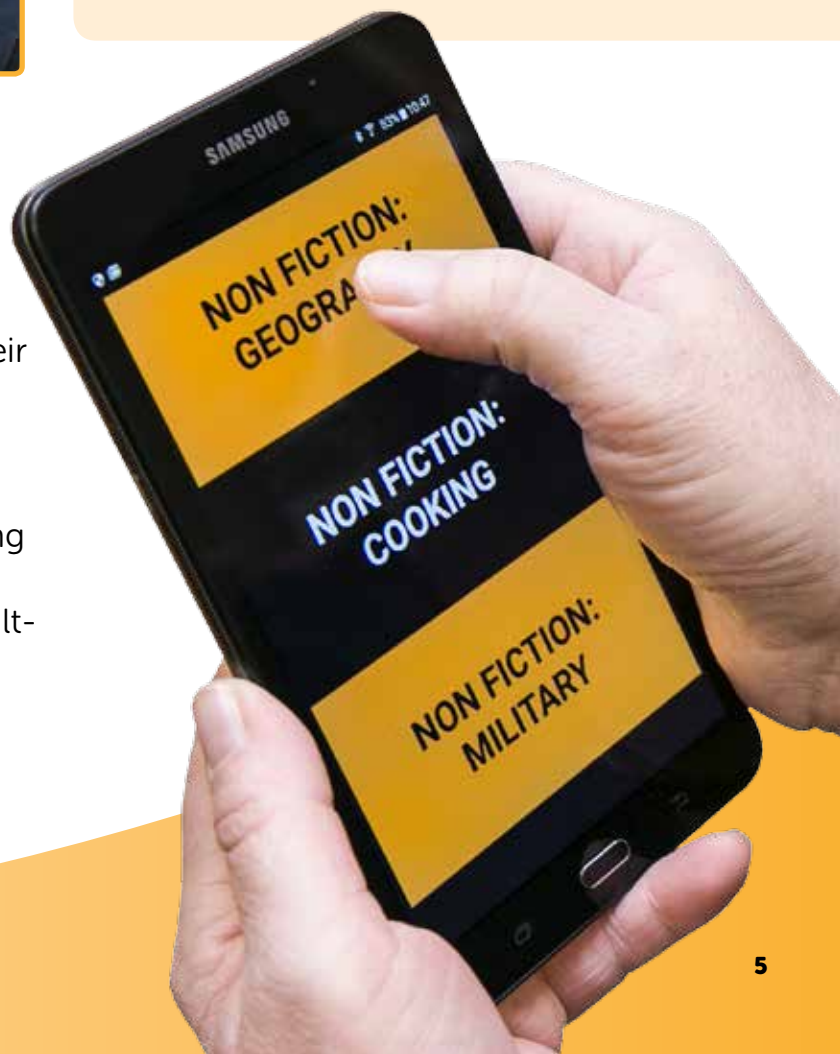


Part of the exclusivity of Bumblebee is the user-led content aspect, where listeners can essentially create their own personalised audio library in their pocket. Bumblebee requires a wireless connection to stream live radio and download content, but once the audio files have been saved to the tablet they can be accessed anywhere.

**You can read more about Bumblebee on our website at [www.blind.org.uk](http://www.blind.org.uk)**

Throughout the design and development phases of the app, we worked closely with blind and partially sighted people at every step to ensure we created something which will make a real difference to their daily lives.

This is why Bumblebee also includes a community section, where users can share their experiences, discuss trending topics, talk about popular content and support each other, all by using the built-in text-to-speech function.



## What we do

British Wireless for the Blind Fund is the only charity providing specially adapted radios to blind and partially sighted people across the UK. For those who would not otherwise be able to afford this type of equipment, our range of sets is available on free loan for as long as our recipients need our support.

Sight loss can happen for any number of reasons to anyone, at any age. Losing your sight can be a confusing and disorientating experience with many

**“My radio is great – it’s the best thing I’ve ever had.”**

people suffering feelings of depression and isolation. A radio not only provides companionship with a comforting voice in the room, it also helps people feel connected to the world around them with news, entertainment and sport. In fact we have recently joined up with one of the UK’s top football teams to provide accessible live commentary for our listeners. Read more about this partnership on page 15.

To be eligible to receive a radio on free loan you need to be a resident in the UK who is registered blind or partially sighted, in receipt of a means tested benefit and over the age of eight. However, if you do not meet all of our criteria you can read more about how we can still help below.

## BWBF Direct

BWBF Direct is the commercial arm of British Wireless for the Blind Fund. Whether you do not meet all of our criteria or you liked your free loan radio so much you want to purchase further equipment, BWBF Direct has a wide selection of suitable sets you can buy.

BWBF Direct donates 100% of its profits back to the charity and as such is another vital source of income, allowing our charitable work to continue for many years to come.

If you would like to talk to us about buying a set please contact Victoria Fox on 01622 754757 or have a look at all your options on BWBF Direct’s website -

**[www.bwbfdirect.org.uk](http://www.bwbfdirect.org.uk)**

**“Thank you for giving me this brilliant piece of equipment – it’s going to give me thousands of hours of pleasure.”**



# Why is radio still so important to so many?

Losing your sight can be a very emotional and unsettling experience as everyday living brings new challenges and difficulties.

Imagine not being able to read a newspaper, book or magazine. Think how lonely you would be having lost the confidence to venture out and without the television to watch. Many visually impaired people experience isolation like this all day, every day.

Our radios provide companionship in what can often be a rather lonely world.

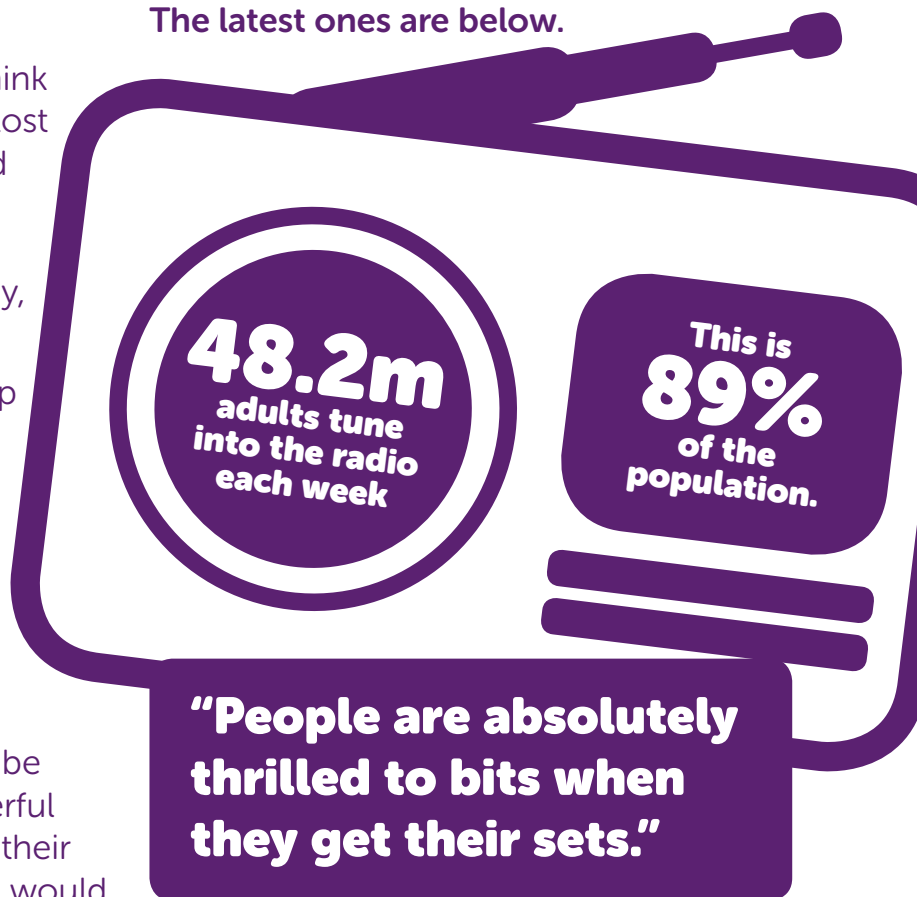
## Our volunteers

We are lucky at British Wireless to be supported by a network of wonderful volunteers, who selflessly give up their time for others. Without them, we would not be able to help the thousands of visually impaired people who access our service.

Our volunteers are a vital part of the charity and assist us in all different departments such as delivering radios to people with sight loss in their homes, helping at head office with admin and behind the scenes in our technology department. They come from all walks of life and have different reasons for volunteering.

Colin Perrott is one of our longest serving volunteers and has been helping us support people with sight loss for more than 20 years. In over two decades, he has installed audio equipment to

The importance of what we do is reinforced with the quarterly release of the Radio Joint Audience Listening (RAJAR) figures. The latest ones are below.



hundreds of blind and partially sighted people and says he enjoys it as much now as he did the day he signed up. His reasons for coming on board were personal, having had his own experiences of sight problems. He was able to have treatment to save his sight, but wanted to help people who hadn't been so fortunate.

He says: "I've met so many interesting people. Each time, I enjoy that I've helped someone and made them feel a bit less isolated. I always stop and have a chat and keep in touch."

You can keep up to date with our volunteering vacancies at [www.blind.org.uk](http://www.blind.org.uk)

# Fact and figures

While our main focus in recent months has been on preparing Bumblebee for launch, we have of course worked hard to distribute even more radios than the previous period.

We have issued

**3,094**

radios on free loan to visually impaired people across the UK.

This was made up of

**2,321**

of our most popular Concerto 2 multimedia players; 354 Duet 2 digital radios; 184 Sonata Plus internet radios; and 235 other pieces of equipment.

This means we have supported an additional

**72**

blind and partially sighted people compared to the previous year.

A total of

**702**

of the issued radios were refurbished or recycled.

We have also continued to grow the number of local Talking Newspapers on offer on our streamed service, which is now

**140**

individual publications.

We completed the rollout of Sonata Plus+ replacements, resulting in

**135**

in total.

We are now providing

**25**

unique live sport commentaries from the BBC on our streamed service, including all the ball to ball commentary for county cricket.

## Our finances

Consolidated statement of financial activities for the year ending October 31st, 2016.

Income	2016	2015
Donations and gifts	90,276	106,457
Legacies	1,165,046	696,942
Grants received	283,281	281,133
Marketing sales	241,985	157,170
Investment and other income	159,099	137,572
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>1,939,687</b>	<b>1,379,274</b>
Expenditure		
Grants	8,820	16,025
Costs of furthering charity objectives	699,360	649,962
Support costs	388,606	264,627
Fundraising & publicity	143,763	190,576
Marketing expenditure	238,192	164,181
Investment management costs	22,553	24,455
Governance costs	34,992	33,308
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>1,536,286</b>	<b>1,343,134</b>
Excess of income after expenditure	403,401	36,140
Gains in investments	395,791	67,717
<b>Total surplus for the year</b>	<b>799,192</b>	<b>103,857</b>

BWBF's full financial report is available to view on the [Charity Commission website](#).



# Our recipients

Many of the people who have our equipment in their homes say they simply couldn't be without it, even for a day. Our radios mean different things to so many people – but they are always a constant companion which keeps them in touch with the outside world.

Hearing their stories and about how important their radios are to them is what makes our cause so worthwhile and is why our generous donors want to support us and our work.



Jennifer Hubner has been supported by British Wireless for more than 40 years and has seen the radios she's had from us change over the decades as new technology has come along.

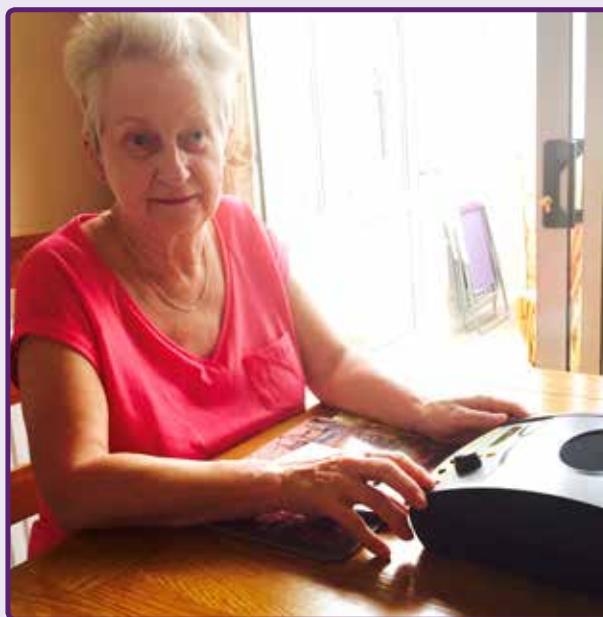
She currently has one of our Sonata Plus+ internet radios and loves being able to quickly and easily get stations added onto her personal playlist.

The 64-year-old says she often meets people who are wary of the equipment on offer for blind people, but she feels it's important to embrace things which make your daily life easier.

She said: "The radios are brilliant. They are easy to use – I just switch it on in the morning and there you go.

"I'm a great believer in trying to be as independent as a sighted person and the radios help me with this.

You can talk about things you've heard on the radio and if you didn't hear it there, you wouldn't be able to join in the conversations."



**"The radios are brilliant. They are easy to use – I just switch it on in the morning and there you go."**

## Trusts

**“Thank you for bringing some light into my life”**

Grants from charitable trusts and foundations are a vital source of funding for our work and we are very proud to have strong relationships with a number of them.

Sometimes money is donated to assist people with sight loss in specific areas and other times there is no restriction on where we can spend it. This means we can distribute our service where we know it's most needed.

We would like to say a heartfelt thank you to each and every one of the 160 organisations which have supported us in the last 12 months.

These include The Graham Trust, which gave us £5,750 to provide the Bumblebee tablet and app package to visually impaired people in Glasgow; the Portmore Charitable Trust which donated £10,000 to provide equipment to blind and partially sighted people all across the country and the Lopylugs and Barbara Morrison Charitable Trust which gave us £7,500, which could provide more than 41 radios to people with sight loss.

We are so grateful to be supported with grants from trusts and foundations, however you don't need to be a charitable organisation to help us.

## How you can help

BWBF receives no government funding and is proud to be supported by the generosity of the great British public. Your support could help us to provide high quality, specially modified audio equipment to people across the UK who need us. However you choose to support our work, your involvement can make such a difference to someone who is struggling with the challenges sight loss can bring.

- Donations can be made by cheque, Paypal, credit or debit card. A donation form can be found on page 13.
- A gift to us in your will not only allows us to continue our work but it would also be exempt from inheritance tax. For more information turn to page 11.
- If you would like to get involved in some fundraising activities for us, such as a cake sale or a sponsored walk just contact the team who will be able to help with ideas. Contact details can be found on the back page.
- Perhaps you could volunteer your time. Colin talks about why he enjoys helping us in this way on page seven.

**“I can't tell you how much pleasure I get from my radio. I close my eyes and I'm in another world.”**

# Your legacy is their lifeline

At BWBF we understand ensuring your loved ones are taken care of must come first. If after this you are able to leave us a gift in your will, no matter the size, you will enable us to provide future generations with hours of enjoyment.

Types of gifts to consider

- **A share of your estate (residuary bequest)**
- **A cash gift (pecuniary bequest)**
- **A specific item**

Leaving us a legacy is a special way to help us ensure we are here to support people with sight loss, when they need us, for years to come. We understand your will is very personal to you. However if you have pledged to support us in this way we would very much like to know so we can thank you for your decision in your lifetime.

To advise us of your gift or for a confidential discussion about leaving us a legacy, please contact Kirsty Grainger on 01622 754757 or email [kirsty@blind.org.uk](mailto:kirsty@blind.org.uk)

**A full legacy information pack is also available on request or from our website [www.blind.org.uk/about/publications/](http://www.blind.org.uk/about/publications/)**



## **Donate in memory**

Donating in memory is a special way to celebrate your loved one's life and to help a visually impaired person receive a lifeline to the world.

You can set up a tribute fund on our website [www.blind.org.uk/support-us/in-memory-of](http://www.blind.org.uk/support-us/in-memory-of)

## **Donations in lieu of flowers**

Some families choose to ask for donations in lieu of flowers at a funeral service. Many people are opting to make charitable donations instead of sending floral tributes and should you wish, you could suggest contributions be sent to us at the address at the back of this report.

If you would prefer to speak to a member of the team before you donate, whatever the method, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We would like to thank everyone who has thought of British Wireless at such a difficult time. Your donation is an incredible gift to someone who needs it.

# Friends of British Wireless

As a charity which relies on the generosity of our supporters to keep providing our service, we are always looking for ways to recognise their kindness. During the last year, we have launched our **Friends of British Wireless** scheme, which will help us support visually impaired people who need us now and in the future.

It costs as little as £5 a month to become a **Friend** and by giving a regular gift, your continued generosity allows us to plan our future activities and ensure that every year thousands more people affected by sight loss stay connected to the world around them.

By becoming a **Friend**, you can proudly say you have helped us put a lifeline to the world into the home of someone who cannot see.

As a valued **Friend**, you will receive an exclusive welcome pack and be kept up-to-date about our work so you can see the difference your support is making.

To find out more about the scheme, visit our website at [www.blind.org.uk](http://www.blind.org.uk)

**IF YOU ARE ABLE TO MAKE A DONATION TO SUPPORT OUR WORK WE WOULD BE EXTREMELY GRATEFUL.**

**Please use the donation form opposite.**



## Give a friend a friend

Our radios are a lifeline to visually impaired people, becoming a companion which keeps them in touch with the outside world, and easing the isolation sight loss can bring.

The number of people living with a visual impairment in the UK is expected to double by 2050, so there will always be a need for our service.

While we are already supporting thousands of blind and partially sighted people, we know we aren't yet reaching everyone who needs us.

**If you know someone who would benefit from one of our radios, please let them know about our work and give a friend a friend. Our contact details can be found on the back page of this report.**



**Yes, I would like to help people like Jennifer by making a gift to British Wireless for the Blind Fund.**

I enclose a cheque for £

(made payable to British Wireless for the Blind Fund)

or

Please debit my:  Mastercard  Visa (Please tick)

Card number

Start date  /  Expiry date  /

Security code  Issue number  (if on your card)

I am a UK tax payer and would like to Gift Aid my donation and any donations I make in future or have made in the past four years.

I understand if I pay less income tax and/or capital gains tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay any difference. Please notify BWBF if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains. If you pay income tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid declarations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

**Printed name**

**Signature** **Date**

Please make me a Friend of British Wireless with this gift.

If you would prefer to make a regular gift to us, you can request a Direct Debit form from Jules Hocking on 01622 754757 or by emailing [julieh@blind.org.uk](mailto:julieh@blind.org.uk)

Alternatively you can simply download it from our website - [www.blind.org.uk/support-us/make-a-donation/set-up-a-regular-donation/](http://www.blind.org.uk/support-us/make-a-donation/set-up-a-regular-donation/)

**Please turn over >**

**£50**  
could pay expenses for a volunteer to visit a recipient at home to install their set

**£100**  
could pay for a Roberts Play to be delivered and set up for a recipient

**£190**  
could pay for one of our most popular sets, the Concerto 2, to be installed

**£215**  
could pay for our Bumblebee tablet and app package

**£500**  
could pay for the repair or service of 15 of these much loved radios

# Let's keep in touch

As a valued supporter we feel it's important that you know how your money helps support people with sight loss across the UK. We would very much like to keep you informed of our news, any future service developments, our fundraising activities and how your support helps us.

We promise not to overwhelm you with too much information or constant demands for money.

If you would like us to keep in contact with you **please tick** which of the below methods of communication you are comfortable with us using.

In accordance with the data protection act 1998, BWBF will not pass any of your information to any other organisation.

**Name**

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**Address**

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---

**Postcode**

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**Telephone no.**

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**Email**

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**Let me know about fundraising and sales**

Post  Telephone  Email

**Let me know about service developments**

Post  Telephone  Email

**Please DO NOT add me to your mailing list.**

**Signature**

**Date**

---

Please return your completed form to our freepost address.

**FREEPOST RRXL-EAXXAXAT, BRITISH WIRELESS FOR THE BLIND FUND,  
10 ALBION PLACE, MAIDSTONE, KENT, ME14 5DZ**

# Highlights from the last year

**Bumblebee isn't the only exciting thing to happen at British Wireless in the last 12 months. Here are some of our other highlights:**

## **Securing an accessible premiership football team live stream**

We launched a free, accessible live Newcastle United commentary on our streamed service.

Providing these easy to use streams is something we had been aiming to do for a number of years and we hope it will lead to other football clubs coming on board with us to do the same.

While many clubs do provide free online commentary, the feeds are locked behind log-ins and wrapped up in flash players which is very frustrating and almost impossible for people with sight loss to access on their own.

## **Finding a note from Dame Vera Lynn**

British Wireless is lucky to have had some high profile supporters during its 89 year history.

During the early part of 2017, we were delighted to discover a letter (pictured above) written by Dame Vera Lynn in response to a fundraising appeal she did for us in 1973.

We came across the piece of our history for sale on eBay and now have it safely back in our archives.

In the letter, the White Cliffs of Dover



singer, who celebrated her 100th birthday in 2017, is thanking someone for a donation and says their kindness will bring pleasure to a blind person.

With such a long and proud history of supporting blind people around the country, it's great to be reminded of past appeals and lovely to have a link to Dame Vera Lynn.

## **Taking on new agents and linking with other charities**

As a small charity which supports people right across the UK, we rely on a network of local agents to deliver our service on our behalf.

These organisations vary from local sight loss support groups and sensory services teams to local councils and other charities.

In the last 12 months, we have started working with a number of new agents, including Wigan, Leigh and District Society for the Blind, Yorkshire Coast Sight Support and Kirklees Transcription Service.

All our agents play a vital part in the day-to-day running of BWBF and it's great to start new relationships to help us support even more people in different regions of the UK.



## How to contact us:

**BWBF,  
10 Albion Place,  
Maidstone,  
Kent, ME14 5DZ**

Tel: **01622 754757**

Email: **info@blind.org.uk**

Web: **www.blind.org.uk**

**🐦 Follow us on Twitter @BritishWireless**

**📘 Like us on Facebook [www.Facebook.com/BWBF0](http://www.Facebook.com/BWBF0)**

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Registered charity number: 1078287

Scottish charity number: SCO41582

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