

BRITISH WIRELESS FOR THE BLIND FUND

**KEEPING BLIND PEOPLE IN
TOUCH WITH THE WORLD**

A photograph of an elderly man with white hair and a beard, smiling warmly. He is sitting on a white leather sofa. In front of him, he is holding a black Roberts portable cassette player. The man is wearing a dark camouflage t-shirt and a watch on his left wrist. The background is a simple room with a light-colored wall and a framed picture. The image is partially overlaid with a purple geometric shape in the top right corner.

**Keeping people
connected through
the joy of sound and
the companionship
of radio.**

This report is available in other formats

Foreword

Margaret Grainger

CEO

It really doesn't seem 12 months ago that I was introducing last year's Impact Report. Where does all the time go?



In 2019 we had another fantastic year and have been overwhelmed by the positive reaction to our Talking Newspaper app - which we designed

and developed in-house in partnership with the Talking News Federation (TNF).

The app - which can be downloaded by users to their own smart devices for free from both Apple and Android stores - has been developed for use by people with difficulties reading standard text.

Featuring over 200 regional Talking Newspapers, it makes it easier than ever to keep up with what's going on in your own community or in areas where you may have friends or family.

Looking ahead to the new decade we welcome the changes and opportunities it will bring, and we remain committed to reaching out to ever more visually impaired people across the UK. Our passion and drive for developing new and exciting ways of keeping blind and partially sighted people connected to the world around them is as strong as ever.

With many smaller charities and local community groups closing down and with social services being stretched to their

limits the work we do, and how we deliver those services, will become increasingly important.

More than ever we will be relying on our extraordinary team of volunteers up and down the country to achieve our aims.

"I enjoy contacting and talking with our registered people and if we can help them this makes me happy. It's not only about the radios; I've had some interesting conversations with lovely people. Just taking the time to chat and listen I'm sure is as nice for them as it is for me." Gillian Vaughan

These fantastic people are the backbone of the team and we couldn't give the personal face-to-face service we pride ourselves on without them. Each one of our volunteers makes a real difference to the lives of visually impaired people in their own communities, giving up their time to help us reach out to thousands of people across the UK.

I am extremely excited about what is going to happen in the next 12 months and am already looking forward to introducing you to, and writing about, the amazing achievements and developments 2020 will bring us.

Margaret Grainger



From our Chairman

Daniel Smith

Chairman of BWBF's Board of Trustees

As we enter another year, we continue to be humbled and encouraged by the support and generosity of our friends, donors and partners. They enable us to continue the valuable work we started over 90 years ago with confidence and enthusiasm.

It is now estimated that 1 in 30 citizens in the UK are living with some form of sight loss and here at British Wireless for the Blind Fund (BWBF) we are more determined than ever to reach as many people as we can.

Our determination to meet our aims has, of course, been tested to the maximum during the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic which has had such a disastrous impact on people's lives. It was essential that, as soon as we had ensured the safety and well-being of our staff and our family of volunteers, we put plans in place to provide as full a service to those most in need as was physically practical and safe to achieve. I am very proud of the positive way in which the team reacted, managing to deliver many radio sets to help combat the sense of isolation and loneliness which has inevitably been enhanced by the lockdown procedures implemented by the government.

As mentioned in my opening, none of this would have been possible without the invaluable contribution from you and our amazing staff, volunteers and partners - including our key supplier, Roberts Radio.

Roberts have been granted two Royal Warrants as manufacturers and suppliers of radio receivers to Her Majesty The

Queen and HRH The Prince of Wales. This means that the Queen and her family have enjoyed listening to Roberts radios at the various royal residences for over 60 years!

Roberts' ethos of 'never compromise quality but keep pushing boundaries' is something we too have always believed in. It is reflected in everything we do.

Another important relationship is the one we have with the Talking Newspaper Federation (TNF). Last year BWBF staff designed, developed and built a stunningly simple mobile app, enabling Talking Newspapers' latest editions to be freely available via the user's smart device. This was an invaluable and robust piece of work by the BWBF team and was rightly lauded throughout the visually impaired community. This continuing dedication to making access to media straightforward cements our longstanding relationship with TNF and helps to secure our respected position in the visually impaired digital marketplace.

Thank you all once again for another very satisfying and productive year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

What we do

Two thirds of people with a visual impairment have experienced loneliness due to their sight loss.

British Wireless provides free adapted audio equipment to registered or registerable blind people who receive an income-related benefit, anywhere in the UK.

Sight loss is a growing concern. Every year 23,000 people in the UK lose their sight and become registered as either blind or partially sighted. Studies have shown that only 17 per cent of people, when diagnosed with a visual impairment, are offered emotional support to help them cope with their deteriorating condition. We know that experiencing sight loss can often lead to loneliness, whatever your stage of life; leaving people lacking the confidence to get out and about, but also no longer able to rely on books or the television for company at home.

Tackling loneliness and isolation due to sight loss has been at the core of BWBF's objectives since the charity was formed

in 1928 and, in recent years, the subject of loneliness has moved further to the forefront of public consciousness. With or without a visual impairment we know that feeling separated from everyday life can negatively affect a person's health and well-being. There is a clear link between sight loss, feelings of depression and mental health concerns.

Research concludes that levels of loneliness and isolation are higher among people affected by disability, including those living with the many challenges sight loss can bring.

Loneliness is defined as a lack of companionship. For many of our beneficiaries it is the companionship provided by our radios that makes a real difference to their lives.

Research from RNIB, Royal Blind and Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness

"With sight and confidence diminishing it brings the outside world into my four walls, telling me what's going on and keeping me safe at the same time."

Diane Doherty

Every year
23,000
people in the UK lose
their sight and become
registered as either blind
or partially sighted.

A photograph of two men sitting on a light-colored sofa. On the left is an older man with white hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue t-shirt. On the right is a younger man with short blonde hair, wearing a dark blue patterned sweater over a white collared shirt. Between them is a large, black, vintage-style radio with yellow accents. The background shows a home interior with a bookshelf and a framed picture on the wall.

Radio Voices

"I love listening to the radio. It goes on first thing in the morning and is on most of the day."

In February a very special visit was arranged with one of our longest supported beneficiaries.

Mr Ray Jones has been a beneficiary of our radios for 50 years and has seen a number of changes in the technology we have offered. Ray now enjoys our unique streaming service via a Sonata 2 as well as owning a Concerto 2.

Regional Development Manager Simon Parsons arranged for Robin van Rozen, CEO of Roberts Radio – who design and build all of the British Wireless radios – to pay Ray a very special visit.

Robin, who was new to his role as CEO, wanted to visit a beneficiary to get an understanding of how they use the equipment in their daily lives, to learn about the challenges of sight loss and to find out what else Roberts could do in future that would help further.

Ray spent an enjoyable hour talking with Robin along with Mark Huijsmans who is Head of Roberts Product Development.

Ray explained all about his particular sight loss which is called Retinitis pigmentosa (RP). RP is a group of rare, genetic disorders that involve a breakdown and loss of cells in the retina – which is the light sensitive tissue that lines the back of the eye.

"I have had over a million hours of listening with my BWBF sets over the last 50 years." said Ray.

The BWBF radio allows Ray to follow the cricket as well as his beloved Chelsea Football Club.

He offered suggestions and ideas for the next generation of equipment including more pre-sets, talkback enabled equipment and ideas for an internet radio.

Robin finished the visit by extending an invite to Ray to be part of the focus group for new equipment and, as a surprise gift, agreed to send Ray - who is a vinyl fanatic - a vinyl record player as a thank you for the visit.

Photo: Jools Hart Photography

Talking Newspaper App

Last year British Wireless was delighted to let you know about our new venture, teaming up with Talking News Federation to provide free, easy access to local news.

Bringing our two charities together saw the technology team at British Wireless develop a brand new mobile application. The Talking Newspaper app can be downloaded by users to their own smart devices for free from both Apple and Android stores; and is available to people with a variety of difficulties reading text, such as dyslexia - not just people who experience sight loss.

We are so proud of how our two organisations have come together to

develop a user friendly app that is both intuitive and inclusive; and is now available free of charge to such a wide range of people in need.

At the time of going to print we're proud to say that we have 250 regional Talking Newspapers available on the app and close to 1,600 people have downloaded it to their device.

It's never been easier, or more important, to be able to keep up with what's going on in your own community or in areas where you may have friends or family.

Simply search for Talking Newspaper in your app store and start using it today!



Our Finances

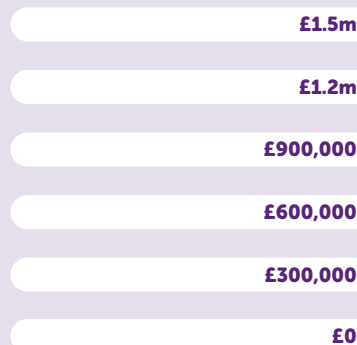
Income

2019

Total
1,176,280

2018

Total
£1,742,162



Legacies	697,551	1,207,892
Marketing Sales	136,266	221,279
Trusts & Foundations	164,936	125,882
Investments & other income	96,750	99,029
Donations	80,777	88,080
Total Income	1,176,280	1,742,162

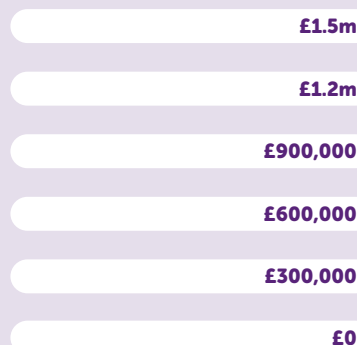
Expenditure

2019

Total
£1,912,487

2018

Total
£1,763,116



Delivering charitable objectives	-1,105,374	-1,060,555
Support costs	-499,531	-391,384
Fundraising	-273,864	-285,371
Governance costs	-33,718	-25,806
Total Expenditure	-1,912,487	1,763,116
Reserves	4,750,199	4,920,251

Regional Focus



South East Region

In the South East we have been busy recruiting a new team of volunteers to help us with radio support installation and delivery across the 12 inner London Boroughs. Among the new recruits are a retired London Tube driver, a former teacher, a retired librarian, a stay-at-home mum, an interior designer and a university lecturer. We are fortunate to have such an eclectic band of enthusiastic volunteers who are prepared to give up their valuable time to support our recipients living with sight loss.

Our volunteers across the whole region have been working hard to help us reach out to visually impaired people in communities far and wide.

We would like to thank and pay special tribute to our West Sussex volunteer John French, who has now retired after 9 years' service to BWBF.

And a warm welcome to Keith Turner - our Hampshire Radio Support Volunteer - who is now covering much of the county and is uplifting set issue.

Northern Region

2019 saw a very encouraging increase in the number of radios issued throughout the Northern region, covering areas such as Merseyside, Lancashire, Cumbria, North Yorkshire, the North East and Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In order to deal with such a large area Regional Manager Steven Poole works with a number of wonderful volunteers and dedicated agents.

He says, "Their incredible hard work delivered 978 sets in 2019. This accounts for 38% of all the radios distributed by BWBF last year - we can't thank them enough!"

All our volunteers provide a crucial service, not least volunteer Roy Walker who covers much of the North East of England. He alone supported 85 visually impaired people last year.

"In 2010 I retired from a lifetime in sales and marketing," he said.

"I love travelling around the area and meeting people and I have enjoyed every minute of volunteering for British Wireless."

Stephen Reynolds 6th June 1960 – 22nd January 2020

British Wireless would like to dedicate this report to Head Office Volunteer Stephen Reynolds who sadly passed away earlier this year. Stephen was a radio enthusiast and expert. During the 3 years he volunteered he used his vast knowledge and passion to help so many visually impaired people share in the joy radio had brought him.

He will be sorely missed by everyone.

South West Region

The traditional South West and South Wales region grew in 2019 and now also incorporates much of the East Midlands. As with other areas we rely heavily on our brilliant group of regional volunteers. As well as delivering radios they also covered 38 local promotional events last year.

In February 2019, Colin King joined us as a Volunteer Ambassador for Herefordshire and has since been instrumental in establishing contact with local organisations to raise awareness and support for our work. Colin has formed a great working relationship with the Royal National College for the Blind (RNC) identifying students who are in need of support.

Regional Manager Bradley Samuels

would like to express the gratitude of everyone at BWBF to all volunteers and local agents who have worked so diligently to support us in 2019.

"After I retired in 2002 I worked as a volunteer adviser for Herefordshire Citizens Advice for almost 15 years. When I heard about the opportunity to volunteer with British Wireless I felt that it would be something personally fulfilling for me. As their Ambassador for Herefordshire I help by doing radio installations as well as promoting the service to the VI community. It has been good to see such a positive reaction from the RNC staff and students to our approach and I am proud to have been involved in establishing the partnership."
Volunteer Ambassador Colin King

Central

2019 was a very positive year for the Central region, with 356 sets issued by our team of 22 volunteers. Lincolnshire was our most successful county, supporting 108 visually impaired people throughout the year.

We could not do the work we do without our dedicated volunteers, who not only ensure our sets reach our wonderful recipients but also provide the technical and personal support of which we are so proud.

"Being a volunteer makes me very happy. I meet so many wonderful people dealing with the challenge of visual impairment."
Radio Supporter Richard Hawkins,
from Birmingham

Alan, who looks after Shropshire, says: **"The most satisfying part of volunteering for BWBF is helping someone who is visually impaired listen to the radio stations of their choice."**

"Very often a visit includes sitting down with them and having a chat for a while before I leave, which is very enjoyable."

Staffordshire volunteer David said: **"I really enjoy my volunteering role with BWBF. I get a thrill when I see the expression on a recipient's face when they receive their radio."**

A huge thank you to all of the region's volunteers. You make a real difference.

Our Products

“The controls are tactile so it’s easy to use. With headphones it’s non-intrusive – I am a great fan of radio and would be unhappy without it.” Lillian Linthwaite

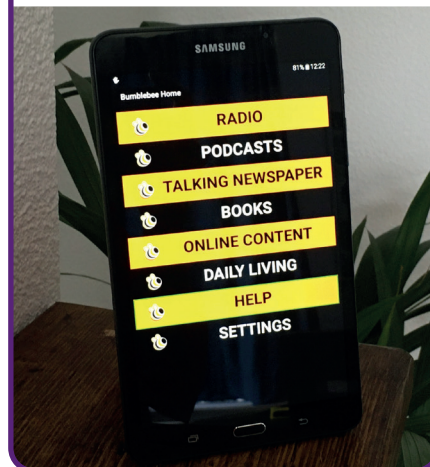
Concerto 2

The only CD, cassette, USB playback, DAB & FM portable digital radio of its kind created for people living with limited sight.



Bumblebee

An easy to use app designed to unlock the digital world for people with any level of sight loss. Content includes radio, podcasts, Talking Newspapers and audio books.



Opus

Opus, is a DAB/DAB+/FM RDS/Bluetooth portable digital radio.

With Bluetooth audio streaming from a smart device, USB recording and playback.



Play

An ultra-compact and portable DAB/FM radio by Roberts with 10 pre-sets, a headphone socket and built-in battery charger. Not adapted.



Solo

High quality USB Audio MP3 & WAV playback, USB stick bookmarking function with Bluetooth transmitter able to drive headphones and speaker. Solo is ONLY available to purchase from our sister company BWBF Direct.



Hello, I am Victoria and I am the Sales Manager for BWBF Direct.

I consider it an honour and a privilege to be at the forefront of technology for the visually impaired community. In my 9 years with BWBF Direct and working so closely with my colleagues at British Wireless for the Blind Fund I have seen many changes to the technology. All driven by the feedback we receive on a daily basis from people with visual impairment using our equipment in their homes.

BWBF Direct started as a selling arm for equipment already provided on loan by British Wireless. Fast forward to now and we are a one stop shop for anyone looking for a way to access their CDs, cassettes, radio and memory sticks. We pride ourselves on not only selling equipment exclusively designed by British Wireless and Roberts Radio but also creations from other manufacturers such as the Solo handheld USB player.

Every piece of equipment within the BWBF Direct brochure is rigorously tested and passed through various feedback stages from the important people: those using it.

BWBF Direct relies heavily on the feedback from its customers and prides itself on the hands-on customer service we are able to offer.

From myself and British Wireless for the Blind Fund thank you to each and every one of our customers. Every purchase made allows BWBF Direct to donate and continue its essential work within the visually impaired community.

Thank you

Victoria

If you would like to purchase any of our sets either visit us at www.bwbfdirect.co.uk or telephone 01622 427633.

BWBF Direct donates 100% of its profits to British Wireless for the Blind Fund. BWBF Direct is another source of income that allows us to continue the amazing work we have been doing since 1928.

As a thank you quote
THANKYOU
to receive 5%
off of any
purchase.

A message from our Patron

Sue Cook - Writer and BBC Broadcaster

"As we progress through our battle against the dreadful Covid-19 pandemic, maintaining the required social distancing and self-isolating when necessary, listening to the radio hasn't been as important since the dark days of World War II.

But think for a moment about people who can't see well, living at home alone; denied the warmth of a smile, the comfort of a hug, the squeeze of a hand. For many hundreds of blind or partially sighted people the companionship of a radio – listening to the information it provides and the entertainment it brings – is nothing short of a lifeline.

Charities like BWBF are going to find raising funds harder than ever after this lockdown ends. We need your help more than ever, no matter how small a donation you can spare."

How to make a gift

Online

If you can, please visit
www.blind.org.uk/donate

By post

If you would like to make a donation by post please complete the form on pages 13 and 14 and return to us at our freepost address -

**BWBF Freepost RRXL-AXAT
10 Albion Place
Maidstone
Kent, ME14 5DZ**

By phone

To give a gift over the phone you can call us on **01622 754757**. Monday to Friday 9am-5pm. Please have your credit or debit card ready and bear in mind our lines could be busier than usual.

As a legacy

If you would also like to consider supporting us in the future you can of course make arrangements to leave a gift in your will. Legacy gifts are integral to us helping generations to come and we are so grateful to everyone who supports us in this way.

For more information please contact our Legacy Manager, Kirsty Grainger, on **01622 427641** or email **kirsty@blind.org.uk**

"The wireless is my best friend, without it I would be lost. I live on my own and look forward to having the talking book every three weeks where I can escape into a different world."

Brian Reardon

With your help we can make sure everyone feels like they have a best friend.

I enclose a cheque for £

(made payable to British Wireless for the Blind Fund)

or

Please debit my: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa (Please tick)

For the amount of £

Card number

Start date

/

Expiry date

/

Issue number

(if on your card)

ACCOUNT HOLDER DETAILS

Name

Address

Postcode

Email

Telephone

or

If you would prefer to make a regular gift, you can request a Direct Debit form from Julie Hocking on 01622 427632 or by emailing **julieh@blind.org.uk**

Alternatively you can simply download the form from our website -

www.blind.org.uk/donate

MAKE YOUR GIFT WORTH EVEN MORE

giftaid it

If you would like to make your donation go **25% further** through allowing us to claim Gift Aid, simply sign the declaration below. Using Gift Aid means that **for every pound you give, we get an extra 25 pence** from HM Revenue & Customs.

Simply complete and return this form and we'll do the rest!

☐ **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 donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

Signature

Date

Our promise to you -

BWBF values its supporters.

We would not be able to continue our work without you.

It's important to us that you feel informed about our news, future developments and fundraising. We want to share with you how your amazing support helps to change the lives of visually impaired people across the UK.

If you do not wish to be contacted, or you would like to change how we contact you, let us know at any time using the following details –

mydata@blind.org.uk, 01622 754757, 10 Albion Place, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 5DZ, www.blind.org.uk/privacy-policy/

We respect your privacy and remain committed to ethical and responsible fundraising and communications. Your details will be stored securely and we will never sell them. However, from time to time we may need to share your details with trusted partners authorised to work on our behalf such as our printers or agents (e.g. your local blind association).

For further information please refer to our privacy policy – www.blind.org.uk/privacy-policy/

Thank you

Helping visually impaired people across the UK stay connected through the companionship of radio truly is a team effort.

Often our beneficiaries send us messages of thanks and gratitude for the support they have received. However we feel that they are really thanking YOU - our agents, partners, volunteers and donors.

Without your continued belief in our work we just wouldn't be able to deliver the same personal service we have prided ourselves on for over 90 years.

So, on behalf of all our beneficiaries, and from the whole team at British Wireless, thank you for playing your part in reducing isolation and loneliness for people experiencing sight loss.



ROBERTS



Disabled Supporters Association



Waitrose

Jools Hart



The Constance Travis Charitable Trust



Our biggest thank you goes to our family of volunteers who give up their precious, free time to help us change the lives of those living with sight loss in their communities. We simply could not do it without you.

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KEEPING BLIND PEOPLE IN
TOUCH WITH THE WORLD

How to contact us:

British Wireless for the Blind Fund
10 Albion Place
Maidstone
Kent, ME14 5DZ

Tel: **01622 754757**

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

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

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This Impact Report is available in other formats

Registered charity number: 1078287

Scottish charity number: SCO41582

Print and design by Captiv8. www.captiv8uk.co.uk



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