

Community Rights Of Way Service

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2020-21 Annual Review

Who are CROWS?

We are a group of volunteers who maintain and repair the footpath network in the Upper Calder and Ryburn Valleys.

Our achievements this year

This has been a very weird year with work parties intermittently ceasing for nearly four months due to COVID rules. During these periods of no work parties:

- We combined surveying and waymarking with the daily exercise in pairs as allowed under lockdown rules.
- We moved premises to Mount Shed in Mytholmroyd.
- We improved all our procedures and policies to reflect the growth of the organisation.
- Using government guidance, we managed to develop safe practices so we could continue to work whenever possible.

We work three days a week (in nearly all weathers), and during the year the total number of days worked by volunteers was nearly 500.

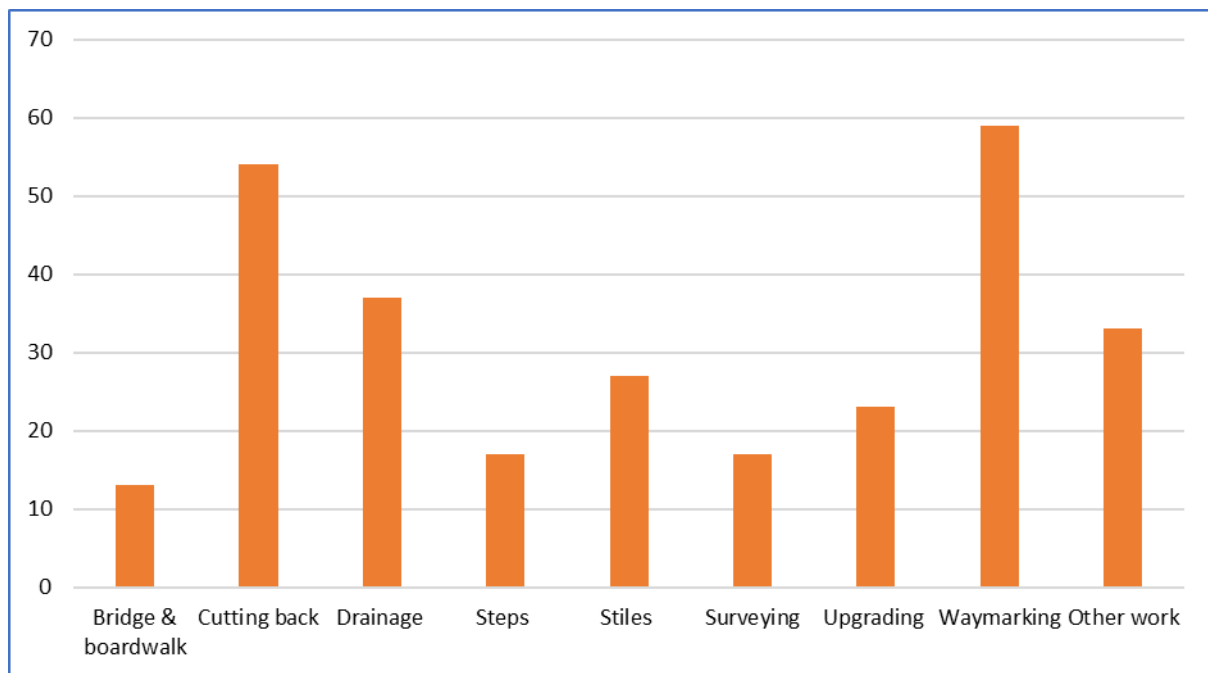
Some details

It is clear that during Lockdowns, there has been a huge increase in the use of local paths, creating a lot of wear and tear.

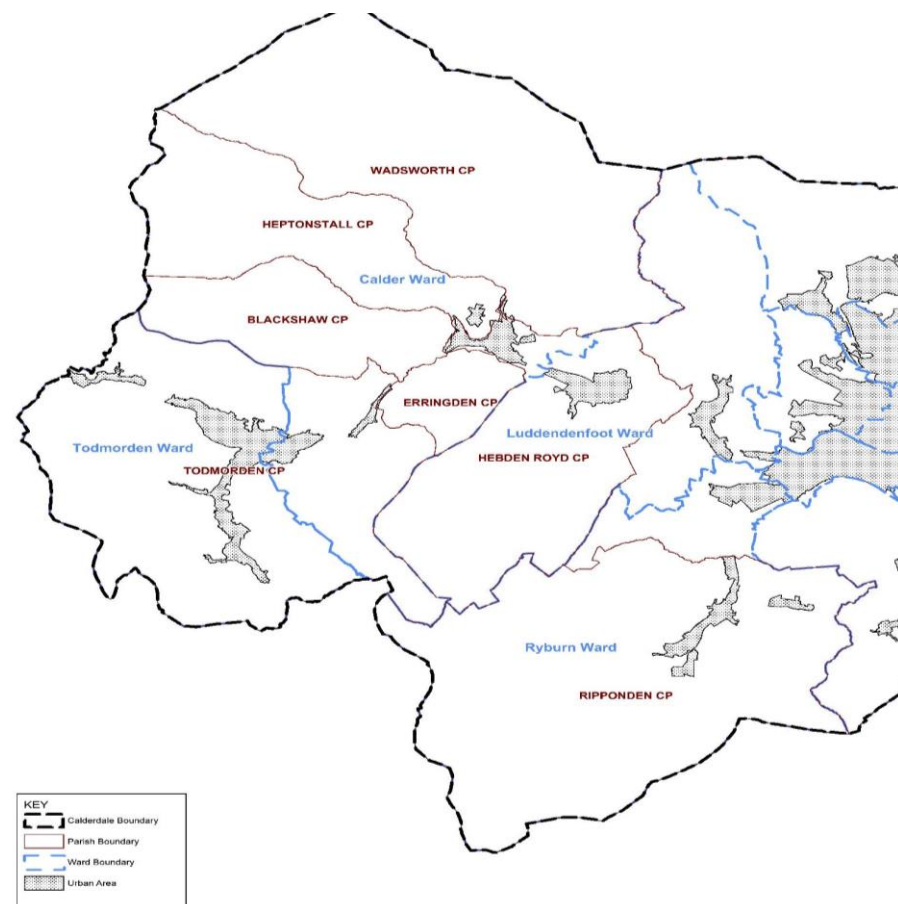
On the next few pages there is a more detailed breakdown of the types of jobs we have done, the places where we worked, some highlights from the year's work and some end of year information about CROWS.

Types of work

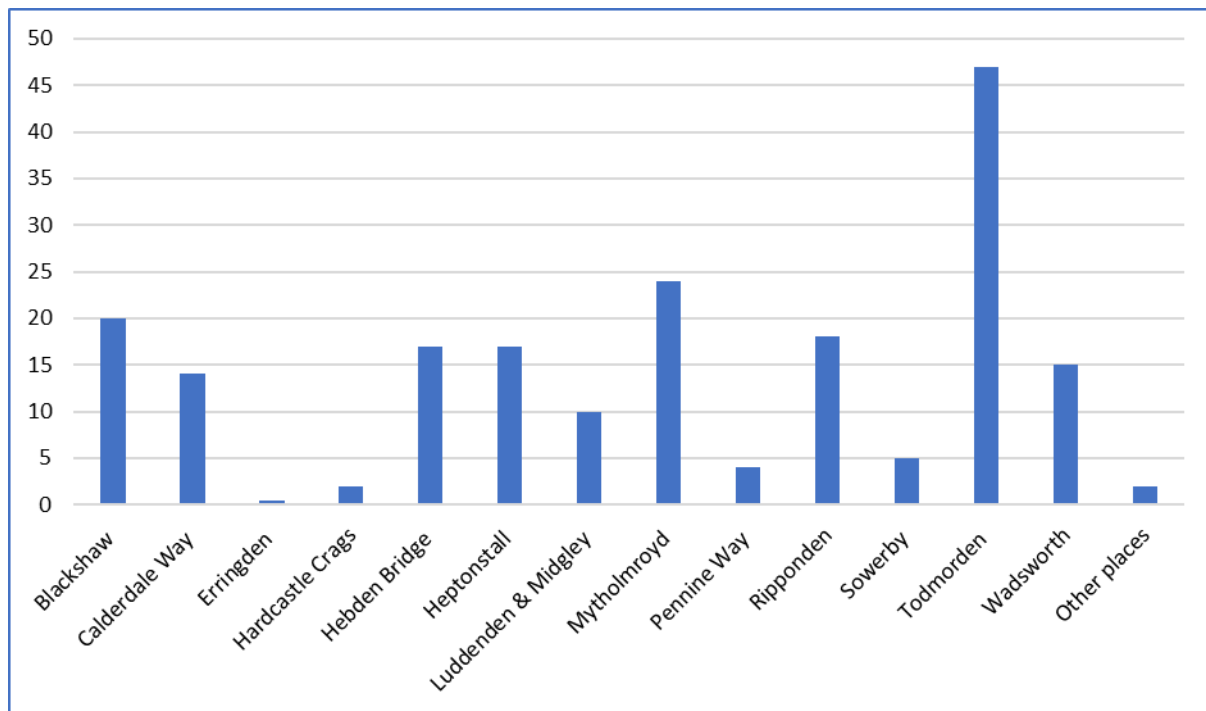
The bar chart gives an idea of the range of work we do; the figures represent the number of tasks completed.



Where we work



This bar chart shows the number of work parties in each area.



Some highlights showing the range of our work



We completed surveys and waymarking for the **Calderdale Way** the **Todmorden Centenary Way** and **Walks around the Village** routes. This work was funded by donations to CROWS

Dark Lane, west of Lower Rawtonstall had become unwalkable without wellies. We scraped off years of mulch to reveal some old causey stones. Work funded by a local donation



An example of the many stile repairs we have done this year. This is one just needing a new tread-board was at **Keb Hill** was funded by Todmorden Town Council.



A decrepit bridge at **Ramsden Clough**, Walsden. Several rotten struts and slats were replaced. These repairs were funded by Todmorden Town Council



The waymarking and interpretation boards on the **Todmorden Geology Trail** were all refurbished. Work funded by Reaps Moss Windfarm Community Fund.



Impassable steps cleared at **Bank Hill Bottom Lane** Ripponden. Work funded by Ripponden Parish Council



Part of the new steps from **Dodd Naze estate**, Hebden Bridge. A well-used path by local residents to access the main road and public transport. Work funded by crowd-funding through JustGiving.



One of the many paths needing a summer clearance. This one was near **Great Rock** and was funded by Todmorden Town Council.



These steps which we cleared are below Ryburn School in **Triangle**. They are part of the route in the Sowerby Village Walks leaflet. Work funded by Sowerby Residents Association



A lovely causey path near **Wood Top, Cragg Vale**. The water was taken off the path by digging out the channel. Work funded by Hebden Royd Town Council Mayor's fund.



Balsam eradication zone in the **Nutclough**, Hebden Bridge. This work was not funded but driven by a personal vendetta against this invasive species!



A landslide on the path to **Hebble Hole** made the path unstable. We widened the path and put in hazard tape. Work funded by Calderdale Highways (who have now installed a boardwalk)



A choked path up at **Colden**. Work funded by Heptonstall Parish Council.



One of the many waymarking issues dealt with at **Blackshaw Head**. Work funded by Blackshaw Parish Council

There are more photos on our blog where we record every work party. You can find out what we have been doing in your area by using the labels under places worked.

Our new depot



Special thanks to Frank, Ray and Ken, the main people who planned and put the new depot together. Being well organised makes it much easier to carry out work parties.

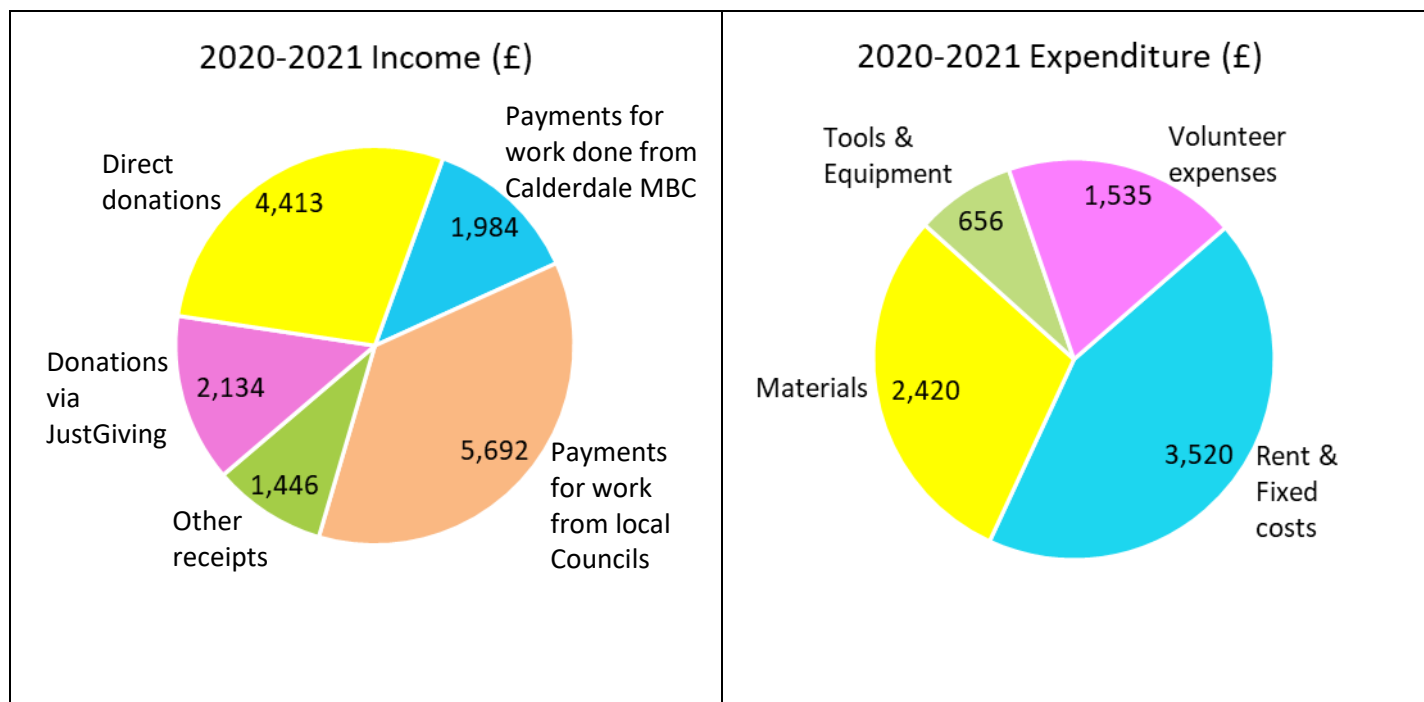
Reviewing our organisation

In 2019, to reflect the increase in the size of CROWS, we started an organisational review. Little did we know we would have a lot of time this year to develop and implement the suggested changes! Some changes have already been implemented:

- We have refined our system for the recruiting and training of new volunteers.
- We now have a funding group which includes outside expertise from Derek Kettlewell and Kasher Chatham.
- We have a completely new system for storing and accessing information online.
- The website has been rebuilt and is now simpler for people to use.

There are still some proposed changes that will have to wait until later in 2021 when hopefully we will be 'back to normal'.

Funding and Finance



Individual donations increased during the year for which we are very grateful.

Local organisations have again generously supported our work this year:

- **Calderdale Highways** funded several jobs that the public had reported to them.
- **Heptonstall, Blackshaw, Ripponden and Wadsworth Parish Councils** funded work on paths in their parishes.
- **Todmorden & Hebden Royd Town Councils** funded work on paths in their areas.
- **Bearder Charity** funded the fitting out of the new depot.
- **Little Box Consulting** provided a grant which has been used for path improvements in the Midgley and Luddenden areas.
- **Sowerby Residents Association** funded work on paths in their area.
- **Reaps Cross Wind Farm** funded projects around Todmorden.

Our new premises are a great improvement but will increase our outgoings. We are happy that our finances will cover this increase.

We start 2021 -22 with a healthy balance which will secure our base costs for twelve months and provide enough funding for the first few month's work from April 2021.

CROWS Volunteers

We currently have 28 volunteers, some with us from the start, others started this year.

As well as taking part in work parties, every volunteer contributes to the running of the organisation.

Other supporters

We rely on and remain very grateful for the expert guidance from Jan Gibson at **Calderdale Council Highways**.

Thanks to the walking groups and individuals who regularly report issues to us.

Ian Whitehead from Calder Computers who, with much skill and some patience helps us with our website, blog and Facebook pages.



Twelve of our current volunteer team

Publicity and profile

- We published several pieces about our work in Valley Life and Go Local magazines and we were nominated for the annual Go Outdoors Awards.
- The website has been upgraded and is now updated regularly. About 5000 users visited the site during the year.
- The Blog has been further developed and forms a unique public record of our work. The blog was visited 9,000 times during the year.
- The Facebook page had a reach of 7,000 people with over 1800 regular followers. We have successfully used Facebook to rally help and support for some projects.
- We are grateful to Pathway Productions for their filmed interview about CROWS. This is on our website.

Future plans

Following the surveys carried out during 2020-21 lockdowns, we have a schedule of work to carry out which will last at least six months.

We also hope to be able to implement the rest of the organisational changes identified in the review.