

# Calderdale Badger Protection Group

Working to protect badgers from all forms of persecution



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## 2021 Annual Report





# Planners in partnership

Badgers in the UK are covered by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and by Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to:

- Wilfully kill, injure, take, possess, or cruelly treat a badger;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a badger sett;
- Disturb a badger while it is occupying a sett. Disturbance could include digging or scrub clearance within 30m of the sett.

When seeking planning permission, survey reports and mitigation plans are required if:

- There are signs of setts or badgers on the development site or nearby;
- Historical or distribution records show that badgers are active in the area, or there is suitable habitat for sett building.

## Report contributors:

Cath Baker, Membership Co-secretary & Vaccinator

Steve Francis, Planning Subgroup member

Andy Mather, Planning Subgroup member

Tracey Morris, Former Treasurer

Lee Roberts, Twitterer

Lisa Wilkinson, Crime Liaison Officer, Planning Subgroup member & Membership Co-secretary

Report compiled by Emily Rawlins

**The front cover is an extract from a painting by Sara Abbott, produced in collaboration with Calderdale Badgers. The full painting costs £480, of which the group gets half. For details, visit [www.sara-abbott.com](http://www.sara-abbott.com) or [www.facebook.com/saraabbottstudio](https://www.facebook.com/saraabbottstudio)**

**B**uilding development is one of the things with the biggest impact on badgers in Calderdale.

Prior to the establishment of the Planning Subgroup, a considerable number of planning applications were being approved by the council on land occupied or used by badgers for foraging, without any account being taken of their existence. This was despite Natural England and Government advice, which states: "it was essential local planning authorities ensured that the presence or otherwise of protected species (badgers), was established before planning permission was granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision."

The subgroup – consisting of Steven Francis, Andy Mather and Lisa Wilkinson – aims to develop a working relationship between Calderdale Badger Protection Group and the Planning and Countryside departments at Calderdale Council, and ensure the council is aware of all planning applications that are likely to affect badgers. So how have we gone about this mammoth task?

A report was sent to Calderdale's Chief Ecologist in November 2020, ensuring the council is now aware of every proposed site in the Local Plan affecting badgers. Our excellent database and Badger Alert Zone were also produced around this time.

This brings us to the monthly planning applications that appear on the Calderdale Planning Portal. There are usually around a hundred a month, and each member of the planning group takes it in turn to check them. All the applications are filtered against key words, which reduces the numbers to around 10 or 12. A more in-depth assessment is now made. Is it in the Badger Alert Zone or the Wildlife Habitat Network? Are there setts or signs of badgers nearby on our database? Is it surrounded by badger habitat, and does it require a site visit? This usually brings the numbers requiring a site visit down to about three or four applications.

Information on the remaining applications is entered on a spreadsheet and a site visit carried out. If, during the visit, it is found badgers are likely to be affected, a report is sent to the Chief Ecologist, along with photographic proof of badgers and/or their sett being used on the date of the site visit. A link to the report is

then entered on the spreadsheet so it can be followed up.

Our reports on specific planning applications are forwarded to the case holder in the Planning department with either a request for an initial ecological appraisal or a protected species survey to be undertaken if needed. We are also increasingly being contacted by ecologists who have been asked to undertake ecological assessments on planning application sites.

The Planning Subgroup met with the Head of Countryside Services in December 2021 with the aim of discussing and agreeing a way of working collaboratively to best protect badgers in Calderdale. The meeting agreed that a close working relationship would be advantageous for all parties.

Calderdale Badgers would benefit from this working relationship with the planning officers and this would add weight to comments, suggestions and reports put forward by our group. Likewise, the knowledge and expertise available in the group benefits him in helping to protect wildlife in Calderdale.

The meeting agreed the following to ensure a safe and effective working relationship:

- Any information given to the group by the council must remain confidential and not be shared with the public, or people who could use or pass it on;
- The Chief Ecologist must not be quoted in our reports or elsewhere;
- On important sites he will try to get permission for us to accompany him to site;
- He will contact us with information on new applications;
- As a group, we will concentrate on badgers and not get involved in other areas of planning;
- To continue with further meetings to discuss specifics going forward.

The Planning Subgroup's relationship with the Head of Countryside Services (Chief Ecologist), and indeed the relationship with the Planning department itself, continues to develop in a very positive way. We are now getting notification of applications which may affect badgers and being asked for our input, and our reports are being used and referenced in the case of some applications. This has been a huge success for the group and for the protection of badgers from the impact of planning and development in Calderdale.

## Rescuers wade in to save badger

Group members sprang into action after a badger was reported stuck on a ledge by a Todmorden river in March 2021.

Local residents spotted the animal curled up asleep on a small concrete ledge between the river and a wall, and alerted the group via our hotline. It may have fallen from gardens at the top of the wall the night before.

Cath, Emily and Marguerite attended the scene and considered leaving the badger to find its own way out — but its options would have been either a difficult swim upstream to access a shallow riverbank, or continuing downstream then returning across a busy road. The decision was therefore made to attempt to catch the badger.

Emily, joined by Andrea and Andrew, waded towards the badger with a cage and wooden “pig boards”. The animal woke up and tried to escape downstream, but



Left, the badger sleeps on a ledge by the river. Below, Emily herds it towards a cage using a pig board. Pictures by Cath and Marguerite

was clearly just as frightened of the water as it was of its rescuers — even making a desperate effort to climb the vertical wall!

Eventually it was cajoled into the cage, which Andrew carried back to dry land. As there were a number of dog walkers around, the group decided to wait until dusk before releasing the badger. When Emily opened the cage door, it scuttled purposefully across the field — clearly in



no doubt as to where its sett was. An account of the rescue was published on Yorkshire Live website a few days later — a rare, and much welcomed, positive outcome following a badger mishap.

# Roads exert bloody toll

In 2021 we recorded 59 dead badgers. Of these, 31 were recorded as official road traffic accidents and 17 were death unknown, which means there were no obvious injuries, ie no impact wounds which would be sustained from being hit by a vehicle.

There was one shot badger and 11 recorded as not found — this is when members turn out but no badger is found. We can assume these have been moved by the council street cleansing teams or by a caring member of the public.

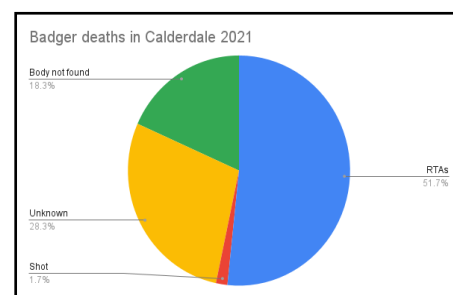
Traffic is the number one threat to badgers in the UK. Our friendly badger consistently tops the list of RTAs of all mammals. We use RTA statistics in various ways: is it a genuine RTA or covering up for badger crime? During the birthing period, is the casualty a female and is she lactating? If yes, we could have cubs going



Andy looks for setts in Todmorden, near Calderdale's most dangerous road for badgers.

Picture by Cath

hungry back in the sett and these could come above ground frantically looking for mum. Without human intervention, these would either starve or be predated on. According to Badger Trust information, 50,000 badgers are killed on our roads annually, equating to a fifth of the adult population. These are only recorded figures as many more will go unrecorded.



We ask our supporters to please:

1. Slow down and give badgers a brake — be sure your speed matches that of the road, being especially vigilant at dawn and dusk.
2. Report badger casualties to the Badger Trust if you are not aware of your local group. The Badger Trust will then inform your local badger group.

## Extreme badgering

Yorkshire badgers are a hardy bunch, going out in snow and sub-zero conditions — and so are our volunteers! Cath (left) and Jude went looking for badger pawprints in Todmorden in February 2021, but found these magnificent snow drifts instead!



# Shooting and sett digging among litany of crime

**I**n terms of crime, 2021 unfortunately got off to a busy start, with two setts badly damaged by bottle diggers (*see next page*).

We continue to monitor these setts and other setts on old Victorian ash tips closely and have put up signs in collaboration with West Yorkshire Police advising that digging the woodland floor and damaging wildlife habitat could be a criminal act.

Other badger crimes reported included part of a sett being damaged on a planning application site where developers were clearing the land before the application had been agreed and mitigation factors put in place. A dog belonging to a group of young men out with terriers and lurchers on an area of moorland frequented by lampers was reported to have entered a badger sett. The men ran off when police arrived and the dog appeared some time later and was taken by police to the vets and then held while an investigation was



PC Matt Hamilton, Calderdale's Wildlife Crimes Officer, and a dog which may have been used for badger baiting.



completed. The dog was not seriously injured and was eventually returned to its owners. We had issues with a couple of residents blocking sett entrances in their gardens and both had visits for our WCO. In March we were sadly informed of a dead badger found on a footpath. On examination, it was discovered the badger had been shot. Despite forensic vet evidence, the investigation was never able to identify the circumstances or perpetrator of this crime.

We were fortunate that after this incident in March there were no further identified badger crimes for the rest of the year. On a more positive note, the group's relationship with Calderdale's Wildlife Crime Officer, Matt Hamilton continued to develop in a really positive way throughout 2021 and involved a close and collaborative working arrangement. While Covid and numerous lockdowns impacted on us and prevented us from attending

many face-to-face meetings, our WCO and Lisa Wilkinson, the group's Crime Liaison Officer, did manage to meet in person in December.

PC Hamilton informed us of the formation of a National Wildlife Crime Unit North of England and Scotland branch.

The police are now also using the Badger Crime Toolkit for investigators developed by the The Badger Persecution Priority Delivery Group.

PC Hamilton had attended a National Wildlife Crime training course, and West Yorkshire Police Rural and Wildlife Crime Officers also had a day together.

Calderdale Police Training Unit had asked the group to offer some training in badger crime to a group of PCs and PCSOs but unfortunately this had to be cancelled because of lockdown. We are hoping to provide this in 2022 instead. We also receive support from The Badger Trust and their Wildlife Crime Officer and Trainer in relation to any queries about badger crime.



# Habitat wreckers meet their match



Group members repair the extensive damage, shown below, caused to this badger sett near Halifax.

Pictures by Cath

Calderdale is littered, literally, with old Victorian ash tips. With soft sloping diggable ground, some of these sites are now occupied by our favourite stripey diggers, who nestle in among the coal ash, clay pipe ends and glass bottles. Unfortunately, this means that sometimes our friends come into conflict with bottle-digging humans, searching for that elusive rare bottle. While many in the bottle-digging community know to avoid sites with the tell-tale signs of badger use, we have found setts destroyed by people who put bottles above badgers.

In January 2021, members of the public alerted police to exactly this. Our Wildlife Crimes Officer was, as always, straight on the case, and contacted us for verification that the sett was active. Three large pits had been dug in an area of land that used to contain seven holes of a 20-hole sett. Our members attended the following day to check the damage, only to find that the bottle-diggers had cheekily returned, broken through the police tape, and were found, spades in hand, in the pits!



They were identified and questioned under caution for reckless destruction of a badger sett. Fresh latrines and camera trap footage from our group members confirmed that the sett was still active. However, we had 1.5 metre deep pits with exposed badger tunnels, at risk of collapse or attracting further bottle diggers. The landowner agreed to let us access the land to monitor for badgers and repair the damage.

With a fantastically speedy response from the Wildlife Lead Advisor at Natural England, and help from Lancashire Badger Group and one of our group's ecologists, we managed to get a licence to interfere with a badger sett to refill the holes. After

checking that the tunnels were no longer active, we mounted Covid-secure relay teams, four members at a time, refilling, trampling and then disguising the large area that had been destroyed by the bottle diggers. By this time, the whole of the local community had heard about what had happened and were offering support. The landowner even called the police when she saw strangers heading back towards the site holding spades. Luckily, those diggers turned out to be badger group members turning up for their shift! So what became of the bottle diggers? In the end they received police cautions. While a full prosecution would have been great, the cautions sit on their records. Bottle diggers in Calderdale now know that the police will take this crime seriously and will pursue prosecution. And they know that we know who they are! We met other diggers who assured us that they would make sure that word got around not to dig near badger setts. All of our ash tips have increased monitoring. If you know of one near you, please let us know, as we can check it for signs of

## Snufflers forage prizes

When Lisa's dog trainer held a quiz night in aid of animal causes, including Calderdale Badgers, we felt it would be rude not to enter a team — and then walked away with most of the prizes! Philippa Smith, of Happy Dog House UK, organised the event at the Volunteer Arms, Copley, in November 2021, and raised a fantastic £710 to help our badgers.

Celebrating with their prizes are "The Snufflers": from left, Cath, Amy, Lisa and Emily (Jude was also on the team).



**Financial Statement for the period 1 January to 31 December 2021**

	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Balance b/f</b>	<b>10317.84</b>	<b>6311.13</b>
<b>Income</b>		
<b>Subscriptions</b>	<b>978.00</b>	<b>744.00</b>
<b>Donations</b>		
<b>Members</b>	170.50	231.00
<b>Events</b>	0.00	135.00*
<b>Surveys</b>	0.00	200.00
<b>Other</b>	467.00	734.74
	<b>637.50</b>	<b>1300.74</b>
<b>Sales</b>		
<b>Stalls</b>	7.00	0.00
<b>Jam</b>	876.10	763.00
<b>Cards</b>	1156.50	1639.00
<b>Wooden Badgers</b>	15.00	481.00
<b>Toy Badgers</b>	14.00	126.00
<b>eBay</b>	6.18	139.17
<b>Crafts</b>	483.00	1047.50
<b>Other</b>	53.20**	165.50**
	<b>2610.98</b>	<b>4235.17</b>
<b>Grants</b>	<b>210.00***</b>	<b>415.00</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>
	<b>4436.48</b>	<b>6940.91</b>

\*George appeal

\*\*postage payments for goods

\*\*\*Mr Lumpy – paid back

	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
<b>Running Costs</b>		
<b>Badger Trust Levy</b>	190.00	178.00
<b>Insurance</b>	314.70	314.70
<b>PayPal</b>	22.67	40.45
<b>Postage / Stationery</b>	104.76	114.04
	<b>632.13</b>	<b>647.19</b>
<b>Vaccination / Rescue kit</b>	<b>772.37</b>	<b>1419.83</b>



	2021	2020
<b>Fundraising costs</b>		
Stalls	25.00	0.00
Merchandise	89.76	176.25
Crafts	86.92	147.90
Cards	752.18	488.61
	<b>953.86</b>	<b>812.76</b>
Other	<b>1329.00</b>	<b>54.42**</b>
	<b>3687.36</b>	<b>2934.20</b>

	2021	2020
Brought forward	10317.84	6311.13
Income	4436.48	6940.91
Expenditure	(3687.36)	(2934.20)
<b>Balance</b>	<b>11066.96</b>	<b>10317.84</b>

\* Repayment of monies to Mr Lumpy, donation to Secret World, and repayment of incorrect invoice from Tod Almighty

\*\* Just Giving fees from last year's fundraising

<b>Restricted funds</b>		
Vaccination Project	<b>5888.06</b>	<b>6203.03</b>
Emergency / Rescue Funds	<b>1012.32</b>	<b>1071.08</b>
Running costs		
Badger Trust Levy	200.00	200.00
Insurance	350.00	350.00
Stalls costs	300.00	300.00
Merchandise	1000.00	1000.00
Depreciation of cages	300.00	150.00
And a bit over	283.50	24.50
Unspent 2021 running costs	516.68	0.00
	<b>2950.18</b>	<b>2024.50</b>
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>	<b>1216.40</b>	<b>1019.23*</b>
	<b>11066.96</b>	<b>10317.84</b>

Notes:

The income and expenditure categories are colour coded as they relate to each other. In order to pay for the blue running costs (insurance/ Badger Trust levy/ PayPal / stationery etc), we need the blue income (membership subscriptions). The yellow income from stalls pays for the costs of running the stalls. Green donations are paying for any rescue costs (i.e., training and emergency care bills). Red income doesn't necessarily relate to red expenditure, but where we have big one-off expenses, we would generally need big one-off grants.

# Anti-cull fight goes on

As autumn drew closer, the Badger Trust launched a campaign to highlight the ongoing badger cull by asking the public to send postcards to their MPs. We embraced this wholeheartedly – the difference between postcards and petitions is that the MP is obliged to respond to each postcard, making it much harder to ignore! We went into the



market streets of Calderdale with stalls, and to train stations with clipboards and badger signs, as well as rallying friends and neighbours. People were overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing surprise and disgust that the cull was still happening (after headlines suggesting the opposite). Some people hadn't heard of the cull, so it was a great opportunity to educate. Hundreds of people completed the postcards, some local to

Calderdale, others from further afield.

People who weren't sure of their MPs filled in their addresses for us to find out and post their cards.

We planned to visit our local MPs and hand-deliver the postcards. However, rising Covid levels made this unwise if not impossible, so instead they have been posted to the Houses of Parlia-

ment with a plea for MPs to attend a vote in March 2022 to ban the free-shooting element of the badger cull.

Meanwhile several of our members spent autumn nights tramping across fields outside Chester as part of Cheshire Wounded Badger Patrol.

There is a shortage of patrol leaders and we have been invited to attend training in order to be able to help out more in future.

On one occasion, Andy and



Stewart and Amy collect postcards opposing the badger cull, outside Todmorden Station. Left, a Cheshire Wounded Badger Patroller.

Pictures by Cath and Lisa

Emily, along with their patrol leader, spent more than an hour following a known shooter's car before being warned off by police around 1am. We would like to think that by that

stage the shooter had had enough and went home to bed; but, as a worst-case scenario, at least the local badgers were able to enjoy an hour's window in which to forage in peace.

# Vaccination project put on ice

Early in 2021, despite Covid limitations, we were full steam ahead to begin a badger vaccination programme in Calderdale.

While Calderdale has very low rates of bovine tuberculosis and no evidence of the disease in wildlife, we wanted to vaccinate those badgers in areas where cattle had been infected. Before it will grant a licence to vaccinate, Natural England requires that landowners are signed up, land surveyed and evidence that the group can afford the costs.

Early in the year we had a very generous donation of equipment from the Cheshire vaccination programme. Friends of Mr Lumpy, the Stockport badger, donated a large sum in addition to our own fundraising, we had vaccinators trained up, and seemed ready to apply.

However, it became apparent that Calderdale simply did not meet the criteria for badger vaccination – which focuses on levels of bTB in cattle. With so few confirmed cases over the years, the science did not stack up – it was so unlikely that TB from cattle could have been passed to badgers that we made the decision to put the scheme on hold. There seemed to be no benefits to badgers, cattle or landowners. We passed the money back to Mr Lumpy's friends to enable them to support other schemes and donated the equipment to the fledgling Cumbria vaccination project.

While the group did not take the decision to postpone lightly, the experience of the process has been invaluable. We know of more setts than ever before, have had some comedy days out slipping through

Calderdale's steep wooded valleys, have forged new links with landowners and smallholders, and understand the current process, should we ever need it here.

One of our vaccinators made it to Derbyshire to vaccinate badgers there, where the scheme is going strong, offering a real alternative to the cull.

We would like to thank everyone who has supported us so far, through mentoring (Debbie Bailey and crew at Derbyshire Wildlife Trust), fundraising, making and selling merchandise, donating to our Just-Giving page, and buying our jam, cards and badger decorations.

The money is still ring-fenced so we can be ready to go, but if we decide that we will not be going ahead, we will donate the funds to other vaccination schemes that need it.