Berkshire Lowland Search and Rescue

Trustees Annual Report 2026

This is the annual report from the Trustees of Berkshire Lowland Search and Rescue for 2026.

Berkshire Lowland Search and Rescue is a group of approximately 80 volunteers who are trained to be able to support Thames Valley Police (TVP) in searching for high risk, vulnerable missing people who have been reported to the police. This service is available free of charge to the police, and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Whilst most of our members are operational searchers, as identified below some of our volunteers conduct important support roles. In addition to supporting TVP the team also provide support to Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) in water rescue and providing drone capability at the scene of major incidents. In addition to these services the team are also able to provide support to Local Authorities and other statutory bodies such as the NHS.

The team currently have 93 members and in 2026 so far have attended 46 incidents, and were involved in 155 events. Of these incidents there were only 7 full-team call outs which sees a continuation of a trend for reduced need from TVP. This is good news but is a challenge to the motivation of members.

Since becoming a CIO, the Trustees have ensured that the team operates on a secure bedrock of policies and practices in order to carry out their responsibilities. This has been completed and the Trustees continue to be involved with providing strategic oversight to the running of the team. The Trustees can report that for the financial year 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 the team is in a firm financial position with the team employing recognised practices to manage the team finances and to identify any challenges to this position.

Income for the team came from a variety of sources during 2026. These funding streams consist of grants, donations and money raised for services provided by the team such as medical and stewarding services. The majority of the money raised is spent on the operational costs of running the team. Extra income is spent on replacing, or enhancing existing equipment used by the team such as better equipped drones.

An objective for the Trustees during this year has been recruitment to the Leadership Team. The Trustees are responsible for the process of identifying, and nominating to the membership suitable individuals to take up lead roles on the Leadership Team (LT), which manages the day-to-day operational running of the team. Unfortunately, despite some key positions being filled by knowledgeable individuals in their areas of expertise, they have not been able to stay with the team and the Trustees continue to seek out personnel to fill these positions. Trustees visited Volunteer Fairs and hope to be able to recruit suitable volunteers to fill the identified roles.

Importantly these individuals were recruited for their professional knowledge and experience, and not as operational searchers. This allowed the Trustees to make strategic appointments to roles such as Business Operations, PR and Marketing, Membership (HR) and a Project Officer. As a result, these individuals were producing results and hence the desire to continue with these benefits.

Another significant objective for the Trustees has been progressing a new base for the team to operate from. The team has a fleet of vehicles and trailers, along with associated equipment which all requires secure storage. For the last few years, the team have been using premises owned by a Local Authority but have now had to move out. Negotiations with a land owner had progressed to the planning stage before the team found it necessary to pull out of the negotiations. To give this project the urgency it requires a Trustee is now leading the search assisted by a Project Officer. They regularly report to the Trustees and LT regarding progress. Financially the team have reserves built up to offset major expenses related to a new base. This project is now making progress and the team should be housed in a new base later in 2027.