

# **Bittern Countryside Community Interest Company**

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## **Chairman's Report March 2020**

Welcome to all our shareholders old and new.

The Corona virus, Covid-19, is going to affect us all greatly in the coming months. We may need to look carefully at what needs to be done to help our villages weather the storm. While this AGM has been cancelled, in order to fulfil legal requirements and taking account of changing guidelines regarding Covid-19, we will plan to hold an equivalent meeting, if at all possible, some time in the summer.

Hopefully we can all work together ( if apart) if you know what I mean, to bring help to all those who need it in the AONB. If you have any ideas on how we can mitigate the undoubted financial and social problem that will affect many in the AONB in the coming months please share them with us all.

I would like to briefly touch on what has happened in the BCCIC over the past financial year.

The solar PV initiative still continues to reduce the carbon footprint of the area. Storth School, our first solar school in 2012 continue to be very pleased with their panels. The solar panels from the Leeds Childrens Holiday Centre which were donated to the Lakeland Trust for Natural Sciences who run Wildlife Oasis on the A6 are generating. The Solar panels at the AONB offices are working well and have generated around 3,000kwh per year since they were installed in 2015 and the small panel on the shed still charge up the batteries. Silverdale Primary School panels went back on in the summer. They will have to be removed again when a major re-roof of the whole school is done this coming summer but will go back on as soon as that is over. They are still fund-raising to help to pay for their part of the £130,000 cost of the work and we have given them £1,000 towards this.

We are delighted to see that the RSPB have a new array of panels on their roof at Leighton Moss and hope that the big display panel can be put back in the cafe.

The Parish Signboard project we started with Arnside Parish Council is bearing fruit under the aegis of the AONB. Each parish is being offered help with the design and production of a series of parish information boards. Arnside, Storth and Beetham boards are now up and Silverdale have decided to wait until the Coast Path Route

along the shore is finalised. The Yealands are now underway and we will be helping towards their production costs.

The Silverdale District Woodbank are thriving and continue to help local wood owners to manage their woodlands in exchange for the surplus wood. I feel strongly that this is an initiative that is worth supporting for many reasons. It enables waste wood to be used. Many of the members have young families and collecting wood brings them out into the countryside. They all understand the importance of only burning seasoned dry wood and their communal wood stores enable them to achieve this.

The atlases continue to sell well at the RSPB cafe and at events which has meant that a total of £456 has come to us in the last 12 months to Sept 2019. We donate 50p from each copy sold in the cafe to the RSPB funds (an additional £120). The AONB Landscape Trust also sell the Atlases through their new web shop.

I am vice chair of the AONB Executive Committee of the AONB and the BCCIC continues to support the work of the AONB team in many other ways.

The Arnside/Silverdale AONB Red Squirrel Strategy is continuing with the support of all the major landowners in the area including some funding from the BCCIC. Bob Hamnett is working on this. It is encouraging to note that far fewer Grey Squirrels are being reported in the area. It is hoped that the Arnside peninsula will be a base for re-introduction in the near future. It is interesting to note that in 1987 the AONB hosted a conference with the hopes that following the initial sightings of greys in the area a strategy could be worked out to protect the indigenous reds which were still thriving here.

The Morecambe Bay species introduction project BOOM is now up and running with the Maidenhair Fern re-introduction going well. Other species include Dormice, Small Blue Butterfly, Aspen, Spiked Speedwell and Pine Marten.

Another important area is plastic. We are looking to see if we can work together with others to reduce the use of plastic in our locality. Val Stevens has a leaflet showing how to replace plastic with more sustainable alternatives. This is now on our website. Financially we remain on a sound footing and we have managed to further many of our aims. We always welcome suggestions from our shareholders as to further possible initiatives.

Our web site is now run by A2A, a local business. It has allowed us a lot more flexibility than before. Do have a look at it. If you have any ideas for other things that could go on the site please let us know. Also if you would like to get involved in

this side of our work we would love to hear from you.

We have a vacancy for a director. We would like to hear from anyone who is interested. They could be co-opted any time in the coming year and stand for election at the next AGM.

Thanks are due to all our board and especially Mike, our secretary, David, our Treasurer and also Lucy, Barbara and everyone at the AONB office.

Finally can I wish you all continued health and all the best in the coming months.

Ann Kitchen

BCCIC Chair