

Chairman's Report, BCCIC, March 2015

I will try to differentiate between things that happened up to 31st September 2014, the date of the end of our financial year, and those that have happened since.

Firstly we worked together with Silverdale School to put Solar PV panels on their roof. They have been installed. Interestingly enough the one complaint from some parents was that they couldn't see them. They are of a new design which sits in the middle of the flat roofs of the prefab classrooms and the only place they are visible from is the Pepperpot!!! Unfortunately over the summer we discovered that Silverdale School had been put on the wrong tariff. This meant that the Feed-in tariff would only produce half of what was expected. We, Silverdale School, our MP's and various others have been trying to get this reversed. This we failed to do but British Gas, the energy supplier, offered us some compensation. We have accepted a sum of £2,300, which is half the amount we have lost through being on the wrong tariff. This means that we will make a loss of £500 on the Silverdale scheme. However we will not make a loss as such on the whole project but will not be able to help another school just yet.

Friends of the Earth are having a project called Run on Solar to encourage schools to get Solar PV systems. They have used our work here as a case study and spent a couple of days with our schools in January 2015. They were very grateful to hear about what went wrong with our Silverdale Tariff and say they will make sure that others don't fall into the same trap. OFGEM have said that all the generating companies must alter their forms to avoid the misunderstanding that plagued us so some good will come of it all.

We have offered a grant to the AONB office so they too can have solar PV panels on the roof of the station building and we are just awaiting a final decision from Lancaster City Council to see if that can go ahead.

We were commissioned to produce a directory of woodland advisors, contractors, woodfuel and wood products funded by the Morecambe Bay Nature Improvement Area Partnership. This was finished in March 2014 and has been very popular. We only have a few left of the print run and it is available on our web site.

We also started a trial project to encourage people to move from open fires to woodburning/multifuel stoves. We have a lot of wood in the area but it is four times more efficient to burn it in a stove than an open fire. Thanks to a few shareholders who offered their winter fuel allowance for this purpose we were able to offer a few small grants and/or interest-free loans to those in the

AONB who want to make the change but haven't yet saved up enough to do it. We have prioritised those with small children, using storage heaters and/or open fires to heat their homes. Our first grant/loan was given in January 2014 to a delightful family in Silverdale with 2 small boys and a damp house heated by storage heaters which they found hard to afford. They are now the proud possessors of a lovely woodburning stove which heats the whole house and is almost free to run as the father is a conservation volunteer in his spare time. He is self-employed, and has also joined the Silverdale and District Wood Bank. We have since given 2 more grants, at the end of 2014, and are giving another for start in April 2015. We would love to hear from anyone who feels that they could pledge all or part of their 2015 winter fuel allowance for such a good cause.

We helped the Silverdale and District Woodbank get started (allowing them to keep their money with us as well as with advice and help). They are now up and running with their own bank account so the money has been returned. They also have a website, <http://sadwoodbank.btck.co.uk>, insurance for all their tasks and have had a grant to enable them to get some tools and also some training. We wish them well in the future.

Our wildlife guides are still selling well and we now have 14 in all. The new ones are Mini-mammals, Rocks and Soils and Fungi. Our sales have now reached £4,784 (£4,397 to the end of the financial year). Our production costs have been £4,356. We have sold 2,687 atlases to date and have 1,296 still in stock. This should provide money for our running costs. I would like to thank the RSPB cafe staff who sell some of them for us in return for a share of the returns to RSPB funds.

We have had displays at various AONB, Arnside Natural History Society and Landscape Trust events. We even had a half page mention in Cumbria Life.

The AONB website has had a new look and our pages have been updated too. Our thanks must go to Barbara Henneberry for her help in this. David Askew retired from his job with the AONB but I am delighted to say that he is still happy to go on acting as our Financial Director and our registered office will remain at the Old Station Building, Arnside.

We also welcomed 1 new shareholder.

I would like to thank the Board and the staff of the AONB unit for all their help and encouragement over the past year.

The Board would like to send you all thanks for your support and look forward to another successful year.