

## **Bittern Countryside Community Interest Company**

### **Minutes of the Eighth Annual General Meeting held at 7.00 pm on Friday 18th March 2016 at RSPB Leighton Moss Visitor Centre, Silverdale.**

Before the business meeting, Bob Cartwright gave an illustrated talk about the initiative to restore red squirrel populations in the Arnside Silverdale AONB.

The talk covered the context the decline of red squirrel populations in England since the introduction of the non-native grey squirrel in the late 19th century. Initiatives to protect existing populations of the red squirrel in the north of England including the establishment of 'safe heavens' and the setting up of groups to monitor red squirrel populations as well as eliminate greys through trapping were explained. The Initiative that covers South Westmorland including the AONB has appealed for funds to attract more volunteers to carry out trapping and it is hoped that at some time it will be possible to appoint a project officer to coordinate efforts.

#### **1. Present and Apologies**

Present: Shareholders: Ann Kitchen (Chairman), David Askew, George Steele, Alan Rhodes, Heather Rhodes, Roger Walton, Natalia Walton, John Webb, Bob Hamnett, Brenda Penn, Fiona Allan (also representing Landscape Trust), Val Stevens, Malcolm Stevens, Robin Horner, Roger Cartwright, Mike Smith, Jeanette Smith and Ken Kitchen. Others: Ray Anslow, Liz Anslow (Landscape Trust) and Bob Cartwright (Westmorland Red Squirrels – speaker).

Apologies were received from: Prof Alwyn Smith, Susan Briscoe, Kate Schofield, David & Jill Player, Barbara Hall, David Farrant, Margaret Bromley-Webb, Jean Watts, Ann Gegg, Laura Middleton, Ian Henderson, Liza Henderson, Laura Askew and Lesley Edkins

#### **2. Minutes of the last AGM**

The Minutes of the last Meeting held on 6 March 2015 were agreed as a true record (Prop: Ray Anslow; Seconder: Roger Walton). There were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.

#### **3. Chairman's Report on Company Activities**

The Chairman welcomed all shareholders Old and New.

At the last AGM, she reported that we had put new Solar PV panels on the roof of Silverdale School. However a mistake with the FIT application meant that the school had been put on the lowest tariff rate. We finally got our share of the compensation in July 2015. This amounted to £2,380. It has meant that while the school that benefits from free electricity as well as a share of the FIT will make a profit over the life of the scheme and the Company will just cover its costs and should receive an annual income of around £250 for the next 18 years. The solar panels at the Silverdale Leeds Children's Holiday Centre continue to generate well and we have received an annual income of over £500 as our share of the FIT. As they will be leaving the site in November, the agreement will end then (Holgate's have bought the site) and the balance of £5,100 will be repaid to us. Our

last Solar PV project, to give a grant to put PV panels on the Station Building for the AONB has finally come to fruition. The panels were installed in September. As we wish to support the AONB it was decided that this £3,800 should be a grant with all the FIT going to the AONB office.

Since the last AGM we have given another grant towards the cost of the installation of a wood-burning stove. We will hope to carry this on over the years as funds become available. The Silverdale District Woodbank (now a company limited by guarantee) is thriving and continues to help local woodland owners manage their woodlands in exchange for the surplus wood. They are working with the National Trust and the Woodland Trust as well as with Butterfly Conservation, Leighton Hall estate and other small land owners.

The atlases continue to sell well at the RSPB cafe. We donate 50p from each sale to the RSPB funds. We have sold 364 since the last AGM, roughly one a day although the summer is by far the best time.

I, as Chair of the BCCIC, was invited to go on the AONB Executive Committee of the AONB. I accepted and at the last meeting became its Vice Chairman. Hopefully we can continue to support the work of the AONB team in many other ways. You may know that Ruth Ainsworth has joined the AONB team to job share with Barbara.

We still have vacancies for new directors and would welcome any shareholder willing to stand.

Financially we remain on a sound footing and we have managed to further many of our aims.

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

In answer to a query from Val Stevens, AK explained that the solar panels from Leeds Children's Holiday home would be surplus and that we have been asked whether we know of anyone wishing to use them. If however they were so re-used, they would not be eligible to receive the Feed-In tariff.

#### **4. Report of the Finance Director and Presentation of Accounts**

The finance director circulated an abbreviated copy of the accounts. In the last financial year the Company made a modest loss. Turnover (i.e. income) was £5,421 compared with £4,388 in the previous year. Taking into account the cost of sales (£5,927 that included the £3800 grant to the AONB for their solar panels) and administrative expenses (£830), this gave an operating loss of £1,336. Corrected to take account of a small amount of taxable interest on balances, the net loss was £1,327.

The balance sheet to end September 2015 shows that the tangible assets now stand at £79 and cash at bank and in hand of £8,612. From this has to be deducted an amount falling due to creditors within 1 year of £723, giving £7,889 as the net current assets. A further £600 will be due to be paid to creditors after more than one year.

The total called up and fully paid share capital is £11,170. Deducting the accumulated loss of £3,802 (£2,475 from 2013/14) plus £1,327), shareholders' funds stand at £7,368.

The administrative expenses of £830 included £327 for insurance, £131 for printing, postage and stationery and £120 fees for the accountancy checking service. A sum of £28 was paid for legal and professional fees and the standard £225 for depreciation of fixed assets.

## **5. Approval of Reports and Accounts**

Val Stevens proposed that the accounts be approved. This was seconded by Malcolm Stevens. The accounts were then approved by a show of hands.

## **6. Appointment and Re-appointment of Directors**

This year Mike Smith and Ann Kitchen retired as Directors and both expressed a willingness to be reappointed for a further three year term. Proposed by David Askew and seconded by Ray Anslow, the re-appointments were confirmed by a show of hands.

Fiona Allan confirmed that she would be happy to stand as a director. This appointment was proposed by Ann Kitchen and seconded by Mike Smith. The appointment was agreed by a show of hands.

## **7. Supporting the Arnside/Silverdale Red Squirrel Project**

The Chairman asked members how they feel about supporting the Westmorland Red Squirrel Initiative. Individuals could be involved with trapping whether or not they own woodland. To be successful trapping needs to cover all areas of woodland where grey squirrels occur. It is important to involve all woodland owners however small the holdings.

The Company could thus support the initiative through individual help, by publicity or by providing direct financial assistance. Such assistance would be within the powers and objective of the CIC. Such assistance would support objectives to deliver red squirrel conservation set out in the AONB Management Plan (5.1b). A vote to allow the directors to support the initiative was carried by a clear majority with no votes against.

## **8. Other Business**

There were no items under this heading.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Signed as a true record:

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