

Bittern Countryside Community Interest Company

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Newsletter to Shareholders December 2017

This is an update on the activities of the Company and the AONB during the last year.

Community Renewals Project

As part of this project we have helped Arnside Football Club install LED lighting in their clubhouse. This has been very successful and as well as lowering the energy used the whole clubhouse looks lighter and brighter. We are looking to roll this out in other areas. We are looking to donate around £500 to schools or community buildings within the AONB who want to do likewise.

AONB Planning and Management

The AONB Unit is now working on the next AONB Management Plan. The BCCIC is helping by reading documents, commenting, and together with the AONB Landscape Trust and the AONB Unit working on a plan to help the Partnership develop resilience to take it through the coming years. This work is vital if we are to be able to continue to protect the area we know and love.

Lancaster City Council and South Lakeland District Council have jointly prepared a dedicated Development Plan Document (DPD) for the whole of the AONB. It identifies sites for new housing and employment to contribute towards meeting local needs and sets out planning policies to ensure that any development reflects the AONB designation.

Following public consultations, the Plan has now been agreed by both Councils and went to the Secretary of State for approval on December 14th 2017. The full document is available from the AONB Office or online at www.southlakeland.gov.uk/aonb-dpd. This has taken a huge amount of time but hopefully will protect our area for years to come.

Haweswater Plan

After much discussion, the work to restore Little Haweswater and Hawes Water within the Gait Barrows NNR should start in the New Year. Natural England had produced a plan that will help to protect the very special flora but local residents had been worried about the proposed removal of mature beech trees. It is understood that Natural England put the plans on hold to allow further public comments and that the felling of beech trees had been delayed and may be reduced.

Red Squirrel Initiative

Westmorland Red Squirrel Society (WRS) have expressed their gratitude for the £1000 grant support given by BCCIC at the end of 2016. This was a major contribution to their general fund restricted to use within the AONB and immediate locality. It has paid for traps, equipment and bait purchases together with an increased level of professional trapping to supplement the work of volunteer trappers. Without the grant this would not have been possible.



This is a brief synopsis of the most recent trapping report:

“Up to the end of July the professional and voluntary trappers had culled 851 Greys

before we include culls by the major shoots which are usually only available in the New Year. This represents a considerable increase over the comparable figure for 2016 of 627. Of course, WRS want to eventually see this figure falling but at the moment we are still learning where to direct our efforts to be most effective. For example, it has become obvious that much breeding of Greys takes place within the caravan sites from which they spread to the rest of the AONB. This could be through intentional feeding or from bird feeders. Holgates Caravan Parks have accepted this and have now allowed us to deploy our own trappers to deal with the problem and this has proved very effective and is the main reason our cull numbers have gone up this year. We are back into Holgates sites this autumn to trap and we expect to successfully bring numbers down to very low levels by this means. We are also exploring the possibility of establishing a captive breeding pen for Reds within Holgates Silverdale Site but first we need to eliminate Greys in the area.

One other important development has been permission from RSPB to trap on their land and our trappers culled 100 Greys there in the Spring. This is another reason for the increased cull rate. RSPB are pleased with the result.

There are also other technical developments for controlling Greys which may be available soon. These could help us eliminate and control Greys more effectively. There is much work still to do but we remain optimistic that we will see Reds in the AONB within the foreseeable future. We are very grateful for your continued support”.

Looking Back

The Company has now passed its first 10 years, the first Board Meeting being held on 28th September 2007. It dealt with the registration and formation of the Company and the appointment of the first directors.

Outlined in the minutes were the origins of the idea to form a company. The proposed move of (the AONB Office) to Slackwood Farm, Silverdale had failed due to the lack of financial support from the local authorities. The AONB as an organisation was inevitably constrained by the political will of its members. The Landscape Trust, as a charity, was also under constraints under its trust deed. Thus the AONB Unit was looking for a third way – an organisation that would not be under the political control of local authorities. Advice had been sought from experts and the articles for the new company drawn up over a long gestation period as tightly as possible. Thus the Executive Committee originally approved the formation of the Company in January 2006.

New Website

Our new web site is now up and running. For many years the Company has been hosted by the AONB Unit web site. We have been immensely grateful for their help. However the time has come when we feel we should be self-sufficient. The web site will enable us to do more to keep in touch with our shareholders. The page on ‘Our AONB’ this Month is a start. All our back documents will be archived there, not just the present year’s.

Do let us know what you think of it and what else you would like to see there. The website address is bitterncountrysidecic.org.uk

Why not give it a try!

The Directors are always open to any new ideas or initiatives that would further the CIC’s aims and objectives. If you have any suggestions, we’d love to hear from you.

As always we are looking for new directors. Do let us know if you feel you have the time to spare to join us on the board.

We are most grateful to our shareholders for their continuing support. If you would like to increase your shareholding or become a shareholder, please contact the Treasurer at: treasurer@bitterncountrysidecic.org.uk