

Bittern Countryside Community Interest Company

Minutes of the First Annual General Meeting held on 23 February 2009 at RSPB Leighton Moss Visitor Centre, Silverdale.

1. Present and Apologies

Ian Henderson (Chairman), Sue Hewett, Lesley Edkins, Claire Dixon, Bob Hamnett, Ken Kitchen, Ann Kitchen, John Webb, David Farrand, Roger Walton, Roger Cartwright, Harry Warner, David Askew (Finance Director) and Mike Smith (Secretary).

Apologies were received from Ann Gegg and Barbara Hall.

2. Welcome and Chairman's Report on Company Activities

The Chairman recalled that the idea for setting up the Company had been David Askew's and that it quickly gained the support of the Office and the Executive Committee. Initially it was a struggle to get it set up but difficulties were overcome with the help of a Newcastle upon Tyne based solicitor expert in setting up Community Interest Companies.

The Bittern Countryside CIC is intended to complement the conservation charities in the area such as the Landscape Trust (our asset-lock body), RSPB and National Trust etc. It has held regular meetings and has been diligent in exploring what is going on and how it fits into the larger picture i.e. the whole AONB. Although the initiatives and ideas have (so far) come to nought, this is not because of lack of energy or knowledge but more to do with failing Government policy at National or even European level (CAP Reform) which has rendered our efforts irrelevant or impotent.

He expressed the view that the Company is now established and that with a modest number of shareholders, it is in a position to support any major initiatives that the Board may approve. At the present time it does not know what these will be but the Company can, as an incorporated body, do things that the charities and the AONB are unable to do. It can buy land, if necessary at greater than market value or run contracts for the AONB Executive Committee. In his view the Board and the Company should be less proactive and should work to more closely with the other organisations in the area to make clear that we are here and in a position to help whenever needed.

3. Community Interest Statement report

David Askew outlined the contents of the Community Interest report (CIC34) that had been sent to the regulator. The report was accepted.

4. Report of the Finance Director

David Askew outlined the contents of the Financial Statement, a copy of which had been sent to Companies House.

He stated that the Company had £2908 in its main account and held £12,501 in its deposit account. An interest free loan had been received from an anonymous donor,

£1500 of which had been put into the Cookbook. The remainder would be repaid but the benefactor had indicated that they would be prepared to support another major project if requested. The financial report covers the status of the Company as at 30 September 2008. Due to the size of the Company, it was not subject to a formal audit. The Company made a modest profit and paid £25 in Corporation Tax. On page 4 (Creditors), it states that £370 was paid out to the accountants and in tax.

In answer to a question, David stated that design and printing costs of the Cookbook had been fully funded by SDF grant (£8250). A local business had expressed interest in taking copies on a sale or return basis. 12 copies had been sent to Cumbria County Libraries.

Of the allowable share capital of £120,000 (page 7), £6000 had so far been allotted. The transfer of shares under £1000 in value no longer attracts the £5 stamp duty.

5. Presentation of Accounts

The Accounts were formally presented and accepted.

6. Appointment of Accountants

It was agreed that the Company would re-appoint Thompson and Co as accountants.

7. Election of Directors

The returning Directors, David Askew, Ann Kitchen, Roger Walton, David Farrant, John Webb, Robin Horner and Mike Smith were elected by a show of hands. Bob Hamnett was duly elected as a new Director.

The total number of Board members is therefore 8 with 2 vacancies.

8. Business Plan Update

David Askew had circulated copies of the updated Business Plan at the meeting. He stated that there had been only minor changes to keep it in line with the AONB Management Plan. Members were invited to approve the Plan in principle and were invited to make any detailed comments on the content. The Business Plan was approved in principle.

9. Any Other Business

Lesley Edkins said that she thought that communications (between the Company and the Landscape Trust) could have been better. Networking was a part of the Business Plan. Could someone from the Company attend Landscape Trust meetings?

Another questioner asked if the Company could become a charity. David Askew stated that under the current law this would not be permitted.