

Bittern Countryside Community Interest Company

Minutes of the Third Annual General Meeting held on Friday 8th April 2011 at RSPB Leighton Moss Visitor Centre, Silverdale.

1. Present and Apologies

Present: Ann Kitchen (Chairman), Ken Kitchen, Ian Henderson, Liza Henderson, Roger Cartwright, Harry Warner, Claire Dixon, Bob Hamnett, Jeanette Smith, Roger Cartwright, Roger Walton, Robin Horner, David Askew (Finance Director) and Mike Smith (Secretary).

Apologies were received from Leslie Edkins, David Emmett, David Farrant, Sandra Felton, Barbara Hall, Sue Hewett, Peter Kennedy, Stephen Kirtley, Liz Richards, Kate Schofield, Peter Standing and John Webb.

2. Minutes of the last AGM and matters arising

The minutes of the Second AGM held on 5th March 2010 were approved. There were no matters arising.

3. Chairman's Report on Company Activities

The Chairman summarised the work that the Directors have been doing in the year ending September 30 2010. The Company continues to hold a watching brief on any land sales within the AONB. Government plans regarding the management of National Nature Reserves and sales of forestry land seem to be on hold but in any case their likely impact on the AONB would have been limited. The recent lease of land at Myer's Allotment by Butterfly Conservation is to be welcomed.

The Conservation Cookbook was still selling and was available on the Web. The initiative to make Grantfinder available to local organisations had been useful, a number of directors had been trained in the use of the software and we had dealt with a number of enquiries. Unfortunately grants are few and far between at the moment and Directors felt that the considerable cost of renewing the Grantfinder licence could not be justified. If further requests come in, we will be able to tap in to alternative sources of grant information.

Directors have supported the AONB's Low Carbon Landscape initiative that is intended to encourage local residents to adopt low energy solutions to domestic heating and lighting. This might include offering a heat audit using a thermal imaging camera. The Company is producing a series of Fact Sheets of which four, entitled 'Electricity from Sunshine', 'Heat from Trees', 'Woodfuel Wisdom', and 'Avoiding Waste' have been published. Further Fact Sheets covering heat pumps and solar hot water will be published when the domestic rules under the Government's Renewable Heat Incentive are known.

Members were requested to take a shareholder application form with them to recruit new shareholders.

On the financial side, the Company had made a nominal loss of £604 in three years of its operation and members were conscious that more money was needed for the day to day running of the Company. One way would be for shareholders to donate £10 (on a voluntary basis) annually to cover these costs.

Under the Company's Memorandum of Agreement, a third of the directors must retire each year and are then eligible for re-election. This year three Directors, Robin Horner, David Askew and David Farrant are retiring. All three have indicated that they wish to be reappointed. There have been no new candidates; so the Company is seeking to recruit three new directors.

4. Community Interest Statement Report

5.

David Askew summarised the contents of the Community Interest Statement (CIC34) that is to be submitted to the regulator. This covered activities of the Company over the past year including:

- a) Purchase of the Grantfinder licence

- b) Low Carbon Initiative
- c) Watching brief for community land purchase
- d) Developing a share-holding membership
- e) Website (hosted by Arnside Silverdale AONB)
- f) Consultation with stakeholders including AONB staff
- g) Director's remuneration (none)
- h) Transfer of assets (none).

6. Report of the Finance Director and Presentation of Accounts

David Askew presented the Accounts for the year ending 30 September 2010. Turnover had increased due to the Grantfinder licence (about £2800). He confirmed that there had been a loss for the last 2 years, mainly due to the payment of accountancy fees. A new arrangement for insurance had been made with a company that is a charity and provides benefits to the local area. The cost is about £300 per annum. Accountancy fees were £360 per annum. There were also additional running costs. Hopefully in future we could reduce the accountancy fees considerably. There was a need to generate a regular income of around £500 to cover these charges. If, after 5 years, the company was still making a loss, then Companies House would require that it be wound up. This would be a great shame.

7. Approval of Reports and Accounts

There were no questions regarding the accounts that had previously been circulated. The accounts were approved.

8. Future Auditing of Accounts

David Askew said that it was not a requirement that the Company had audited accounts and that we could do the accounts ourselves. He is not an accountant and doesn't have the expertise but there is software available that could assist. This would involve a one-off purchase rather than an annual fee and would be a considerable saving. The Board would also like to hear from anyone who could assist in handling the accounts.

9. Reappointment/Election of Directors

The three retiring Directors; Robin Horner, David Askew and David Farrant were re-appointed by a show of hands.

10. Any Other Business

In relation to the Low Carbon Initiative, the Chairman had visited Bentham where as part of a local initiative, a thermal imaging camera had been used to carry out surveys of the heat loss from insulated and un-insulated buildings. A camera costs around £2,500 - £3,000 and would need some expertise to use. Would people like to know what heat was being lost? Roger Cartwright mentioned that he had had a free survey done by Lancaster City Council but that as the weather was quite warm at the time, it didn't give very useful results.

The Chairman showed a heat monitor to the meeting that records the temperature of surfaces. It costs about £20 and is therefore a cost effective alternative to a camera. The option of leasing a camera for a period in the winter could also be considered.

The Chairman asked the meeting how people feel about making a £10 annual donation to assist with running costs. Liza Henderson suggested that the money could be raised through a coffee morning, perhaps in association with the Landscape Trust who have a regular slot at Gaskell Hall, Silverdale. This idea gained some support. It was agreed that the chairman write to shareholders putting the options.

Ken Kitchen proposed a vote of thanks to the Directors for the work during the year. This was carried.

The meeting finished at 7.40 pm.