

BCCIC Chairman's Report March 2012

Welcome to our fourth AGM. This is my third as Chairman and I have to report another busy year for the board.

We have been holding a watching brief on land sales in the area. Butterfly Conservation has a 5 year lease on Myers Allotment and this is now being sympathetically managed to improve the limestone flora and habitat for butterflies. As a side effect the flowers and fungi are also flourishing. The Landscape Trust is looking at adding 2 small reserves to Teddy Heights and Coldwell Parrock but they do not need our help in this. Things are still a bit fluid one of them but more information will be made public soon I hope. The Conservation Cookbook is still selling and is also available on the web. There are Company web pages available through a link from the Arnside/Silverdale AONB web site.

We have again put most of our energies this year into supporting the AONB's Low Carbon Landscape initiative. This has been done partly through our energy fact sheets and partly through our own efforts in taking on the low carbon challenge. There are now 5 fact sheets available both on the web and in printed form. They are Electricity from Sunshine, Heat from Trees, Woodfuel Wisdom, Heat Pumps and Avoiding Waste. They have proved very popular. There has never been a better time to look at Saving energy, Saving money and Saving the environment as our slogan goes. We are producing 2 more factsheets, Solar Hot water and Woodpellet and woodchip central heating. These will probably not be released until we have had time to learn more about the government's Renewable heat incentive scheme for households which is due to start in 2012.

With the high rates of solar PV tariffs available last year we made the decision to look for funding to put panels on village schools and community buildings. We got a 50% grant from the sustainable development fund and with money donated by shareholders for that purpose we started on our first school at Storth. However the sudden and chaotic decision by the government to cut the tariff by over 50% threw all our plans up in the air. However we decided to go ahead with Storth Primary School and their panels are now up and running. We don't yet know what the final tariff rate will be but even if it is 21p it is still worth doing.* This is to be a rolling programme. If the initial government tariffs had been honoured we could have gone ahead in 2013 with our next school and still achieved a decent rate of return. However it looks as though after July the tariff will be cut yet more. That being the case we are looking to see if we can bring our next school forward to the beginning of June. We did put in for a grant of £5,000 from the Lancaster Participatory Investment Programme but unfortunately were not successful. We have however got a grant of £500 from Booths' supermarket towards our next school.

We welcome the Landscape Trust, and everyone else who has joined us as shareholders over the past year and also a big thanks to those who have increased their shareholdings. We still need further shareholders, both large and small. Those with a shareholding of just £10 are as valued as those with much larger holdings. If you have friends and or relatives who you think would be interested in becoming shareholders please see one of the board who will give you any information you need.

As you will hear from our Finance Director, most of our expenses come from things like accountants' fees. We have also taken out insurance for the coming year now we are being more proactive. This is very expensive but we see no way that we can escape our obligations as far as the insurance is concerned. We have however taken on the submission of accounts to Companies House ourselves. We have joined a local charity/society Time Bank and this has meant that we have been able to have our accounts checked by an accountant for under £40. We will also be moving the web hosting and this will also save some money. Overall in the 4 years of the company's existence we have used up £1571 of our capital. That is the difference between the nominal shareholding capital and the cash in the bank. The money has been used to enable us to produce the fact sheets, buy the CD writer and pay for accountants etc. We have made the fact sheets free as we thought it was more important to have them widely used. We still have our CD writer which we has now been fully written off at £272 a year. Initially it was hoped that the income from our share capital would go some way towards this. However interest rates being what they are this has not proved to be the case. However we are now at a point where we should be able to start to replace our share capital.

You will see from further down the agenda that there is an election for 2 directors. Last year, our third AGM, three of the directors were re-elected. Our articles state that a third of the board (two and one thirds of a director) should resign each year. They are then eligible to stand for re-election. We have decided to round that down to 2. Bob Hamnett and Roger Walton are therefore retiring and are putting themselves up for re-election. We still have vacancies that we can fill on the board but we have no new candidates. It would be good to find at least one new director with an interest in renewable energy. If you, or anyone you know, support our objectives and could give some time to the company please talk to either David Askew, Mike Smith or myself. Can I take this opportunity to thank the rest of the board for their work and support over this last year.

* April 2012 We will be getting the higher rate of return of 45 p for the feed-in tariff for Storth.