

Chairman's Report 2012/13

Welcome to all our shareholders Old and New.

Much of what I am going to talk about will not appear in the accounts as our financial year end is September 2012.

At our last AGM, I reported that we had started our new Solar PV initiative with solar panels on the roof of Storth School. 12 months on how has that progressed? Well even with last year's very sad weather the panels produced well and brought in an income of £1250 for the first 9 months of the initiative. This gave us the confidence to roll out the scheme and in December we put solar panels on the roof of the Silverdale Leeds Children's Holiday Centre. These have started generating. We raised the money for these through a very generous grant and interest free loan from one of our shareholders, and a grant of £500 from Booths Supermarkets. The income produced from both of these PV systems will be around £2,000 a year index linked for the next 20 plus years. This will be used over the 20 years to pay back the initial shareholder capital of £7,000 that was used, repay the loan of £3,000 from our shareholder, pay our annual administration expenses and enable us to help other community buildings. As the costs for Solar PV are still reducing so is the tariff available and it is likely to be phased out shortly for new schemes. This means that in future years we will probably need to make grants to community buildings rather than our present system of sharing the Feed-in Tariff. We have the offer of an interest-free loan from another shareholder to put solar panels on the roof of the Station Building. This is on condition that the money is used as a grant. As one of our main aims is to help the AONB office in their work, this seems very sensible and I hope that everyone will support the use of our funds this way. The feed-in tariff from the other two schemes will allow us to service this loan as well.

Another of our initiatives has not been as successful. We hoped to put a chimney pot turbine on the chimney of the AONB office to power batteries that could be used in the Warehouse in Station Yard that is used by the AONB volunteers and has no electricity. We got a grant from the Sustainable Development Fund and the wiring was put into the warehouse and the turbine bought. Unfortunately it has proved impossible to get

delivery from the manufacturer. The matter is now in the hands of the County Court. It is hoped that we will eventually get the return of the £1698 the turbine and batteries cost us. While we were still hopeful of getting delivery, there was a chance of a United Utilities grant. We put in for £450 for solar panels and batteries as backup when the wind didn't blow. We got the grant and the panels have been bought and are in the process of being installed. This means the lighting can now be used. This left us with the problem of what to do about the SDF grant. We had the choice of returning it and making a loss or asking if we could transfer the grant to another initiative. We chose the latter as we have for some time been talking about making an online atlas of the flora and fauna of the AONB and the first few were finished. Initial feedback convinced us that it was worth printing the atlases and the SDF committee agreed that we could transfer the funds to that project. The first 6 are now printed and are available for sale. The grant has allowed us to put free copies in schools and enable us to print further titles. We hope sales, both through outlets, at meetings and by mail will enable us to produce a revenue stream. Not all the titles will be printed. Those of a more specialised nature will be available on a CD in high and medium resolution. Whether all the titles should be available on the web at low resolution has not yet been decided and we would welcome your input. If anyone would like to input a future title please see me to talk over what would be entailed.

A third of our aims is to keep an eye on land sales. Hale Moss came up for sale last May. Despite our best efforts the Landscape Trust was not able to buy the land and once again it went to a private bidder. The new owner seems very sympathetic to wildlife conservation and we will be doing all we can to make sure that the land is well managed and remains open to public access. We will know more as the months progress and will keep you informed.

The NIA initiative should help our last two aims, Woodland usage and conservation grazing. We are working with Martin Wain to try to set up a sustainable wood usage scheme that will benefit the whole community. The forthcoming atlas of Large Trees should raise awareness of our woodlands.

Harry and Elfrieda Warner have offered their garden on 20th July for a Fundraising afternoon. The Fair Trade group will also be having a stall there.

So after the past year we have had our ups and downs but I think that financially we are now on a sound footing and we have managed to further many of our aims.

We have had a few more shareholders and hope that the Atlases will bring in more people willing to join us in our work. Thanks are due to all our board and especially Mike, our secretary, David, our Treasurer and also Barbara at the AONB office.

Ann Kitchen