

Bittern Countryside Community Interest Company

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BCCIC

Chairman's Report March 2019

Welcome to all our shareholders old and new.

The solar PV initiative is continuing albeit with a few problems. Storth School our first solar school in 2012 continue to be very pleased with their panels. They have generated over 20,000kwh. The solar panels from the Leeds Childrens Holiday Centre were donated to the Lakeland Trust for Natural Sciences who run Wildlife Oasis on the A6. The Solar panels at the AONB offices are working well and have generated over 10,000kwh since they were installed in 2015, Last summer Silverdale Primary School discovered that all their roofs were leaking badly(not just the ones with panels on). The panels had to be removed and put into storage and the roofs patched temporarily. Hopefully the roof problem will be resolved soon and Silverdale will be generating again.

Four schools in our area did not have any help through the solar PV scheme mainly because their roofs were not suitable. We are looking therefore at seeing if we can help by lowering their lighting costs. We have done a pilot at the Arnside Football Club, where we paid for the lighting to be replaced by LEDs. This has been very successful and we will look to roll this out to the primary schools. Storth School is already looking into this.

The Parish Signboard project we started with Arnside Parish Council is bearing fruit under the aegis of the AONB. Each parish is being offered help with the design and production of a series of parish information boards. Arnside, Storth and Beetham boards are now up and Silverdale are just starting. We will be helping towards the production costs for all the parishes.

The Silverdale District Woodbank are thriving and continue to help local wood owners to manage their woodlands in exchange for the surplus wood. I feel strongly that this is an initiative that is worth supporting for many reasons. It enables waste wood to be used. Many of the members have young families and collecting wood brings them out into the countryside. We had an enquiry from a family for help in purchasing a woodburning stove and have just given them a grant of £300 to help a little towards the cost.

The atlases continue to sell well at the RSPB cafe and at events. We donate 50p

from each copy sold to the RSPB funds which has meant that a total of £530 has come to us in the last 12 months. We have agreed to let the AONB Landscape Trust sell the Atlases through their new web shop. We have also been contacted by a local Caravan Park, Fell End, who have asked to sell the Atlases in their shop. We hope to agree to this shortly.

I am vice chair of the AONB Executive Committee of the AONB and the BCCIC can continue to support the work of the AONB team in many other ways.

We have been providing food for the bird feeders at the AONB office. The birds that flock to them give a great deal of pleasure to visitors and locals alike.

The Arnside/Silverdale AONB Red Squirrel Strategy is continuing with the support of all the major landowners in the area including some funding from the BCCIC. It is encouraging to note that far fewer Grey Squirrels are being reported in the area worked by the project and there have been a couple of reports of Red Squirrels.

I and others are working with the Morecambe Bay species introduction project. The Maidenhair Fern re-introduction is going well.

Another important area is plastic. We are looking to see if we can work together with others to reduce the use of plastic in our locality. Val Stevens has a leaflet showing how to replace plastic with more sustainable alternatives. This is now on our website. Financially we remain on a sound footing and we have managed to further many of our aims. We always welcome suggestions from our shareholders as to further possible initiatives.

Our web site is now run by A2A, a local business. It has allowed us a lot more flexibility than before. Do have a look at it. If you have any ideas for other things that could go on the site please let us know. Also if you would like to get involved in this side of our work we would love to hear from you.

David Farrant has had to retire as a director. We would like to thank him for all the work he has done over the past. He was one of the original directors who got the whole thing started. We therefore have vacancies for directors. We would like to hear from anyone who is interested. They could be co-opted any time in the coming year and stand for election at the next AGM.

Thanks are due to all our board and especially Mike, our secretary, David, our Treasurer and also Barbara and everyone at the AONB office.

Ann Kitchen