

# **Bittern Countryside Community Interest Company**

Old Station Building, Station Road, Arnside, Cumbria LA5 0HG



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at 7.00 pm on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at RSPB Leighton Moss Visitor Centre, Silverdale.

## 1. Present and Apologies

Ann Kitchen (Chair), Ken Kitchen, Val Stevens, Jeanette and Mike Smith, Liz and Ray Anslow, Roger Cartwright, Lynne Farrell, Rachel Duffield, Malcolm Stevens, Jenny and Martin Elsworth, John Webb, Mike Warren (Landscape Trust) and Robin Horner were present for the meeting. Also present were Caroline Howard (AONB Partnership) and Karin Kingshott (Larksfoot CIC)

Apologies were received from Ian & Liza Henderson, David Player, David Askew, Lorna Askew, Ann Gegg, Laura Middleton, Stephen Kirtley, Lesley Edkins, Elizabeth Richards, David Emmett, Sandy Felton, Barbara Hall, Philip Pacey, Heather Rhodes, Kate Schofield, Jean Watts, Margaret Bromley-Webb, Gillian Rimmingtom and Fiona Allan.

## 2. Approval of the Minutes of the last AGM (2022) and matters arising

The minutes of the last AGM held on the 29th April 2022 were approved (Proposer: Val Stevens, Seconder: Liz Anslow). There were no matters arising.

## 3. Chairman's Report on Company activities

Welcome to all our shareholders. For the last year we have been working with the AONB Partnership and our local primary schools on our Sustainable Schools Project. We have also been publicising more ways that people can lower their Carbon Footprint after the unprecedented energy price increases.

Our Business Plan for 2022-2026 highlighted 3 categories we are addressing.

1: Protect and Restore Nature,

2: Build a waste free world and

3: Fix our Climate.

These three are all interconnected and working towards one of the aims will have benefits for the other 2.

One of the main ways we can Protect and Restore Nature is to educate the next generations on the importance of living in harmony with Nature. Our Sustainable Schools

project has helped our 6 primary schools engage with Forest School activities. Firstly by using the expertise of Larksfoot who are based at Leighton Hall and have developed a series of workshops for us on light pollution and its effects on wildlife which they have taken out to the schools. Secondly we have helped the schools to improve their own Forest School provision. So we have provided Forest School materials for Silverdale School and have bought equipment for the AONB team to use with other schools. Both Storth and Warton have had money to refurbish their ponds to help wildlife and to facilitate teaching about protecting and restoring nature. All the schools have been given sets of our Wildlife Atlases for the teachers to use. We have also helped with transport to enable the schools to use the new Trowbarrow forest school area.

Schools have found energy price rises have affected them. We have provided funds to help Arnside School put Solar Panels on their roof. This should enable them both to reduce their costs and teach the children about renewable energy. All the parents were given a copy of our solar power booklet to help with fundraising and to encourage them to put solar panels on their own roofs. In addition after discussions with the pupils on stopping waste, their eco club has set up their own swap shop for school uniform. They have got across the idea to their peers that reusing perfectly sound uniforms is good for the environment as a whole and is not just for those who can't afford to buy new.

With the help of a starter grant from us, Beetham School have accessed diocesan funding to allow them to replace all their old lighting with LED lighting. This has reduced their bills and enabled them to improve the quality of their lighting.

We are working with Yealand School to replace their old and very inefficient security lighting with LED lights that will increase the safety of the area without adding to light pollution.

Fact sheet 5 on heat pumps is now available. There is still a great deal of suspicion and misinformation about heat pumps and I hope that the booklet will help to counter this. Ken and I have had our air source heat pump for almost a year and now use less than half the energy we used in previous years while staying warm even in the very cold spell we had in December. We are very happy to show people our installation. It does need to be managed differently than a gas/oil boiler but even in the coldest weather we found it could keep our 1960's chalet bungalow warm and produce all the hot water we needed. We didn't need to replace our radiators but we did ensure our insulation was as good as it could be. Several members have installed batteries with their solar PV and we will be looking to see how these work both for the owners and the environment for a possible future pamphlet.

The Wildlife Atlases are on sale in the RSPB shop as well as at various meetings like the Art Trail, and selling well. We have just reached £10,000 in sales. This does not include over £900 we have donated to the RSPB during the time they have been selling our booklets in their shop.

Where now? Well we still have work to do with the sustainable schools project to make sure that it leaves a lasting legacy and the links forged through it with the schools, the AONB staff and ourselves continue to strengthen. We also hope to be part of a new challenge. The Government has announced a new Nature Recovery Strategy which they hope will bring the farming community, local landowners, all the nature conservation charities, NGOs and the wider population together in looking at ways to undo the harm done to our wildlife and natural resources through years of over use of herbicides, pesticides and chemical over fertilisation and pollution. Much of it was done with the best of intentions as a means to enable us to increase our food self sufficiency and allow our gardens to look wonderful but now we need to find ways to mitigate the harm that has been caused. We will be working with the AONB and others on our own Nature Recovery Strategy.

Financially we remain on a sound footing and we have managed to further many of our aims. New shareholders have joined us and we have also had donations from present shareholders. We always welcome suggestions from our shareholders as to further possible initiatives.

Our Directors have continued to work hard to further our aims but we do need more help. None of us are getting any younger. Please if you think you could help or know of anyone who would support our aims and could spare some time to help us do come and talk to us. I would like to thank Ken for taking over as Secretary when Mike Smith retired last year. He has done a great job and is willing to continue for the next year. However I know both he and I are looking forward to being able to hand over to a younger generation. With a combined age of 170 we feel the time has come for others to step up. I will not be standing again when my term of office runs out in 2025.

Thanks are due to all our board and especially Ray, our Finance Director and also Lucy, Caroline for all their help with the Sustainable Schools Project and everyone else at the AONB office and our friends at the Landscape Trust. Thank you too to all our shareholders for making our work possible over the years. Without your share capital and support none of this would have been possible. Finally can I wish you all continued health and all the best in the coming months.

#### 4. Report of the Finance Director and Presentation of Accounts:

The Financial Statement details, which are on the Website, cover the year ending September 30th, 2022. The Income/loss account shows a turnover of £5744 with an Operating Loss of £806. Administrative expenses have been largely in line with previous years. The Company has made a loss so there will be no tax liability. The balance sheet shows that the Company continues to be worth £7,411 compared with £7,517 the previous year. Called up share capital has increased slightly to £12,010.

A printed and signed copy has been sent to Companies House.

In the current financial year we have almost completed the spending for the Sustainable Schools programme. The only outstanding amount is that for the security lighting at Yealand School which should be completed by the end of the summer holidays. We would also need a reprint of 2 of the wildlife atlases. Mini-mammals which is being updated and Orchids.

#### 5. Re-appointment/Election of Directors

Directors who have come to the end of their 3-year term are Malcolm Stevens, Robin Horner and David Askew. They are all willing to be re-appointed and no others wished to stand.

John Webb proposed that the appointments be confirmed. This was seconded by Lynne Farrell.

#### 6. Any Other Business

The meeting agreed that the BCCIC should support the AONB Partnership with their Nature Recovery Programme. Specifically to help with plant monitoring over the coming years.

The AGM closed at 7.25pm

Following the AGM, Karin Kingshott gave an enjoyable and informative talk about the Forest Schools run by Larksfoot CIC. Some of these are used by all the primary schools within the AONB with the support of the BCCIC.