

# **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 26<sup>th</sup> April 2025 at RSPB Leighton Moss Visitor Centre, Silverdale.**

Prior to the AGM itself, Caroline Howard welcomed our guest speaker, Rachel Marshall, the coordinator of the Closing Loops project. This extensive programme seeks to apply regenerative economic principles to support a circular food economy and sustainable food futures in North Lancashire. Rachel gave examples of how circular (zero waste) principles can be applied in the production, distribution and management of food resources locally, including community sharing of locally produced food, gleaning of surplus apple crops for juice production, and community composting. See here to review the full scope of the programme <https://foodfutures.org.uk/our-food-stories-rachel-marshall/>

Rachel encouraged groups such as BCCIC to join aspects of the programme, and was thanked for her very inspiring presentation.

The formal business of the meeting then proceeded.

### 1. Attendance - shareholders present:

Caroline Howard (Chair), Ken Kitchen (Secretary), Ann Kitchen (Finance Director), Fiona Allan, David Askew, Lynne Farrell, Peter Haine, Mary Hamilton, Sue Weldon, John Webb, Jenny Elsworth, Martin Elsworth, Roger Cartwright, Mike Smith, Jeanette Smith, and Val Stevens.

Also present was Mike Warren on behalf of Arnside and Silverdale Landscape Trust

Apologies were received from Ray Anslow, Liz Anslow, Lorna Askew, Margaret Bromley Webb, Suzanne Crabtree, Rachel Dutfield, Lesley Edkins, Stephn Kirtley, Laura Middleton, Gillian Rimmington, Kate Schofield, Malcolm Stevens, and Jean Watts.

### 2. Approval of the Minutes of the last AGM (2024) and matters arising

The minutes of the last AGM held on the 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2024 were approved (Proposer: Lynne Farrell, Seconder: John Webb).

Matters arising: There were no matters arising.

### **3. Chairman's Report April 2025**

BCCIC Chairman, Caroline Howard, extended her welcome to shareholders and reminded everyone of the aims set out in the company's business plan for 2023-26

#### **Business Plan**

Our Business Plan from 2022-2026:

- 1: Protect and restore nature
- 2: Build a waste free world
- 3: Fix our climate

These aims are interconnected and provide us with a general framework to inform decision making – whilst they might be ambitious, they provide a clear direction for the organisation.

Over the last year we have undertaken or considered several projects (both new and ongoing) which might help us work towards these aims.

#### **Bittern Sustainable Schools Programme**

The Bittern Sustainable Schools Programme this year funded the acquisition of a potting shed for Arnside Primary School and the laying and supplementing of a hedge at Archbishop Hutton School in Warton. We have further arranged for 5 of the 6 to have another Marvellous Moths workshop with Larksfoot CIC, and the Arnside & Silverdale National Landscape have funded some additional work to evaluate the workshops. The only primary school not participating this year is Yealand, and the whole school participated in 2023, so it would be a repeat for some children if it was run again this year – we anticipate Yealand might engage less frequently than the other schools due to the size of the school.

The Marvellous Moths workshops will generate artwork which will be displayed as part of the 2025 Art Festival (replacing the Art & Craft Trail this year). Work from Arnside School might also be used as part of a Big Green Week display with Sustainable Arnside.

A further contribution has been made to the programme by the National Landscape partnership, which will allow us to deliver another series of the Marvellous Moth workshop in 2026.

#### **Wildlife Atlases**

The wildlife atlases continue to be sold via the RSPB and National Landscape Office. They continue to provide an excellent resource for people looking to learn more about our local flora, fauna and fungi.

Sales figures for 2024/5 are 212 booklets, with 169 sold at Leighton Moss (leading to a £152.10 donation) and 43 sales via the National Landscape Office.

### **National Landscape partnership updates**

The National Landscape team continue to work closely with the BCCIC, providing a temporary chairperson. Belinda Barclay has taken on additional hours in 2025/6 as an Engagement Officer, working on community projects with a nature and climate focus – this offers opportunities to work with the BCCIC.

The National Landscape partnership is reviewing the Management Plan, and Ann Kitchen has been attending various events representing the BCCIC.

### **Nature Recovery Strategy – Plant Recording Scheme**

The plant recording scheme continues to develop, with input from both Helen Rawlinson and Grace Holland from the National Landscape team. Thanks to Lynne Farrell and Ann Kitchen who have done impressive work on the project; the National Landscape team are building on this base.

After the initial year of data recording by volunteers from various organisations, including BCCIC, led by Helen, the results are hosted on the BCCIC web site and can be found at the bottom of our links page. Individual summaries are given for each of the 56 species we are studying. Each one is chosen either because of its rarity or because it is a good indicator of health of a particular habitat. We are now focusing on 21 species, including the 14 indicator species which are considered at risk and suitable for possible reinforcement or re-introduction work by the National Landscape.

### **Further projects and collaborations**

BCCIC has been working with Sustainable Arnside, and will be attending their Big Green Week celebration on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2025. We are also developing further potential community sustainability projects, currently in early development.

### **Financial status**

It was reported that the company remains on a sound financial footing, able to maintain our current activities. Suggestions from our shareholders are welcomed for further activities, especially those which might develop further engagement with new Directors.

## **Directorships**

We have welcomed Peter Haine as our new Secretary, and he's also joined as a new Director. We're delighted to have him on the team. Thanks were extended to Ken Kitchen for all his work as Secretary up to this point.

The search for new Directors continues, looking to ensure a long-term future for the organisation so that it can continue to support efforts within the National Landscape to protect and restore nature, build a waste free world and fix our climate. Thanks were extended to our dedicated directors for their time and effort in delivering on our business plan, our partners in supporting us and helping to create a community of conservation in the National Landscape and thanks to our shareholders for making our work possible.

## **4. Finance Director's Report and Presentation of Accounts for 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2024**

This was presented by our Finance Director, Ann Kitchen who reminded the meeting that our main financial aim is to spend any money we make on projects that further our objects in conservation and supporting the National Landscape. That being the case we do not try to make a profit each year. However we would hope not to make a large loss. Our financial year runs from October 1st to September 30th.

The grants we get go wholly towards the purposes for which they were given.

So from our Sustainable Schools grant from 2022/23 we spent the deferred portion of £2,000 together with an additional grant of £1,750 to complete the project. In addition we were fortunate to get a grant of £12,000 (£2,000 to be spent in the year 2023/24 and £10,000 to be spent in 2024/25) towards our Climate and Nature project with the local Primary Schools. This has been very successful enabling them to build on the previous year's work. We have now secured a further £3,500 for next year 2025/26 to carry on this work with the schools.

We try to minimise our overheads but some of these are inevitable. We save quite a bit by doing all our own accountancy work as well as our filings with Companies House and the Inland revenue. Our main annual overheads are for our web site, our AGM costs and our insurance. These are unavoidable. They come to around £700 a year. The main ways in which we cover these costs are by the Feed-in tariff we share with Silverdale School for the solar panels we put on the school roof in 2014. This runs until 2034 and our share is around £400 a year. In addition we make money from the sales of our atlases, around £1.75 an atlas if we sell it direct and 85p if we sell it through RSPB.

In 2023/24, part of the Sustainable Schools grant enabled us to give several sets of atlases to each of the schools and this meant our takings from the atlases were higher than normal. These are expected to return to around £400 this year. However it also meant that we had to replace our stock of atlases which was getting rather low leading to an expenditure of £675 for printing costs. We now have a healthy stock to carry us over the next year.

These printing costs mean that we made a loss of £291 which is rather higher than hoped for.

We do not charge for our fact sheets and if these are to be redone then we will either need to look for grant money or donations from shareholders.

So as of the 14th April 2025 we have £6,847 of our own money but while we have paid most of our overheads we have not yet had the Feed-in Tariff for the summer months and the book sales for May to Sept. Thus we expect to break even and perhaps claw back a little of last years loss. As far as our Grant money we have £9,277 left to cover our costs of our schools' Climate and Nature Project this financial year and in addition will have a further grant £3,500 for October 2025.

The detailed financial statement for the financial year 2023/2024 are on our website.

The financial report was agreed unanimously by the meeting.

## 5. Re-appointment/Election of Directors

Anne Kitchen and Fiona Allen had come to the end of their 3 year appointments but had expressed a willingness to stand for a further 3 years. Peter Haine had been co-opted as a director and will take over from Ken Kitchen and Secretary. These appointments were ratified by the meeting, proposed by Val Stephens, seconded by Dave Askew.

The chairman appealed to others present to consider serving as a Director or to recommend others in the community who may be prepared to serve.

## 6 Any Other Business

It was suggested by Ann Kitchen that a number of the examples relating to achieving a sustainable food future, such as surplus apple orchard gleaning and community composting might be worthy of further consideration by BCCIC. It was agreed that further discussion of this should be encouraged.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 20:50hrs.