

TARVIN COMMUNITY WOODLAND TRUST LIMITED

DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 29 February 2016

Principal activities

The principal activity of the company continued to be that of managing a Community Woodland for public benefit.

Review of business

This will be our first major meeting of Members of TCWT Ltd since the transfer of assets from the Charitable Trust to the Company Ltd by Guarantee; the latter is also a registered charity so we will refer to it as The Trust and its Directors as Trustees. Why did we create TCWT Ltd? Because a purely charitable trust places personal responsibility on its trustees for the trust's performance and financial liabilities which we felt would hinder the recruitment of Directors/Trustees. Whilst a Limited Company does not absolve directors from their legal obligations, it does distance them from commercial decisions and interests. Members of TCWT have a liability which is restricted to the value of their "Guarantee" to the company of £10 per person should the Company fail.

My theme for this report is:

"Can you see the wood for the trees?" – can we do better?

To begin with an obvious statement; the woodland is, and is seen, as a successful and valuable asset for the Tarvin Community which, through the Trust Company, owns the assets. You the Members represent the Community to the Trust/Company, thereby ensuring good governance, good practices and, especially, that TCWT Ltd works always in the best interests of the Community. That is why you, the Members, attend the annual meeting.

In modern parlance the TCWT is "in a good place" with an active capable Board, many active members/volunteers and adequate funding for its needs.

I have been Chairman for some five years and suggest the time is right to appraise critically who we are, what we do, how we do it and whether we should continue with the status quo or instigate changes. This should include the role, responsibilities and decision making powers of the Chairman. While I have strong personal views on many aspects, I refrain from expressing them here to ensure independence.

What follows are a few comments on this theme to stimulate discussion and hopefully decision-making in the meeting. I repeat, the Woodland is doing extremely well so none of this should be regarded as negative; we merely strive for improvement. The discussion of the management plan will put the comments in context and perspective.

Our founder, Jim Grogan, was a visionary in terms of what could be achieved but was also a true "countryman" in his knowledge and experience. In application we have probably learned to match him but have we added sufficiently to his knowledge of flora and fauna and to his vision? Do we need to find and attract trustees/Members with more specialist knowledge?

Further to this, does the Board have the best balance of skills and experience for what we want to achieve? If not how do we attract or recruit new talent? As an example, we are a physically active bunch of elderly gentlemen but what of the botanical knowledge we require? What of the gender balance of our participants? Can we adapt our management-style, our 'modus operandi', to attract a broader range of age/gender/ethnic contributors?

In a short time we will take over the first half of the new woodland from Taylor Wimpey, with the transfer of the rest expected somewhere in May or June. While this will increase our workload we should be able to cope thanks to our increased volunteer support. In recent weeks we have regularly had 10 or more volunteers on Thursday mornings – as always the Craic and coffee is good (thank you Bryan!). However, the need for grass cutting will increase, so how do we manage this? We will probably require more - or perhaps different - equipment - which luckily we can afford.

Our active, physical work continues to be done on Thursdays. Is this sustainable? It has been suggested we could increase the number of (younger) volunteers if we also start weekend work and over time reduce our reliance on more elderly gentlefolk! The trick will be to test this without damaging what we already have – recognising that two work groups would need coordination and management (not forgetting Health & Safety).

We should consider the roles we fulfil and the balance of effort in each. For example:

- Finance is carried out by one individual albeit very competently in addition to much other work on our behalf
- We apparently have reasonable business acumen, with external support, given the acquisition and ownership of the enlarged assets at little cost.
- Tree work is not an obstacle, lead by our Tree Warden and chain saw-man.
- We need to do much more botanically but, as said, we need more knowledge.
- “birding” is well covered.
- In project definition, planning, management and delivery we are well endowed.
- Our local PR is very active but consumes much effort; is it sustainable and do we get an adequate return on our investment?
- Finally, is the overall workload fairly spread or do we rely on a few?

You, the members, have kindly submitted your suggestions for woodland development for the meeting to debate and for the Board of Trustees to consider. Much of what is said above will overlap with this. I will be asking the Board to address some of these questions and make recommendations in the coming months. We will provide feedback to Members and will request input and help from you as required.

Finally, on behalf of the Board and the Trust, I thank all of the Members for their support and encouragement which I hope will be something which is ongoing and not limited to contributing to an annual meeting. Certainly, Thursday working would be one good opportunity to do this.

Again, we can all be proud of what we have achieved in recent years and I look forward to more!

Thank you for your time and best wishes to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Stuart Exell, Chairman