



A. G. M. - 2008

**Held at The Phoenix Hall, St John's Lane, Bovey Tracey, TQ13 9FF
On Tuesday 12th August at 6 PM.**

The Chairman welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. He hoped they would all be able to stay for the talk given by Catherine Mitchell who is a nationally and in-fact internationally recognised expert in the energy field.

1. **Apologies**

Andrew Pedrick

Bert Bruins

Steve Cryer

Peter Stokes

Chris Elliott and Yvette Elliott from Western Renewable Energy

2. **To amend if necessary, and accept the minutes of the meeting of 6th August 2007**

The minutes were accepted with no amendments.

Proposed by: Richard Pymm

Seconded by: Jodie West

Signed by: Silvan Robinson – Chair

3. **Matters arising from the above minutes which are not otherwise dealt with below.**

No matters arising were voiced.

4. **Chairman's Report**

(Text of report as given by Silvan Robinson)

What strikes me, looking back over the seven years or so that I have been associated with DARE is how greatly the public policy atmosphere has changed. The environment was hardly on most people's radar, now it comes second only to cost of fuel (which has much the same impact on people's behaviour). People are frustrated and are always asking – "what can I personally do about global warming?" This is why DARE is so important. It is the one organisation in Devon with the remit and expertise to provide advice to individuals and communities on the practical issues. The constraint is and always has been, lack of core funding.

This has not prevented DARE from growing. Its turnover has increased from £38,000 in 04/05 to £127,000 in 07/08. Staff numbers have increased from Paul and one assistant in 04/05 to Paul and five part time staff. The continued success of DARE owes an enormous amount to Paul Baker's dedication ever since it was formed. We are however lucky to have co-opted onto the Board three very experienced and dedicated people. Leighton King from here in Bovey Tracey, Michael Horsnell from Sidmouth and Chris George from Yelverton. They help to provide the countywide expertise that we need.

This last year has owed much to the funds made available by the RE4D programme, in which we are a partner with three other environmental organisations, each with an area of responsibility. This programme of course initially only covered the Objective 2 areas of Devon, and typically of Government sponsored programmes, after two years the money has dried up. Interim funds have been cobbled together while a new funding package is dreamed up. But it is a thoroughly unsatisfactory situation.

This does not mean there is not plenty of work to do. Thanks to careful financial management, DARE has built up a financial surplus of around £15,000. We have decided to restructure internally to give more emphasis to promotional efforts, which are now in the capable hands of Kirsty and Shura. We are also employing an additional technical officer using some surplus funds as a buffer while an order book is built up. There is no reason why this post should not be self-financing.

The target market remains the same and there is every reason to suppose that the demand for services will grow. We have completed a Renewable Energy Assessment for West Devon Borough Council, and hope to be able to use this as a model for other councils. The same applies to Parish Plans, an initial pilot project should serve as a template for many such exercises – there is a widespread need for help in assessing green energy solutions in a local context. In the same way we plan to publicise our service of providing at low cost home energy audits for individual households, not because they want to sell up, but because they want to do something about it.

The most recent turn of events is the substantial awards given under the Local Action funding programme to four area groups with whose bids we are associated. These wards are designed “to help bring about lasting improvements to the life and economy of their towns and villages” – just up DARE’s street. This hopefully will provide plenty of paid work. It should certainly provide the financial underpinning for one additional member of staff, and could be much more.

There is no shortage of prospective activity. But we do need to make people more aware of our existence and services. We need better publicity. We need to advertise some of our services better. We need to find time to organise more events and link in with other interests such as the farming community. An active publicity and development programme will produce an even greater flow of projects and community service.

The whole staff are skilled, knowledgeable and committed. They are the lifeblood of the organisation and I am confident that with them DARE’s role will continue to grow. There is talk of more effective countywide structure being developed. Whether this happens or not DARE will continue to be a driving force in renewable activities in the County.

5. Finance Director’s Report

(Text of report given by Richard Pymm)

It seems to be becoming a habit, but as was the case last year, the accounts have only just been completed in time for this AGM.

Our Accounts are prepared under Part VIII of the Companies Act 1985 as it relates to special provisions for small companies. I have made available the abbreviated Profit and Loss Account (P3), Balance Sheet (P4), Notes to Financial Statement (P5 & 6), and Detailed Profit and Loss Accounts (P8 & 9).

To tell the story in a logical manner, I will be jumping between these pages, so if you turn to P8 to start, you will see that our Membership Fees, Commercial Income and Newsletter income are all increased, in total to £20,629 from £15,087 last year, an increase of over 30%. Increase from project work that is grant-aided and therefore cannot generate a profit (usually operating at a loss), was up to £109,251 from £90,709, an increase of over 20%. Balanced against this, our operating costs (which includes wages), also increased around 25% from £97,757 to £124,936 – these figures are further broken down on P 9. Taken altogether, this has resulted in a net profit of £4,975 for the year – less than the previous year, but still good.

The Profit and Loss is summarised on P3, which also shows the profit brought forward from the previous year, giving the cumulative final reserve of £18,432. P4 shows how this reserve is broken down in practice to include debtors, creditors and assets. Pages 5 & 6 note what is taken into account during the calculation of Turnover, Profit, Assets, Debtors and Creditors.

To make you aware of a few items of note, please turn to P8 & 9.

1. Newsletter income has improved in spite of Kirsty's absence (Kirsty produces the Newsletter), on Maternity Leave for some of this period. There is no itemised balancing figure to indicate the time and cost of production as it takes place around other work or from home – no doubt if fully accounted for it would show a significant loss. Production changes have recently been introduced so this situation will be watched with interest.
2. Membership fees are up significantly, although numbers are still not increasing as we would like.
3. The commercial increase is important and encouraging, but again needs a major increase to support operating and management costs that cannot be covered by non-profit making project work.
4. The increase in DARE expenditure is mainly due to wages, and the employment of additional employees for at least part of the year.
5. You should note that no Directors – other than Paul for travelling to meetings representing DARE – have charged any expenses.
6. There are no long-term debtors or creditors.
7. The figures presented should be seen as better than indicated in light of the loss of CRI income during this year. This amounts to some £12,000 of income plus associated profit.

Finally I would ask that you bear in mind that the Board decided during the year to take a calculated risk in investing some of our reserves in project development and management. This investment is initially incurring losses as expected, but in the longer term should produce further increases in income and profitability. This represents a move towards financial sustainability with paid management and development time without relying on 'unsustainable' voluntary input. We can only sustain this increased expenditure for a short period of time, but it is essential if we are to retain and develop our position in a rapidly evolving market. We also have to retain significant working capital in order to bank-role wages etc. prior to being able to reclaim these costs from projects and clients. The more project work we do, the more working capital we need.

Any questions on these Accounts, and I will try to answer them for you.

There were no questions.

6. Managing Directors Report (Text of report presented by Paul Baker)

2007/08 was another very busy year, a time when we experienced many changes and we continued to juggle minimal finances and resources.

Not the least of those changes have related to employees.

Amongst our stalwarts, Kirsty left us to add young George to her family, but has now returned for 2 days a week. Shura is almost full-time, and Tom Furness works for us for 3 days a week on RE4D work and mostly out of the office. Stuart continues to undertake technical appraisal work for us, but having taken on other employment he now does less for us than previously.

Other changes :-

Jim Rosseinsky left to pursue a career in journalism. Jim used to deliver RE4D community support and other project work. This work is now undertaken by Andrew Knox, a highly qualified Canadian, currently on leave back in his homeland, but shortly to return for another year with us. Also during this period Angus left to return to his RE Degree studies, and Rosie came and went, and has not been replaced other than through the extended hours of Kirsty and Shura. As Silvan touched on, Kirsty and Shura have been given a greater role in development and management.

RE4D remains the main focus of our activities and has continued to develop in coverage and reputation, now having a county-wide remit – but no extra resources – and with major future aspirations that would keep Devon in the forefront of RE action in the Southwest. Like many funded projects, of course, RE4D can only cover its costs, and we cannot generate a profit from our role within it – indeed we have to contribute some match funding. However, during this year we have quoted for, and undertaken, some contract research for RE4D which has been of significant value, and profitable.

The challenge as always for DARE is the balancing act that is required to fit in with and support, but not compete with, other RE development work in Devon, and whilst doing so to deliver services that generate the profit we need to make us more truly sustainable and continue to be of value to the industry.

Fortunately, my fellow Directors are rarely short of ideas about more useful things we could and should be doing. Unfortunately, we have yet to identify the money-spinning project or service that we can deliver without additional labour or capital.

The demand for Home Energy Audits and site assessments continues to increase, but is still fairly small-scale, whereas we need to generate a flood. Much of this kind of work is undertaken for RE4D, of course, and therefore not directly profitable.

Silvan has mentioned the West Devon work, and in addition we are pursuing important work on Woodfuel and on Farm/Community AD. A key to our future may well be the LARC programmes that have created a potential home for new research and support proposals, although they are unlikely to be open for business before November or December.

As you can appreciate, there has been – and continues to be – a huge amount of work to be done with very meagre resources. We need to keep pace with and capitalise on new opportunities, but that in itself requires resources. The proposed increase in Director numbers will help to identify and assess opportunities, with the new knowledge and skills that they could bring. Two of them are leading members of local Climate Action/ Transition Town groups for example, which has been another positive feature of the past year. The third prospective new Director is a recently retired Environmental Scientist with a lifetime's experience of the impacts of unsustainable energy use.

In the coming months we should expect to see the requirement for the Government to play its part in achieving EU targets for RE and CO2 emission reductions, become a major factor in ensuring that the sector receives much more support and urgency.

Challenges and Change; Challenges and Change.

I would like to close by thanking everyone for their support and unstinting hard work during the past year – it is all too easy to take for granted, but we must not fail to appreciate how fortunate we are in the quality and dedication of Employees and Directors. At the 'coalface' as it were, I see it every day and get to rely on it. If I listed all their achievements and

contributions you would be overwhelmed with project and operational details, and we would be here all night.

I apologise for not going to those lengths, but am happy to try to answer any questions that you may have.

Joddy Chapman – South Brent – Would DARE consider being registered as one of CEP’s consultants? PB agreed that this was something DARE would investigate and consider.

David Kelf – Is DARE able to drive the delivery plans for the LARC funding to promote DARE projects and insure their success. PB informed those present that the LARC projects all have to form a management committee, with a delivery plan and a set criteria within the next few months. It is important to bear in mind that all the areas have received a reduced sum of funding than that which they applied for. Then it will be up to DARE to make formal applications dependant on what each area focuses on. However we have had a DARE presence in all of the groups from the project application stage.

Comments on DARE’s commercial services were invited from those present.

One comment was that the DARE website does not make it clear what services we offer and how much they cost. It was agreed that this would be investigated by DARE to see if this could be altered.

Another was that Good Energy are currently offering an energy concierge service for £195.00 for a year. It was agreed that this would be investigated by DARE.

Francis MacNaughton queried whether with the introduction of zero carbon homes DARE could find opportunities in the construction industry. PB informed Mr MacNaughton that we have worked with a local construction/design company, as well as the High Bickington project and the new towns Sherford and Cranbrook and have developed in-house skills regarding the code for sustainable homes. We have also worked with several district councils throughout Devon providing renewable energy scoping reports. However our other partners in RE4D have more involvement in the commercial sector and with the current financial climate there may not be a great take up of these services within that sector currently.

7. To consider a proposal from the Board of Directors that clause 38(a) of DARE’s Articles of Association be amended from “The number of members of the Management Board (Directors) shall not be less than three nor more than seven” to “The number of members of the Management Board (Directors) shall not be less than three nor more than ten”

Passed with a vote of 10 for
Proposed by: Richard Pymm
Seconded by: Peter Marshall

8. Election of Directors

(a) Resigning Directors (one third of existing Board Members)

Paul Baker

David Kelf

(Both are willing and able to stand for re-election) Re-election is proposed by Silvan Robinson and is seconded by Richard Pymm.

(b) Up to three, or up to six new Directors can be appointed depending on the outcome of Item 7 (above)

Nominees include :-

Paul Baker – standing for re-election

David Kelf – standing for re-election

Leighton King – Co-opted as advisor to the Board during 2007/8 and nominated by the Board.

Chris George - Co-opted as advisor to the Board during 2007/8 and nominated by the Board.

Michael Horsnell - Co-opted as advisor to the Board during 2007/8 and nominated by the Board.

All directors who were standing for election were elected through a vote of 12 for.

This was proposed by: Silvan Robinson

and seconded by: Paul Baker

N.B. It was agreed that the remaining post would be kept open at this juncture to enable another director to be co-opted over the year.

9. Any Other Business (at Chairman's Discretion).

No matter arising.

10. Next AGM - Date and Place

It was agreed that it would be on a similar date next year, date, time and venue to be confirmed.