**HALTON LUNE HYDRO LTD**

**MINUTES OF THE 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Held in the Centre @ Halton on Friday 21st April 2023 at 7:30pm**

1. **Present**:

Hydro Management – John Blowes, Maria Angeles Solera Garcia, Brian Jefferson, Nick Mannion (4)

Shareholders - Angela Blowes, David Johnson, Sheila Jones, Sue O’Brien, Alison Page, Joan Richards, Richard Trevitt, Tom & Vivien White, Norma & Sandra Woodmancy (12).

Also in attendance - Alan Meikle & Joel Procter (accountants), Carol Slinger (Halton Lune Trust) Graham Porter & George Scurrah (DO’s), Andrew Richards (7)

1. **Apologies:**

Apologies were received from Edward & Heather Beeson, Adam Bradbury, Kevin Frea, Sandra Gardner, Michael Gee, Jo Guiver, Michael Haswell, Fern Hodges, Garry Jenkins, Graham Lister, Martin Lowe, David Martin, Irene Meikle, Lee Patterson, David Rimmer, Jon Sear, Marion Seed, Heather Smith, Eileen Whittaker, Ian & Moyra Arnott, Barry & Margaret Askew, Ian & Margaret Huckle, Val & Ewan Stevens, (28)

1. **Chairman’s AGM Report:**

Chairman John Blowes welcomed shareholders to this ninth AGM and provided a power-point presentation covering the highlights of the 2022 financial year. With no significant dry periods or excessive high water the hydro had a more consistent year of production enabling the 4% dividend to shareholders.  
  
The scheduled annual drain down took place in July with stone removal and screen cleaning taking place. The old galvanised screens appear to attract and retain algae and it is planned to replace these with stainless steel in the 2023 drain-down. This was a second occasion on which we had an exceptional blue/green algae bloom entering the inlet following low water and we will work with partners to understand the causes and find solutions or mitigation of the effects.

Our resident fish data analyst and director Maria Angeles Solera Garcia provided an explanation of how we count fish movements up and down stream, including a size estimation. Health check sampling has not taken place this year on instruction from the Environment Agency with no approval yet this year to commence checks, which normally start in late April. Fish numbers remain low in the Lune and other North West rivers, unlike those of the North East.

Income in 2022 exceeded £200,000 and is set to improve again this year. The global events that have raised domestic fuel prices have also led to a significant increase in income per KWh from December 2022, with projected potential income rising from £200k to over £300k this year – always assuming no major event reduces income. John made a specific point regarding future increased revenue leading to a potential considerable increase in corporation tax, which HLH will offset by increasing donations to the Trust to ensure a tax efficient operation. Future HLH would potentially apply to the Trust for funds, should an unexpected event reduce reserves.

We can now state that company viability beyond the Feed in Tariff period (post 2034) looks secure based on current and anticipated income and expenditure. With this financial model after 2034, we anticipate £50k per year being available to Halton Lune Trust to continue the charitable support of local good causes.

Governance of the Company after all shareholders are repaid will rest with those Retention Share holders who remain on the register. We continue to redeem an average of 5% of shares each year and invite those redeeming all their shares to apply for an ‘R’ share, if they wish to remain involved in the long term. Current shareholder redemptions are close to the ideal projection and we continue to invite fund withdrawal on this basis.

Day to day operation of the company rests with our voluntary Duty Officers who carry out daily checks while occasionally being required to seek assistance to clean out the inlet of leaves, branches and the odd tree trunk. New volunteers to the team are always welcome and will receive training and induction appropriate to experience.

1. **Halton Lune Trust**

The Chairman, John Blowes, introduced Halton Lune Trust Secretary Mrs Carol Slinger, who then made a Trust presentation of their activities in the past year. Income from HLH was £15,000 with a further £90 received from visits to the hydro. Grant funding was provided to three successful applicants:

1. Aughton Verges wildflower scheme

b. Halton with Aughton Heritage Group Mill film project

c. Heritage Field Community Meadow project at Crook of Lune

Trust holds a further £20,000 on deposit and meets three times a year to consider and approve applications.

**5. AGM Formal voting:**

The Company Secretary informed the meeting that shareholders on the register were now 248 with 44 of those joint memberships. There are currently eight ‘R’ (Retention) share holders.   
The meeting was then invited to vote on the following motions:

**Resolution 1: Acceptance of the September 2022 AGM Minutes**

Postal votes: For 9 Against Nil Abstained: 1

On the night: For 14 Against Nil RESULT: motion carried

**Resolution 2: Approval of the 2021 calendar year financial statements**

Postal votes: For 9 Against Nil Abstained: 1

On the night: For 14 Against Nil RESULT: motion carried

**Resolution 3: Re-appointment of accountants RFM to carry out account examination only.**

Postal votes: For 9 Against Nil Abstained: 0

On the night: For 15 Against Nil RESULT: motion carried

**Resolution 4: Re-appointment of the Nick Mannion to the Board of Directors**

Postal votes: For 9 Against Nil Abstained: 0

On the night: For 15 Against Nil RESULT: motion carried

**9. The Chairman invited questions from the meeting:**

Q1. – Do we know what the sources of the algal blooms occurring in the river are?

A1. – Not with any certainty, but they appear to occur after periods of very low water. They appear to be from local stagnation rather than from significant water pollution. Nevertheless the Chairman is considering water testing to assess whether foul water may have polluted the river working with other partners.

Q2. – Are the other index rivers experiencing the same drop in fish numbers as the River Lune?

A2. – There has been a fall in numbers here, but in the north east are not declining in the same way. The cause is not understood fully and continues to be a concern.

Q3. – How do fish counts compare through the fish pass with the original fish pass on the south bank?

A3. – The water flows on the south side appear to create a longer white water trail attracting fish up the river, while the down count may be higher on our side as we are on the outside of the bend and the weir shape may channel fish towards our inlet.

Following the question and answer session the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.30pm and invited everyone to enjoy the refreshments available.