

BCFB Ltd AGM 15th Feb 2017 chair's report to the meeting.

Group photo.

Anyone who doesn't want to be in it you don't need to be but it would be nice to have lots of you as a record that we have well attended AGMs !

Hello, good evening and welcome. I am Mark Tucker, chair of the board of directors.

It's great to see lots of you here – I see some familiar faces - not surprising - you are our members and we're very pleased to see you again this year. I hope you will have an interesting evening.

Loos are on this floor at the rear. If the fire alarm sounds, please go downstairs and outside at the front the way you came in. Don't use the lift.

First let me introduce our staff - most of them you may recognise but we do have a few new faces too - please stand up and say your name and your role - skipper or crew.

Second, I'd like to introduce our board of directors, again mostly familiar faces - please stand up, say your name and perhaps one sentence about your personal reason for being on the board.

First part now is the "formal" section where we need to fulfil requirements of The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

If you have any specific questions regarding my report on the year's activities or finances, when we come to that - please put your hand up and ask- that's quite alright. We will conclude with election of new members to the board. Then we will have a break 15 mins – while votes are counted - I'll announce the members of the new board - that's the end of the formal part.

Then we'll have a short informal discussion and you can raise any other questions, make suggestions or generally air your views regarding the company as result of what you've heard. After that, we have a special guest who will give us a presentation which I'm sure we'll all find very interesting - but for the moment that's a mystery.

This will be the third AGM of your company and in my previous reports I explained why people came together to rescue the former ferry company from the receiver and how that was done - with the help of you, all of us, in our essential role as shareholders.

Last year I was able to summarise everything that had happened and say we'd had a good year. I can't say that this year. It hasn't been a good year - it's been an absolutely fantastic year ! I say this particularly in terms of our prospects for the future and I'll tell you more about that in a few minutes.

Strictly, the AGM is concerned about last year to October 2016 so I'll talk first about last year. In a nutshell, our finances are good. On a turnover of over half a million pounds, our net profits are up on the previous year and are about 10% of turnover, at over £ 50,000. Ken, our finance man on the board, will give you a bit more detail later.

The other absolutely wonderful news we had was that we had been awarded just over a quarter of a million pounds from power to change, funded by the lottery.

I don't need to tell you what a fantastic piece of good news this is for the company and its future - I'll explain a bit more about what it will mean and how we intend to use it in a few minutes.

Keeping to financial news directly concerning you as our members, we will pay interest on our shares as we did last year. In our share offer document we promised to pay between 3% and 5% every year provided it is financially prudent to do so, well, we can afford to pay so - we would like

to pay again at the rate of 4% this year. (Incidentally that's more than 10 times what you can get in a bank deposit!).

And, as in previous years we will suggest :

1. You can take the 4% in cash.
 2. Or you can have vouchers for ferry tickets which will be to an equivalent value of about 8% (twice as much).
 3. Or you can waive your interest and it will be invested in our future investment fund - and thanks to those of you who have already opted to do this, it now stands at around £ 14,000.
- We'll be sending out a form as we did last year so you can choose which you prefer.

Now – I'd like to run quickly through some of the important innovations we made last year.

There are no major changes in what we do - it's already a mature business with 2 clear operations - the scheduled ferries and the trips and private hire.

1. We set up a marketing sub-committee of the board - to improve the way we do marketing to pursue interesting ideas such as discounted direct sales of annual tickets to be sold direct to companies around the harbour for benefit of and an incentive for their staff to use the ferries - We hope this will help us particularly in the off peak season. Also integrated ticketing with Great Western trains. We're doing all this now.

One of our young staff, Mike is a whiz on social media - he's doing that for marketing.

2. Timetabling of ferries - you'll remember this was a thorny issue. We have resolved this longstanding problem.

When we started operations in 2013, Bristol City Council, via the harbourmaster, imposed a ferry timetable on us and our competitor No 7 boats, which didn't work very well. After many meetings and discussions, over the last 3 years, I'm very pleased to say that the city listened to our requests and since last March, we have been operating a new timetable giving us and No7 boats fair and equal slots on a 20 mins schedule and it's working well.

This enables us to run a through service from Temple Meads to Hotwells, eliminating the need for passengers to change boats and wait at the centre - for example to get to the ss Great Britain.

We can operate either as a 2 boat system (Hotwells and Temple Meads sections) or as a through service – we call it - the figure of 8. It applies to both companies - it has proved more economical for us to run and provides a much better service to the public. So that's a real success.

We also promised to look at staff pay - and said we would work towards paying not the minimum wage but the living wage to all staff. From 1st October last year, we did it in one leap - all staff have been receiving the living wage or more. – and we've introduced for the first time a lunchtime break for ferry skippers and crew - in the interests of safety and staff welfare.

In 2016 we also introduced a pension scheme for all staff - this was well ahead of the statutory requirement to do so.

Another innovation - we commissioned a social impact study - the idea of this is to report on our non-financial objectives and performance and outline our plans as a social enterprise. This is it - a lot of it will be well known to you as our members - but it has some interesting facts and information about our plans. We will email a copy to all members with the next mailing.

We also paid a profit share to Phil and Ian as our operators, in recognition of the sustained enthusiasm and great effort they continue to make towards the success of your company - and also from 1st January 2016, their basic pay was increased in line with inflation for the first time since the company began 3 years earlier.

I'm going to ask Phil to speak now about some of her own highlights of last year and plans for this year.

To rescue and relaunch the ferry company, offer a great service and get back to profitability was, in a sense, stage one of our plan which has been accomplished over the last 3 years.

Stage two will be to bring our fleet of boats fully up to scratch as we would like them to be and to expand our range of services to the community.

To remind you, we have 5 boats Brigantia (built 2006), Matilda (1997) both large 50 seat capacity steel boats.

Then we have dear little Margaret- our first ferry boat- built in 1952 and Independence (1927). Both of these are wooden, open boats - very popular with the public in the summer months.

Lastly, we have Emily (1925) , a wooden boat with a fully closed cabin - so Emily is a grand old lady at 92 years old. Emily is the least flexible member of the fleet for her suitability for different kinds of use and in time, sadly, she will be retired but, for now, she is still a useful member of the fleet.

I explained last year how we would like to obtain a new boat - to build resilience into the fleet, to improve passenger comfort and capacity and enable a greater flexibility with boats which can do a variety of work and how this is likely to add to profitability in the longer term.

We have looked into greener power -

Electric and hybrid engines. Buying a new boat is easier said than done. That's because we need relatively high seating capacity in a boat of compact dimensions - a wide beam but short overall length to be manoeuvrable within the confines of some reaches in the harbour - and, crucially, a very low height so we can pass under the various low bridges in the docks. That's a pretty unique set of requirements so you can't just go out and buy one "off the shelf" and you can't buy one secondhand.

The only solution is to commission the building of a new boat - as was done for Brigantia and Matilda for the same reasons. The board decided last year we would go ahead , basically we want another Matilda as that has proved our best design. But it will be even better - cleaner, greener, quieter and more comfortable. It will cost about £ 300,000.

So the question is - where to find that money.

Well we have :

Capital in hand - a capital reserve of retained profits and the future investment fund (many of you have generously waived your right to receive interest on your shares in order to build up this fund.) We have over £ 100,000 already. But that's nowhere near enough and we need a new boat now. It would take years to build up sufficient capital from our profits alone.

We may also need in future to raise some additional capital and if we need to do so we shall of course offer the opportunity to buy new shares first of all to you, our existing shareholders and we would probably open it also to new shareholders to join us

A couple of years ago, Tim, one of our members told me about Power to Change, which is funded by the national lottery.

Power to change makes grants and part of it was set up specifically to help community businesses, just like ours.

So began for us a long process of assembling information, working out our ideas and deciding whether we could qualify for the exacting standards to be eligible for grants.

We came up with a project that we felt would be eligible and applied.

After much due diligence testing of our ideas and meeting with our assessors which followed, I'm delighted to say that p2c announced last August that we had been awarded the full amount we had applied for - £ 257,000.

This enabled us to crack on to obtain the new boat.

Longitude - small firm of marine engineers and naval architects based in Southampton, who came highly recommended. The recommendation actually came from Alf Perry, one of our original rescuers. He was manager of the Underfall Yard and I'm sure many of you will have known him. He sadly passed away recently and is much missed by folk around the docks.

We commissioned Longitude to do a feasibility study to see whether our idea of an electric ferry was possible. Would it be possible overnight to recharge batteries in the boat using wind or solar power, to drive an electric ferry? The answer is yes, every component of such a boat is well proven technology. But would we have enough charge to run all day for 9 hours? Sadly not. Well actually it is possible but we would need so many heavy batteries that there wouldn't be carrying capacity for any passengers -- which would rather defeat the object.

But it is possible to have an electric boat running on green energy for part of the day and to have a whisper silent efficient generator running on waste cooking oil to top the batteries up and that will work and that's what we're designing. Longitude's final report on the engineering feasibility went to be- group - power to change assessors and that was officially approved and signed off yesterday.

Babcock - a very different engineering firm, with sites all round the uk. They have a large site at Ashton Gate, you've seen the big shiny tower building - maybe wondered what goes on inside. They are ship builders - everything from patrol boats, pilot boats, submarines - they are currently building an aircraft carrier, so we figured they probably know enough to be able to advise us on our ferry.

Babcock have very generously offered to loan us a young graduate naval architect to advise on design and procurement for the ferry entirely for free. We have a meeting on monday with longitude and Babcock to get the design work underway. We're looking at a design and build process that will take 12 - 18 months.

Important to us that the grant opportunity was not only about getting a new boat.

We wanted to do more for the whole bristol community than simply providing the ferry service and other trips. Power to change really will be key to enabling this.

Introduce Kate Fowler, her firm is accountant to ferry company and she has 30 years experience with charities and organisations in the 3rd sector. She's regularly attended our board meetings, she's a boaty person herself - she and her husband have their own narrowboat - she's an enthusiastic member of the company and she's now offered herself for election to the board - she's going to tell us something about the other part of our p2c proposal - what we've called "community aboard"

Introduce the 4 new staff to each say something briefly about their roles

Jaslyn - outreach to older people

Elena - volunteers

Carrie - education

Rosie - training young people

Finally. Just like to thank all staff, operators and crew who have worked really hard to get this business well and truly back on its feet and working well.

Also to thank all the directors who have given their time on a voluntary basis.

I want to ask just two of the directors Katy and Marian to come up here please.

Katy and Marian deserve a special mention this year because it was they who put together our successful lottery bid. So its thanks especially to them and all the work, and it was hundreds of hours of work, they put in to assemble all the information, formulate the bid and make the application to power to change which resulted in our award of £ 257,000.

Ken - financial report

Thanks Ken. I should mention the accounts have been approved by the board, the AGM simply needs to receive them.

Now the election of the board. Company requirement is that three members of our existing board need to stand down – the other members remain as directors if they wish to do so- every one has said they do.

I am standing down. So is Katy Hallett. Ross Kinneir resigned during the year and thanks to him for his contributions while on the board. So there are 3 vacancies.

I'm standing for re-election as is Katy and earlier you met Kate fowler. There are also 2 other candidates as well - so plenty to choose from – details on the boards.

You can vote for 1, 2 or 3 candidates as you wish. You can vote for fewer than 3 but please don't vote for more than 3 otherwise it will be a spoiled paper.

Now we'll have a break - 15 minutes do look at the display boards if you haven't already.

In second half we'll have result of the election, opportunity for questions then we'll have the talk by our mystery guest.

Please can you now vote - you have your voting slips borrow pens - put an "x" by your choice up to 3 of candidates. Staff will collect slips.

Introduce David Chater, head of "community business funds" within Power to Change

Thankyou David for the talk - very interesting to hear about other community businesses and how we have become part of that family.

By the way, David, thanks also for the quarter of a million - it'll come in handy.

Seriously, we are hugely grateful for the confidence you have expressed in our business. The best way we can thank you is to fully deliver on everything we promised in our application and we intend to do exactly that.

Thank you all very much for coming - that's the end of the show - by all means stay, have a drink and we're happy to chat if anybody wants to stay. Otherwise goodnight and have a safe journey home