

Stroud Community Agriculture

Annual General Meeting

March 22nd 2009

Brookthorpe Parish Village Hall

Apologies: Martin Quick, Merci Rebati, Helen and Kevin Cranston, Carly Fields, Justin and Jenny Tait, Poh-Eng San, Martin Large, David Drew,

Present:

Core Group: Nadine Smykatz-Kloss (chair), Andy Jones, Simon Ryder, Mark Harrison, Simon Hanks, Richard Swann, Sue Baker (minutes)

Members:

Jade Bashford, Simon Charter, Tim Lawrence, Nick Wier, Carol Mathews, Laurence Dungworth, Sue Dance, Paul Sheridan, Clare Sheridan, Jehanne Mehta, Rob Mehata, Liz Hardiman, Bernard Jarman, Ute Schlossmacher, Zambodie Schlossmucher, Annie Shaw, Francis Goby, Ruth Davey.

1) Nadine welcomed everybody to the meeting and everyone introduced themselves.

2) Acceptance of the minutes from the previous AGM was proposed by Nick Wier and seconded by Laurence.

3) Annual report

Laurence talked about how there were a few difficult times in the last year but that in farming it is important to look to the future as well as the past. The haymaking last summer was good, producing all hay rather than silage. The animals in general have done well, there have been a lot of visitors to the farm both formal and informal and continuing media interest. Tim's apprenticeship is going well (Mark then introduced Tim to the members. He has been with us since last July). For the first half of last year Wynstones children visited the farm as part of their studies.

Veg Report – There has been more expansion at Brookthorpe which has had a better year than the previous. The soil and yields are improved. The weeds were stressful but are better now but the need to keep on top of it is ongoing. At Hawkwood all is going well.

Horse Trial – Didn't manage to get the trial running as it was a very wet year and we didn't have all the equipment. We decided to give Kate back to Ruskin Mill.

Membership – We now have a membership of 175 vegetable shares. This years target is 200 shares so we need to continue to work to get to our target. The point was stressed that it is important that members continue to let people know about us.

Bursaries

We are recruiting fewer 'disadvantaged' workshares, which means that the bursary is less spent so there is more scope for recruiting people with lower incomes. The idea of a stall at the farmers market in Gloucester was suggested. It was also pointed out

that now that we have a Friday harvest as well as a Tuesday one, we are more adaptable in what we can offer.

Membership Enquiries

Nadine thanked Paul and Claire Sheridan for their work on this.

Newsletter

There is still an opening for someone to take over from Sue as editor of the newsletter.

Children's activities

Thanks to Kate Docherty for this, particularly the crocus bulbs that came out in time for mothers day.

Funding Bid

This is an application for lottery money and is for, among others things, a rainwater harvesting system. Mark and Nick are continuing to work on the application for this.

4 Treasurers report

Richard Swann talked through the treasurers report as in the AGM report. It was suggested that this also be put on the SCA website along with the AGM minutes. Despite reservations about this it was pointed out that they are public documents.

Richard Swann proposed that we do not have the accounts audited for 2009. This was seconded by Mark and this was accepted.

Thanks was given to Ian Barwick who has done the accounts up until now.

5 Budget for 2009

Mark presented this years budget with the following explanation for the figures:

Farm +£875 (£10 of the veg share cost goes into the running of the farm)

Beef -£320

Pigs - £2130 (Normally make a loss here due to the expense of feed and the loss of piglets in 2008)

Veg -£2800 (this is budgeted to 200 shares which means an increase in land cultivation, labour (Tim, Ute and Mark to work an extra day), and cover whilst waiting for Sam).

Admin +£2635 (£2/month of membership. Admin costs include Carols payment, Newsletter printing costs, hall hire, bookkeeping etc.)

Total Projected Loss -£1740

It was pointed out that the sheep are still included in farm costs as they are not big enough for a category of their own.

In the case of a loss we have £14,000 to cover us. It was pointed out that it is usual to have three months funds in reserve.

The budget has already been proposed and accepted by the core group.

6 Core Group Elections

Nadine is stepping down after 3 years on the core group and Naomi is also stepping down.

Sue Dance and Justin Tait are the interested candidates and have both already attended a couple of meetings. Sue introduced herself and Mark introduced Justin in his absence.

Nadine and Markus Gobey proposed and Claire Sheridan seconded that the above named be accepted as members of the core group.

Thanks was given to the outgoing core group members and to all the core group for their work.

7 Lease

Laurence reported on the recent meeting with Wynstones. To accommodate the rent which Wynstones considers to be low, there is an agreement for it to remain at £1100/year and we will provide free visits for class III. Further class visits will cost £10 an hour which was considered to be cheap. This led to the question of whether we would charge another school the same rate. This was set aside as a question for a harvest supper or conversation café.

With regard to the lease we ideally would like 10 years but will settle for 8 years. The schools hesitancy about the lease is seen to be due to the development at Brookthorpe.

Laurence mentioned that the work done by Class IX was very worthwhile.

8 General Discussion

It was considered that the proposed topic of New Farmer New Ideas be better discussed when Sam is here. The following discussion points were suggested:

- 1) Encouraging members to come to events
- 2) Membership
- 3) Survey results
- 4) Food Bid
- 5) What experience to share with other groups /CSAs
- 6) Wynstones lease and educational visits generally.

1) and 2) were chosen to be discussed by all groups.

The following was noted:

How to get more members?

Press-releases:-

- Re: whole farm in Citizen to attract Gloucester folk
- Re: bursaries available and credit crunch
- Re: our new farmer

- Re: Healthy Start vouchers – buy your veg from SCA!
- Re: Local Food Hero – Mark has been nominated
- In Stroud Life & SNJ for Stroud
- Radio – Stroud FM & Radio Gloucester

We need a Press Officer!!

Could have an Open Day at Brookthorpe site – advertise in Gloucester

Should advertise at St Luke's surgery in Tuffley – have leaflets & joining packs there

Get Brownies & Scouts & Guides to visit

Talk to Gardening Clubs (many people only grow flowers and might like our veg); talk to U3A in Gloucester (if there is one) - Annie would be happy to do in the summer hols when she has less work

Contact people on allotment waiting lists.

Promote through Early Years Centres - talk about the bursary available – also Healthy Start vouchers

Link with City Farm in Gloucester

Need to set up a drop-off point in Gloucester in advance – maybe at St Luke's Tuffley surgery (make links between health & veg – get GPs prescribing SCA veg?) – maybe at City Farm at Robinswood?

Why are people leaving? How to get people to adopt an “SCA lifestyle” and not just buy a veg box? Need to promote the whole concept – locally grown / organic / bio-d / interaction with animals (especially for children)

Promote to elderly / people whose life is physically restricted – come to the farm and meet the animals – Zambodhi has a photo of an 87-year-old woman on a kitchen folding chair with piglets all around her feet!

Working class folk need to have the idea of open access to the farm / permission to be with the animals explained clearly – old ideas of ‘trespass’ are strong.

The question was also raised “do we have to get to 200 veg shares” – could we not stop at 175? What would this mean for the farm?

We need to:

- Get registered for Healthy Start vouchers (Carol & Mark are on with it)
- Add to Joining Form “how did you hear about us?” so we can track our most effective marketing (Carol will do this)

Involving Members

A half days work per year commitment as part of the membership. This could be on the farm on a workday or on a stall.

A New Member process where new members are introduced by an existing member.

It was pointed out that community events at the farm should be enjoyed for what they are with no expectations.

Could have community events that focus on giving something for the wider community.

Farmers market stall to sell excess veg. and to promote farm

An outer core group who exist to take on specific tasks and to ease the load of the core group.

This last point lead to a request for outer core group members and names were collected of interested members.

9 Conclusion of meeting

Nadine drew the meeting to a close thanking all for their contributions and efforts and in particular Laurence for the huge impact he has made on the SCA and wishing him and his family the best of luck in the future.