

Jurassic Coast Trust
7th Annual General Meeting
8th October 2010
Riviera Hotel, Sidmouth
Chairman's Report

The last 12 months has been, as with virtually everyone else in the current economic climate, an uphill struggle for the Trust and we have not been able to achieve all the targets we had set ourselves, although we have had some notable successes.

Nikki has successfully increased our revenue, through our corporate and project sponsors, the numbers involved with Investing in the Future and the funds we have been able to collect in support of Jurassic Coast projects and has put in place some new initiatives to raise income and get more people involved in the World Heritage Site.

The Lyme Regis Fossil Festival in May was a resounding success in the numbers attending and those, particularly children, who were entranced by the ancient history of the Earth, encouraged by an enormous array of displays, particularly from the Natural History Museum, Natural England and the Jurassic Coast Team.

This year the Trust shared an area with the Team, which worked extremely well with the various activities provided including the Fossil Dig Boxes, fossil mould making and the life size scelidosaurus puzzle. This much more visibly cohesive approach between the Trust and the Team resulted in Nikki being able to sign up a number of new Friends.

An extremely good film was produced of the event, which we will show later, which, to my mind has captured the whole purpose and ethos of not only the Fossil Festival but that of the UNESCO designation of the Dorset and East Devon Coast as a World Heritage Site.

The 2011 Festival is between the 29th April and 1st May.

The Petroleum Exploration Society of Great Britain has directed part of their contribution to the Trust towards the Fossil Festival and Nikki, with the help of the Team, organised another very successful field trip for the PESGB and their families. We are very grateful for all the help we received in putting this together and particularly to Denys, Malcolm and Richard Edmonds in being able to act as guides over the weekend.

I hope with the help of the Fossil Festival film we will be able to persuade them to continue their very generous support of the Trust long into the future and increase their support for the Earth Festival in 2012.

Corporate, Project sponsors and local business supporters have increased this year to 30, donating £26,806 with a similar amount promised for 2011, and we must particularly thank Martin Cox and West Dorset Leisure Holidays for their continuing support in

raising the second highest amount of £6,118 last year. With his lead, we have been able to show what can be done and attract additional members into the scheme.

We will continue to work on the many businesses along the coast that are directly and indirectly involved with or make use of the Jurassic Coast and we are currently putting together a comprehensive list of those businesses to maintain our growth in this area. As and when the country begins some economic growth, I hope that we will see good results in this area.

Our continued involvement and partnership with Coastlink and our own programme of guided walks for which we are extremely grateful to Alan Holiday and Sam Scriven, among others, has resulted in attracting Friends and we do need to continue to seek ways of making this more appealing to the public to increase their involvement with the Trust and the World Heritage Site.

Nikki recently received an enquiry from a youth group in north Wiltshire, who initially wanted copies of the Official Guide as they are organising a walk along the Jurassic Coast. They are raising funds for various charities and she managed to persuade them to raise funds for the Trust in return for some information.

Mike's daughter-in-law, Janet has offered to help us organise a sponsored walk for next year and although this will probably be on a small scale in its first year, I am hopeful that we can continue this in following years and grow this into a well-supported annual Jurassic Coast event. As more details emerge I will keep you all informed so that you don't miss out on a little coastal exercise.

We are very grateful to Janet for volunteering to do this, albeit, I have no doubt, with some persuasion from her father-in-law. In addition she has also been able to persuade a charity ball in the spring to include the Trust as one of its beneficiaries.

The Jurassic Coast has continued to see some extremely good media coverage throughout the year, culminating perhaps in the recent Radio 2 broadcast for a whole week walking along the coast. This, together with a children's BBC programme 'Live and Deadly', has increased the profile of the Site still further, although we do still need to work on how we effectively link such exposure to the Trust and the need to raise funds for projects on the coast.

Although, as in all other areas, funds are difficult to source, we have been able to expand our publications, the main new book being the Sticker Book, which we agreed to support earlier in the year. To date this has sold in excess of 1,000 copies.

We are currently seeking funding for the Purbeck Guide, written by Malcolm Turnbull and Paul Ensom and although difficult, we have been able to raise almost two thirds of our minimum target and we are very grateful to Denys and Sibyl for their help in trying to achieve this. Inevitably, the traditional sources are dry of funds, but we have found some new ones. I am also very grateful to those Trustees who have agreed to make a publications loan to the Trust, once the initial target has been reached in order to be able to put this book into print. I hope that we will be able to forge ahead with this for the new season in 2011.

We are also working on a coffee table book, funded by Coastal, which will show the whole of the Jurassic Coast from the air. I hope that this will also be published for the new season.

Overall we have seen a growth in our income this year from our publications to £10,140, having sold 10,198 books and 13,365 postcards during the year to 31st March 2010 and a total of 65,030 publications since we began this work in 2003. As the number of publications increases, the income generated will increase and this will form the basis of our grant-funding in the future.

We have further improved our working practices with Coastal Publishing and have moved into the next level of professionalism, if you like, putting in place clear procedures to ensure that the process is as efficient as possible, whilst maintaining the highest quality expected of books affiliated with the Trust.

As always, I must thank Denys for his unstinting and uncompromising contribution to the production of our books and the considerable amount of time he puts into the design, presentation and editorial of our publications. There is no doubt, that without his efforts, we would not be able to produce the quality in print that we continue to achieve.

This year we began the direct selling of products in support of the Trust and we commissioned some T-Shirts to trial at the Lulworth Cove Heritage Centre. This met with a modicum of success, experimenting with different prices, but not selling in the numbers we had hoped. As with the publications, if we are able to persuade coastal retailers to stock these on our behalf we will slowly increase our income from this source. We are now exploring, with the help of Sibyl and Mike, what other products we could produce and sell, although in order to ensure that required margins are available for retailers, volume will be the key to the success of this project.

Turning to our accounts, the Trust raised £378,230 during the year to the end of March 2010 of which £277,715 was in relation to the Durlston Castle. Our net income for the year was £309,240 and unrestricted funds, those not ring-fenced for specific projects, amounted to £32,564 after expenses of £57,548 which included a contribution from SWRDA of £62,128. Our current balance is £22,823.29 with £378,080.96 held for Durlston Castle.

This year we have begun raising funds for the Chesil Beach Visitor Centre and we have received £25,000 from Garfield Weston.

At this time last year, we decided that we would need to be careful with our funds to ensure that we were able to maintain a strong position for the future, but we were still able to support various projects to the tune of £11,442 and funding the Monsters sticker book with £15,800.

We successfully persuaded SWRDA to complete their payments to us and we were able to meet our expenses and continue to setup the foundations for the future of the Trust.

We have now come to the end of our SWRDA funding for the post of our Executive Director, Nikki, and have needed to take the decision about whether we continue to fund the post ourselves.

The reality is, that despite the tremendous job Nikki has done during a very difficult period, we still find ourselves with a shortfall, even though Nikki has been able to halve that shortfall over the last year. However, as a Trust, we are not in a position to take the risk, particularly in the current economic position the country finds itself in, that this shortfall will be reduced by a similar amount over the coming months and feel that we cannot continue to fund her position without suitable assistance, in spite of the fact that this would be considerably below that required nearly four years ago. In any event, bearing in mind the aims and objectives of the Trust and the mere fact that we are charitable, does, in my view, preclude us from spending the majority of our income on our expenses and thereby preventing us from supporting projects which we were set up to do, despite the potential Nikki has created over the last few years.

The figures and initiatives put in place speak for themselves and are an immense accolade to the work that Nikki has done and the enormous success she has had in setting up the Trust for the future. We have concrete and tangible links with a good number of local and other businesses and organisations, a thriving publication enterprise, the beginnings of a product enterprise and a real and effective start to a Friends association, all of which have contributed nearly £600,000 to the Jurassic Coast Trust. We must not forget that this has been achieved during a period of a contracting and uncertain economy and who knows what might have happened in different circumstances.

The foundation she will leave us with, has provided the needed springboard for the Trust and I hope that by working together, we will be able to give her work due appreciation by building on this foundation to grow a larger fund raising vehicle to benefit the Jurassic Coast for many years into the future.

I am particularly disappointed that without that external funding, we have to let Nikki go, after the efforts she has made and I know that in order to properly thank her for her work we must ensure that we continue her efforts and make the best use of the basic foundations she has created for the Trust.

Although, on behalf of the Trust, as always, I would like to thank all those who have helped us during the past year, the Trustees, Sam Rose and his Team, our supporters and Friends, I must reserve my greatest word of thanks for Nikki, not only for what she has done for the Trust in its early years, but also for the help she has given to me in keeping me informed, up to date and reminding me when I had forgotten or failed to do something.

Thank you Nikki and all of our very best wishes for the future.