

Annual Report 2019 / 20



torrshydro
NEW MILLS

Torrs Hydro Annual Report 2019-20

WELCOME!

Our financial year 1st October 2019 – 30th September 2020 has been a year of momentous change for the world, and for Torrs Hydro too.

It has been an extraordinary year for Torrs Hydro in several ways:

The coronavirus pandemic has brought many more people out walking, including in the Torrs, with time to stop and observe and ask questions – so Archie has become more conspicuous.

Although the spring of 2020 was very dry, and no rain fell for weeks, – remember all the lovely sunshine, day after day, which helped so many of us to get through the first Lockdown of the Coronavirus pandemic? – we clocked a total power generation for the year of 136MWh.

And a number of factors came together which led the Board to decide to undertake a major upgrade of the plant. A special general meeting was held via Zoom in September 2020, to agree that additional community share capital be raised to fund the upgrade.

We thank all our members for their continued support, and particularly welcome our 49 new members, whose support has assisted in the plant upgrade.

We proffer our enormous thanks as ever to all our volunteers – to the board, to Archie’s Angels, to the engineering team, and to the others who contribute their time, skills and enthusiasm to collectively make this a truly community project.

Plant Management and Operations



Steve Essex



Steve Essex

Despite the dry spring we generated 136MWh over the year. While not our best year, this was 20% above the average to date.

Our insurance company introduced a new requirement – that we have a maintenance contract with a hydro engineering company. Whilst this would increase our costs, it seemed an eminently sensible move. Quotes were sought.

A contract with Hallidays Hydropower, with a local office in Manchester, was agreed, providing expert support and back-up together with an annual service. Hallidays’ first move was to carry out

a 'health check' of the plant, and identify issues needing to be addressed. New regulations coming into effect at the end of 2020 necessitating an upgrade to the instrumentation within the control system, problems with the sluice gate, and the issue raised by the coronavirus of volunteers self-isolating and therefore needing greater ability to remotely observe and control the plant remotely were all key considerations.

The board had long been aware that a variable speed control system could enable more power to be generated than our fixed speed system, but changing the control system had seemed unaffordable. Until this year, that is.

Grant funding was available for the instrumentation upgrade, and a business support grant to assist with adapting our day-to-day operations to allow for volunteers needing to self-isolate. In all it was a pertinent moment to explore the costs and cost benefit of converting the control system to variable speed. It all looked very favourable, but would require more capital than Torrs Hydro had available.

Both a loan and additional community share equity were considered to fund the upgrade. Additional community share investment was favoured as this would give a chance for people who had not been able to invest at the start of the scheme or had moved into the area more recently the opportunity to become members.

But we wanted our existing members to approve this decision. A Special General Meeting was held via Zoom in September 2020. Approximately 20% of our membership, double the minimum requirement according to the Torrs Hydro Rules, took part, either in person or by proxy. And there was overwhelming approval.



Richard Body



Mary Cohen

Financial Report

Based on our current income per unit and annual overheads we need to generate approximately 82MWh per year to break even. So an annual output totalling 136MWh will produce a good profit. This year the £10,000 Covid-19 business support grant boosted this profit considerably to £17,987 (though of course this will be used in the next financial year to assist in the plant upgrade). For comparison, we posted a loss of £9571 for the year to 30th September 2019.

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 30 September 2020

	2020	2019
	£	£
Income		
Sales	12,698	695
Deferred income	3,748	3,748
ROCS	7,259	431
Fish Pass	973	970
Grant - COVID-19	10,000	0
	<u>34,678</u>	<u>5,844</u>
Cost of sales		
Commissions payable	1,083	250
	<u>33,595</u>	<u>5,594</u>
Gross profit		
Administrative expenses		
Volunteer training and welfare	92	0
Rent	600	600
Telephone and fax	8	0
Postage	53	31
Stationery and printing	2	8
Subscriptions	100	99
Insurance	4,619	4,513
Equipment expensed	77	0
Repairs and maintenance	2,619	2,653
Depreciation	7,103	7,130
AGM costs	0	43
Sundry expenses	0	0
Consultancy fees	500	250
	<u>15,773</u>	<u>15,327</u>
Operating profit/(loss)	<u>17,822</u>	<u>(9,733)</u>
Exceptional items		
Interest receivable	165	162
Interest payable	0	0
Profit/(loss) on ordinary activities before taxation	<u>17,987</u>	<u>(9,571)</u>
Tax on profit/(loss) on ordinary activities	0	0
Profit/(loss) for the financial year	<u>17,987</u>	<u>(9,571)</u>

Life down at Archie

Autumn and Winter 2019/2020 were relatively quiet. It was dry and there was an electrical fault that needed attention. Consequently, any school visits were cancelled whilst matters were sorted and then Covid 19 arrived. The pandemic has affected everyone including Archie.

Although daily checks are usually solo affairs, any cleaning or tidying work is usually communal. Undeterred, Archie's Angels have met a couple of times to weed, sweep, paint railings and generally keep the site tidy. These were socially distanced and masked events which happened after the initial lockdown ended. Keeping the site tidy is good for our public image but we are very aware that the engine house roof is in dire need of attention. It has been repaired and vandalised several times over the years and remains an eyesore. Finding a vandal-proof solution that also satisfies local government requirements is a focus.

Also on hold were any publicity events such as our regular attendance at the One World Festival and Community Energy Fortnight.

The pandemic has had a positive impact, in that more than ever, people have been walking through The Torrs and they have been more curious. There have been plenty of enquiries about how things are going, or why there is no generation.

Perhaps because people have taken more notice, or because Climate Change issues have been more in the news, more people have become interested in volunteering. This is so important for the project. We need younger local people to take the scheme forward. So we've been delighted to welcome 3 new volunteers. They have received an induction, including a tour of the site and a health and safety briefing. All 3 have joined the Archie's Angels team, and one has also been trained up as a daily checker. This is crucial to the ongoing viability of the project. With an expected life of 40 years, there needs to be continuous recruitment and interest in the scheme. Torrs Hydro has always been about pioneering and education. The scheme shows that small scale community projects can be run by and for the local community.

My Life as a Torrs Hydro Volunteer – by Mary Cohen



Steve Essex

My involvement with Torrs Hydro started at a public meeting in New Mills town hall way back in 2007. There was a talk about a hydro-electricity project that was inviting local interest and investment. Scraping together £250 to become part of it seemed reasonable and easy enough. At one of the first AGMs a request for volunteer directors, no experience necessary, was also easy and, with a friend accompanying me, I joined as a director.

It was a hands on, learn as you go along, sort of role. It was completely out of my depth of knowledge as a primary school teacher. I went along to daily checks,

group visits and board meetings and slowly gained information and understanding of how the project worked. There was a sense of pride that a small town like New Mills could achieve such a pioneering project.

I became more confident and fluent talking to visitors, both local and from overseas. I helped organise and run open days and promotions at the One World festival and other green initiatives. I helped to write a newsletter and welcome other volunteers. All volunteers come from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences but sharing knowledge and expertise gets the decisions made and the job done.

I have learned that the rivers are in charge and that they will always come first, witnessing the impact of storms on the inlet. I've been part of the team now for about 12 years. I've seen volunteers come and go, I've cleared the rubbish from the inlet, kept the public informed of the project with updated notices down at the engine house and answered lots of questions, the main one being, "Why isn't it running?"

I have even learned a little bit about the mechanical and electrical engineering behind it all, though I will always bow to others' greater knowledge.

What has struck me over the years is the genuine interest from passers-by.

Torrs Hydro has undeniably been a huge education project, showing all sorts of groups that small scale, community projects like this can work. I have been overwhelmed with the generosity and support of shareholders who always back the Board of Directors in some of the difficult decisions needed. This is not a grandiose 'get rich quick' money making scheme. It's a 'let's work together' scheme with the aim of improving the ways things are done, considering the environment and the needs of the community.

Torrs Hydro New Mills Limited is a Community Benefit Society

Website: www.torrshydro.org Blog: torrs-hydro-newmills.blogspot.com

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