

## RECORD OF MONTHLY MEETING 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020

### Ashtead Wing

Record of meeting held by Zoom on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020  
Number of participants 20

The Joint Presidents Sarah and Sally welcomed 20 Members to the meeting.

Sarah introduced our speaker Richard Walker a volunteer from Shared Interest who spoke about investing in a fairer world.

Richard shared with us how he became involved, the history of the organization and the importance of lending unsecured loans to people in poverty combined with people in developed countries paying a fair price for the goods.

Richard was introduced to Shared Interest shortly after it was founded 27 years ago initially as an investor and he became an ambassador for them 6 years ago.

Mark Hayes was the driving force behind founding Shared Interest in 1989/1990 which was described as a “new concept in ethical investing” by alleviating poverty through trade. The aim is to help the extremely poor or people living in extreme poverty defined as living on less than \$1.90 a day. This is about 10% of the world’s population - 746 million people- of which 80% are living in rural areas and 65% are working in agriculture. Shared Interest do this either by providing short term loans to help finance equipment or build capacity, or by providing credit so that the workers are paid immediately on production rather than having to wait for the items to be sold on the international market. In Malawi for example, to borrow money for access to working capital the interest rate was/is 40% as the loans typically are short term and unsecured.

The funds the organization had to loan was initially £350,000 and this has grown to around £45 million today. They have placed loans in 55 countries. Shared Interest has four regional centres in Ghana, Peru, Costa Rica and Kenya and it is to these countries that the majority of the funding goes.

Fundamental to this model is the Fairtrade market and this is described as an exchange where producers in developing countries are paid a fair price for their goods and their work by companies. 50% of Fairtrade is owned by farmers and the premium generated by this market worldwide is about one billion euros a year. This money is then typically invested in local education and improvements in housing.

In the UK we are able to buy 4,500 Fairtrade products. Coffee makes up 44% of the Tradecraft market followed by cocoa, handicrafts, chocolate, nuts and honey. At this point Richard asked us to think about the decision we make when we select between brands and the difference choosing a Fairtrade product will make to the grower.

In 2019 Shared interest worked with 174 producer groups, 8,825 permanent employees and 396,973 farmers and artisans of which 141,052 are female.

The conditions to secure a loan are that the product is sold internationally, only to Fairtrade and only to those with three years of accounts. Realising that this would exclude some farmers Shared Interest created the Shared Interest Foundation, a charity which teaches business,

accountancy and health & safety so that there is a pathway for farmers to feed into the main organization.

The interest rate on the loans that is charged to farmers is between 5-10% and it is this interest that funds the organization's Head Office in Newcastle so that every £1 that an investor makes goes to a project abroad. New investors are always welcome with starting sums from as little as £100 which one can withdraw at any time and interest is paid. Last year each £1 was lent out 1.8 times in a year in short term loans. As a word of warning Richard said that money that members invest in Shared Interest is not covered by the Financial Conduct Authority but historically the default rate on loans has been low at 1-2%.

Richard then answered questions and Sarah thanked Richard for the very informative talk.

#### Wing Business

- Visitors are welcome to join our Zoom meetings and first meeting is free.
- Denman's College - access courses online
- Please access members section of the website for updates. Password TeaBreak
- East Surrey Science Group has invited us to attend their meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> September Infectious diseases are we winning the battle. Email: [mdw70@uwclub.net](mailto:mdw70@uwclub.net) to request a link
- NFWI – make a match campaign to increase awareness for stem cell donors during blood cancer awareness month – September
- NFWI -Tips to reduce household food waste as it has increased by 1/3<sup>rd</sup> since lockdown
- Support 16 days of action to end violence against women - 25/11/20 White Ribbon Day to 10/12/20 International Human Right's day. In first three months of lockdown 26 women and girls killed in suspected domestic homicides
- Request that members contact their MP to ask them to become a member of the newly formed all party Parliamentary group on micro plastics.
- WI turns 105 years old on 16<sup>th</sup> September

The meeting closed at approximately 21.30 pm.  
Signed as a true record of the meeting

Joint Presidents.....

Date .....