

MINUTES of the meeting of the Green Party held on Saturday 27th January 2024 at 2.30 pm at the Pannier Pantry in Bideford.

PRESENT Tracey Beresford, Marcus Alexander, Cathrine Simmons, Wendy LoVel, Peter Hames, Will Douglas-Mann, Gill Douglas-Mann, Huw Thomas, John Puddy, Keith Funnell, Brian Garman, Ruth Funnell

1. APOLOGIES Tony Pratt, Gillian Stevens, Lorraine Drake, Colin Jones

The meeting noted with sadness the sudden death of Rosemary Gent

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15TH DECEMBER

These were agreed as a correct record

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising not already on the agenda.

4. REPORTS

a) **Treasurer**: Cathrine reported that there was no change in our balance apart from Wendy's regular donation. Ruth suggested she put a note in the next Green Info suggesting other people replicate this if they can as the National Office has withheld the capitation fee this year. Ruth said she had £100 from the Green Gathering. Cathrine is unsure about our GP account with Nat West as it was predicated on Peter Christie being a signatory and having an account with them.

b) **Webmaster**: In Colin's absence, Ruth reported that he had posted an obituary to Rosemary on our website.

c) **Press Officer**: Tracey was congratulated on her excellent letter in the Journal about climate change.

d) **Membership**: Ruth was able to report that we had had no new members since the last meeting. She could act as Membership Secretary until another was found and will put a request in the next Green Info.

5. FEEDBACK FROM DISTRICT AND LOCAL COUNCILLORS

a) **Peter Hames**: Peter reported that his resolution that TDC oppose fireworks near Bideford Bridge on New Year's Eve, because of the adverse effect on starlings that roost under the bridge, was approved by Councillors. However, his proposal that the Council install drinking fountains at its properties to encourage a reduction in plastic water bottle use was voted down.

He reported that demolition had begun at Middle Dock in Appledore to prepare the site for the Clean Maritime Centre. He has expressed his concern that the subject of demolition hasn't been included in the planning application for the Maritime

Centre given comments from members of the public regarding the demolition process and which buildings should be demolished.

Peter said TDC's budget for 2024/25 is being discussed soon and it is important that there is money in the budget to fund the Council's carbon reduction measures.

As Mayor of Northam TC, Peter has attended various functions. The band, Soul Intention, is providing the music at his Mayor's charity fund raising event on 17th February. The Town Council has engaged 361 to do a further survey of Northam's carbon footprint to establish what reduction has been achieved.

b) Wendy Lovel: Wendy proposal for free car parking at Events in recognition that they bring in more money than the fees raised has resulted in an offer of charging 75%. She has managed to get this down to 50%. John Puddy, in his role on the water festival committee, has requested the Council's figures and they are estimating the cost of free parking based on an assumption that every space is full with cars paying the hourly cost even though car parks can be half full.

c) Huw Thomas: The active travel group is looking at improving access onto the Tarka Trail. The Tarka Trail is a DCC responsibility and they have to establish the land ownership at the proposed access points. Gill Douglas-Mann said in Petrockstowe she had applied for a Right of Way on a route used from Petrockstowe to the Tarka Trail for over twenty years but DCC had not agreed it and now a landowner has put a padlocked gate across the route even though she suspects he owns the land alongside but not on the path. The meeting recommended she approached the Ramblers' Association and got publicity in the local media about the issue.

5. TDC RATING ON CLIMATE SCORE CARDS

Peter Hames said one problem causing the low rating was the Council's vehicles. They have only one electric vehicle which is five years old. It was suggested that the Council look at purchasing vehicles for use in the urban area first and only expand to rural use when money is available. Improving the carbon footprint of buildings is being reported on in April but available funds is an issue. There is a minimum energy standard but the lack of cash and the rise in energy costs are a problem.

There will be a workshop with North Devon to look at actions but again shortage of cash is an issue. There has been a 20% increase in carbon footprint as a result of taking the three swimming pools back in house. Ruth suggested solar panels on the pools' flat roofs would very quickly return the cost in energy production. Electric refuse vehicles cost five times as much as diesel vehicles currently. There has been talk of HBO run vehicles but it is not clear where the fuel is sourced, for example, palm oil would not be good nor using oils that would compete with animal feed.

The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) provides for a biennial report which is due on 27.2 The issue of air pollution with the UK at four times safe levels at

present is also important. John Puddy asked if the life time savings on electric versus diesel use and the cheaper servicing costs were being taking into account and pointed out the cost of the expected flooding here with sea level rise if we didn't cut our carbon use.

It was agreed that Tracey will work up a Press release on the whole issue.

6. PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION MOTION

Tracey reported that Make Votes Matter had asked Councils to pass a motion in support of Proportional Representation. Huw said this would be useful in flushing out who did and did not support this on the Council. Tracey thought it would be useful to write to every district councillor to explain the reasons why PR was a fairer and more democratic system. The meeting supported this action.

7. CANDIDATE SELECTION

Ruth explained that Judy Maciejowska has been proposed as the Green candidate for Torridge and Tavistock. She is a long standing member of the Party and has held national posts. As she is the only candidate she is likely to be selected. It was suggested and agreed that we invite her to our next meeting.

Ruth also mentioned that Phil Huty has been selected to stand as the Liberal Democrat candidate. He lives in Callington and works in Plymouth as a Senior Child Care Officer.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) **20 mph Speed Limits**: Gill raised the issue because the village had been told it had missed the deadline for this. The villagers had asked for the 30 mph sign to be moved 50 yds down the road for safety reasons and were told it would cost £3,000. Ruth suggested Gill ask Colin who has knowledge as a Dolton Parish Councillor of the issue and could possibly offer useful information.

b) **Voter Registration**: Keith explained that eight million people are not registered to vote nationally, especially renters and the young. We need to find ways to get to people to explain how to register. The Electoral Registration Society has a partner pack which can help. Keith has not yet been able to speak to Tom Vanstone at TDC to ask what action he is taking on the issue. It was agreed to put this on the agenda for next time.

c) **Tree Planting**: Huw said Mike Day at Torridge plans to plant 3,000 trees in Bideford and needs sites for another 2,000. He is actually planting a lot of shrubs and small trees and the process needs long term maintenance to ensure survival. Keith pointed out that it was National Tree Week in December and perhaps the actual planting could coincide with that. It was pointed out that we are likely to lose trees in high winds with climate change and new trees will be even more vital.

d) Plant Based Councils: Brian Garman raised this issue which had been circulated before the meeting: there is a web site for Plant Based Councils which explains the aim to get Councils to move to plant based menus in catering etc. Peter Hames was happy to look at this and Ruth said she would send Brian Peter's phone and email so they can discuss action.

e) Peter Christie's column in The Journal: John Puddy said the River Torridge Heritage Group was standing in for Peter and Teresa Tynsley is the main contributor. The column usually includes a selection of historical photos and Peter Hames said Peter had given him his hard drive of photos so these can be accessed for use.

The Heritage Group has managed to get Bideford designated a Heritage Harbour under a scheme set up by the Maritime Trust and Historic England. It is the eleventh such designation in the country. Two presentations were made to the TDC committee but the Harbour board turned it down on the such arguments as "it would encourage hippy boats" and cause planning issues! Ruth suggested a proposal needs to go to the full council under Peter Christie's name, as he set up the site near the Kingsley Statue in celebration of the town's maritime past and this designation would be a fitting tribute to his long term work.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was agreed for Saturday 9th March at 2.30 p.m. at the Pannier Pantry