

MINUTES of the meeting of Torridge Green Party held on Saturday 9th March 2024 at 2.30 p.m. at The Pannier Pantry in Bridgeland Street, Bideford.

PRESENT Brian Garman, Tony Pratt, Keith Funnell, Tracey Beresford, Howard Porter (North Devon), Wendy LoVel, John Puddy, Ruth Funnell and Judy Mac (for part).

1. APOLOGIES were received from Cathrine Simmons, Peter Hames, Colin Jones and Gillian Stevens

The meeting noted with great sadness the death of Peter Christie's

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 27TH JANUARY

These were agreed as a correct record

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were not matters arising not on the Agenda

4. REPORTS

a) Treasurer: In Cathrine's absence, Ruth reported that there was no change in the accounts apart from the regular donation. She said she would put a section in the next Green Info inviting members to set up regular direct debits as even a small amount per month can make a significant difference.

b) Web Master: Colin has sent an email showing that there had been an increase in posting on our Website and Facebook page.

c) Press Officer: Tracey has written to NDJ on projected sea level rises with climate change which will significantly (disastrously) effect the Taw and Torridge estuaries. Tony Pratt said the Biosphere website shows these rises decade by decade. More serious consequences will come from storm surges with especial concerns about the old landfill site on the Burrows and the effect on wildlife. Horsea Island and marshy areas are especially at risk.

The NDJ ran a piece about Judy's selection as the Green PPC. Howard and Tracey will work together to get Green issues across N. Devon and Torridge in the press.

The River Torridge Heritage Group has taken on Peter's regular column in the NDJ. Members can contact John Puddy with information. Ruth noted that their piece on 29th February was a tribute to Peter Christie.

d) Membership: Ruth reported that there had been no new members since the last meeting.

5. FEEDBACK FROM COUNCILLORS

Wendy LoVel reported that Huw had reported on our Facebook page about his concerns that South West Water is allowed to be in control of Planning decisions with regard to their capacity to cope with additional waste from new estates. There

is also the issue of agricultural run off from intensive dairy, maize production and chicken farming. John Puddy mentioned River Champions and will speak to them about how we can help. It was suggested that testing water quality with River Champions would be a good photo op for Judy when the election is called. Keith will check with Huw about how far he has got with the issue.

Peter Hames had emailed his report. He said the main political concern is that the two non Green members of their group on the District Council are leaving in May to set up their own independent group which will reduce the Green representation on committees unless we can get another Green Councillor elected.

At TDC the Green group have expressed their continued frustration at the lack of progress on climate matters. The Climate Officer was asked to investigate other councils' climate actions but has not done so yet. It is hoped the Estates Manager, who is leaving after only a year, will produce his property report before he departs.

On Planning Peter used his casting vote to refuse an application to build an extension to the Maritime Museum. Peter noted that Huw is making very useful contributions to the Planning meetings.

SWW's meeting with councillors from North Devon and Torridge did not answer the question of the number of storm overflows and the fact that SWW had a record fine last year for pollution. Hew is pursuing the fact that they give the number but not the volume of spills.

Grant money has been allocated to improve cycle provision in Torridge such as bike racks, signage and a better entrance to the Tarka Trail at Bideford. A cycle link with the Trail from East the Water is also being looked at.

Northam TC continue to create wild areas in open spaces and have had compliments for getting the hedge laid at Anchor Park. We have budgeted for another hedge next Autumn.

Ruth said she had told Peter Hames about the Gap Finders programme last Thursday on Radio 4 which was about converting diesel trucks such as rubbish collections vehicles to electric. The proposals sounded very coherent and have been picked up by at least one council (Berks?) and have several serious investors to ensure it will succeed. It would be worth TDC looking into it.

John Puddy said he had been speaking to Professor Smith at Exeter University re powering Freshspring with hydrogen. There is also the possibility of refuelling vessels with hydrogen, possibly at Yelland.

6. WHATS APP TORRIDGE GROUP

Tracey suggested this would be a useful means of rapid contact within the party and it was agreed that she should set up a group.

7. PROPOSAL TO AMALGAMATE TORBAY INTO DEVON CC

Ruth said there had been consultation on this proposal. The main concern in Devon north of the moor, would be that it would tip the balance of the County

Council towards the more urban south which could disadvantage the more rural north.

8. UPDATE ON GENERAL ELECTION AND BI-ELECTION FOR PETER'S SEATS

Keith has been in contact with Tom Vanstone at TDC and it is likely that the process to have elections for Peter's seats at TDC and Bideford Council will be triggered on Wednesday after the funeral. The aim would be an election on 2nd May to coincide with the election of the Police and Crime Commissioner. It was agreed that on Wednesday Ruth should contact members in Bideford by email to ask them if they would be interested in standing. Judy said that, when they had the bi election to replace Neil Jameson, they sent individual letters to postal voters in the ward to ensure they had information before they voted. Ruth said we could also repeat the procedure of having specific leafleting days and times to, hopefully, get more members and supporters out to work for the seats.

9. BEACH CLEAN

Ruth thought this might be a good way of both involving more members and supporters and getting publicity. North Devon had held a similar event. It could be done in conjunction with Surfers Against Sewage. It was agreed to set a date in June.

Members were also reminded of the Plastic Count from 11th to 17th March, details of which can be found on line.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Make Votes Matter: Brian said MVM are willing to provide speakers to meetings and suggested this would be good. It was agreed to look at inviting a speaker for the first meeting after the May bi election.

b) Appeal to farming community: There was discussion of getting our message across to the farming community. It is noteworthy that all our District Councillors represent urban area. It was suggested that we have a stall at the Holsworthy and Woolsery Shows. Not all farmers are hostile to the Greens and Brian mentioned farmers getting bad deals from supermarkets and not getting the government grants that had replaced the EU monies on time. We need food security especially with climate change making it difficult to grow crops in regions we have become used to importing from.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was agreed for Saturday 13th April at 2.30 pm with the following meeting at the end of May.