

MINUTES of the meeting of Torridge Green Party held at 2.30 p.m. on Saturday 18th May 2024

PRESENT Jack Gordon, Tracey Beresford, Cathrine Simmons, Peter Hames, Huw Thomas, Tony Pratt, Keith Funnell, Wendy Lo-Vel, John Puddy

1. APOLOGIES were received from Gillian Stevens, Colin Jones and Lorraine Drake

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING These were agreed as a correct record after the addition of Tracey Beresford to those present.

3. MATTERS ARISING

a) **Prospective Parliamentary Candidate:** Ruth said she had heard from Judy that she is much better but could not attend today as her husband was not well enough to drive her.

4. REPORTS

a) **Treasurer:** Cathrine reported that our current balance is £2,622.79p. She needs a third signatory to replace Peter Christie and it was agreed that Huw Thomas would do this as he lives in Bideford.

b) **Webmaster:** In the absence of Colin, Tracey said she had made quite a few posts on our Facebook page.

c) **Press:** Huw's letter about proportional representation had been published in the local paper. There was a piece in the Journal for May 6th reporting on the Council meeting where the decision to note the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Adaption Strategy rather than endorse it was heavily criticised by Wendy. The vote was to endorse it.

d) **Membership:** Ruth reported that we had one new member since the last meeting but his email had bounced back. She needs to telephone him to get the correct one. This has happened with several new members. Cathrine offered to help with the phone calls.

5. FEEDBACK FROM DISTRICT, TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILLORS

a) **District Council:** Wendy had raised the fact that the planning application near Abbotsham Road was going through without insistence on excluding gas boilers as a form of heating. It is far cheaper to start with carbon friendly new builds than to retro-fit later.

The attempt to stop the use of SW Water as a statutory consultee on planning applications because they have a commercial interest in more homes meaning more customers is still ongoing. Jack commented that he found that water pollution was the number one issue on the doorsteps during his campaign.

Peter Hames called in the decision on the “Isles of Scilly, Devon and Cornwall Climate Adaptation” – details above under Press.

Wendy drew attention to Bideford Sustainability Group who do a lot of small scale work to benefit the town. They are proposing a hedge to screen the skateboard park from the adjacent houses and she hopes the Council might give a grant towards this. Keith said that the only effective sound proofing would be a wall but the hedging could be used to soften the visual impact of a wall.

Wendy saw Sean Kearney about the Bideford Harbour making use of the income opportunity with the Appledore development. The Harbour User’s Group meet for the first time next week. It was agreed that Tracey should issue a Press Release about the issue and Tony, John Puddy and Paul Brown of the River Torridge Heritage Group could provide good information towards this.

In Appledore there is currently no Warden to monitor the use of jet skis and consequently the permit scheme has lapsed. The proposed Bideford Harbour could encompass Appledore and give Paul Brown in Bideford (and formerly of Dover) a job more suited to his skills.

Huw said the Council AGM is this coming Monday. The proposal for a new depot for recycling off Gammaton Road has now been relocated to a site off Monteo Way. The Planning Staff seems to be taking the decisions, a hangover from the Covid period, but Keith pointed out that the Councillors should be given multiple options so they decide where such infrastructure is put.

There are now two Greens on Planning and the two Independents have left the “Green Group”. Currently the Council has 9 Lib Dems, 4 Conservative, 12 Independent (of assorted hues) and 3 Greens.

Peter is on the Budget Working Group which discusses possible savings on the TDC budget including energy efficiency measures and the use of renewables on TDC properties. Holsworthy Pool has a grant for an upgrade including solar panels. The other two leisure centres are in line for similar when budgets allow.

Under the Biodiversity Plan, Huw is looking at the potential for tree planting in East the Water.

b) Town Councils: Peter noted that he is no longer Mayor of Northam which will reduce the pressure on his time.

Jack reported that he is on the Planning Committee on Bideford Town. The AGM was last Thursday. The traffic effects on the proposed Waste Centre in East the Water have not yet been worked out.

The Proposed X Links electricity cable from Morocco is up for Planning shortly and it is suggested that the temporary haul roads that will be needed to create the infrastructure to bring the power to Alverdiscott could afterwards be converted to cycle and walking paths. There will be public meetings at Pollyfields and Abbotsham. The likely time scale of the development is 3 – 5 years.

6. DISTRICT BY-ELECTION AND COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2025

a) **Bideford North By-elections**: The meeting congratulated Jack on his success in the Town Council election. Keith noted that John's result was very similar to that for Wendy in the Northam Bi-election in 2021. She was successful when all three seats were up for election in 2023. Hopefully it will be similar for John in 2027 if he still wants to stand. It is also true that Peter Christie had a strong personal following.

Tracey said she thought Torridge GP needed to update their campaigning skills and said she was happy to organise and attend training via the SW Regional Group but she would like other members to do this with her. Ruth pointed out that the printer's sudden illness had resulted in an unavoidable delay in getting the leaflets and that we do not have a lot of (fit) feet on the ground to do canvassing.

b) **County Council 2025**: Keith said, on past results, rural areas are harder for the Green Party to win. We did concentrate last time on Bideford West and Hartland but, looking at the District results, we have our greatest chance now in Northam (includes Appledore and Westward Ho!) and Bideford East (includes Bideford North). Tracey suggested we should do a leaflet drop some time before the elections just advertising Green Policies and pointing out achievements on District and Town Councils. This was supported.

7. WORLD REFILL DAY

This is an event planned for June. Ruth asked people to send her details of shops they know that will provide refills so she can make a list for the next Green Info. The aim is to encourage people to use less plastic. She listed refills available at Home and Hardware and the Deli in the Pannier Market in Torrington along with The Refill Shop itself. Other towns will have similar opportunities.

8. FARMING UPDATE

We proposed at the last meeting to attend Holsworthy and Woolserly Agricultural Shows to advertise our policies and, hopefully reassure farmers that the Greens are not anti farmer. The Holsworthy Show is on Thursday 22nd August and the entry is £16. Woolserly is on Monday 29th July and costs £10. It was agreed to ask for volunteers to help staff a stall and the GP will pay their entry. Ruth will put together info on GP policies and the problem with current policies for, especially, small and tenant farmers.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) **Climate Changing Room**: This is a local centre in the Castle Centre in Torrington for information about climate change and actions to reduce its impact. Phil Topham would like a representative from the Green Party to give a GP perspective to the venture. It was agreed that Ruth would email members in Torrington to seek a volunteer. The role is purely advisory.

b) Littleham PC Vacancy: In response to the enquiry about the vacancy created by Rosemary's death, Ruth said we actually had no members in Littleham and Landcross so were unable to propose anyone.

c) Taw and Torridge Estuary Forum: Tony Pratt said the Forum hopes to give out grants to young people of up to £100 to encourage activities helpful to maintaining the estuary. Full details will be on the website.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING The next meeting will be on Saturday 29th June at 2.30 p.m. at the Pannier Pantry.