

**MINUTES** of the Torridge Green Party meeting held on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November at 2.30 p.m. at the Pannier Pantry in Bideford

**PRESENT** Cathrine Simmons, Tracey Beresford, Gillian Stevens, Keith Funnell, Wendy Lo-Vel and Ruth Funnell

**1. APOLOGIES** Huw Thomas, Brian Garman, Will Douglas-Mann, Gill Douglas-Mann, Colin Jones, Brian Garman, Peter Hames, Jack Gordon, John Puddy

**2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18TH JUNE** These were accepted as a correct record.

### **3. MATTERS ARISING**

a) **Coal Yard:** Ruth asked what happened about Huw's request to call in the Coal Yard planning application. Wendy said the site had already been sold and it was too late to change anything.

b) **Beer Fest:** Huw had reported at the AGM that the East-the-Water beer Fest had been even more successful than the previous year and raised money for good causes.

### **4. REPORTS**

a) **Treasurer:** Cathrine reported that the General Election had been crowd funded very successfully so had not made a dent in our balance which is £2,761.34. Cathrine particularly thanked Wendy for her standing order. This means there is funding to produce a leaflet to deliver post Christmas and pre County Council elections to areas where we already have District and Town Councillors.

b) **Membership:** Ruth reported that we had one new member. The aim of a leaflet drive would be, in part, to recruit new members.

c) **Webmaster:** Colin had sent in a report saying that our Facebook page has 231 followers but only 28 engagements in the last month. We need to look at how to improve our engagement. Tracey said we do have an Instagram account that Marcus set up and she will contact him for the access codes.

d) **Election Agent:** see below under County Council elections.

### **5. REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS**

a) **District Council:** Wendy reported that Active Torridge are now turning the old Town Hall into a gym. Ruth mentioned that Holsworthy Pool, which is run by Active Torridge, now has a £1 million grant to mend the roof, carry out essential repairs and install greener heating.

The Bideford Post Office is threatened with closure under the latest PO announcement and there is likely to be a campaign to save it. The PO plans to close all North Devon sorting offices and send everything to Exeter.

Planning permission has been passed for the recycling vehicles to be housed at the new site at the top of Manteo Way. Wendy is trying to meet with Donna Sibley to raise the use of hydrogenated veg. oil instead of diesel. It would not require any adaptation of diesel vehicles and can be sourced from a reputable supplier who guarantees sustainability. It is hard to persuade officers on the Council of the need to spend initially to save money in the long term.

On housing strategy, there is a large expenditure currently on housing homeless people. The pods are a success but do not cover, e.g. families. Knapp House was being used to house some homeless people but has now gone into receivership.

There was a workshop last Friday on the Local Plan. The Government has asked for 12,000 more houses in North Devon and Torridge. The homes that are needed – terraces and semis – are not what the builders want to provide. Wendy mentioned that builders are still not being compelled to split rain and foul water run off on new properties.

The “Walk for Water” went well with fifty marchers.

Peter Hames added, via email, that they had recommended at TDC Climate Emergency Workshop Group that fifty per cent of food at TDC events should be plant based, given the carbon emissions from meat and dairy (14% globally). The recommendation goes to the Community and Resources Committee.

Peter submitted a written question at Internal Scrutiny Committee about whether the charity arm of Goldman Sachs Bank (where TDC puts most of its investments) still donates to the illegal settlers in Hebron. A written answer said that TDC investments comply with Treasury rules. After Peter responded to this bland answer, he was told off by the Legal Officer for trying to lead the committee and engage in debate given that he is not a member of the committee> Peter thought he was just exercising his right to respond to the written answer.

The Joint Climate Officer, Donna Sibley, has told both TDC and NDDC that they won't reach net zero by the target date of 2030 and that we “need to take this on the chin”. Peter would like a letter to the Gazette where this was reported.

**Northam TC:** Wendy said Northam is looking at mechanical control of weeds to replace using toxic weedkillers.

The new Maritime Centre is under threat of being modified because the Universities are backing out of a firm commitment to a physical presence because of budget issues” and proposing to water their presence down to just online. Ruth suggested that Tracey might do a letter to the press to raise the profile of this issue before it is too late.

**Bideford TC:** Jack, via email, asked for suggestions for items to take to the “Decarbonisation Committee in December. Otherwise Bideford TC has been quiet.

## **6. COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS**

Keith said that no one had responded to the request on Green Info for volunteers to stand for County Council seats despite the temptation of an allowance of

£15,082 plus 45p mileage allowance. The problem is the distance to Exeter for meetings plus the need to attend Parish Council meetings in your ward. Ruth suggested that phone calls to possible candidates was more likely to yield a result than a general newsletter and will trawl the membership to see who might be interested.

The target seats will be Northam, West and East Bideford provided we can find candidates. Cathrine said she is willing to be a paper candidate.

The Zoom Meeting organised by Exeter Greens was attended by Tracey. Both North Devon and Torridge are finding it hard to stand candidates. Exeter want to do phone banking and are probably hoping that if the County Council goes to NOC, the Greens can gain a voice in coalition with the Lib Dems. Tracey wondered about campaigning in Hatherleigh. Keith said we had found it very Tory in the past as it is a strong farming community.

## **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**a) Ideas for increasing membership:** Miranda had contacted to suggest a stall at local Christmas Markets. Unfortunately the Torrington one was happening today. However Bideford has a Christmas Market on 14<sup>th</sup> December and it was agreed to have a stall on the corner of Mill Street as the footfall will be good. We could have a leaflet ready to hand out to people.

**b) North Devon Lectures:** Ruth said that on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November from 6 – 8 pm Prof. Tim Lang from Exeter Uni would lead an online discussion of Food Security and the Climate and Ecology Crisis. The codes to join are on our Facebook page.

**c) Local Transport Plan Consultation:** This closes on 30<sup>th</sup> November. Go to the have your say webpage or by email to [transportplanning@devon.gov.uk](mailto:transportplanning@devon.gov.uk). The offer for North Devon is currently very thin so really worth accessing the site and making your comments.

**d) Lloyds Bank:** Cathrine is still trying to finalise the changes following Peter Christie's death. They are still using his name.

## **8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

This was agreed for **Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 1 p.m. at Church Lane Cottage, Torrington.** We will start with a "bring and share" buffet and have the formal meeting at around 3 p.m. Everyone very welcome.

We also agreed to meet to leaflet on **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January at 10 a.m. at the Kingsley Statue.** Tracey will circulate the draft leaflet for comments.