

MINUTES of the meeting of Torridge Green Party held at the Pannier Pantry, Bridgeland Street, Bideford on Saturday 10th May 2025 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT Jack Gordon, Huw Thomas, Peter Hames, Marcus Alexander, Colin Jones, Brian Garman, Keith Funnell and Ruth Funnell

1. APOLOGIES Wendy Lo-Vel, Tracey Beresford, Gill and Will Douglas-Mann, Gillian Stevens, Cathrine Simmons

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY MARCH 29TH

Peter Hames said that under TDC the report on pollution should say that national standards are higher than UNHO standards and not lower. The corrected minutes will be available on the Website.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There are no matters arising not on the Agenda

4. REPORTS

a) **Treasurer:** Cathrine had forwarded the latest bank statement and it shows that our current balance is £1,974.34 having spent £630 on materials for the Bideford East election campaign.

b) **Membership:** Ruth reported that we have four new members. Only one of these lives in Bideford East so perhaps the general atmosphere of an election campaign persuaded them to join.

c) **Webmaster:** Colin reported that a general post about the CC elections got 4,638 views. Huw's post saying that life in Bideford can be tough with a hash tag of CC Elections got 5,500 views which suggests that hash tags boost posts.

5 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

a) **Bideford Town Council:** Jack reported that the De-carbonisation Group meets next Thursday at 6.30 p.m. if anyone wants to attend as a member of the public. There has been wild seeding on the verges of Manteo Road. Peter Hames said the County Ecologist can give useful advice on maximising the effectiveness of this. Solar panels are being put on the new depot at Caddesdown using green grants. There are also grants available to local voluntary organisations to carry out relevant projects.

Brian asked about the cycle route from Appledore that currently ends at the High Bridge with no ongoing route to the Kingsley Statue. Peter said proposals for this link have met with objections, particularly through Victoria Park. It needs revisiting.

b) **Dolton:** Colin reported that Councillors had met with Highways to discuss improving the Dolton Beacon junction but they are not interested. As Colin said, not enough accidents have happened there. No news yet on the planned EV charger for the village.

c) **Torridge District Council**: Peter Hames reported on progress on the Local Government Review. The 500,000 minimum population has been dropped. Keith repeated the suggestion that making the boundaries of unitary authorities co-terminus with the health authorities would give four authorities including one that covered North Devon and Torridge. This would make better geographical sense and enable better co-ordination between Public Health and the NHS.

The Active Travel Group is making slow progress but have negotiated access from North Down Road through to Kenwith.

d) **Northam Town Council**: The by elections were won by Jeremy Bell and Jonathan . Louis Bach is the new Mayor. Developers want to build at Bloody Corner but this is being opposed. There is also an application from a collector of wartime memorabilia called Mr. Wheatcroft who lives out of the area to moor a U boat at Appledore.

Mayfair went well and the Council have purchased a second electric flat bed vehicle.

6. MAY COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS – LEARNING POINTS

Keith has produced a report on the elections which is attached to the minutes. He began by thanking Huw for all the work he put into the campaign for Bideford East. Ruth said we should also thank Keith and Tracey in particular for the amount of time they put in along with the other people who helped deliver leaflets etc.

It is currently unclear what the future of local government will be but it was clear that the first past the post voting system together with turnouts of between 30 and 40% delivered county councillors elected on 10% of the electorate. Our successes on the District Council have depended on multi member wards where we have often won the third seat up for election.

It is important now to grow our membership, particularly among younger age groups, rather than campaigning on the doorstep as we do not know when or what shape future local elections will take. Keith suggested we need to push our social programme as people are not so aware of this compared to our environmental programme. We need to look at online methods and also local events where we can have a presence.

Reform wrote to all postal voters with a generic letter from Farage which made no mention of local candidates or wards but seems to have been effective. We need to consider something similar but a candidate contact using the marked electoral registers. We also need to overcome the “what’s the point of voting” attitude which leads to low turn outs.

On the positive side, we saw Ilfracombe go Green and, with six seats on the County Council (an increase of four) we do hold the balance of power with the Lib Dems.

7. PROPOSED RESTRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

This has been covered under reports from Councillors.

8. SHAMFEST AND OTHER ACTIVITIES THIS SUMMER

Huw said that Shamfest this year will be on the evening of Friday 17th and all day on Saturday 18th October. He is looking for a free band for Saturday night. Ruth suggested approaching the Wild Strawberries.

Bideford Pride is on Saturday 31st May and Ruth has contacted the organisers to ask if Torridge Green Party could have a stall. She will also contact region for information on GP policy on trans in light of the recent Court judgement and the Government's response to it.

There is a Paddle Out at 10.15 am next Saturday 17th May organised by Surfers Against Sewage.

Bideford Summer Fair is on 7th June from 11 am to 4 pm and we might be able to have a table there.

We should advertise the ongoing campaign on water quality and water testing and invite members to offer their help. Details can go in the next Green Info. A talk on Green Agriculture might attract members to a meeting, especially as an estimated 50% of water pollution in this area is due to agricultural run off.

Brian raised the issue of plastic. Oil companies are still talking of tripling plastic production (possibly in response to falling petrol and diesel sales).

It was agreed that we should invite a representative from North Devon to our next meeting.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ruth noted that there is a by election in Pilton and Yeo Valley where Howard Porter is standing on 22nd May. We should offer to help as he helped us earlier in the year.

Colin said he would put it on our web site.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was agreed for Saturday 5th July at 2.00 p.m.