

**MINUTES** of the meeting of Torridge Green Party held on Saturday, March 29<sup>th</sup> 2025 at 2 pm at The Pannier Pantry in Bridgeland Street.

**PRESENT** Colin Jones, Peter Hames, Will Douglas Mann, Gill Douglas Mann, Keith Funnell, Brian Garman, Tracey Beresford, Simon Mathers, Wendy Lo-Vel, Ruth Funnell

**1. APOLOGIES** Huw Thomas, Gillian Stevens, Lorraine Drake, Miranda Cox, Jack Gordon , Cathrine Simmons

## **2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 22ND**

These were agreed as a correct record.

## **3. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising not on the Agenda.

## **4. REPORTS FROM OFFICERS**

a) **Treasurer:** Cathrine sent a report that the current balance is £2,047.34 after spending £535 on two sets of leaflets.

b) **Membership Secretary:** No new members have joined since the last meeting.

c) **Webmaster:** Colin said all the candidates are now listed on the website with information and photos. He is ensuring a flow of information about the election.

d) **Election Agent:** Keith reported that we have a full slate of five candidates. Nationally the Green Party has achieved 56% so we are doing well. Jamie McKenzie, ex Bideford Mayor, has endorsed Huw which is good news. Our next key date is 7<sup>th</sup> April when the postal votes are sent out.

## **5. REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS**

**Torridge District Council:** Peter Hames report that the Climate meeting has received an interim report on Torridge air quality. There are no high levels of pollution reported in relation to national standards but these are higher than UNHO standards. One significant place where pollution is relatively high is the old coal merchant base in Bideford which is situated in a dip where fumes can accumulate more easily.

Torridge are purchasing euro-diesel waste vehicles as they are so much cheaper than electric vehicles. Donna Sibley said there were no government grants available but Peter has since found a link to one. The two new vans being purchased will be electric.

The impact of XLinks on local ecology, hedgerows, traffic flows etc is being considered. Ruth mentioned the impact on the sea bed. It was agreed that climate factors should be included in local plans in future.

**Northam Town Council:** A second electric flat bed truck is being purchased to add to the existing one and in future strimmers etc. will be electric powered. The

bid to have the Knapp site accepted as a community asset has been refused. However a Multi Use Games Area is proposed for the space adjacent to the tennis courts at Westward Ho!

There are plans to write to schools to ask them to ask parents not to idle their engines (which is illegal).

**Dolton Parish Council:** Colin said the County Council have money for three thousand electric chargers. Dolton hopes to obtain a double charger for the car park in the village. In some areas it may be possible to arrange a channel across pavements with a lift up flap to take an electric cable safely.

The Parish has approached County Highways about an improvement to the junction where the road from Dolton meets the Winkleigh to Torrington road but with no success so far. The 20mph limit is working well and the Lottery Fund has provided £20,000 to refurbish the playground with recycled plastic equipment which needs far less maintenance than wood.

## **6. COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS**

The Green newsletter was delivered to the whole of the Bideford East Ward over February and March. Huw's A3 leaflet is printed and will go out over the next week to ten days in time for the postal voted. Although only 10 to 15% of people have postal votes, they do vote with few exceptions so have a significant impact if the turnout is only in the 30 to 35% area.

We will have a stall on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> April at the end of the Quay car park nearest to the bridge to make the Greens very visible. The "Don't Forget to Vote" cards will be delivered on that day.

Tracey said she plans to have people out canvassing next Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April and Ruth will draft a Green Info with details of campaign plans for Marcus to sent out.

Tracey talked about writing to postal voters. Personalised letters can be produced fairly easily on the mailshot facility. Ruth suggested it would be good for future elections but we need training and planning to ensure it is successful. If the Unitary Councils come in in two years time we could be ready for that.

The last canvassing day Tracey had eight helpers including Andy from Exeter and the North Devon Ilfracombe candidates. Mark and Rosie are helping this weekend.

Tracey said the main feedback issues were air pollution and speeding drivers especially in the High Street, cost of living and water. SEND (special needs education) is a real issue at County level with a huge finance gap of £500,000. Simon said social workers have caseloads of 800 which is simply unmanageable.

Ruth commented that Keith had put in an incredible amount of time organising nomination papers and delivering leaflets to the villages included in Bideford East.

Nominations for the County Elections close on 2<sup>nd</sup> April at 4 pm and the list of candidates will be up later that evening. Our five candidates are already listed on the "Who can I vote for" website.

## **7. RE-ORGANISATION**

Peter Hames said the 1/4/5 division of Devon which put Torridge, North Devon, Mid Devon and East Devon with Exeter had been proposed by North Devon. Keith made the point that this was hardly local government as the journey time from the furthest part of Torridge or from Ilfracombe to Axminster was over two hours. One proposal had been to match the boundaries of the Health Authorities which would give four Councils and put Torridge and North Devon as one.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**a) Voter ID:** Ruth suggested making the point to Westminster that abolishing Voter ID would save a considerable sum of local authority money. Peter Hames said applying voter ID at one bi-election had cost £11,000. Also some 16,000 were turned away at the last election here.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of Torridge Green Party will be on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May at 2 p.m. at The Pannier Pantry.