

**Transition Town Reading (TTR) Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Room 1 at Reading  
International Solidarity Centre (RISC) on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

**Present:** Chris Rhodes (Chair), Karen Blakeman, Chris Burden, Pete Wheat, Stuart Ward, Bethan Chant (Treasurer), Tony Cowling, Beth Scott, Wilberforce Alliston, David Allen, Ornella Trevisan and Laura Ross Gakava

**Apologies:** Alan Clark and Marta Rossato

**1. Chairperson's report**

Chris welcomed everybody to the meeting and gave his Chairperson's report. He said that he tried to cover all of the necessary duties of Chair of TTR and in addition was involved in a number of other related things: he was associated with Braziers Park where he had spoken at a number of events, he also spoke at other local events where his message was about the resource situation that the earth faces and what can be done at a local level to bring about change. He had also produced a series of children's books about Hippy the Happy Hippopotamus and had written in scientific journals where he had introduced the concept of permaculture.

**2. Treasurer's Report**

Bethan handed around her Treasurer's report which showed that there was an opening balance of £5,087.26 on 1 April 2017 and a closing balance of £4,918.41 on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2018. The TTR project with the biggest balance was Reading Repair Café at £3,625.68. There was an amount of £410.04 which had come from various sources which was transferred to General core funds in September 2017.

Bethan said that the changing of signatories with the Cooperative Bank was still being sorted out. It was a much more complicated process than she had expected. Once the signatories had been changed she would sort out an online banking account.

The Public Liability Insurance was due to expire and would cost £196 to renew which she would go ahead and sort out.

If any of the group needed help with grant applications Bethan said she was happy to assist.

A number of those present commended Bethan for the work she had done.

**3. Election/re-election of Steering Group Executive Officers**

**Chris Rhodes** was the current TTR **Chairperson**. Nobody else was standing for election and Chris was nominated by Tony Cowling and seconded by Chris Burden. He was unanimously voted back in to the position of Chairperson by the rest of the group.

**Bethan Chant** was the new **Treasurer**. Nobody else was standing for election and Bethan was nominated by Chris R and seconded by Stuart Ward. She was unanimously voted back in to the position of Treasurer by the rest of the group.

**Marta Rossato** was the current **Communications Officer**. Nobody else was standing for election and Marta was nominated by Chris R and seconded by Karen Blakeman. She was unanimously voted back in to the position of Communications Officer by the rest of the group.

**Laura Ross Gakava** was the current **Secretary** with Ellen Brown. Ellen had moved to London. Laura was nominated by Stuart Ward and seconded by Chris Burden. She was unanimously voted back in to the position of Secretary by the rest of the group.

The other steering group members were **Alan Clark, Chris Burden and Tony Cowling**. Alan was nominated by Chris Rhodes and seconded by Chris Burden, Chris Burden was nominated by Karen Blakeman and seconded by Chris Rhodes and Tony Cowling was nominated by Ornella Trevisan and seconded by Chris Rhodes. All were voted back in unanimously by the rest of the group.

#### 4. Project reports

**Reading Repair Café** – Alex and Rachel’s departure had pre-empted some changes with Stuart and Pete having simplified the organisation of the Repair Cafés which were now taking place at 2 alternate venues: Rlab in Weldale St and at RISC. They had also agreed to be at East Reading festival and had been invited back to The Oasis. They had some grant money and needed to collaborate with other projects. **Their main challenge with this however was around communication: i.e. sending out emails and organising things. If anyone could help with this they would be grateful.**

Reading Repair Café was involved with the Bike Kitchen in being part of an EU funding bid to set up a permanent arts/crafts space jointly with a project in Barcelona. They wouldn’t know the outcome until November.

Chris R said that there had been an article in the Guardian about Reading Repair Café and Edinburgh Remakery.

**Refill Reading** – was originally run by Alex and Ellen. Alex has moved to Edinburgh and Ellen to London. The project had bought 300 reusable cups and had 170 in stock which Tony had suggested could be sold at the Waterfest. The cafes around Reading had also been asked if they wanted more. The project had broadened from when it was originally set up and was now under Reading Sustainability Centre (Reading Plastic Action). 5 students had surveyed 60 restaurants and cafes and had reported on the use of plastic coffee cups, plastic bottles and straws.

**Draught Busters** – had had a brilliant season. They had clients booked in for their next season and enough funding to go on for another year.

**Abundance, Orchards and Apple Press** – It had been another busy year for Abundance with crops of plums, damsons and apples which had mostly gone to the Town Meal to make crumble. Beth was not sure if it would be a quieter year this year as apple trees particularly tended to have 2 year productive cycles followed by less productive year(s).

**Orchards** – Most of the orchards that had been planted around Reading were doing well. Some were not being looked after very well but were ok nonetheless. Palmer Park didn’t have many trees as too many community members used it. Permission would need to be sought to prune the trees in Prospect Park. The trees also needed mulching.

**The Apple Press** had been well used during the year and would probably need some repairs: Beth would take it to the Repair Café in the first instance. They might need a small amount of cash to repair it. The project had been asked to speak at a number of schools in the area.

**Reading Food Growers Network (RFGN)** – Karen had been involved with the seed swaps which had gone very well. There had been seed swaps at Farmers Markets and Bean Pole Day which had both been positive as there had been interest from a cross-section of people from experienced growers to first time allotment holders, teachers etc.

People had been given seeds and were being asked to grow specific things for the Town Meal this year: potatoes, onions, beans, beetroot, carrots, squashes, radishes and salad leaf. They had been given information sheets on how to grow specific vegetables and had been asked to give the Town Meal team updates on their progress. **Beth asked whether there was anyone from TTR who would like to be involved with the Town Meal Steering Group. Chris R said that if anyone expressed an interest he would let her know.**

**Reading Sustainability Centre** – an important sustainability exhibition will be taking place at Reading Museum.

**Reading Hydro** - Although the Hydro had planning permission it needed permission to connect to the grid which was challenging due to not owning premises. Permissions had to be in place by March 2019.

**Reading Community Energy Society** – Lots of people had pulled out of the community solar panels investment project as although returns are high people have the perception that there isn't a strong future in solar energy.

## 5. Discussion on the Working Together for a Sustainable Reading Report

Chris R introduced the agenda item by saying that there were a number of environmental groups in Reading with some efforts being duplicated due to groups having similar aims and objectives and not always working as collaboratively as they might.

On 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018 a meeting had taken place between GREN, TTR, TRSC, Reading Hydro, Friends of the Earth and RCCP/RCAN with the objective of identifying an optimal approach to improve sustainability in the Greater Reading area. The meeting had been chaired by David Johnston who had written a report and was an independent person. One of the recommended next steps had been for the Reading Sustainability Centre to be subsumed into TTR as this would mean there was less duplication as there were many points of interest that overlapped. A Reading Sustainability Centre meeting was due to take place on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May at RISC from 6-8pm to discuss this further. **It was agreed that 2 members of the TTR group would attend as observers: Chris B and Pete Wheat who would report back to TTR Steering Committee.** The general consensus from the TTR Steering Committee re Reading Sustainability Centre becoming part of TTR was that there was no foreseeable conflict in terms of aims and indeed there were benefits in simplifying things so there was less duplication and greater collaboration. The only concern was whether there would be financial challenges in terms of extra work for the Treasurer.

## 6. Any other Business

Somebody was needed (to replace Rachel) as an Administrator on the Transition Town Reading Facebook page. Someone was also needed to look after the TTR website. **An email would be circulated by Chris R via GREN, RVA etc. to try to find people for both positions.**

Chris R said that the group was no longer holding monthly meetings. He asked how frequently they should be held going forwards. It was agreed that it would be good to have meetings about every 6 weeks. **Chris R would send out a Doodle to find suitable dates in June and July.**