

Minutes of GREN Members' Meeting held on 23rd May 2015 at Mapledurham

1. Welcome, introductions, and apologies:

Meeting was quorate with more than six members present.

GREN Committee members: Peter Chan (PC) (Chair); John Booth (JB) (Secretary); Tony Cowling (AC) (Treasurer); Tanja Rebel (TR);

GREN members: Anne Booth; Will Alliston; Annalisa Cavallini; Summreen Sheikh; Jackie Oversby; Rachel Chilton; Karen Blakeman; Nick Mercer; Chris Rhodes; Anna Zavialova.

Apologies: Tricia Marcouse (Committee Member); Steve Goodman;

2. Minutes of last member meeting held on 9th October 2014

<http://www.gren.org.uk/resources/141009GRENMembersMinutes.pdf>

- Agreed
- Actions and matters arising:
 - JB said he now had access to GREN Twitter account.
 - Other actions not reviewed.

3. Updates from GREN Officers and Committee:

- Chair – PC
 - Satisfactory
- Treasurer – AC
 - Satisfactory – room-hire bill for GREN Hustings had been paid, largely covered by donations at meeting.
- Secretary – JB
 - Since October has been a rise in membership of both GREN website (from 170 to 188) and Facebook (from 156 to 193)
 - There was one new Group Member – Action AWE Affinity Group
 - GREN was a member of Reading Neighbourhood Network which provided useful courses and could publicise events.

4. Members' Forum – Networking Opportunity

- **Global Justice Now** – had been campaigning on issues around Corporations' control of seeds and foods, and on energy privatisation. One route for action was trying to influence how UK aid budget was spent.
- **Earley Environmental Group (EEG)** – had finished winter series of speaker meetings (including Chris Rhodes on Fracking and a talk by Population Matters). Now turning to summer walks and outdoor activities. Earley Town Council's Park Ranger - Grahame Hawker – was sowing more beds of nectar-bearing flowers (including in a location on

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Wokingham Road suggested by a Reading FoE member who had recommended a suitable plot). EEG had accepted an invitation to run a stall at Hillside primary school summer fair.

- **Reading Energy Pioneers** had been re-activated as a TTR sub-group – was looking to raise funding community-wide for solar panels for schools, community organisations and charities. Considering becoming a Community Interest Company and becoming a free-standing GREN Member Group. Similar initiative was already running in Oxfordshire.
- **Reading FoE** was about to launch a campaign against 'all lane running' – loss of hard shoulder – on the M4. Government proposal to allow traffic growth which would impact air quality, safety, and climate change. Also working on solar schools and against threats to EU Birds and Habitats Directives.
- Tanja Rebel said she had just come from a rally in London against Monsanto's activities on GM. 4th October (the day after Reading Town Meal) was World Animal Day.
- Will Alliston said the Organic Research Centre bulletin had an article about Tolhurst Organics (close to Mapledurham) and Tolhurst were having a 'Strawberry Solstice' open day on 21st June.

5. Updates from GREN representatives on other bodies:

- **Cycling Forum – PC/TR**
 - This group was convened by the Council and allowed group representatives – particularly of the Cycle Campaign and GREN – to meet with relevant Councillors and Officers. GREN representatives felt progress was extremely disappointing – things that were discussed had not been implemented soon and representatives were not consulted before decisions were taken.
- **Reading Climate Change Partnership – JB**
 - Review of Action Plan progress to end March 2015 was under way. Some new theme leads were needed to replace roles previously filled by Council officers who had been lost to 'restructuring' – will be advertised on Reading Voluntary Action.
 - Climate Action Network meeting on energy issues was planned for 2nd June – see GREN 'Events'.
- **Social Value in Public Commissioning Project – TM**
 - JB said Tricia had sent him an update. The Public Services (Social Value) Act requires local commissioning units to incorporate social and environmental value into their processes. Since the autumn Tricia has been serving (voluntarily) as GREN representative on a local working group funded by the Department of Health to develop and practice ideas to improve commissioning. Reading had won support for this as it had stressed the need to cover environmental aspects as well as social aspects, but

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because the working group was dominated by health professionals and Council staff discussions had focussed mainly on social improvements.

A mission statement had been developed which included the climate change agenda. Organisations bidding for contracts will have to show how their proposals provide improvements against these goals. The working group is also looking for ways for contracting groups to use voluntary agencies as technical advisors when evaluating bids, or as service providers – Tricia was concerned that this could lead to conflict of interest. Reading area will test the process on a couple of projects.

6. Review of Recent Activities:

- Better Recycling and Less Waste – 9th October 2014 – joint meeting with RNN and Councillors and Officers. Had been useful with around 30 attendees
- GREN Environmental Hustings – 14th April 2015 – had been successful with over 50 attendees but local papers had not published post-meeting press release.
- Where's Reading Heading – JB had taken part in this video for Reading Museum, which will soon be on show for visitors and available on the internet.

7. GREN's future activities

- GREN had been invited to have a stall at Reading Town Meal on 3rd October. Agreed should have a presence but ideally share with some other group – GREN did not have public liability insurance. JB to discuss possible co-operation with Sustainability Centre and/or Climate Change Partnership.
- JB said one member had already asked how she could be put in touch with other people from Reading going to the parliamentary lobby on climate change on 17th June. It was agreed that the event should be re-advertised giving a time to meet at Reading Station – no other actions were agreed.
- Reading Energy Pioneers had discussed a Pedal Cinema event – it would be a good way to show films of environmental activities in Reading, but there would be costs of equipment hire. Reading Neighbourhood Network had experience of making promotional videos. Annalisa said she would look into this further.
- A visit to Whitley Growallot was suggested – possibly as a venue for a Members' Meeting.

8. A.O.B. - none

9. Date and location of next meeting.

There were a number of suggestions:

- Tolhurst Organics was a possibility for a lunch or evening meeting – combined with a tour of Tolhurst – but there would be costs for refreshments. Will said he would make further investigations.

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- A gathering for drinks and football (cricket? soft-ball?) on Thames-side was discussed again. PC to consider options.

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