

Minutes of GREN Members' Meeting held on 23rd May 2016 at RISC

Version – draft_v1 – 7th June 2016.

1. Welcome, introductions, and apologies:

Meeting was quorate with more than six members, including at least three Committee members, present.

GREN Committee members: Peter Chan (PC) (Chair); John Booth (JB) (Secretary); Tony Cowling (AC) (Treasurer); Tanja Rebel (TR); Tricia Marcouse (TM); Will Alliston (WA).

GREN members: John Oversby; Erica Purvis; Chris Burden; Gillian

Apologies: None

2. Last member meeting held on 24th February 2016

Minutes:

- http://www.gren.org.uk/resources/160224_GREN_Members_Minutes.pdf
- Agreed correct

Matters Arising: Air Quality

JB circulated a section of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment <http://www.reading.gov.uk/jsna> which said Reading was not meeting required standards, and contrasted this with a recent report in the media <http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/reading-berkshire-news/readings-air-pollution-levels-deemed-11322934> which said they were deemed safe.

AC said there were differences between European and WHO standards and the equipment measuring particulates in Reading had recently been modified – after which readings had been much lower – so he was not confident of the results.

John Oversby said action was urgently needed – there were proposals for a ‘citizen science’ approach to creating a monitoring network but equipment was expensive at around £2k5 per unit.

Members were concerned at pollution from taxis, especially when waiting near the station, and various suggestions were made including mandating cleaner vehicles, improved traffic management, and a ‘one-minute rule’ forbidding taxis from running their engines for more than one minute when not carrying passengers. One suggestion was to allow ‘green’ taxis (and no others) to use bus lanes. Redevelopment of south side of station offered opportunities for improvement.

John Oversby said he would prepare a report on Air Quality for GREN for discussion in the autumn.

It was agreed that GREN should arrange an open meeting on Air Quality inviting a speaker from RBC and other speakers.

3. Updates from GREN Officers and Committee:

- Chair – PC – no issues to report.
- Treasurer – AC
Had paid all current invoices and the bank account was still in the black – some of the payments made recently would be reclaimed from RCCP in July at end of series of ‘Climate Change Seminars’.

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After discussion it was agreed that GREN should apply for Skipton Building Society 'Grassroots Giving' £500 grant – application must be in by 29th July. Committee to prepare application – photographs of GREN in action were needed to accompany the application.

- Secretary – JB

GREN Membership:

- Website – February was 203- now 208 registered
- Website Groups – Total unchanged at 29
- Facebook – February was 223 – now 228.

Eco Church: JB and TM had met with Dr Liz Ratcliffe (Curate of Christchurch) and Joanna Laynesmith on 15th March to discuss future collaboration. Eco Church is a movement <http://ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk/> asking for supporters to: “express your care for God’s world in your worship and teaching; in how you look after your buildings and land; in how you engage with your local community and in global campaigns, and in the personal lifestyles of your congregation.”

4. Updates from GREN representatives on other bodies:

- Cycling Forum – TR

This had not met since February – next meeting scheduled for 7th June.

It was noted that Council had decided not to allow cycling through all of Broad Street after formal consultation.

- Reading Climate Change Partnership – RCCP – JB

Activities had been hit by reduction in support from RBC. Summreen Sheikh has been made redundant and Ben Burfoot now only works for two days per week on Council business. No events are being planned by RCCP’s ‘Reading Climate Action Network’ so GREN’s RCAN-funded ‘Reading Climate Forum’ events are filling a gap.

RCCP has agreed to grant-aid Interclimate Network <http://www.interclimate.org/> who are to hold another event for school children in the Council Chamber on July 1st.

Grant-aid for other climate projects continues to be available.

Reports on progress with the Climate Change Strategy Action Plan to March 2016 are in preparation.

- Social Value in Public Commissioning Project

TM had been nominated by GREN to work on this government-backed collaborative project which had looked at how the new legal requirement to incorporate social and environmental values in public commissioning could be achieved.

Project closed in September 2015 and Health Commissioners had adopted its recommendations but RBC had not, although it is legally required to implement a system of some sort.

Agreed that TM should approach Sarah Morland at RVA (who had been very involved with the project) for an update with a view to asking RBC to explain how it is delivering this legal requirement.

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5. GREN Climate Change Seminars

These events were now being collectively billed as '**Reading Climate Forum**' to imply scope for discussion/debate. A 'steering group' consisting of GREN Committee plus Rayner Mayer (UoR, Sciotech), and Dan Fernbank and Chris Beales (both from RCCP Board) had been established.

A series of 4 meetings had been arranged between March and June 2016 – arranged by GREN and funded by RCAN/RCCP – and two had been held so far.

Topics covered: Extreme Events (16th March); Carbon Pricing (30th March); Food Security (25th May); Climate Justice and Sustainable Development (June 29th). Attendance at first two had been 30 and 20 and there had been some press coverage.

There was agreement that a further series of events should be arranged for the autumn if RCCP funding could be agreed, and that boosting GREN membership was not a prime aim. However there was inconclusive discussion around whether aim should be to provide general knowledge of issues or aim for specific local action – and whether the events should aim for a wider audience or try to cater mainly for 'green' enthusiasts.

John Oversby suggested that it would be good to have two or three speakers addressing two related topics.

TM said it would be good to include a meeting to get people thinking about climate change aspects of Reading's Local Plan revision - which had already started with the Issues and Options consultation discussed in February. To have impact it was important to influence the Council thinking soon – before they had committed to a revised draft. She had discussed such an event with Prof. Gavin Parker who had said some of his students could be involved as well. Would focus on what could be achieved through local plan revision with emphasis on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Members commented that to maximise attendance meeting should not be called 'Reading Local Plan'!

6. GREN 'Hustings' for the local elections in May 2016

This had been held on 15th April and had been well-reported in 'getreading'
http://www.gren.org.uk/resources/GREN_PREnvironmentalQuestionTime2016_website.pdf

JB said there are no local or national elections planned in 2017 so scope in the calendar for a GREN event on Local Plan or other topic.

7. Members' Forum – Networking Opportunity

- AC said the proposal for a **Hydro scheme on the Thames** was making progress. An alternative type of turbine – using the Venturi principle - was being considered. Planning application delayed by contaminated land issue.
- AC said Berkshire Energy Pioneers had transformed into **Reading Community Energy Society** <http://readingenergy.coop/> which was part of the 'Energy4all family' aiming to install solar projects on local buildings. Unfortunately some sites had withdrawn from the scheme so it would not achieve as much as had been hoped. A share offer was expected in the next few weeks.
- JB mentioned that Siggie Huegemann had presented to both Reading FoE and Berkshire Greenpeace on his proposals for African Hydrogen Power. After some discussion – questioning the feasibility and benefits of the technology and the politics of African nations - it was agreed that GREN would

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be happy to advertise any meetings or events Siggie arranged or was involved in but GREN did not want to sponsor a public meeting on this topic.

- John Oversby said he was presenting a course for the Nepalese community in Reading on climate change and horticultural practices.
- TR spoke about her campaign for 'Warm White' LEDs for street lighting.
 - 'Cool White' – as currently being installed widely - was not ecologically benign, creating daylight at night and making some people ill. France had banned them near children and Westminster was choosing 'Warm White' (Correlated Colour Temperature of 2700K) but Reading and other local LAs were going with 4000K.
 - TM suggested starting a petition on Avaaz or 38 Degrees to raise awareness.
 - TR said timescales were short for Reading and asked if GREN could formally write to Councillors. It was suggested that GREN members should be formally consulted on a draft letter before it was sent on behalf of the Network, and that as an individual member she could post a 'News' item to GREN calling on all GREN members to write to their Councillors as individuals.
- Erica Purvis said she was interested in sustainable design and moves towards a circular economy and was involved in Open Source Circular Economy days <https://oscedays.org/> and would be bringing a mapping project to Green Fest on 11th June.
- JB said Reading FoE had had a meeting with RBC to discuss Reading's challenge to achieve 50% recycling target by 2020 when it was currently recycling 33%. Re3 were revising their recycling strategy and aiming to reduce 'contraries' (contaminants) in the collection of 'recyclables'. TR said the Isle of Wight was changing its scheme to increase composting. Members asked for clarification of the target – there was some uncertainty as to whether certain waste streams such as composting and ash from incinerators counted as 'recycling' towards the target.
- JB mentioned that a group called Engineers Without Borders had formed a Reading area branch and had held a meeting on wind power and energy storage <http://www.ewb-uk.org/ewb-reading-regional-network>

8. GREN's future activities – what else should we be doing?

No additional suggestions

9. A.O.B.

JB said he would not stand for re-election to GREN Committee at the next AGM on October/November 2016 which would mean appointing someone else to the role of Secretary and to the role of GREN representative on RCCP.

10. Date and location of next meeting.

It was suggested that this should be in September and should have a focus on Air Quality. A 'Doodle Poll' should be arranged to choose a date.