

MINUTES

Present

Martin Sherring, Julian Paren, Frank Kremer, Anne Thomas, Jess Christman, Wendy Price

Welcome

Julian welcomed Wendy Price who was attending in connection with the Transport proposal with the Climate Challenge Fund.

Apologies

Martin said Richard Robinson would now focus on work with schools and transport issues.

Minutes of Last Meeting

Accepted as a true record.

Actions Points from the Minutes

- Update on Renewable Heat Initiative (RHI) and Premium Payments. Martin remarked that B&B establishments that considered they were within the commercial sector for the RHI, were found to be excluded because the proprietors did not pay Business Rates – the chosen criterion for “non-domestic” application.
- Website. John would be encouraged to make TBI documents/resources, such as Jess' RHI Guide, more prominent. In the meantime, Martin agreed to post the RHI guide on the site.
- Information for TBI members. Martin agreed to write an Energy Newsletter for all the members who had shown an interest in Energy matters.
- Lighting. Anne had secured a mains-powered lighting display from Peter at Alness that showed the light output from conventional and new technology bulbs, and included information on purchase price and running costs. She proposed to bring the display to community markets. Anne also had a FoE two-sided A4 information sheet about lighting, and she agreed to place an electronic copy on the TBI website.
- Pellet wood heating in Community Halls. Frank reported that installations at North Kessock and Munloch were long behind schedule, and that neither hall yet had a flue.
- Energy-saving light bulbs. Martin agreed to speak to Alan Grant at Energy Savings Trust Inverness about whether a wide range of different bulbs could be made available as freebies, or as a loan to individuals to convince them of the worth of switching.
- Potential Wind Turbine Site. Anne agreed to talk to Sandy at Sheep Park Farm.
- HBS Ring. Martin was soon to attend a Working Group Meeting in which the topic of Wind Turbines would be discussed amongst the farming community.
- Energy Saving Tips. Suggestions should be sent to Martin for use in Energy Newsletters or for placing on the TBI website.
- Improving Information Flow. Members agreed to review the Energy Newsletter to be produced by Martin, and feed back ideas on items that might be made newsworthy, for possible submission to the Ross-shire Journal.

The Green Deal

- Martin explained the way the Green Deal was being set up and that the consultation on the scheme was to close on January 18 2012. There was perhaps scope for community groups to be involved, particularly in the role of Green Deal Assessors. The impact of the Green Deal was expected to be “modest”. The idea was that a company with a Consumer Credit Licence would

finance the loan to pay for home energy improvements and that the repayments to the loan company would be secured through additional costs in billing from their Electricity Supplier. The scope of the Green Deal was connected to the future life of Energy Performance Certificates. The scheme was intended to be flexible and not to bind people into the scheme. The intention was that individuals' total bills should not increase, as the energy savings payback should more than offset the credit payments on the installation.

- We suspected that individuals who had the capital to finance savings measures would be better off by avoiding this scheme that was intended to generate profits for the credit company as well as benefit the householder. Martin explained that there may be a role for super-assessors within the Green Deal and he was personally interested in this aspect. He wondered if Community Groups could form spin-off companies to provide the expertise needed to service the Green Deal. Martin would respond to the Consultation and take it from there.
- Solid Wall insulation and Fuel Poverty. These topics were known to be especially important in the Highlands and note was taken that there needed to be progress outside the Green Deal to improve the energy standards of traditional old Scottish homes. The Energy Company Obligation, to be introduced in parallel with the Green Deal, may give scope for improvement, but funding is expected to be modest and there is a counter-argument that limited funds would be better spent on loft and cavity wall insulation.

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CCF Transport Bid and its commitments

- Martin confirmed that any funding decisions had to be approved by Scottish Ministers and the outcome might be announced in mid-February.
- The Transport Project included a commitment for a baseline survey of Black Isle residents to be undertaken in advance of the project. Representative travel patterns over the area and attitudes to cycling were information required. Although it would be useful to know what the most common journeys were from each settlement on the Black Isle, the Transport Project had narrowed the work involved and was focussing on Fortrose, North Kessock and Muir of Ord.
- A questionnaire needed to be developed and a way found to encourage people to complete it. Perhaps an incentive was needed? Could questionnaires be on display at North Kessock Community Market? In view of the partial closure of Kessock Bridge in 2013 and 2014, it would be useful to know what crossed it. It was noted that Sustaining Dunbar had also undertaken a big survey that was distributed to schools, libraries, local groups and WRI, and advertised by posters and available to download on their website.
- Wendy agreed to create the first draft of the questionnaire with help and advice from Martin. Promoting the questionnaire through the magazine Chatterbox, that now claimed to be the local magazine for the whole Black Isle, seemed worth investigating. There was also an opportunity for some promotion through the HEN newsletter.
- The need for a strong integration of Home Energy and Travel in an Energy and Transport Group was noted and thought needed to be given on how to enlarge the membership.

Any Other Business (AOB)

- Natural oils for furniture and wooden flooring. Martin recommended highly oils made by Osmo and Auro for interior use for wooden floors and furniture respectively. Both were eco-products.
- Community Renewables Event. Martin noted that a Community Renewables Event was scheduled for January 17 run by Energy Savings Trust and ESSAC in Inverness. Wendy, Julian and Martin agreed to attend.
- Solar PV. Anne noted that the appeal had been made against the imposition of less favourable Feed in Tariffs (FiT) for Solar PV, because a public consultation on Solar PV was still open. The future was uncertain, a debate in Parliament anticipated, but it seemed that a necessary prerequisite for FiT payment in future would be that the house had been assessed to have an Energy Performance Certificate of C or better.

Next meeting: Wednesday 14 March at Anne Thomas. Drumsmittal.