Minutes of the Transition Black Isle AGM on Tuesday 26th October 2021 at Glachbeg Croft and via Zoom

Present:

At Glachbeg: Martin Sherring, Anne Thomas, Peter Moffatt, Marion Moffatt, Julian Paren, Mary Paren, Alaine Macdonald, Penny Edwards, Bob Bull, Helen Bull.

On Zoom: Julie Gibson, Sheila Currie, Pat Kemsley, Wendy Price (Associated member), Kathryn Logan, Hannah Barrows, Trish McKeggie, Andy Dorin, Janet Hooper, Gwenda Diack (non-member)

Apologies: Julie Shortreed, Sarah Grant, Vanessa Halhead.

Minutes of the last meeting

These were unanimously accepted as a correct record of the meeting.

Convenor’s Report

Julian reported on activities during the year to 31st March 2021, and those which had taken place since then.

Of particular note were:

* Communications, including the newsletter, website and social media.
* Publications – the Growing Guide, another edition of the Active Travel Map, and the continuing work to keep the Our Local Larder website current;
* A successful seed potato selling regime despite Covid constraints ruling out the normal approach;
* Bike hire business continuing from Black Isle Yurts and a new outlet in Cromarty;
* Strong public support for the proposed off-road active travel route between Avoch and Munlochy. However, resistance from landowners continues to cause delays;
* Work on outdoor access – both practical path work and campaigning for better access;
* Stallholder-organised outdoor markets continued in Culbokie and North Kessock, and the indoor market in N Kessock is now restarting after lockdown. An attempt to set up an online market with deliveries has stalled, mainly due to lack of volunteer time;
* Strategic work done by the Black Isle Partnership and Highland Council’s draft Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (with input from TBI/ our members) both show that our ideas of sustainability are increasingly mainstream;
* Hopefully for the future – we have participated with 7 other Highland Community Groups and Keep Scotland Beautiful in an ambitious 3 year proposal to reduce waste throughout the Highlands, and expect a funding decision early in 2022;
* Campaigning with other groups has led to a change in investment criteria for THC pension fund, to switch investments to companies with a lower climate impact, consistent with a 1.5 degree warming limit;
* Further collaboration with other Highland groups to share our activities in Future Communities Highlands & Islands.

These activities are mostly driven by our directors, two of whom, Penny and Jimmy Hepburn are standing down, having re-located to Aberdeenshire. They were thanked for their contribution to TBI. There’s a great opportunity for others to join the board and help steer our activities.

At the time of the AGM there were 178 members, compared with 176 at the same time last year. There were 419 newsletter subscribers, 1,450 followers of our Facebook page, and 246 of our (more discursive!) Facebook group.

Finance

The Treasurer, Martin Sherring, gave a summary of finances for the year ended 31st March 2021.

Martin noted that in the previous year the board took a strategic decision to spend some of our accumulated surplus on a project to promote the wider uptake of local food. This led to the Highland Good Food Partnership, initiated by TBI, partnered by The Pebble Trust. After a successful conference attended by over 90 people from all parts of the food system, the Partnership now has a co-ordinator and is working with a range of partners on a range of topics. These include:

* establishing “Controlled Environment Agriculture” in the Highlands to use our renewable energy resources to extend growing seasons, grow a wider range of crops, and reduce reliance on imported vegetables;
* working with The Highland Council, Zero Waste Scotland, HIE and Cairngorms National Park Authority on community action to reduce food waste;
* also working with The Highland Council, following their signature of the Glasgow Climate & Food Declaration, to bring more local food into their procurement process.

TBI’s financial commitment to the Highland Good Food Partnership is £10k, of which £1.6k is reflected in the 2020/ 21 accounts, the balance anticipated in future years.

The accounts for the year ended 31st March 2021 showed a deficit of £8,349. This reflected both the spending on Highland Good Food Partnership and reduced income due to the effects of Covid19. Cash funds at 31st March 2021 were £20,091, of which £4,000 was restricted for the use of Highland Good Food Partnership.

A further deficit is anticipated during 2021/ 22, but as it becomes possible to restart some of the activities curtailed by Covid19, some of our previous sources of income should return.

Election of Directors

Martin explained that all Directors have to stand down at each AGM. Any who wish to stand again must be re-elected by the membership.

There were 8 Directors before the AGM, 6 of whom wished to stand again. There were no other candidates.

Martin proposed that all 6 individuals standing for election should be elected en-block. This was carried unanimously. The duly elected board is therefore: Julie Gibson, Martin Sherring, Julian Paren, Anne Thomas, Peter Moffatt and Sheila Currie.