

Minutes of Transition Network Board of Trustees Meeting

Friday 22nd July 2016

Trustees present: Peter Lipman (chair), Henry Owen, Hilary Jennings, Ellen Bermann (online), Tony Greenham (treasurer) (online)

Staff in attendance: Sarah McAdam, Rob Hopkins, Nicola Hillary, Naresh Giangrande (online for Training item)

Apologies: Clare Pavitt, Andrew Simms, Ben Brangwyn

1. Check-in

A minute's silence was held for Adrian Atkinson of the Philippines Transition Hub, who has drowned in a swimming accident.

Note: Ben has been diagnosed with prostate cancer and is waiting to hear treatment options after scans. He is currently working only mornings.

Roles:

Keeper of the record: Nicola

Keeper of the time: Rob

Keeper of the heart: Henry

Keeper of the tech: Sarah

2. Previous minutes and actions

Minutes of 4th March 2016 Board meeting: Agreed.

Actions:

- Emilio Mula's film from COP21 is online.
- Tony's actions regarding funding contacts - dropped as doesn't have the contacts any more.
- Trustee Conflict of interest forms – sent to trustees

Action: All trustees please return completed conflict of interest form to Nicola and Tony by 5th August 2016

- Rest of actions - done

Conflict of interests for this meeting: potential conflict of interest noted for Peter and Tony, with their interest in Real Economy Lab, on the Acting as a Charity Conduit Policy, given that Transition Network is acting as a charity conduit for Real Economy Lab. (Note: Jules now working for the B Team (a Richard Branson project) to help further the Real Economy Lab work.)

3. Treasurers Report

Income up significantly to £651,000 - partly due to conference fees and partly from new Tudor Trust grant of £45,000.

Ended up with higher general reserves at March 2016 than we were expecting - £88,000 plus £3,000 for One Year in Transition. Have just undertaken a number of actions and processes to control expenditure, some of which are quite painful. This level of reserves is partly a result of having taken action at the 4th March Board meeting. Also a number of budgets were not fully used, plus web project expenditure delayed to the current year.

Regarding the year to March 2017: Budget looks quite healthy, again as a result of having taken action of costs. 2016-2017 is the last year of the UK REconomy grants, need to look at the future on those. Good coverage of staff salaries and good control of overheads. Projected reserves still a bit low for March 2017. Going to need to change how much of Ainslie's salary comes out of the REconomy budget, so this will adjust the forecasts.

How should staff feel about the higher reserves forecast in the light of Jo being made redundant? The higher reserves level does not fundamentally alter the need to match fixed overhead (staff) costs with revenue expectation, especially given that we no longer receive a grant to support a PA for Rob. Without this (and other actions) our projections for the March 2018 year would be negative reserves. Also, part of the action we took to control costs was to adjust some budget towards salaries rather than international project work, and we don't want to do this again.

March 2018 reserves – current crude estimate of reserves of £18,000 - need to fundraise but we have time.

We need a better and more timely idea of how the forecasts change.

Action: Sarah, Nicola and Nigel to look at how the system of regularly checking budget information for the IE by Fund spreadsheet will work.

We need to communicate to budget managers a nuanced message about the need to spend grant-funded project budgets, in order to leverage the environmental and social benefits intended; while keeping restraint on overhead budgets.

3.a Policy on Acting as a Charity Conduit

The fees for acting as a charity conduit are “good value” but we would only act as a Charity Conduit for organisations we want to support, so trustees considered this a good policy to try. **Policy Agreed.**

4. Funding update

Pete Yeo is donating £2,000 to help the Latin America Train the Trainer event go ahead (along with the Network for Social Change donor who has already donated £2,000.)

Note: Liz Hoskins of GAIA Foundation is also interested in Latin America, but we should talk to May East before any approach.

Offer: Hilary happy to step up to help with UK-related fundraising.

KR Foundation: Brian Valbjorn Sorenson of KR Foundation is suggesting he meets Peter and Sarah when he visits London.

Suggestion: where it is geographically easy, could invite another trustee to meetings like this, to build relationships for succession.

The preparation for co-designing KR Foundation proposals with the Hubs seems to have energy and will also inform other discussions such as the Evolution proposals.

Juliette Timsit: Through this contact Peter spoke at the EDGE (Engaged Donors for Global Equity) Europe meeting. Opening of relationships with funders, including Liz Hoskins of GAIA Foundation and Oak Foundation. Oak Foundation much more focused on technological solutions than Transition, but have an interest in Brazil - something worth exploring with Transition Brazil?

Peter also attended the Centre de Fondations Francais meeting. Juliette is known to all of them and is a very useful bridge.

ESRC Understanding the Macroeconomy Network Plus: Not likely to be funding source for Transition Network. The Leeds University/ Anglia Ruskin University consortium is likely to ask for a letter of support from Transition Network. This is a group of economists we would be happy to see getting this funding.

MacArthur Foundation 100&Change. Much of the thinking of this foundation may be around being a catalyst for people to have interesting ideas.

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Income from non-grant sources: Some shift in actions to help gain non-grant income, such as a donate button on the new website, and thinking about sponsorship opportunities (for example Rob is investigating sponsorship for the primer). In the longer-term, would be great to do crowd-funding for needs of the global network – but not in a position to do this at this stage of the international evolution process.

UK REconomy Project/ Friends Provident Foundation: Need to be starting to think about what the UK REconomy Project looks like next year.

Action: Sarah and Peter to think about the timeline for a dreaming process with UK REconomy Transition initiatives, and a date to meet with Danielle Walker Palmour of Friends Provident Foundation.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Do we have a gap around monitoring and evaluation? Could we ask for modest funding to gather evidence about the impact of Transition, to help us approach larger funders? At the moment, we are bringing in a researcher (Amy Burnett) to work alongside us on the Organisational Development work and a researcher to work alongside us on the English Hub development work.

Another researcher, Mary Green, is interested in applying for a post-doctoral fellowship, for 3 years funding to work alongside Transition Network on the impact of the Transition Network charity plus the impact of Transition. We want a detailed and careful approach, rather than measures of community resilience which focus on ticking funder boxes.

5. Annual Report and Accounts

Henry had some typos and edits. Draft text will be finalised soon and sent to trustees for comments and edits.

6. Report on a survey of international trainers

Feedback from Trustees on Naresh's survey of international trainers, will help inform the next stage of planning of training with the STIR team:

- Comment about some trainers not knowing what resources are available on our website? One of the key challenges facing us, spreading learning across the network, broadcasting the relevant information to everyone.
- Using the content of the training to develop a more generic offer of transferable skills? This is direction Naresh is going with Launch:Online.
- Demand for the Transition Launch course in Italy has dropped off. Key first activists have been trained, and now have new needs. Also there are now lots of other people offering similar trainings. What type of training will appeal to the next wave of potential activists? Italian Transition trainers now tend to listen to groups and create tailored trainings, relating to their needs. This needs more preparation work, so it is more of a financial problem to provide this more personalised training. This approach has similarities to the Support workshop, and Transition:Thrive, where there is an assessment of a group using the health-check, and the course tailored to that. Does creating tailored trainings need more funding? Using a tailored mix of modules was mentioned by several trainers in the survey.
- Naresh is thinking about creating a longer, blended-learning training course (a mix of face-to-face and online). Could call together a group of trainers to discuss this?
- Naresh, Josue and Juan are now delivering Launch Online in English, French and Spanish respectively. They have established an Action Learning Set so that they can all learn from each other's experiences.

- As part of Rob's non-TN work, he is talking to HEC - a business university near Paris, who want to create a Chair of Transition role for Rob. HEC are looking for a range of Transition content and activities as part of their Masters in Social Innovation.
 - Asher Miller of Post-Carbon Institute is working on a range of modules for Higher Education. This could be a potential collaboration.
 - Need a sense of whether the range of Transition content and activities HEC are looking for is Transition Network work or not, and the extent of Rob's time this would take.

Action: Sarah and Rob to get a sense whether the Transition content and activities proposed by HEC is Transition Network work or not, and the extent of Rob's time this would take.

7. Evolution Working Group

Input for Peter and Sarah as Guardians of the Evolution Working Group:

- Question about the phrase "Transition Network's lack of focus" in the report. This refers to the current state of trying to do too many things at the same time, and consulting Hub representatives about different things at different times. This leads to confusion and dissatisfaction about the way pieces of work or decisions suddenly appear. This links to things we could change in the organisational development process. For example, we could be discussing with Hubs "what's the next thing we focus on for 6 months" as part of our team planning. Can we get to fewer projects that we can engage more people with?
- For example we are now getting really interesting engagement in the web project, because we've said it's a priority project and the whole team is involved. Hubs can see it will help them develop their websites and they want to be represented on ours. There is also good engagement in preparing for the KR Foundation proposals. Doing fewer projects more collaboratively is an organisational experiment that is already underway.
- We should not forget that most Hubs are mainly voluntary people who are already engaged on many levels, local, national, and international. Sometimes there will be waves of energy, highest when people meet, say at Hubs Gatherings. The way of working that currently works is to say "here is an offer, do you want to get involved?" and organise things so that Hub representatives can contribute when they can, can come and go.
- Are there things we can assume will happen as Transition Network develops to become more international, that we can start to plan for, or put in place? Could thinking about changes we can already make be part of the Away Days? Let's look for opportunities to not keep resources in the UK. For pieces of work we can think, "does it have to be UK-based, can we put a call out?" A good example is the Italian and Portuguese team working on translation.

- Are there some principles the Board can look at in how we work with the Hubs, some actions we can embed in how we work, to help become more international as an organisation?

Action: The September Board meeting will include a discussion about whether there are some principles the Board can look at in how we work with the Hubs, to help us become more international as an organisation.

8. Brexit and its implications for Transition Network (an initial discussion)

Five different discussion areas:

1. **Exploring a worst-case scenario of what Brexit might lead to in terms of Transition Networks's ability to function**, for example ability to travel to and from the UK.

It was not possible to see likely immediate worst-case scenarios. Changes to freedom of movement seem a long way away. We employ Filipa in Belgium and we pay people in Europe, there could be some technical issues but we won't know what they are for a while.

2. **Message and an opportunity to say something different about localisation**

We should continue to talk about returning power to local communities. Also remember that Transitioners in the UK will have voted both Leave and Remain.

We need to revisit what we say about localisation - localisation can have a fascist side to it. Brexit is a bit of a wake-up call as to the state of society; people with fascist tendencies in the UK have found a validation in the message. It's particularly important now to send messages against racism.

We should comment about what Brexit means in terms of power and influence. Transition's role includes promoting compassion and questioning boundaries.

Action: Henry will lead on writing a blog on what does Brexit mean for Transition Network and all levels of the Transition movement – including a statement on Transition Network's international role; rebutting the shadow side of localisation; being explicit about neo-local fascist structure. Ask Filipa and Ellen to put voices into this.

3. **Implications for Funding and Networks such as ECOLISE**

Through the ECOLISE network we are starting to get to a place where Transition Network can be part of partnerships that are connecting with European funding. One thing that Transition Network could previously offer was that we were enough of an entity to be able to co-ordinate taking part in EU funding bids. Now as a UK-based organisation we will not add to the attractiveness of an EU bid. So how can we support the development of a European regional approach, from the UK?

Do we need to have a Transition Network organisation registered in an EU country? Would this be a subsidiary of Transition Network, or a grouping of EU Hubs that doesn't include Transition Network and the England or Scotland Hubs? Would it be the Belgian Hub that takes this role of co-ordinating taking part in EU funding bids? Would be better to support the setting up of an independent EU Transition organisation grouping, not as a subsidiary?

Brexit pushes us quicker to the question about whether it is enough for Transition Network to be incorporated in the UK.

Action: Tony and Nicola will look into the question of whether creating a subsidiary organisation in Belgium would help Transition Network be eligible to receive EU funds? Need to also find out what European Hubs think about this.

Action: As part of the KR Foundation discussions, on ideas about a Europe-specific project Sarah and Nicola will explore Hub representatives' ideas about whether Transition Network needs a separate organisation in Belgium.

4. Are there potential implications for where we are incorporated?

The ECOLISE network is a great opportunity but has given Transition Network a risk of developing a Europe focus. Why would we consider an EU-based Transition Network organisation or subsidiary, and not Latin American-based? Is the reason of potential EU funding enough?

Brexit is a big reminder of the importance of the international Evolution process and the questioning of Transition Network's identity.

On balance, we should not move the international Evolution process quicker than currently planned, some Hubs have already said that moving too quickly on this process will give the wrong result.

Currently, we need to focus on how we can support Latin American grouping and the start of an European grouping. Transition Network needs to be happy to "let go" of power and responsibility in order to be able to support the movement. The Latin American and European groups could be part of building blocks of a new international structure.

5. Where are the opportunities?

This conversation highlights the transition we are in as an organisation. When we say "we" which we are we talking about? We should be able to see "we" as an international network with activity taking place in many places.

There is an opportunity for the UK to vision something that isn't Nigel Farage's version of the future.

Can we notice where Brexit impacts on Transition initiatives (eg through legislation changes) and publicise these on our website? (Inspired by voteleavewatch.org.uk)

Should we open the discussion about the implications of Brexit to the Hubs?

9. Succession planning/ Trustee Recruitment

The Board **Agreed** it was happy to move to a co-chair arrangement.

We will be recruiting 3 trustees, and then choosing a co-chair. We will look internationally as well as in the UK, but there is still a place available for a second Keeper of the Global Perspective to be nominated by the Hubs.

Only advertising on our website and e-newsletter will not reach enough people in time. We need to put the advert in quite a few newsletters and advertise internationally as well.

We will need to update the Information Pack, including information about the Organisational Development process and the Evolution process. Trustee roles might become quite different, might shift as the organisation structure shifts.

Decided there should be three people on the interview panel. This was proposed as Peter, Sarah and Hilary. (Clare has said she won't be able to talk to prospective interviewees before applications).

Action: Clare, Hilary, Henry and Nicola to change the timetable for recruitment: change the date of starting to advertise the vacancies to 1st September. Change the closing date to at least 23rd September. Rob will ensure he is lined up for intensive tweeting about trustee vacancies at the start of September.

Action: Any further comments on the trustee and co-chair role descriptions should be sent to Clare, Hilary, Henry and Nicola by Friday 29th July. Job description needs something more "heartful". Worth having a brief think about a skills audit and any particular skills we are looking for as gaps. Applicants can communicate beforehand with either Peter or Hilary (give email contact)

We need to pay attention for the need for balance (gender, race, other aspects). Part of the consideration, not an overriding one? The role description should state: "Co-chairing increases the opportunity for diversity in the leadership of Transition Network."

Action: Clare, Hilary, Henry and Nicola to liaise over how to recruit a co-chair at the same time as the two other trustees.

10. Delivery Directors Report

Additional items of note:

Regional REconomy events are planned for Sheffield - one of the communities taking part in a Local Community Plan process. Laura talking to Mike about fitting in with the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust regional events. One REconomy event will be in London to coincide with London/South East Transition initiatives event.

Ben and Sarah met with the translations project team. They will be launching the crowd-sourcing of translations, around the same time of the new website launch. One idea is a translation "hackathon" – to help relatively quickly translate key parts of our website. Deborah from Italy is using pioneer programme funding to enable her to travel to Totnes to work at the time of the launch of the translation project.

Illness of Ben and Ainslie: this has meant we have postponed a round of grants to Hubs. Sarah has been doing quite a lot of fire-fighting, for example on the website. We have agreed reduced hours for Ainslie during August and September. We need to find someone else to do REconomy communications.

Sarah was formally thanked for picking up so much with 2 key members of staff suffering illness.

The Transition Network Strategy runs to 2017 - what happens next? We are talking about this with Universite du Nous, can this be picked up in the organisational development process?

How many people have looked at the support offer resources online? How many people can find it? Testing of the new website involved the user journey and how can we make it clearer to find resources, and keep reminding people that those resources are there. New website structure should make it easier to find these resources. We are also starting to log what we want to do in the next phases of the website.

What happened at the UK Demain screening? Rob is still waiting to hear from Cyril Dion about distribution, and the idea of Transition Network sending out English-language DVDs with community distribution licences? We could send a template for how to run the accompanying events. Cyril is consulting with Elle Driver who hold the distribution rights.

How do we get a sense check on how the Transition movement globally is doing, at Board meetings? For now:

- Demain in Europe is quite a catalyst
- The Hubsters skype chat is a very vibrant exchange of views and information.
- Quite a lot of collaborative training going on - Inner Transition training happening supported by trainers from other countries
- Latin America very interesting. Radical work: Raul of Mexican Hub will step back from Transition because it makes him feel under threat.
- Mike surveyed UK Transition initiatives - heartened by the numbers still operating.
- Transition Crystal Palace has been mobilising networks to find a missing member of the community.
- Cristiano in Italy is asking Rob to speak in the Italian parliament.

- The piece about links between Transition groups and engaged municipalities keeps coming up. Wigan council was excited after REconomy day – has helped with projects and funding. Lots happening with Italian municipalities. Part of the funding dreaming might look at this - what tools can help municipalities and Transition groups to work together.
- The Belgian Hub exceeded their crowd-funding appeal.
- Is some of the Transition movement “going underground” - social permaculture but not stepping forward? The number of registered initiatives is not going up. The International Initiative Registration Service has to be brought forward as a priority. Then we can share maps of Transition initiatives with transformap and ECOLISE.

Can we build some measure of how the Transition movement is going, this into our board meetings? We need to also hear what people are struggling with?

Consider the idea of Rob interviewing a Hub a month, for the website - not necessarily just positive stories; and bring the interviews to board meetings?

11. Any Other Business

The Board formally thanked Jo Coish for her work as Office Manager and Board Secretary.

Action: Please pass any messages for Jo’s card to Sarah.

Trustees are welcome to attend Jo’s leaving do on the evening of 14th September in Totnes (and the staff Doing meeting during the day).

Action: All trustees to fill in trustee conflict of interest forms by Friday 5th August.

Action: Nicola will create Doodles now for all the 2017 Board meeting dates.