



Minutes of Transition Network Board of Trustees Meeting Friday 10th February 2017

Trustees present: Henry, Peter Lipman, Andrew, Peter Lefort, Joe, Clare, Tony, Hilary, Ellen (online)

Staff in attendance: Sarah, Rob, Mike, Nicola

Apologies: Isabela

1. Check-in

Roles:

Keeper of the record:	Nicola
Keeper of the time:	Clare
Keeper of the heart:	Hilary
Keeper of the tech:	Mike
Keeper of avoiding jargon/ assumed knowledge:	Peter Lefort

2. Welcoming New Trustees

Isabela Maria Gomes de Menezes was formally appointed as a trustee, having been nominated as a second Keeper of the Global Perspective by the Transition Hubs. She sent apologies for this meeting.

This is the first Board meeting attended by new trustees Joe Duggan and Peter Lefort.

There were discussions in pairs about why trustees joined the Board and their particular role.

Everyone shared "what people need to know about me to work with me".

Action: Sarah, Ellen, Isabela and Filipa should arrange a catch-up before Board meetings about the global picture, update and issues, including anything for the agenda, ahead of Board meetings

3. Previous minutes and actions

Minutes of 18th November 2016 Board meeting: Minutes **agreed**.

Actions:

The following actions will not be carried forward:

- *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.*
Sarah and Rob have discussed, however HEC will be coming back with a more detailed proposal.
- *The International Group will have a first go at developing Principles Which Support Us to Work Internationally, drawing on Board feedback. These will be reviewed at a future Board meeting and then be tested with Hubs.*
This doesn't feel like the most useful process right now. The current Organisational Co-Design Hub working group discussions feel more useful at the moment as a way to explore these principles. It is also more meaningful to include principles that support us to work internationally as a discussion in our strategy development this year.
- *Tony and Nigel to assess whether any disclosure is needed in the accounts relating to Peter working as a paid consultant to one of our funders (the anonymous Foundation).*
Nigel plans to address this when he starts to prepare the accounts (from April 2017)
- *Hilary and Henry to update induction pack for new trustees.*
The previous induction pack could not be found. Documents including the TN strategy, annual report, 3 previous Board minutes and charity commission guidance for trustees were sent to new trustees.

Action: Nicola to create a new folder in the Board googledrive for "induction documents" and save the relevant documents there.

Other actions done.

Conflict of interests for this meeting:

Peter Lipman is working as a paid consultant for the anonymous Foundation (more on Peter's new areas of work later in the meeting)

Tony's RSA programme is in receipt of funds from Friends Provident Foundation and KR Foundation.

Andrew's New Weather Institute is in receipt of funds from Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation

Peter Lefort: Eden Project is funded by Big Lottery on networking, peer support

Joe is starting to receive an honorarium from Transition Crystal Palace

4. Treasurer's Report

Tony gave a summary of Transition Network's finances:

We have three primary sources of income:

1. Donations with no restrictions. (Core to this is a £50,000 a year donation from Roger Ross. Note: Roger Ross has recently told Peter Lipman he is delighted to continue this donation. However he has now set up a trust called the Serve All Trust, (with interest in bottom-up sustainability action) so continued support will be the decisions of the Board of the Serve All Trust rather than Roger Ross as an individual.)
2. Grants: A significant change is the new KR Foundation grant.
3. Earned Income: Our earned income used to be more significant when we ran an annual conference. DVD sales are tailing off.

We have four main types of expenditure:

1. People
2. Projects – project expenses, travel, freelance contractors (including overseas)
3. Grants disbursed – we hope increasingly, to Transition Hubs. The amount of grants disbursed line should increase significantly due to the KR Foundation funded Municipalities in Transition project.
4. Overheads of running the organisation.

We have two types of reserves:

1. Restricted reserves – grants being carried forward, which are allocated to future expenditure
2. Unrestricted reserves – or “general reserve”. This is our important cash-flow, safety net and ability to wind down if we should ever close the charity. Our target for running as a healthy organisation is £75,000 unrestricted reserves.

The forecast general reserve for March 2017 is £66,000.

The forecast general reserve for March 2018 is over £30,000.

Therefore there is still a fundraising need of £30,000 of general funding, which may translate as needing six-figure project grant funding.

Identified Risk on Exchange rates: The new KR Foundation grant is in Danish Kroner. Our bank account is in Pounds. Many of the project costs will be in Euros (the Danish Kroner is generally pegged to the Euro value). Since the Brexit referendum, exchange rates between Pounds and Euros are very volatile. We will be carrying the risk of these exchange rate changes altering the available budget for the Municipalities in Transition project over the next 2 years.

Nicola and Tony have investigated the possibility of opening a bank account in Euros. There are no current **ethical** bank options to do this. Tony’s decision as treasurer to mitigate the risk is to increase the number of grant instalments from KR Foundation (by one), to make a shorter length of time between receiving and paying out funds. The Board needs to be aware that exchange rate fluctuations is now a risk that Transition Network is carrying.

It was discussed that this revives a previous post-Brexit question about whether Transition Network

should be based outside the UK, or set up organisational bases elsewhere. Recent experience with ECOLISE shows that setting up an organisation in Belgium (for instance) is an administrative nightmare.

Progress against budgets: On some project expenditure we are lower than forecast. This is a combination of circumstances, including the natural instinct of members of staff to be careful with funds.

We have recently identified the areas of current underspend and have some plans to make good use of these. We now need to be more bold with our spending and we are helped in this by the Hubs Gathering being early in the next financial year, so we can develop priorities in discussion with Hubs and then carry them out.

5. Funding update

It was noted for new trustees that a condition of our funding from our main funder is that we help preserve their anonymity. This was discussed as, though for good reasons, it does mean that we are not quite transparent.

Funding opportunity for England being pursued with Big Lottery Fund: in the long-run this feels like a holding action ahead of the existence of an England Transition Hub. The aim is that another organisation in the Renew consortium leads and hosts the project. The project could benefit a lot of Transition groups in England.

This highlighted a tension for the Board between the roles of acting as the Hub for England and Wales, and our international roles.

UK REconomy Project: This is coming to the end of its funding and a meeting is being arranged for early April, which may help with a direction for a future fundable project. Tony's view is that collaboration is the way forward for the UK REconomy project, for example with Rachel Lawrence at new economics foundation or with RSA.

The new KR Foundation funding was celebrated.

The funding report to the board this time was a useful format (with more information). Future funding reports should also list questions for the Board.

6. Delivery Director's Report

Strategic Outcome 1 - Communications

Currently doing some thinking around website management. We have a sophisticated website with a big audience, on a shoe-string. We need to find a web agency that won't charge too much and will hold our values. Web management is taking up too much of Ainslie's time when she was recruited as a Communications Manager.

Peter Lefort is happy to be involved in conversations about how to develop our web management arrangements.

Outcome 2 – Support

We have some really encouraging figures on the downloads of our new support resources.

We now need to review previous resources such as Ingredients, for example looking at whether they are only specific to the UK context.

Outcome 3 – Livelihoods (REconomy)

There are some interesting REconomy events coming up in the UK, supporting knowledge on the ground to be shared.

An International REconomy sub-group – Sarah (TN), Jay (UK), Nenad (Croatia), Raul (Mexico) – are trying to develop an international REconomy strategy. At an early stage on what can we do together internationally that's useful.

Noting that "REconomy" itself is a piece of Jargon.

Outcome 4 – Demonstrating Impact – (having more impact and evaluating it)

The new Municipalities in Transition project may fit under this outcome. The project will look at the power and impact that comes when citizens and municipalities can come together in participative ways.

The Municipalities in Transition project was conceived with the Hubs, and prioritised in a collaborative way. Transition Network is working with the Hubs Group on this project. We have taken care over a proposal for someone to step into the role of Project Manager, and we are putting that to the Hubs to see if there are objections. Showing the tension of volunteers working together and then suddenly there is a paid role.

The European ECOLISE partnership includes Transition, Permaculture, Ecovillages and other supporting organisations including Local Government group ICLEI. Sarah is currently vice-president of the ECOLISE Council. ECOLISE (funded by the anonymous Foundation) is appointing 3 paid roles, Sarah was involved in interviews.

One of the new ECOLISE roles is on Learning and knowledge – it is much better for Transition Network to engage with the world of research through ECOLISE rather than on our own. We are also interested in the scope for Transition Network to pool resources with other organisations to look at the useful research that can inform our work and help us shape research proposals; our idea is that ECOLISE could hold this role for us.

Further on evaluation, the Staff survey report by Amy Burnett is nearly completed. It is a large report, it could be interesting to spend some time at June meeting looking at what that tells us and anything we want to do as a result.

Action: Potentially put staff survey report on June 2017 agenda, look at what this tells us and what we might do as a result

Outcome 5 – International

The Hubs Gathering will be held 24th-27th May 2017 (with an Inner Transition event beforehand and a public event on 28th May). It is 18 months since the last Hubs Gathering. This is an important

process for our international development and decision-making. It has a different focus and function to a Transition Conference. We are working with external facilitators.

The Heart Circle organising the Hubs Gathering was asked, should there be a limit on Transition Network staff and trustee attendance. The answer was, given the important role of Transition Network in service to the movement, if staff/trustees want to be there, they should come. Henry would like to attend and is available. Ellen will attend.

Action: Anyone from the Board who would like to go to the Hubs Gathering 24th-27th May 2017, let Sarah know, she can make decision in balance with available resources.

The Hubs recently used an Election by Consent process to appoint Isabela as a new Keeper of the Global Perspective – this process brought Hubs together and engaged energy.

There is renewed activity in the Hubs Organisational Co-Design working group to prepare work ahead of the Hubs Gathering.

Tensions are starting to emerge with possibilities for paid work and objections and challenges to the way that this is proposed. It feels healthy to have these tensions looked at.

Good progress on connections in Asia – a thriving Hub in Japan is making links with Korea, Taiwan, Philippines and China. Filipa is helping information to flow when previously they felt they couldn't engage without using good English.

Outcome 6 – healthy organisational culture

The Organisational Development project is central to this outcome, to how we are developing as an organisation, including the Universite du Nous seminar at the end of February 2017. We are trialling new forms of governance with one project. Later in the year we will look at how this could work for the organisation as a whole. We need to think how to bring new trustees up to speed on this project.

7. Transition Dashboard

We are exploring what information might be useful to the Board to get some quantitative sense of how the organisation's work is progressing. The paper shares with the Board some of the statistics we have, to see how useful they are.

We will pass on thoughts from an upcoming staff meeting about Web statistics to look at which measures are useful to track. It was noted that the couple of sentences from Sam were helpful to interpret the data.

Action: To include brief commentary on the web statistics in the Transition Dashboard. Also look for the “list” or “industry” standard or average to compare web statistics to, in the same way as the e-newsletter statistics.

It's important to start monitoring our sickness days.

Action: Information on staff sickness monitoring will be brought to the June 2017 Board meeting.

On the Hubs list - the Transition Hubs have very recently agreed a "What Is a Hub" document, which re-defines what is an emerging Hub and what is a Hub with a Memorandum of Understanding. The idea now is that Hubs will assess themselves against the What Is a Hub criteria, and the Organisational Co-Design hubs working group will confirm the self-assessment of each Hub. The Memorandum of Understanding will then be held with the Hubs Group rather than Transition Network. The likelihood is that some of the current "Official" Hubs won't qualify for a Memorandum of Understanding once this exercise has taken place.

The "Hub of the Month" web report is quite a lengthy process. Rob and Sarah would have to discuss with Ainslie whether this is a priority during Rob's sabbatical.

On Training, Henry had spoken to Naresh. It would be labour-intensive to get a picture of training, but actually is this worth investing some time in? Naresh is aiming to build in more ways to get feedback. The STIR (Support, Training, Inner and REconomy) team aims to set aside some time to think about monitoring and evaluation in more detail.

Our long-term ambition to get more structured feedback from the movement, involves the International Registration Service/ Healthcheck project to enable people to register on their own Hub website in their own language and synchronise the information. (Two Transition groups have already fed back Health Check information since its been available online, without being asked.)

Suggestion is, the Board should pose questions – and this data is one potential source of information to answer those questions. For example, questions could be: What is the health of the movement? How are the Hubs progressing?

Action: Sarah and Nicola to meet to take forward next iteration of the Dashboard, including thinking about the questions, context, commentary and industry comparisons.

8. Rob's Sabbatical

Rob will be taking a partial sabbatical to write a book about creating the spaces for collective imagination. From 1st March 2017, Rob will spend 2 days a week of his time on this. From 1st May 2017, Rob will spend 3 days of his time on the writing sabbatical until the end of February 2018.

Its a significant change for the staff team, but we want to help Rob free up his time, and use the opportunity to bring in more voices. Rob will still work a number of days for Transition Network, blogging and writing. We will need to be clear about the difference between Rob's work for Transition Network and his personal work.

Rob's role as staff representation to the Board is not the best use of Rob's time during this next year. Its a good opportunity to consult the staff team on how we should re-organise staff representation on the Board. Good idea to have at least one voice from the staff that isn't Sarah.

ACTION: Staff to think about re-organising staff representation on the Board as a result of Rob's sabbatical.

9. 2017 Communications Plan draft

Discussed draft Communications plan for next 12 months.

Project 1: Editor/Artist in Residence Project

Aim to reach new audiences and explore ideas, looking for diversity and challenge. Using funds partly freed up from the reduction in Rob's salary.

8 guest editors/ artists from different and diverse angles. 6 of these to edit the website for 1 month with their own theme. 2 people to provide longevity across the year, writing a piece every month.

We are carefully planning how to find a good range of diversity, for example expressing this request in a way that helps people feel they can step forward. We will offer editing support and a certain level of support, but we need people who are relatively skilled in their form of communication.

Action: Ainslie to add religion and belief to the area of targeting audiences and diversity, in the Editor/Artist in Residence Project.

Action: Andrew, Peter Lefort, Hilary, Joe, Clare stepped forward to help review comment on recruitment of editors/ artists, and development of project, at relevant points.

Project 2: Transition Storytelling

This is the next phase of the Transition Story project, that gave us a new structure for presenting Transition.

1. Resources, capturing more stories, Talk Training, inner and outer, Which stories work
2. Look at how stories are told around the world, find specialists and train people in these norms in telling stories. Overlay what works for you culturally in your part of the world. Creating an army of storytellers around the world

We need to look at what is manageable with current resources; and what do we need new resources to do?

Netherlands Transition Hub ahead of us on this – recruiting and training a network of Transition Storytellers. There will be people around the Hub community with skills on this.

By the June 2017 Board meeting we hope to be working with some editors in residence, with a structure for what is happening editorially in the months ahead, and a couple of story resources on the way.

Peter Lefort interested in the role of video, has experience and ideas on this. Ainslie happy to talk.

Action: Reflect on the current progress of the Communications Plan at the June 2017 Board meeting

10. Supporting the development of regional networks in the UK

We are currently mapping where UK Transition initiatives are, aiming to finish mapping by end of March. It looks like half to two-thirds of the 400 registered UK Transition initiatives are still active.

This mapping should give us a good idea where there are clusters of Transition groups, to see if we can run Regional Workshops.

Regional networking under way in London/South East England. We are currently arranging or discussing regional workshops for North West England and Bristol.

Interesting point about how people define which groups are invited to regional discussions, how people can know about this possibility. For example, Transition Buxton could be interested in the North West England regional networking, but other North West groups might not realise this.

Action: Mike and Sarah to discuss how we can help UK Transition groups initiating regional networking to extend invites slightly wider and see where the interest is.

Some of the regional networking activity has come out of regional REconomy events. For example, lots of Transition initiatives went to the Wigan REconomy event, which then sparked meet-ups afterwards.

Richard Couldrey of the South-East UK network is researching this regional network project for his MSc at the Centre for Alternative Technology.

Mike would like to create a guide on how to set up a regional network of Transition initiatives.

Ultimately we'll work towards a meeting to discuss what an English Hub might look like.

We may need to fundraise for a continuation of this process, from mid-2017.

The Renew project idea for paid peer-support, if funding is raised, this will start in one region.

Tension between the global role of Transition Network, and the role of an England/Wales Transition Hub.

Would it help to split things internally within Transition Network more formally, including financially with a separate UK budget, and having clearly separated Board Agenda time for both? A formal internal split could help during the "transition" to a separate England/Wales Hub.

This could be a question we examine during the process to revise our organisational strategy.

Our preferred outcome would still be the natural generation from the grass-roots of an England Transition Hub.

Regional Hubs

The London/South East England regional network has a SE England Hub Facebook.

The concept of regional Hubs was looked at during the "What Is a Hub" discussions by the Organisational Co-Design hubs working group. Transition Hubs might not follow national boundaries (therefore we no longer refer to "National" Hubs). In terms of membership of the Hubs Group it was agreed that it would be the highest level of Hub for an area that would participate in the Hubs Group.

For example there are already regional Hubs in the USA, but the Transition US Hub is the Hubs Group member.

For example the Brussels/Wallonie Hub does not cover the whole of Belgium, but there is no pan-Belgium Hub, so the Brussels/Wallonie Hub is the Hubs Group member.

Therefore, SE England could be represented in the Hubs Group until such time as there is an England Hub.

The French Hub, with the support and encouragement of Filipa, is currently moving away from the idea of a national French Hub: more appropriate for the capacity and context is a Parisian Transition Hub.

11. Updating Transition Network's Organisational Strategy

Looking for guidance ahead of a Strategy Day in Bristol on 5th April 2017.

Our current strategy has 6 detailed Strategic Outcomes. We are not looking to repeat this structure, looking for something able to be more flexible and responsive. We could envisage a 6 month process which reconnects to the organisational purpose and sets areas of activity for the next six months.

The Trustees have a responsibility to ensure there is an organisational strategy.

Decision: We will continue to use our current strategy until we publish a new strategy.

Previous work on team planning and organisational development has already established that we have an intention to do fewer and more collaborative projects. We are looking for convergence around four areas identified in October 2016 team planning, rather than divergence.

Areas of convergence, as previously noted:

- **Building innovative social infrastructure and collaborative leadership capacity** - across TN, Hubs Group, within individual hubs and TIs, supporting the development of geographical and theme-based learning networks and connecting up/collaborating beyond the T movement;
- **Intersection between municipalities and Transition** - current example of need to identify an interesting and vibrant edge with potential to achieve significant impacts and then illuminate/encourage exploration of this work, help learning to be shared, bring in resources, support the work to move to the next level;
- **Understanding and telling the Transition story more effectively** - TN's role is to help create fertile soil for community-led action to flourish and inspire more people to get involved/support. Including influencing and drawing upon meaningful research of impacts, potential, strengths & weaknesses plus influencing funders and others to collaborate and share expertise around skilful telling of new narratives to counter the dominant framing of the industrial growth system and evoke values of care and connection;
- **Mobilising resources to support and catalyse bottom up activity.**

The 5th April Strategy Day - this won't design the future strategy. Start with reflection on the current

strategy; discuss the strategy process and how we go about it.

Ideas generated in the meeting:

Can we seek online feedback from Transition initiatives, on what Transition Network is currently doing and what might be useful - do this early in the process, as well as testing the conclusion?

Could we seek a "sample" of Transition initiatives around the world? Could we ask each Hub to nominate a thriving Transition initiative who could form a cohort of wisdom for discussions?

Can we find a structured way of getting feedback from other stakeholders and partners?

Should we include a friendly outsider to help reflect back to us on the strategy process?

The Hubs Gathering could be a good place to raise ideas, such as a greater focus on working with young people, to test priorities, to inform future Transition Network work.

Noted important areas for discussion during the strategy revision, during this meeting:

- Principles for working internationally.
- The different roles of Transition Network's international role and its role as the England/Wales Transition Hub.

Action – Trustees with an interest in strategy development to engage with Henry, Peter and Sarah.

12. Update on Peter Lipman's non-TN work

The anonymous Foundation has 5 funding programmes; Transition Network is the largest recipient with their Global Sustainable Living programme. Peter Lipman is now running their Global Sustainable Living programme apart from the funding relationship with Transition Network.

Peter Lipman is also working for a previous funder of Transition Network, there is no conflict as it was a one-off grant.

Action: Inform staff team verbally of Peter Lipman's roles so they are aware if they are involved in any conversations or comments relating to his work.

13. Any Other Business

It was agreed to sign the Bank mandate form to add the three new trustees.

Andrew is arranging a Brighton-based workshop on Rapid Transition for late April, would be interested in a Transition Network representative attending.

Henry is considering ideas for participatory action research around his role in TN for his Masters research in summer 2017.

Peter Lipman noted reactions to the US election of President Trump. People are taking their eyes off constructing positive things, its becoming all about reactions to Trump. If Transition has a role, the dreaming, creating, building something positive is now even more important.

Peter Lipman is struggling to find voices in the USA who are thinking along these lines. However this could re-engage millions of people to think that they do need to articulate the new world that

they want to live in.

Thanks to Henry for his debut in chairing the Board meeting.

It is still hard for Ellen to engage virtually, due to equipment and language. Maybe we should explore the equipment that Nenad is recommending?

Action: Nicola to investigate different virtual equipment

If there are items without questions – should they just be read, then there could be more time on the areas which need discussion?

END