

Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2021

Totnes Renewable Energy Society Limited Company Number 30373R [The Society]

online via Zoom on Wednesday, 10th November 2021, 7pm.

Present:

Ian Bright - Managing Director
Stephanie Burns - Legal Director and Company Secretary
Raymond Seager - Finance Director
Dr Sally Murrall-Smith - Operations Director
Alastair Gets - Director of Engineering
Sophie Galleymore-Bird - Digital Marketing Assistant

1. Welcome and Introduction - Stephanie Burns, AGM Chair, Legal Director & Company Secretary

Housekeeping and Zoom etiquette - Stephanie. An invitation to vote on the AGM resolutions will be sent following the AGM to members, who will be able to vote using Survey Monkey. Proxy forms have also been received. A reminder that the meeting is being recorded.

The Minutes of the AGM of 4th November, 2020 were approved.

2. Review of the Year: Ian Bright, Managing Director

Richard Turner was obliged to retire as Finance Director due to ill health and TRESOC is sad to see him go. Pleased to have secured the services of Raymond Seager in his place. Also pleased to have Luke Sciemaszko on board as solar Project Manager.

Much activity around Renewable Energy Experiential Learning programme with 105 pupils at the Grove School taking part thanks to grant from Chacegrove Foundation and donations from members. Also a collaboration with Art & Energy's Moths To A Flame mass-art installation. More from Chloe later as guest speaker.

Directors Retiring -
Richard Turner - Finance Director

A vote of thanks was given to Richard.

Directors Appointed -
Raymond Seager - Finance Director.
Sally Murrall-Smith - Operations Director

3. Finance Report 2021: Sally Murrall-Smith, Operations Director

Receipt of 2021 accounts: A copy of the accounts is available on the website.

Appointment of Darnells: Unaudited accounts ending March 2021 prepared in conjunction with Darnells Chartered Accountants who have also been reappointed for the next financial year.

Members will be asked once again to vote to dis-apply the need for an annual audit. This will be one of the resolutions voted on using ZOOM during the AGM & with Survey Monkey following the AGM.

Review of 2021 accounts. Turnover reached £73,651, an increase on last year of £23,000, due mainly to RCEF feasibility grant for Clay Park. Most of grant spent on consultants which is reflected in cost of sales. Other income includes donations and interest on shares in South Brent Community Energy Society and Dart Renewables (DR interest payment came in this financial year and is included in the forecast). Administrative expenses were £46,717, £3,000 up on last year due to maintenance costs at Hatchlands. £25,800 of admin expenses involved asset depreciation. Effectively the Society was run on £20,917. Wages were £3,658.

An interest payment of 1% was made this year. Only cheques over £5 were sent out due to admin and postage costs. Members who didn't receive a payment can be assured that their interest is being accrued and once it reaches £5 it will be sent.

Overall, there is a deficit of £12,210.

The new FD, Raymond Seager has been asking how TRESOC can become profitable. The forecast for 2021-22 is for £18,000 loss. Generation issues with Hatchlands due to soiling are costing TRESOC £3-6,000 p.a. Ian to discuss this Projects section. Working to bring two projects online. Clay Park, which should bring in £5,000 p.a. in management fees, and an application has been made for a grant for modelling for a new project, Totnes Solar Roofs 22 for Totnes Energy Club.

Current cash flow projections show TRESOC to be unable to pay back on shares until it can do so fairly, by growing its projects. At last year's AGM a new withdrawal policy was agreed offering annual redemptions windows where the total redeemable amount would be determined by the surplus generation established by the end of year accounts. Repayment would be made on a pro rata basis. The accounts show a loss this financial year and predict a loss in the next financial year. Therefore, there will be no redemptions offered. Neither will TRESOC be able to make an interest payment next year. However, by 2023 we hope to have two new projects coming online, improving TRESOC's generation income.

4. Projects: Sally Murrall-Smith & Ian Bright

Clay Park - SMS

TRESOC awarded a Stage 2 Development Grant from RCEF in June for nearly £80,000. Technical modelling is almost finished. Financial modelling almost complete. This has had to be done again as consultants had to be changed due to loss of confidence - calculations have had to be revisited. Part of the development grant is specifically for knowledge sharing to promote the business model to the wider community. The multi-technology approach and micro-grid are innovative and the business model is new and the knowledge value is high. TRESOC has encouraged the establishment of a Microgrids Working Group in the Devon Community Energy Network of which it is a member, to facilitate dissemination of learnings. Knowledge will also be shared on the website. TRESOC has given up all intellectual property rights and will share all legal and technical documents. Foot Anstey have been appointed as legal consultants and will produce 20+ documents. Sonia Bedford has kindly offered to convert them into templates. By creating these we hope to reduce significantly the legal fees of other community energy organisations who decide to tread the same path.

A multi-system approach being taken. Optimum technology mix determined as private microgrid of 160kW roof-mounted solar PV, high levels of insulation to PassivHaus equivalent, thermal stores and integrated battery storage. Project outcomes of economic, environmental, and social benefit: 152,000 kWhs green energy p.a.; increasing local resilience; 35 tonnes of CO2 saved p.a.; residents' heating bills reduced by 10% including those on low incomes; empowering local people to own their energy resources; strengthening the local economy through community ownership; creating jobs through local procurement rules; quarterly energy advice and education programmes; the creation of a renewable energy community fund for energy efficiency projects; support the REEL programme; actively promote community energy through knowledge dissemination to community groups and the energy sector more widely; and demonstrate a replicable business model for delivering locally generated low cost green electricity for everyone including those in affordable housing, and at scale.

Timeline: THCLT has an active planning application for an additional 8 market houses to subsidise build costs. Assuming this goes ahead, work will begin on the terraces in March/April 2022 and TRESOC will be ready for a share offer at around the same time.

Energy Local Club - IB

Currently it is difficult to get a new solar installation linked to the grid due to oversupply of renewables in the Southwest, an entrenched structural problem as at times, supply outweighs demand. An Energy Local Club, whereby it can be shown that local energy is being used locally, could mitigate this, and provide 10-30% cost reductions for members. Members do not need to own their own installation. Sally Murrall-Smith has applied to the Community Energy Fund run by Devon County Council for a £25,000 grant to install 250kW solar PV on up to 5 Totnes roofs. Suitable roofs are being identified. This gives TRESOC chance to increase amount of electricity generated locally and sell it locally at a reduced rate. It is a three-stage project: technical and economic modelling; legal work and community share offer; establishing of ELC. Should know result of grant application by the end of the year.

Totnes Pavilions - IB

174kW of solar capacity with potential saving of 27 tonnes of CO2 p.a. Only 90kW consumption on site but full potential could be realised if part of an Energy Local Club. Totnes Town Council has unanimously approved the proposal. SHDC putting together a meeting of all interested parties. Similar range of benefits as Clay Park.

Hatchlands - IB

Farmer's straw chopping operation still causing a drop in generation. Figures for the drop in output have now been collated (slide available on request). Some decline was expected as the site was 2 years old when TRESOC took over the lease, and even if dusty the output was acceptable with 2 cleans a year. Output has declined considerably since the farmer began straw chopping. Only solution is for straw chopping to be moved to a small barn nearby; discussions are ongoing.

Staverton Hydro - IB

TRESOC has been working on this since 2014, with the help of grants from RCEF. At a meeting with the Environment Agency and Natural England it was stipulated that water abstraction for the leat can only take place for 3 months p.a. to protect salmon stocks. This makes the project financially unviable. Staverton Hydro Community Benefit Society is now being dissolved. There are no debts accruing and much has been learned.

Questions from Members. No questions

5. Society Business - Stephanie Burns, Company Secretary

Members Vote on Resolutions.

Resolution: Vote to dis-apply an audit of the accounts for year ending 31 March 2021.

Resolution unanimously approved by Members present and will be put on to Survey Monkey & emailed to the members after the AGM, to allow votes from those not present at the AGM.

Retirement of Directors: Richard Turner - Finance Director

Election of Directors: Raymond Seager - Finance Director.
Sally Murrall-Smith - Operations Director

Re-elected Directors: Ian Bright - Managing Director
Alastair Gets - Engineering Director
Stephanie Burns - Legal Director

No objections to re-election.

Questions from Members

Q. Member's Question: Does TRESOC have any involvement in the Atmos project?

A. Sally: We don't. There was talk of TRESOC becoming a member of Totnes Community Development Society, but it hasn't yet been acted upon. TRESOC would like to be involved.

Q. Member's Question: Does Staverton Hydro have a fish pass?

A. Ian: There would have been one on the old weir as part of the installation, which is starting to break up and it would have helped salmon get upstream. Only 230 female salmon recorded going upstream last year - salmon may soon be gone. There is option of hydro power at the weir itself, but SHCBS is no more.

Q. Member's Question: Is Anaerobic Digestion being discussed at all? Is this possible as future gas supply? Particularly in listed buildings with fewer options to use heat pumps.

A. Alastair: We did quite a lot of work on AD, specifically with Dartington Estate using waste from farming operations and collected organic waste from Totnes. Technically it would work but need the right mix of tech and people. Issues: transporting waste is problematic and requires a licence; dynamics at Dartington were changing at the time.

A. Ian: AD is something that's been talked about since beginning of TRESOC and is possible. Needs land, cooperation of local authority - who have been keen - local investment and building of local supply chain. Our scoping work for Dartington showed it can be done, but it's a multi-partner project. Anyone who would like to help take this forward is very welcome to get in touch with me; TRESOC does not have capacity at present.

A. Sally: RCEF funded study done by TRESOC showed the economic case to be marginal, also to note that the farmer changed his feedstocks by reducing dairy and goat herds. Without government incentives in grants, not viable. Change of policy needed to prevent waste being wasted.

Q. Member's Question: Are wind turbines looking any more likely as a possibility?

A. Ian: Have been asked recently about where to site wind turbines. Replied that sites are very specific, and the site chosen before is still the best site locally. Would love to restart that project. Onshore wind the cheapest and most abundant energy source locally, also the most profitable. The owner withdrew when the planning application was refused. Good grounds for appeal at the

time but all such appeals were called in by the Secretary of State and stopped, as there had been a change in government from one favourable to onshore wind to one that wasn't. Commercial onshore wind development stopped. Scotland and Wales have a more active programme favouring community ownership of wind farms. Community ownership also produces greater local acceptance for other renewable energy projects. External ownership with no benefit to local community does not foster this. Would love to talk to the local authority about wind. £400k spent by the developer on previous application and it is still commercially viable. More support needed at national government level.

Member's comment: wasn't there a huge protest against it in the local community?

A. Ian: Yes, but there were more letters in support than there were against. Times are different now. Attitudes of local authorities towards renewables is changing, as is the climate. It's a matter of time before those turbines go up and it would be better if they were in local ownership.

Q. Member: What would it take to resume communication?

A. Ian: The end of the application was the end of the agreement with the owner. The owner would have to say they want to work with us.

Member's comment: I'm concerned that it is the best site and there will be others interested. Want it to be community owned.

A. Ian: Think it would be appropriate for me to write to the owner about it.

Any Other Business. None.

Guest Speaker - Chloe Uden, Art & Energy Collective, Moths To A Flame live from Glasgow.

A&E work out of Exeter and Plymouth and Chloe was a student at KEVICC and Dartington and has family still in Totnes. MTAF is a mass-participation art installation devised over the last two years. 20,000 moths were made by individuals across the UK and overseas and installed in the Kibble Palace in Glasgow during COP26. The Palace is now part of the Botanical Gardens.

The idea for the project grew out of Covid and a desire to prompt people to have new conversations about energy, and to look at moths in our local communities. Partly to understand biodiversity and the natural world around us but also because the metaphor is useful to make us look at our relationships with energy and to consider some of the destructive elements that our relationship and need for energy has had for us.

It's been in three-parts: an invitation to look; an invitation to make moths and an invitation to send messages. We were delighted to work with the Grove primary school, organised by Sally, and to hold a moth watching session with TRESOC down at Totnes Weir, which was well-attended and appreciated by a diverse range of people. Local groups such as Harberton also took things into their own hands.

It's been a pleasure taking people's hopes up to Glasgow and helping people feel connected who couldn't be there because of Covid or wanting to avoid the carbon emissions of travel. We've been pleased to see lots of visitors: lots of COP delegates and negotiators and local families. Mass-participation does reach people that normal methods of community engagement doesn't: care home residents, schools, WIs, hospital staff. We're very grateful to TRESOC for being involved from the start.

Closing remarks from Ian Bright, with thanks to Chloe, TRESOC members, supporters and the TRESOC Team, and hopes that we can meet in person at next year's AGM.

Close 8.20pm.