

# Transition Chester AGM

Held at Unity Centre, Cuppin Street, Chester – Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024

## **Present:**

Simon Brown (SB) - Coordinator	Craig Green (CrG) – ( <i>Friends of Newton Hollows</i> )	Gillian McHattie – GMc ( <i>Narrows Park Community Group</i> )
Peter Benson ( <i>Frack Free Dee/ CaD FoE</i> )	Terry Walsh	Martin Preston (MP) ( <i>Treasurer, Chester Sustainability Forum</i> )
Ian Percival ( <i>Friends of Dickson’s Field</i> )	Chris Rowlands - ( <i>Narrows Park Community Group</i> )	Richard O’Neill - ( <i>Narrows Park Community Group</i> )
Debbie Lee ( <i>Friends of Dickson’s Field</i> )		

Minutes taken by Simon Brown

## **Apologies:**

Peter Bulmer (*S.E. Parish Councils Link*), John Tacon (*Chester Fairtrade/Chester World Development Forum*), Catherine Green, Jacky Creswick (*Friends of Caldly Valley Nature Park*), Molly Wilderspin-Jones, Arnold Wilkes (AW) (*Suma Group*), Roger Davey (*Friends of Alexandra Park*)

Simon Brown (SB) welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

## **Coordinator’s Overview of 2023**

SB gave an overview of 2023 - key points were:

- As last year, Transition Chester is financially viable – it has ongoing funding to support basic organisational costs (Website Hosting, Domain name cost, public liability insurance etc). Funding mostly raised through 5% levy on all Suma orders placed through Transition Chester plus donations through apple press events and hires
- Basic activities of the group carry on as previously, much at the same level, or a little less. These included:
  - Suma orders
  - Apple press hires and public apple pressings
  - Elmwood Avenue Incredible Edible
  - Incredible Edible (Alexandra Park) – a volunteer from Friends of Alexandra Park was now looking after the edibles bed in Alexandra Park.
- The group was represented at the Chester Green Fair, Grosvenor Park which was organised through Cheshire Eco Groups.
- Some activities were able to proceed or develop further, including:
  - Further work improving habitats and wildflower meadows in Narrows Park (Hoole) Community Group and tree maintenance.
- Friends of Dickson’s Field had officially affiliated to Transition Chester in the year and this has enabled them both to attract and utilise funding support and an ability to attract volunteers to support their work.
- The Caldly Valley Wildlife Group (as a free-standing Community Group) has asked to step down from Transition Chester as a partner organisation.

- Key areas where additional volunteer input is still required to help Transition Chester function more sustainably and effectively include:
  - **Website editing and updates** (utilising the Wordpress platform)
  - **Composition of Email Newsletters and circulation** (via Mailchimp)
  - **Social Media posts** (Facebook and "X")
  - **More frequent monitoring of Emails sent to Transition Chester via the website to enable prompt and effective responses**

**Activity Areas Overview of 2022** (See reports, where applicable, within appendices)

- ***Incredible Edible*** –(Report attached in appendix) SB reported that the planter on Elmwood Avenue has produced lots of growth this year, especially with sunflowers and Nasturtiums , one of which grew to around 2mtrs. These were left to form seed as food for wild birds. Herbs such as tarragon, bay, peppermint and garden mint all did well and were picked by members of the public as they became available. The 'sharing table' has been very well used with sharing of a variety of seeds, plants and surplus produce through the year, proving the benefit of its location on a busy access route to the Greenway and Newton school. Sadly a few plants have been dug up by unknown members of the public and where possible these were replaced by donated plants
- ***Apple Press hires and public apple pressings*** (Report attached in appendix) – SB reported that over the last year 2 public apple pressings took place one in Hoole and the other at the Green Fair in Grosvenor Park. There were 8 public apple pressing events held by community groups in Westminster Park, Saltney, Christleton, Tettenhall, Hoole Allotments, Kingsway Allotments, Great Boughton Parish Council . Only 6 private bookings for the press this year, well down on last year, possibly because of poor harvests of apples in local gardens.
- ***Narrows Park*** – (Report attached in appendix) GMCH gave a short presentation showing the work they had carried out through the year further enhancing the Narrows Park as a public space – the various wildflower meadows have become quite established and have responded well to the programmed management plan.
- ***Friends of Newton Hollows Group*** – (Report attached in appendix) Progress this year was hampered by difficulty in establishing CWaC departmental responsibilities for the different areas on the Hollows route. Some 10 trees have fallen along the route over the year, each requiring intervention from CWaC to maintain Right of Way access along route. Fruit trees have mostly become more established, although a couple seemed to have died since planting.
- ***Friends of Alexandra Park*** (Report attached in appendix) In the absence of Roger Davey GMCH presented the Sub-Group's Report. General Maintenance as agreed with Andrew Worrall our park keeper: including Pruning, Planting new areas, Thinning out of beds, Trimming borders and Cutting hedges ; Successes : Site of veterans hut now transformed into a wild area, additional fruit trees (plum cherry and pear) and bushes planted to extend the existing edibles area near the Panton Road entrance; a wild flower 'meadow' was planted beyond the basket ball area. There has been ongoing vandalism of

toilets in the park, and the original willow sculptures installed in the park in 2020 are all beginning to decay and rot and are now looking very sad. The group successfully rebuilt the willow arch last year, and Andy Worrall has got new bird sculptures added; The park was awarded a gold in the RHS North West in Bloom Awards 2023.

- **Suma buying group** – (Report attached in appendix) Suma orders have been placed every month over the year, delivered to Simon & Molly Brown's home in Hoole for collection by members of the group. Some £7,800 total value of orders placed has produced around £390 of income to Transition Chester via the 5% levy on each order.
- **Friends of Dickson's Field** (Report attached in appendix). IP presented the report on activities since they had joined Transition Chester. Activities included daffodil and snowdrop bulb planting and planting 15 fruit trees to form a small orchard. Ongoing maintenance is now planned, managing the brambles in some areas, Raking away grass from the orchard area annually allowing wildflowers to start growing and improving the footpaths around the perimeter of the park.
- **Mickle Trafford Green Spaces Group** – MP presented a verbal report on activities thorough the year. Two grassed areas were prepared for seeding of wildflowers which will then be managed by group in conjunction with CWaC, including clearing away vegetation after grass cuts. Sadly, suitable sites to plant the fruit trees purchased have yet to be identified. So far, the identified sites have proved far too wet and waterlogged to have much chance of successful planting.
- **Chester Sustainability Walks** – (Report attached in appendix) No Sustainability Walks were conducted by SB this year, due to other commitments, although the website continues to offer bespoke walks for any groups contacting the Transition Chester website. There is a possibility of a short programme of walks being conducted during the forthcoming week-long "Festival of Ideas" which is to be held in Chester in July. This is being coordinated by Chester University.

### **Treasurer's Report and Accounts for 2023 – 2024**

MP took over as Treasurer from February and made available a statement of the accounts including the summary of the income and expenditure over the year. The full accounts are attached at the end of the minutes. The account year was taken to run from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2023.

### **Election/confirmation of Executive Group and Coordinating Group**

The meeting noted and agreed the following people (who indicated their willingness to stand for the various roles within the **Executive Group**):

**Coordinator/Chair** : Simon Brown

Proposed by GMc – Seconded by MP – No objections or abstentions  
unanimous agreement

**Treasurer** : Martin Preston was willing to act as Treasurer for the coming year.

Proposed by GM – Seconded by Debbie Lee - No objections or abstentions -  
unanimous agreement

**Communications Officer (Social Media):** Simon Brown & Martin Preston. Martin offered to operate the Transition Chester "X" account.

**Communications Officer (E-mails):** Vacant (volunteer sought) Emails currently checked by Simon Brown. MP offered to receive automatically forwarded emails from the group's Domain Name account to the group's Gmail account. SB and MP to liaise over making this operational.

**Secretary:** Vacant (Volunteer sought)

### **Coordinating Group**

*Friends of Caldley Valley Nature Park* wished to withdraw from membership of Transition Chester Coordinating Group since no representative from that group was available.

*Chester World Development Forum* had been disbanded and *Chester Fairtrade Group* will be continuing subject to CWaC progressing Fair Trade status. John Tacon to remain as link.

The following were agreed as **Coordinating Group Members for 2024-25** :

**Simon Brown\***: *Apple Press Events/Hires, Incredible Edible Initiatives (Elmwood Avenue), Chester Sustainability Forum, Chester Sustainability Walks*

**Peter Bulmer**: *SE Chester Parish Councils link*

**Simon Brown\*, Arnold Wilkes and Catherine Green**: *Suma Buying Group*

**John Tacon**: *Chester Fairtrade Group*

**Martin Preston\*** ; *Chester Sustainability Forum, Mickle Trafford Green Spaces Group*

**Gillian McHattie** : *Narrows Park Community Group, Chester Community Energy*

**Craig Green** : *Friends of Newton Hollows*

**Roger Davey** : *Friends of Alexandra Park*

**Peter Benson** : *Chester & District Friends of the Earth*- a new rep will be appointed although PB will act as link in the interim.

**Lisa Rosetti** : *Incredible Edible Handbridge*

\* Executive Group members

### **Potential and planned activity for 2023**

- *Friends of Hollows* –Liaise with Chester Zoo about development of Phase 2; reach agreement with CWaC Departments over proper oversight of the path so that group can augment maintenance as feasible.
- *Narrows Park* – Further development of wildflower areas in park, maintaining planters near 'edibles' area in conjunction with others.
- *Suma Group* – expand membership as and when approached by interested individuals.

### **Any other business**

#### **1. Potential Litter pick on Millennium Greenway**

Debbie Lee was keen to organise a litter pick on the Millennium Greenway near Brook Lane entrance. Proposed to be 4<sup>th</sup> April, but dependant on effective liaison with Sustrans to access litter pick equipment and bags. It

was noted that Liz Edwards, current Area Manager for Sustrans had moved to another role and currently was not due to be replaced.

## 2. **Potential Repair Café**

Peter Benson highlighted a potential new initiative for Chester in the form of a 'Repair Café' where household equipment, gardening equipment, bicycles and clothing could be brought to be repaired and brought back into a useable condition. Whilst being led by Chester & District Friends of the Earth a call out to other community groups in the area was being made to collaborate on making this initiative a reality. PB to provide copy to SB ready for the next Transition Chester Bulletin and would provide interim contact for a potential Steering Group.

Meeting business finished at 21.30 pm.

Next ordinary meeting date to be arranged.

**APPENDIX 1:**  
**Annual Accounts:**

Follow link:

[Transition Chester accounts - 2023 year end report.pdf](#)

**APPENDIX 2**  
**Reports on Activity Areas:**

[AGM Reports Transition Chester AGM 2024.pdf](#)