

**Transition Town Haslemere
Link Councillor Report – Claire Matthes**

January 2021

On Thursday 7th January, TTH held their AGM. I copy the Chair's Report from Clive Davidson below. Clive will continue as Chair for 2021.

'TRANSITION HASLEMERE: CHAIR'S REPORT FOR 2020

2020 was a strange unsettling and challenging year. Lockdown constrained our activities, although some of the things we were able to do, such as online green drinks and the allotment, were helpful and much appreciated.

Green drinks had a looser format during lockdown as most people seem to want to connect and share stories and information rather than the themed discussions we have had in the pub in the past. Green coffee morphed into a green walk, which is likely to continue while tier 4 restrictions remain.

Activities on our community allotment were also constrained. Nevertheless, we did have a reasonable harvest – see Jeannette's separate report and thanks to her for leading the group.

We ran our stall at the town's monthly farmers' market until March, selling secondhand books and promoting our organisation and projects. Other events where we were planning to take the stall, such as the Farnham Sustainability Fair and the Haslemere Food Festival, were cancelled. So was the Christmas market in December, but we set up outside Dylan's on the first Saturday and despite the rain and gloom, had a successful day. The farmer's market is hoping to be back in town in March, on the first Saturday of the month rather than the Sunday, and if it is, we will be there.

We were making plans with Love Haslemere Hate Waste to start a repair cafe, but those came to a standstill. We hope to revive our plans this year.

Some of us participated in a local climate collective online meeting with Jeremy Hunt. It was an exchange of views without any practical outcomes.

Although the official Haslemere walking festival was cancelled, I did three 'notable trees of the town' walks with groups of six. They were all enjoyable.

We were active in pursuing better cycling and pedestrian facilities, and have taken on the organisation of the local active travel group, which includes councillors, Haslemere Vision people and local residents. Alastair has been the driving force – or should that be pedalling force? – behind this so tip of the hat to him.

We supported the Neighbourhood Plan, which contains many excellent proposals on planning, transport and wildlife. Commendations to Haslemere Vision and all involved in its preparations, including Gareth and his work with the biodiversity group. Hopefully, it will gain approval by Waverley at its next stage and come back to the town for a referendum.

We sent out a monthly newsletter, which our website manager Anna, posted on our website –

a big thank you to her for maintaining the website through the year. Thanks also to our town council liaison councillor Claire and to everyone else who supported Transition Haslemere activities through 2020.'

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I'd like to answer queries I have had about what Transition Town Haslemere actually do in case I have been previously woolly about it, taken from the website's 'About' page:

'Transition Haslemere is a local voluntary group taking action on climate change and the long-term sustainability of our environment for ourselves, our children and the generations to come.

We are part of the international Transition Town movement that encourages communities to come together to develop local practical solutions to the challenges of climate change and sustainability.

The first town to begin the transition towards lower carbon emissions and lower dependency on fossil fuels was Totnes, Devon, which launched its initiative in 2005. Since then, thousands of towns across the world have adopted the Totnes model.

Community

The key characteristic of a transition town initiative is that it comes from the **community**. It is about local people tackling issues such as waste, energy, local food, transport and health. Such collective action can be more effective than isolated individual efforts, and is empowering for the local community. We also work with other local groups where we share similar ideals and objectives, such as the National Trust (e.g. sponsoring trees in their orchard), 'eco' churches (joint events such as film shows) and local government (such as talks for Waverley Borough Council's waste and recycling department).

Haslemere is well suited to the model, with an active community, excellent local food sources, thriving local businesses, a lively cultural calendar and beautiful natural surroundings.'

As mentioned in my last update to Full Council as link councillor, discussions about a Repair Café for Haslemere slowed over lockdown, but members have now started looking at plans to build up to the full Repair Café concept (a good nearby example of which is in Farnham <https://frc.cfsd.org.uk/>), with a series of small, socially-distanced repair workshops. This would help gradually build up a base of both volunteers and community interest. Even this would be difficult at present but as the vaccine programme rolls out and restrictions are gradually eased such workshops will help us not only repair the broken items we all have lurking, but may go part way to repairing low spirits of social isolation both caused or exacerbated by the pandemic. It's early days for these discussions but Transition plan to form a small working party to flesh out the ideas early this year. This initiative is being worked on

in partnership with other members of the wider community – such as Love Haslemere Hate Waste and the St Stephen's Eco Church Green Team. This repair workshop concept is very much inspired by work already being done to great community benefit by Transition Town Totnes, helping to 'bring people together, relaxing and learning new skills, build networks and move our community towards self-reliance and resilience, create a fundamental sense of 'can do' and feelings of positivity, creativity and empowerment, establish and nurture links between old and young as skills are passed on'.....and more benefits besides!

<https://www.transitiontowntotnes.org/groups/skillshares/>

If you'd like to know more, get involved or receive the monthly newsletter, email info@transitionhaslemere.org

Claire Matthes