

Report from NLETS meeting on Wednesday 17th June 2009

NB This meeting was rescheduled from 11th June, due to flooding in the office area.

This had been planned as a full management group meeting, but as only Donna, Woody, Wendy, and Mary turned up, they agreed to make it a sub-committee meeting, focusing on the issue of local groups. The background was that Mary had raised issues about Wendy's proposed "North by North West" group, because no pledge and sterling budgets had been agreed for the project, but more importantly, she had been omitted from the mailing to the management group announcing the proposal, and should have been kept in the picture at the very least because of the logistical implications of launching what looked like a breakaway group. After a robust exchange, Mary agreed to draft some Guidelines for Local Groups for consideration by the management group - www.nllets.org.uk/members/pages.php?id=12.

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Notes of NLETS management group meeting on 26th June 2009_NB

This meeting was scheduled after the meeting on 17th June.

1. Agenda for this meeting _Donna arrived late at this meeting with her own incomplete notes from 17th June, which she wished to substitute for those Mary had already emailed to the management group, considering them too contentious. Alex, chairing, had not circulated any agenda, and compiled her own list at the start of the meeting in consultation with those present. However, discussion was hampered by the fact that other members did not have a copy of it. Mary had stated that she needed to leave early as she had to catch a train at 6am, and requested that items concerning the system be placed early in the agenda, but this was not taken into account. Alex said she would like to have an item about "where pledges come from", but did not think there would be time at this meeting.

2. Present: Alex (Chair), Rosalind (Secretary), Donna, Wendy, Woody, Mary (consultant), Michele (visiting member). **_Apologies** had been received from: Henu, Rebecca, and Nancy.

3. Welcome to New Members _Members introduced themselves to Michele, who said she was attending the meeting as she wished to assist Rebecca with the CHATI (Crouch end and Hornsey Area Transition Initiative) - described in its membership profile as "A local group aiming to combat climate change by building community resilience. We attempt to raise awareness of the issues associated with the twin challenges of Peak Oil and Climate Change through ethical, social, cultural, economic, environmental and community action to make the transition to a low carbon, sustainable and ethical future". Mary invited Michele to tell the meeting about this project, whether the meetings were well-attended, etc, but the Chair prevented Michele from replying as it was not on the agenda.

4. Minutes of Previous Meetings _Minutes of the meeting held on 14th May were tabled, as were Donna's notes from the meeting held on 17th June, and a copy of the Draft Guidelines for local groups.

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes **5.1 Report from Quarterly Social:** _The social held on 6th June was felt by all to have been a great success. Alex, who had done the catering was thanked for her excellent contribution, and Rebecca and Andy who had organised the programme, were thanked in their absence for organising it.

5.2 Vacancies on the Management Group: _It was noted that Rebecca had requested that a Socials Organiser be appointed in order to provide more support, as in addition to her normal role covering for newsletter editor and mail-out co-ordinator, she and Andy (who was no longer on the management group) had engaged all the presenters and performers and handled the logistics, including borrowing folding chairs from various sources, and hosted the event. Alex invited Michele to take on the role of social secretary but she replied that she was mainly interested in organising events in Crouch End. Michele left the meeting shortly afterwards, saying there were too many tensions in the room.

6. Minute Writing _Mary had suggested it might be a good idea to put agreed minutes immediately on a laptop whilst the meeting was in progress, and this suggestion was put to Rosalind. However, Mary said she had tried it at the previous meeting, and found it difficult, and said she was happy with the way Rosalind was doing it as long as they were circulated to management group members promptly after the meeting

7. Financial Report _There being no Treasurer present, no report on sterling finances, including any specific report on the June Social, was available. The possibility of monthly reports of income and expenditure being provided to each meeting by the administrator had been raised, but this would increase Donna's workload, and it came to light that members who had previously assisted with tasks in the office under Donna's supervision were no longer doing so.

8. Pledge Report _Woody [who has had a stroke, is partially paralysed, and needs to be given more time than most people to get his words out] tried to ask for clarification about inconsistencies in pledge accounting, with particular reference to the admin (001), cafe (562) and system accounts. All three accounts had been used for income and expenses in relation to the social. He was unable to make his point despite several attempts to do so, and a private conversation took place between Donna and Alex, who interrupted him saying anything to do with accounts could not be discussed in the absence of the Treasurer.

9. Interruption _At this point Woody lost his composure, hit the table with his fist, shakily got to his feet, upsetting his chair as he struggled to remove his coat, and left the room. Mary helped him get his coat on, and he left the building. Other members expressed their disapproval of his behaviour. Alex said if he was allowed to stay on the management group, she would have to resign. Mary pleaded with them to let the incident pass, as he had removed himself voluntarily, and move on to other business, but they seemed unable to do so, and she left shortly afterwards. The next day she enquired from Donna what had occurred in the remainder of the meeting, and was told they spent the rest of the meeting discussing Woody's and her own behaviour. It later emerged that Donna had been voted into the position of permanent Chair by those present.

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Follow-up _On Monday 29th June Mary wrote to those who had been present at the meeting, explaining the point Woody was trying to make, providing her own feedback, and advising them that she would be obliged to support Woody if they took action against him. Following receipt of this letter, the secretary, Rosalind, resigned with immediate effect. Mary's and Rosalind's messages were then forwarded by Donna others not present at the meeting.

11. Further Note _The next meeting of the management group, was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 28th July but was cancelled on one day's notice. However it later came to light that an unannounced meeting of the management group had already taken place on Tuesday 23rd July at which an one-page letter to Woody dated 27th July signed by Donna, was drafted by those present, that he had to sign for, telling him that his membership of the management group had been withdrawn and that he had a fortnight in which to resign. This was apparently based in a unanimous decision of those who remained at the 26th June meeting, ie Donna, Alex, Michael, Wendy (and Rosalind), later "ratified" by Rebecca (total 6).

Other management group members not present were Henu, Nancy, and Woody himself (total 3) - Mary was not counted as she is considered to be a consultant. The constitution paragraph 8.7 states "Any Management Group member may be dismissed for reasons of exceptional mismanagement or gross misconduct by a three-quarters vote of the entire Management Group". Since this was not done (and the ratio of 6 to 9 fails to meet the three-quarters criterion, even including Rosalind who had dissociated herself by resigning), the action of sending the letter to Woody was illegal.

Once it came to light that a July meeting had been held, Mary asked Wendy by phone why she had not received the minutes for the website, and was told they were considered too sensitive to publicise to members - they were attempting to redraft them

without mentioning the name of the member who had been ousted from the management group. However, Woody is challenging the legality of the action taken against him, and is prepared for the facts to be made known to members. He will be replying to Donna's letter of 27th July to let her know he will not be resigning.

12. Publicising Minutes of Management Group meetings to members

Extract from the constitution: "8.1 The Management Group shall arrange and determine the timing and frequency of its meetings. These will be at least every 3 months. 8.2 The Management Group will publicise its meetings in advance to members, normally through the regular system mailing or newsletter. 8.3 The Management Group shall keep a record of all its meetings, which members may inspect. 8.4 Management Group meetings are open for any member to attend and make a contribution."

It has been NLLETS practice to circulate minutes only to management group members, but since February 2007 to make them available in a management group area, and once confirmed, to put them in the old "members area", protected by a group password. There was an interruption in this service for several months because Rebecca, who was helping Donna, who is registered disabled, with a difficult situation she had got into with the benefits authorities due to having told them she was working, urgently requested that the minutes be removed from the site, because surnames had been included in some of them. However, the service was restored by the end of July, the surnames having been removed - see [minutes](#).

Other LETS groups make the unconfirmed minutes available to members immediately after the meeting, and those who have an interactive website (or other regular form of email communication) publicise the dates to members, and since there is no actual rule forbidding members from seeing draft minutes, it will now be proposed that we conform to this practice forthwith, in order to support members in being able to attend and contribute to management group meetings.

MF/mf at 11/8/2009