**\*\*Jackie has now done the Building Sense and GC bits. Happy to make changes if required but otherwise done 23.11. at 16.20\*\***

**Herefordshire Green Network, Report 2020-2022**

1. **Who we are**

**The Network**

Herefordshire Green Network, formerly the Herefordshire in Transition Alliance, comprises an eclectic mix of organisations, networks and individuals committed to taking action in response to the climate and ecological emergency, and to support the drive for Herefordshire to become net zero carbon by 2030.

Member organisations vary in size from county-wide environmental charities, such as Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, to local groups such as KLEEN. The membership has recently expanded to include parish councils as part of the Great Collaboration (see below). The current membership stats are:

Membership income has increased from £1187 in 20/21 to £2136 in 21/22 and in 22/23 has already reached almost £2000 with five months of this financial year still to go. The numbers of paid members - individuals, groups and parish councils - has increased, with particular thanks going to those individuals who make a regular monthly donation. This year (22/23) to date, 29 groups and 16 parish councils have paid a subscription: the parish councils pay their subscription to be members of The Great Collaboration. This is an increase from thirteen groups and ten parish councils in 21/22. The number of individuals who are now on our database having subscribed to our newsletter, or attended one of our events has increased by over 300 since 5th April 2021. Many of these contacts have come due to the BUILDING SENSE events that HGN has been running online.

Covid had a significant impact on the way that HGN was able to operate. Whereas in the past meetings and ‘gatherings’ had been face to face, from 2020 onwards all events went online. Like many other organisations, we’ve observed that new patterns have become established, and many people prefer to join ‘informational’ events without the need to travel. However we’re acutely aware that meeting together is essential for our social cohesion and for making new connections, so we really do want to do this. We are currently experimenting with three types of event/meeting: online-only, face to face and hybrid (both online and face to face,, which is hard to challenge in a way that’s satisfactory for all).

**The Team**

The HGN staff team are self-employed contractors who provide services concerning administration, events’ coordination and facilitation of The Great Collaboration (TGC); together with members of the network who form the Steering Group and/or participate in various projects being run under HGN’s auspices.

Our paid staff has included:

* Admin Support/Events’ Coordinator

In 2020, Wendy Ogden worked two days per week as administrator and TGC facilitator, and in a voluntary role as HGN’s Treasurer; at the same time Beth Williamson was Honorary Secretary to the Steering Group. Wendy stood down from her paid roles in Spring 2021 and, after advertising the post, Rachel Hickley (one day/week) took over as Administrator and Events’ Coordinator. Rachel also produces the weekly newsletter.

* The Great Collaboration facilitator

Beth Williamson (one day/week) was appointed as TGC facilitator in 2020, though in August 2022 Beth moved on and her role was taken over by Clare Cherry, in a temporary capacity until a long-term replacement can be appointed.

* Building Sense project facilitator

Since March 2022 Gemma Monk-Hartley has been working on the Building Sense project, in part directly funded by HGN (grant from Herefordshire Council) and in part by the FutureReadyHomes programme (funded via Marches Energy Agency)

* Bid-Writer/Funding Adviser

Although the Steering Group had identified the need for a Strategic Director, and drafted and advertised the post in Spring 2021, there was a poor response. The title was interpreted by the applicants as implying that HGN was a large corporate rather than a voluntary network, and a significant part of the work was for fundraising. Therefore, the Steering Group focused on the core need of attracting someone to help with funding applications. The post was redrafted and advertised and in October 2021 Clare McGowan was appointed as bid writer. Unfortunately, due to personal circumstances, Clare was unable to continue. She left HGN in Spring 2022.

Members of the Steering Group are appointed by the members of HGN. There has been considerable turnover in the Steering Group in the last two years, and we are grateful to everyone who has given time and energy to support the Network. The role of the Steering Group is to set a strategic direction, develop a portfolio of members' meetings, oversee communications, and ensure that we have sufficient resources to maintain the staff for HGN projects and network administration. The current Steering Group comprises:

* Co-Chairs: Jackie Jones and Nick Read
* Vice Chair: Gordon Coppock
* SG Members: Richard Urbanski, Toni Fagan and Clare Cherry
* Honorary Treasurer. In Spring 2022 Wendy stood down as Honorary Treasurer and her place was taken by Pat Sucher, who was formally appointed on 6th May 2022.

Steering Group meetings are attended by the Treasurer (Pat Sucher) and the Administrator/events coordinator (Rachel Hickley)

**Subgroups**

**HR**

The Steering Group also established a HR Subgroup to support the staff team and to ensure that appropriate policies, procedures and contracts were in place. The members of the Subgroup are Clare Cherry, Nick Read and Jackie Jones.

**Communications**

The communications subgroup needs to be re-formed. Current inputs are from Richard Urbanski, Rachel Hickley and Jackie Jones (n.b. we specifically need somebody to edit and post recordings of online events)

**Events**

The events subgroup needs to be re-formed - currently events are being set up primarily by Rachel Hickley or (Building Sense) Jackie Jones and/or Gemma Monk-Hartley

**HGN’s Legal Status**

HGN is not registered as a legal entity, such as a Charity or Company, but is technically an Unincorporated Association, meaning that it does have Terms of Reference and rules governing its activity. However, in practical terms any money which is managed by HGN becomes part of the personal responsibility of the members of the Steering Group who signed any funding contracts, typically the two Co-Chairs. As HGN’s operations becomes more complex, and in order to provide a degree of legal protection, HGN sought legal advice from Batewells Solicitors and HVOSS concerning what might be an appropriate legal structure to support its activities The advice they gave was that HGN should establish a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

A small working party (Nick Read, Jackie Jones, Clare Cherry and Gordon Coppock) have been progressing this and a new Constitution for the Herefordshire Green Network CIO, together with public benefit tests and a business plan are in preparation. We hope that members will vote to adopt the new Constitution at the AGM prior to making an application to the Charity Commission.

1. **Our Impact**
2. **Communications**

**Web-based tools and social media**

* HGN has worked to develop its own website

[Herefordshire Green Network](https://hgnetwork.org/) This hosts member information, news, upcoming events and links to recordings of past events, resources and key HGN documents that are in the public realm

* And that of the Great Collaboration (see below)

[The Great Collaboration - Local Actions for a Healthy Planet](https://greatcollaboration.uk/) This is the site of the Great Collaboration Toolkit, plus resources for local councils/groups to use in their communities

* We also produce a weekly review via Mailchimp circulated to all HGN members/supporters.
* The Great Collaboration also circulates a monthly (themed) newsletter
* Building Sense circulates occasional newsletters, particularly to alert people to upcoming events

Both HGN and the Great Collaboration have active Facebook, Twitter and (GC) Instagram accounts, and we have recently benefited from running some paid advertising on Facebook to reach new audiences.

**Members’ meetings**

It has produced a portfolio of meetings, mainly via zoom until lockdown restrictions eased, including:

*XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, some background to the meetings/events*

**Local events**

HGN has also provided input into a number of local events, through its general activity, own projects (Great Collaboration and/or Building Sense) and via members, armed with appropriate display material). In some cases we have worked in co-operation with local groups to make these events happen. To date these include:

* Eardisland Environment Day
* Archenfield Environment Day
* Archenfield Energy Day
* Staunton on Wye Energy Day
* Almeley Energy Day
* Greener Colwall event (almost 600 visitors!)
* Throughout October HGN’s Building Sense hosted a Herefordshire Green Doors 2022 month (14 Herefordshire homes, 180 visitors across 22 days)

1. **Strategic Influencing**

HGN has had opportunities to inform local policy on behalf of the network members, through its participation in a number of Herefordshire’s strategic forums.

* Jackie Jones and Gordon Coppock, sit on the Herefordshire Climate and Nature Partnership Board. This Board was established by Herefordshire Council to oversee a county-wide climate and nature plan with an intention of reaching zero net carbon by 2030. (Jackie is primarily representing HGN, and Gordon the Marches LEP) Gordon sits on the Subgroups for Transport and Buildings, and chairs the Energy Subgroup. Jackie sits on the Buildings, Energy and Communications Subgroups.
* Gordon Coppock sits on the Marches LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) energy group
* Nick Read chairs the Herefordshire Local Nature Partnership and the Herefordshire Food Partnership. Through participation in these forums HGN has been able to host Members’ meetings on topics such as the Food Charter and various topics on the natural environment.
* Nick Read also sits on the Hereford Diocesan Zero Carbon Group, which is overseeing the Diocesan net zero carbon strategy (with a target of net zero by 2030). This participation has enabled four pilot studies to be developed linking local environmental groups and active church groups, with the support of Beth Williamson as the Great Collaboration Facilitator, to create more of a critical mass within a given locale (see below).

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1. **Projects**

HGN members have always been involved in county-wide projects, such as the h.energy week that used to operate across Herefordshire. However, within the last few years the Steering Group has taken responsibility for a number of funded, projects:

**The Great Collaboration - local actions for a healthy planet**

The Great Collaboration started in 2019 as a series of roadshows in each of the market towns, but with extensive mailings to encourage local parish council members from each town’s hinterland to attend. The roadshows essentially took the form of a climate conversation, raising awareness of the threat of global warming and of the potential for different spheres of human activity (buildings, transport, energy generation and food and land use) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The interaction with the parish councillors led to a number of Parishes declaring a climate and ecological emergency and the Great Collaboration website was developed to further support local activity.

The idea for taking the project online came largely from experiences of then HGN Co-Chair Kate Gathercole and then Steering Group member Gareth Williams, based on their experiences in Fownhope. The idea was for a website that would provide individuals, communities and parish councils with a set of actions and learnings that would support local action on climate change.

Kate Gathercole was successful in getting funding from the MCS Charitable Foundation to develop the website, with particular inputs from Gareth Williams and then Administrator Wendy Ogden, while Beth Williamson became the project co-ordinator. Many thanks to Kate and Wendy in particular for their enormous inputs into creating the website. The initial concept and website also had big inputs from Caplor Horizons, a local charitable organisation that was contracted to deliver the initial website. Taking on a project of this scale and scope was hugely ambitious for a small volunteer-led organisation.

Before standing down as Co-Chair, Kate was successful in obtaining a second round of funding from the MCS Charitable Foundation. This was originally for a 6-month period from August 2021. However, we were able to extend the funding so that it covered 12 months from December 2021 to November 2022, which has provided a longer and slower delivery window.

Meanwhile, Beth Williamson did great work in growing a community of engaged parishes, delivering online events to train them in what the site could offer. In August 2021 Jackie Jones (Co-Chair) took on the role of co-ordinating the funding and working with Beth as the other original team members had needed to step aside for various reasons. HGN continued to work on this with Caplor Horizons, and with a representative of Fownhope Environment Group, Jon Parr. The Co-Chairs would like to thank Jon for an exceptional level of voluntary contribution of his time and expertise to the project, which continues to the time of writing

To fulfil part of our requirement for the funders, we commissioned Hereford-based TheDMLab to take on the website, and a team from Firestarter (marketing) to help with web development and marketing to grow participant numbers. These have gone up by 25% since marketing activity started seriously in August 2022 (to 22 November 2022) and the trend continues.

In line with the long-term strategy, we are now actively seeking partners and/or a more appropriate new home for the Great Collaboration website so that we can continue to use it in Herefordshire but enable it to be used more widely.

Clare Cherry has taken over from Beth Williamson as co-ordinator to work with communities - and all indications are that the key to success of the Great Collaboration is that combination of community plus that actions toolkit, so that parish councils can start to see what their communities are doing and what they need help with.

**Building Sense - creating comfort and cutting carbon**

Two of the Steering Group members - Gordon Coppock and Jackie Jones - were keen to start some kind of initiative to promote and encourage the energy retrofit of buildings across the county. Gordon had done home energy work with Marches Energy Agency and Jackie had been involved with several initiatives in London, including with two London boroughs. Both had been part of a nascent group, including several Herefordshire architects, which had started before 2020 lockdown.

The Building Sense initiative was started late in 2020 and had a launch event online early in 2021. It was able to benefit from the widespread switch to online meetings, running several through 2021. Funding for some events was generously provided by (then) WPD Community Matters funding, and then in 2022 the group was granted funding from Herefordshire Council to deliver a range of events, online and in person, and to also enrol and encourage local builders to undertake specific retrofit training. This also allowed us to appoint Gemma Monk-Hartley to do much of the co-ordination work on this alongside Jackie Jones.

Meanwhile the initiative has built good links with a wide range of interested educational and trade bodies across Herefordshire (and has collaborated on funding applications). At the start of 2022, a funding application led by Marches Energy Agency for a project to trial and learn how to deliver retrofit at scale was successful; the FutureReadyHomes initiative is now working across Shropshire, Powys and Herefordshire, and HGN’s Building Sense initiative is a partner in that. (Severn Wye Energy Agency is the body delivering the retrofit surveys etc.). Gemma Monk-Hartley is working on behalf of HGN as Herefordshire Co-ordinator for FutureReadyHomes.

Building Sense has had an outstanding response - our online sessions regularly have over 70 participants and some 300 people within Herefordshire have taken part so far. The group ran a ‘Herefordshire Green Open Homes’ event throughout October, with 180 visitors. Building Sense has also worked with several local groups to deliver ‘energy days’ in their communities, and are also doing some ‘winterproofing’ energy cafe sessions. We are about to start (November 2022) an initiative to support local community/parish groups to deliver simple energy-saving measures within their communities, generously funded by National Grid Distribution’s Community Matters Fund.

**Hereford Diocese/HGN pilot projects**

Through our role on the Diocesan Zero Carbon Group, HGN has developed four pilot projects with the diocese in which we are linking faith-based groups (who also have a net zero carbon target by 2030) with local environmental groups. The diocese is also involved in supporting church-aided and church-maintained schools so that there are also opportunities to link with the schools within these localities. It is hoped that the pilot projects will enhance the critical mass within a given locale and that the Great Collaboration resources can be developed and utilised to support local activity, and that we can then share the learning outcomes more widely.

The four pilots are taking place in:

* Fownhope
* Little Birch
* Lugwardine
* Orleton