

TT Directors' Report 1/8/22-31/7/23

Directors' Report

for the Period 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023

for

Transition Tynedale Limited

(A company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

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## Legal and administrative information

The information below forms part of the Directors' Report.

Status	Transition Tynedale Limited is a company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 9 July 2012
Directors	Jane Brantom Jan Ashdown (From Feb 2023) Lowri Potts (From Feb 2023) Stuart Page (until March 2023)
Secretary	Stuart Page
Treasurer	Sarah Hallberg
Company number	08135495
Registered address	10 Market Street Hexham NE46 3NU
Web address	<a href="http://blog.transitiontynedale.org/">http://blog.transitiontynedale.org/</a>
Bankers	Lloyds Bank PO Box 1000 Andover BX1 1LT

# Directors' Report

## ***Structure, governance and management***

Transition Tynedale Limited is run entirely by volunteers. Members elect a Board of Directors who take overall responsibility for the organisation. Decision-making is often devolved to project teams or working groups, who are responsible for determining the best way to achieve the specific project or group objectives and performing risk assessments. All financial aspects are overseen by the Board of Directors.

## ***Transition Tynedale Objects***

For the period covered by this report and accounts the Objects of Transition Tynedale Limited were:

*To build resilience and sustainability into our local community by:*

- a) creating, supporting and encouraging local solutions to the global problems of climate change and biodiversity emergencies*
- b) raising awareness of the issues associated with the climate change and biodiversity emergencies and the need to develop a local low carbon, sustainable future through ethical, social, cultural, economic, environmental and community action*
- c) supporting and working with other Transition Towns and similar community-led initiatives*
- d) engaging with individuals and organisations, including statutory, voluntary, and business where appropriate.*

## **Summary Report**

The 2022/23 year has been one of new energy in new projects largely initiated by the new TT directors and good solid work on our existing projects. It has also had its challenges. The year is summarised below.

### **Governance**

The reporting year of 01 August 2022-31 July 2023 presented a challenging time for the governance of Transition Tynedale (TT). At the beginning of August 2022, we were below quorum in our number of directors following the resignation of Ariane Baty due to other pressures on her time. We held a well-attended review meeting in November 2022 which unanimously supported a wish for TT to continue.

We established a time limited task group and were delighted to co-opt new directors Jan Ashdown and Lowri Potts to join Stuart Page and Jane Brantom in February 2023. We were very sorry to see Stuart step down as director in March 2023 after

many years of support to TT. Stuart agreed to continue his role as Company Secretary however until a successor is found and has continued to provide loyal support. The three directors, Jane, Jan and Lowri have met monthly since March to oversee TT work.

The need to recruit additional directors to help share these responsibilities remains an important one as personal circumstance change.

Megan Payne stepped down as TT treasurer at the March 2023 AGM and was warmly thanked for fulfilling that role so well over several years. Sarah Hallberg was welcomed onto the team as the new TT Treasurer.

During the year directors and company secretary reviewed and updated the Safeguarding policy and finalised the Child Protection policy. All risk assessments were updated with project leads.

Our established projects progressed well over the year (see below). We especially welcomed the significant contribution of Grow Hexham into the Community Garden.

Our aim remains to consolidate and grow our established projects, and where possible to explore new project areas and facilitate their development.

We look forward to all the groundwork that has been done for 'Just Fix It' and renewables during 2023 coming to fruition and helping to contribute to the waste avoidance and minimisation, and green energy agendas.

The following presents summary reports on our projects and activities (updates include activities up to November 2023)

## **Hexham Space for Nature (HS4N)**

Hexham Space for Nature joined Transition Tynedale in 2020 and has been active in trying to change the way that we manage our parks, gardens, and open spaces to benefit wildlife. Good partnership working has been achieved with both Hexham Town Council (HTC) and Northumberland County Council (NCC) in some areas.

### **Sele, Abbey Grounds and Hexham House**

Volunteers continue to tend to the 'woodland' border on the top wall of the Sele park, to enhance areas of long grass which Northumberland County Council (NCC) continues to manage as meadow, by planting wildflower plugs, this year including cowslips and primroses (part funded by NCC).

In Hexham House grounds a group of volunteers continue to improve the once neglected long border, and a difficult to manage shady area known as the Glade, with new and donated planting.

In 2023 HS4N volunteers took part in Hexham Hidden Gardens to promote their work, and of wildlife friendly gardening, especially in Hexham House grounds.

Work on the Hexham Tree Strategy has stalled. Our design for the Sele, incorporating proposals for new trees, has not been constructively engaged with by NCC. This was our principal case study, and there seems little point progressing the strategy without buy in from the Council. We are reviewing our next steps.

### **Cemetery and meadow**

The grassland opposite the cemetery continues to be managed as a meadow and species diversity is increasing year on year. We have facilitated an agreement between the two council's, (Hexham Town Council and NCC), that NCC will now undertake the annual cut and collect with their new machine. We have facilitated an agreement with Hexham Golf Club that they will take at least some of the cuttings for composting.

There has been no progress towards the recommendations we made to the Town Council for the cemetery itself.

### **Highford Park**

Last years' consultation at Highford Park was successful, but the County Council let us down and were unable to do the work promised. This year with their new cut and collect machinery they have been able to do at least some of the promised work. Again, we have kept residents informed of progress, and when concerns were raised about hedgehogs being caught up in the long grass mowing, we organised a 'hedgehog sweep' to reduce the risk – approximately 15 concerned neighbours turned out at short notice.

We continue to work with NCC to review the cut and collect regime and to work out what is possible.

### **Shaws Park**

We carried out an on-site consultation event over proposals to seed an area of amenity grassland at the entrance to Shaw's Park. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and the Town Council agreed to purchase seed to our specification. This was sown in autumn after HTC staff prepared the ground. We have facilitated an agreement with NCC that they will cut and collect this area using their new cut and collect machine.

### **Other sites in Hexham**

We have requested further long grass areas in Hexham at Priestlands, Hackwood and two at Tyne Green. For various reasons only one of the Tyne Green sites was left this year, Hackwood was missed, but the Priestlands area was left as it was last year.

On Burswell Avenue, residents were assisted to plant ground cover plants last year in recently established tree pits around the lime trees growing on the road. Because of drought only about half of these plants survived so further planting was undertaken this autumn.

There has been no further progress at Hall Orchard where last year we gained permission from NCC to create a new woodland border along this walk. Funds and a design are needed before we can proceed further.

### **Hexham Hoedown**

This project to reduce glyphosate use on our streets took place again this year, but it is limited to a handful of streets. Our request to HTC for help in communicating with residents and co-ordinating this work on a larger scale was rebuffed. It is beyond the group's capacity currently to organise this, and we are reviewing the project's future.

### **Hexham Town of Trees**

Work on the Hexham Tree Strategy has stalled. Our design for the Sele, incorporating proposals for new trees, has not been constructively engaged with by NCC. This was our principal case study, and there seems little point progressing the strategy without buy in from the Council. We are reviewing our next steps.

### **Hexham – Swift Heaven**

Over 20 volunteer surveyors were active again this season, although numbers of swifts appear to have been lower than the previous year – possibly due to climatic conditions on their migration routes.

An evening training event was put on for volunteer surveyors which was well received. Unfortunately, during the peak surveying period Hexham experienced a long period of cold damp weather which affected both the surveyors and swift activity.

Building on previous years success an additional 10 swift boxes were erected. We now have an agreed 'Hexham Box' design and half of this year's box production of 26 was undertaken by the 'Men's Shed at No 28' and the other half by Swift Heaven volunteers. We have advised the QEII High School and created a bespoke box design for them to build and erect. So far they have not implemented the project. None of last year's boxes have, so far, been occupied. We understand it can take several years for this to happen and there also needs to be demand from a rising population.

A paper extolling the use of swift bricks as a mandatory requirement for all planning applications in the town has been prepared for Hexham Town Council, Planning and Infrastructure Committee. If adopted, it is hoped that HTC will request that NCC Planning also adopt a mandatory policy requirement.

### **Edible Hexham and Community Garden**

This year as being something of a transition year where we have delighted in the achievements of last year with the publication of the Buzz brochure, the Edible Trail map, and the plaques on the planters with information about some of the herbs and a QR code link to some of the recipes, but also where we have struggled a bit with watering in a very dry period, the difficulty of recruiting new volunteers, and delays in securing the NCC Community Chest funded reservoir planters.

However, we now have in place at Selegate two splendid new reservoir planters ready to be planted out early in the Spring. With the help of a new volunteer, we have been able to refresh the planters along the wall of the Old Gaol, and an existing planter at Selegate.

Two of us have worked at the Station, supported with funding from Northern Rail, where we have maintained our six Edible Hexham planters alongside a Coronation special using the triple planter on the forecourt and smaller planters both there and on Platform 2 filled with pollinators.

Adam, at the Wentworth beds has secured some help to dig out the top bed there. The bottom bed was visited on Hexham in Bloom judging day as part of the general community engagement 'feel' of the town.

We approach 2024 with optimism and determination that we can do even better on the 'Edible' front!

This year has been one of great contribution from HTC's 'Grow Hexham' project to the Community Garden. There is much synergy between our work. New events happened and benches and notices appeared. The invaluable extra publicity, muscle power and time has helped keep things going following the retirement of long standing loyal and regular volunteer Elizabeth.

However, the future of both Grow Hexham and the use of the old Middle School land remains uncertain. NCC has publically stated their intention to retain the Community Garden as part of future development of the site. We have made our own representations to NCC and hope that the support of the local council will strengthen the case for keeping the garden as a community asset.

## **Prudhoe Space for Nature (PS4N)**

### **Community Orchard and Wildlife Garden**

We celebrated our first year of work on this site in August. After the initial clearance of the enormously tall willowherb and dense brambles, we had to tackle the mounds of random rubbish, barbed wire and corrugated iron, an abandoned telegraph pole, huge quantities of broken glass and a live machine gun round!

Thanks to the hard work, commitment and problem-solving genius of our volunteers, the site is slowly being transformed. We've put in hedges, apple, cherry, and holly trees as well as willow, climbers and other shrubs. We've repurposed the wood from the base of the old Gardeners' Hut and made two large planters at the top of the site and we now have storage water containers collecting rainwater from the hut roof. We were kindly given two sheds where we can store our equipment.

We also had two large annual wildflower seeded areas which attracted pollinators of all sorts and we are now well on our way to creating a reed bed area. We have another wet area at the bottom of the site and birdboxes and a bee hotel ready to welcome occupants.



Plans for the future include creating a wheelchair-friendly path at the top of the site and a seating area there, replacing an old boundary fence and installing a gate. We also want more hedging and to create a perennial wildflower meadow. We've counted eight butterfly species on site as well as a whole range of moths, bees, and other invertebrates. That seems like evidence we're going in the right direction. We continue to have work parties every Thursday and Saturday mornings.

### **Bee Bed**

We took on the bed outside the Co-op in Prudhoe and planted it up with pollinator friendly plants. The project with its willow bee sculpture in the centre of the bed has attracted a lot of positive interest - as well as bees and butterflies!

PS4N is grateful for the funding and support it has received from Karbon Homes, Prudhoe Community Partnership, Prudhoe Town Council and Virgin Media.

### **Plant swap**

We held another successful annual plant swap stall at Hexham Farmers' Market in May with very welcome help from Grow Hexham with the organising and TT volunteers for making it all run smoothly.

### **Apple pressing**

There was another great morning of collecting, pulping, and pressing local apples at the Farmers Market in October. Thanks to all who helped organise, brought apples along, pulped, and pressed apples, drank the juice and give donations. Like the plant swap, this just shows how much we can grow locally and how much joy it can bring.

### **Transition Tynedale Talks**

We have had no individual talks during this period. But have introduced a guest speaker slot into our AGMs.

### **Community Orchards**

In the last five years TT have planted three small community orchards, at Acomb First School Field, Tyne Green near Emma's Cafe, and on Karbon Homes land in Acomb. All are pruned annually, are healthy and eventually when mature will produce abundant crops.

Grow Hexham organised a very successful 'Fun in the Orchard' event with us at the Tyne Green Hexham Community Orchard in October 2022. It went very well with 120 plus visitors over the 3 hours and huge amounts of apple juice made and consumed. Lack of capacity meant this couldn't be repeated in 2023 but is something we would like to revive.

We continue to look for opportunities to network with others who are active with orchards in the area, and we have engaged in events around Northumberland where leaders of Community Orchards or private owners to come and discuss their experiences of planting, growing, outreach and harvesting.

## **Other activities**

TT and HS4N both had stalls at the Hexham Net Zero Fair in October 2022 and March 2023, regular newsletters have been prepared and circulated and the Facebook page reviewed and refreshed with invaluable help from TT volunteers Ariane and Pixie.

## **New projects**

### **Just Fix It**

New director Lowri has invested much energy this year into developing a TT response to local solutions to the waste reduction and recycling agendas. 'Just Fix It' builds on the successful work of the repair movement witnessed all over the country.

During the year a huge amount of research has been done on the logistical and planning challenges - insurance, health & safety, supervision, etc. Visits have been made to existing events, meetings held, lessons learned and around 30 volunteer repairers have been recruited. There was an open invitation to a briefing at the Hexham Climate Cafe in September 2023, followed by exhibition in the foyer of the Queen's Hall which generated more interest and answered many questions. Funding has been secured for PAT testing and training and funding applications made for running the first Just Fix It event, hopefully in Spring 2024.

## **Renewables**

This long dormant area of activity for TT has been revived this year by new director Jan working with key parties/interested active individuals in Hexham including Sycamore Net Zero and Ariane Baty (HTC and Hexham Climate Action). The focus has been on Hexham with the aim of agreeing on one or two projects all can support in response to biodiversity and climate emergencies to help make Hexham a more sustainable and resilient place to live, learn and work. The result is awaited on the funding application for an initial facilitated stakeholder event - for climate champions and representatives of climate-active groups, businesses, and cultural venues, etc - which we hope will take place early in the new year.

## **Thanks**

Finally, we thank our members for their annual membership fees, every little helps. We give special thanks to all the project leaders, communication helpers and volunteers from all projects and further afield for their continuing time and dedication. We cannot deliver local solutions without you!

Jane Brantom, Lowri Potts, Jan Ashdown  
Transition Tynedale Directors

23 November 2023