

# Report on Meeting to Review Decision Making within TTL

Thursday 28 October 2010, Lewes Werks



Meeting facilitated by **Perry Walker**

## Overview:

The TTL Setting the Compass meeting held in October 2009 identified various proposals that a large number of people present wished to see taken forward. One of these was that TTL should have a decision-making Steering Group. An invitation was sent out in September 2010 to all interested in TTL to attend a meeting to review decision making.

Perry Walker was invited to facilitate a structured consensus decision making process. It was decided to try out the Crowd Wise system <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/crowd-wise>. This was chosen as an innovative way of making consensus decisions among a group in a short space of time.

## First vote and options:

Various options and suggestions had been circulated before the meeting and comments requested. As a result five options were presented to the meeting (Appendix 1). Attendees were asked to vote on a preference basis for these options to gauge the initial feelings of the meeting.

While the votes were being counted, Julia Waterlow and Adrienne Campbell presented the pros and cons of each option in more detail. After counting the votes, Option A was the one with the fewest votes.

## Detailed discussion of options:

The next stage was an open-space type of discussion in groups of the various options in more detail, allowing refinement. As no-one wished to discuss Option A (existing structure), it was agreed that this was to be discarded. A further option was put forward at this stage, much the same as Option D but with the proviso that the existing group contacts could choose by consensus or voting those who stepped forward to join them on the steering group (as per option D(1) sent out prior to the meeting).



The feedback, questions and thoughts, from the groups are shown in Appendix 2

## Voting and Decision

After this discussion, the attendees were asked to vote for the options in order of preference. The preferences are turned into points, e.g. a first preference scores five points and a second preference scores four points. The percentages below represent how well each option did as a proportion of the maximum number of points it would have scored if everyone put it first.

B = 24%  
C = 30%  
D = 50%  
E = 30%  
F = 50%



It was decided that D & F would be merged since they came first equal a long way ahead of the rest and are similar in many respects, and that the steering group, initially comprising of the group contacts, would take the next steps in deciding which elements to incorporate.

### Other issues:

#### Kinds of groups

Two types of groups were identified for the steering group: core and support, and they would be required to meet the following criteria. Groups should:

- have a minimum of three people
- be active
- have an identity
- be appropriate topics to TTL
- avoid duplication (with boundaries)
- have clear aims

#### Definition of 'an active group'

A group who has met and discussed actions purposefully – within the last six months.

Groups should be required to adhere to TTL's Aims & Principles (and those of the Transition movement).

It was also suggested that any kind of group can form, with the approval of the Steering group.

#### Which groups met the criteria?

It was agreed that the following core groups met the criteria:

Food  
Heart & Soul  
Waste  
Energy

And the following support group also met the criteria:

Communications

There was some doubt as to the eligibility of the following:

Village Connections  
10:10  
Schools

Further clarification was also required for the Finance group.

### **Decision Making**

Perry suggested the following:

- The Steering Group has full powers of decision making, including the ability to vote people off the Steering Group if it's not working out, subject to:
- Not changing the system by which it was chosen
- There should be some system of wider accountability eg to the wider membership or possibly trustees/mentors or ombudsman
- Two further additions were suggested: a right of appeal and or a code of conduct.

There was broad agreement to these proposals.

### **Next steps for Steering Group**

It was agreed that:

- The Steering Group would first meet and consider the eligibility of those groups in question, and hence decide the final composition of the initial Steering Group.
- The Steering Group would next decide how to amalgamate options D and F
- The Steering Group would then ask TTL for new members to join the group.

### **POSTSCRIPT**

At the time of writing this report, the Steering Group has now met 3 times to discuss this further. There are at present representatives from the Communications, Energy, Heart and Soul, Waste, Food and Finance groups. What other groups should be represented is still to be decided. The Steering Group now has a constitution drawn up along the lines agreed at the review meeting. This document is attached as Appendix 3 and comments are welcome, subject to the points agreed at the review meeting.



## **Appendix 1**

Voting options presented at first ballot

Rank the options in order of preference (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> etc.). Rank as many as you like. The more you rank, however, the greater the difference between the one you like best and the one you like least, so the greater the effect you will have on the overall result.

Option		Preference
A	Keep the existing structure. This means that groups form as and when decisions need to be made, while the Forum stays as an information/discussion meeting.	
<b>NB All the remaining options involve forming a Steering Group to take strategic decisions affecting TTL overall.</b>		
B	The Steering Group is run as an Open Space: anyone can turn up and contribute to decision making. As one of the principles of Open Space says, "whoever comes are the right people".	
C	The Steering Group consists of the Contacts for the groups (currently 6 people).	
D	The Steering Group initially comprises the existing group Contacts. They then put out a call for more members from the whole of TTL, and co-opt anyone who is prepared to commit to attending the monthly meeting.	
E	The Steering Group is elected.	

### Appendix 2

Discussion of various options – feedback, questions and thoughts

**Option B** The Steering Group is run along Open Space principles with those who turn up making decisions

- Open Steering Group – democratic and inclusive
- Welcoming new ideas from new people
- Keep people up to date & motivate
- No hierarchy
- Decisions made by consensus
- Good communication essential
- Good preparation – Agendas, Minutes, etc. to enable a well informed meeting. Good chairing needed.
- Manage large groups with decision making – possible divide into sub-groups
- Delegate decisions down to sub-groups if too large, need a quorum
- Strong terms of reference necessary.
- No need for elections

**Option C** The existing group contacts form the steering group.

- Steering Group consensus for decisions
- Contacts for groups – change requirement to a representative chosen from groups to attend and represent at Steering meetings
- Have to have list of who's entitled to send people to Steering Groups
- Voting groups and informed groups – two tier structure
- Steering Group decide criteria for voting and informed groups
- How long is a representative chosen for? 6 Months / 1 year.

**Option D** The steering group would be a mixture of existing group contacts who would invite anyone who wished to stand to also be part of the steering group

- Who would come from groups? Nominate representatives for 6 months / 1 year to represent groups – need for consistency
- All groups would have the right to have a representative at the Steering committee even if they don't come every month.
- Names go up on the TTL website
- Restricted numbers from groups and others join
- Not a fixed limit on numbers
- Question of accountability – level of accountability and responsibility (applies to all steering group options)
- There could be a different "open space" (inspiring cafe style) forum meeting, separate from steering group meetings (with agenda and secretary). Decision making could be boring for all otherwise.

**Option E** The steering group would be formed by elections

- Embrace democracy – business like and fair.
- Given existing structure, benefits and downside of election
- Can become political and complicated
- Elections with written submissions (downside – running elections)
- Electorates are people who pay subscriptions of, for example, £2 which buys them a vote and membership
- Anyone can stand
- Elections with secondary and tertiary elections, with secret ballots
- Downside: no funds or time to resource this.

**Option F** The steering group initially consists of existing group contacts who would invite widely. Anyone who wished to stand can put themselves forward to also be part of the steering group. The initial steering group would adopt them on group by consensus elections after a suitable trial period.

- Elections by consent
- People chosen by peers
- Need people who are trusted and known by their peers
- Invite widely and after 3-4 months... ?
- Votes by consensus
  - Ensuring meeting times are limited
  - Clear about how decisions are made
  - Have clear outs
  - Clear principles and purpose
  - Subject to review
- Open and inclusive group
- Essential to have a group representative on the Steering Committee

## **TTL STEERING GROUP** **CONSTITUTION**

### **FUNCTIONS**

The steering group manages and makes decisions on matters that affect TTL generally, including decisions regarding unallocated funds/donations, broad communications issues, strategic issues, helping groups to work in accordance with TTL principles and agreed procedures, supporting the formation of new groups and providing guidance on current projects to ensure they fit with TTL principles and strategy.

Where decisions are to be made about TTL principles, the steering group will involve TTL Active in proposed changes. The steering group cannot change the system by which the steering group is chosen.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF STEERING GROUP MEMBERS**

Members should be prepared to:

- Commit for a year initially
- Attend monthly meetings on a regular basis
- Read minutes and the agendas
- Be prepared to contribute and to take responsibility for helping keep the rest of TTL informed and involved

### **FORMATION AND COMPOSITION OF STEERING GROUP**

The steering group is comprised of:

- a) A named representative from each core and support group (defined below)
- b) Any other person from the TTL network who applies when the steering group asks for new members

At least once a year (or other period to be agreed) the steering group will ask TTL news for nominations or offers from people wishing to be involved. Potential steering group members would be asked if they wished to stand. Those willing to stand would provide a short summary of who they are and what they feel they could contribute (no more than about 100 words), and they would have seen and read the steering group criteria. The existing steering group can decline applications by consensus. Should the potential steering group member wish to proceed, then they should attend two meetings. After that their application will be considered by the existing steering group members.

Steering group members can ask to resign, preferably giving at least two months' notice. A steering group member can be asked to stand down if requested by consensus between the other members of the steering group.

### **MEETINGS**

Meetings will be held as at present, on the first Wednesday of each month. These steering group meetings would as now be open to everyone interested in TTL to attend.

Contact details will be given on the website for information on dates, venues, agendas and minutes.

Only steering group members at the meeting would be involved in the decision making process. Agendas with any decisions to be made would be sent out in advance to steering group members.

Decisions would be made by consensus.

Quorum shall be at least 50% of steering group members, but 4 people at minimum.

The chair will be rotated. Draft minutes will be circulated to all members for approval and sent out within 14 days of the meeting.

The steering group would encourage the setting up of working parties including other non-steering group people as and when necessary to consider issues on which decisions need to be made and take their considered advice in making decisions. The steering group will regularly review the way it is working.

### **CRITERIA FOR STEERING GROUP MEMBERSHIP**

Members of the steering group should:

- have understanding of Transition principles and agree to operate by them
- have no history of defamatory or negative behaviour towards TTL or the transition movement
- agree to abide by the principles by which the steering group works
- actively seek to contribute to and enhance the good name of TTL

### **PRINCIPLES BY WHICH THE STEERING GROUP WORKS**

Confidentiality – members of the group are free to share whatever they wish but whatever is shared in the group stays in the group.

Respect – all members should feel their contributions are valued and be sensitive to others concerns

Commitment, responsibility and participation – be clear about whether you want to be involved and how and stick with it

Make clear requests and agreements

Equal access to power – ensure that all in the group are able to participate fully

Patience – listen carefully and let others finish

Cooperation – try to build a shared decision rather than getting one point of view to win

Accountability – we give reasons for our decisions

### **CORE AND SUPPORT GROUPS**

These are defined as:

- having a minimum of three people
- be active ie should have met and discussed actions purposefully within the last six months
- have an identity
- be appropriate topics to TTL
- avoid duplication (with boundaries)
- have clear aims
- acting in accordance with TTL aims and principles and those of the Transition movement