

**Minutes of Meeting of Harrow Agenda 21
Ethical Consumer Action Group
Held on Tuesday 16th March 2010 at 6.30pm
At the Community Premises
27 Northolt Road, South Harrow, HA2 0LH**

Present	Sarah Kersey – Acting Chair	(SK)
	Jon Cope – Oxfam Brent & Harrow	(JC)
	Jane Skelly – Harrow Friends of the Earth	(JS)
	Liz Binney – Wealdstone Methodist Church	(LB)
	Linda Robinson – Secretary, HA21	(LR)
	Jean Newby –	(JN)
	Karmel Seth – Potential volunteer	(KS)

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING HELD ON (12th January 2010)

After a round of introductions and a brief overview by SK of HA21 in general and Harrow Council's lack of progress in forming a Fairtrade Steering Group. Other topics raised as suitable for consideration by the group included organic and locally grown produce, food and packaging waste and other consumer issues.

There were no Minutes of the previous meeting. SK referred to the agenda as being of a standing format that would be used for future meetings.

2. DEBRIEF ON LOCAL EVENTS

Fair Trade Fortnight (22nd February to 7th March 2010)

JC had attended several events to promote and distribute Fair Trade information and leaflets. These included three school assemblies, University of Westminster, a tasting at North London Co-op as well as within the Pinner Oxfam shop. He advised that only three schools in London had attained Fairtrade status.

LB confirmed that had she had attended several schools and various other groups, including Big Brew and a Fairtrade lunch. Campaigns had also been held and leaflets distributed at various church coffee mornings. She pointed out that some producers without Fairtrade certification also claimed to operate ethically and praised the 100 per cent Fairtrade policy of Sainsbury's own brand tea.

JN had displayed posters and held regular coffee mornings, not only during Fairtrade fortnight, which had also raised money for Traidcraft and distributed leaflets.

3. NEW CHAIR OF ETHICAL CONSUMER GROUP

SK advised the group that she was standing down as its Chair but would continue to attend its meetings and provide a written report to HA21's Executive Committee until a suitable replacement was found. She asked members to consider nominating a new chair, perhaps by inviting newcomers. LR clarified that the group's official Chair would automatically become a trustee on the Executive Committee. JC suggested that meetings could be chaired on a rotating basis and that all could bring along someone extra to the next meeting. LR felt that JS would make a good chair.

Action Point: All to consider ideas for increasing membership of the group and appointing a new Chair.

4. ETHICAL PRODUCTS/ CAMPAIGNS

It was agreed that the group should campaign to promote ethical consumerism in local places of worship including temples, mosques and synagogues. It was felt important to raise awareness amongst ethnic minorities. SK envisaged a letter being sent to link up the faith groups in HA21's database of organisations. SK wondered if any lists of "eco-congregations" were available. Possible sources mentioned included Heather Henshaw and Jane Wedlake.

Action Point: All to bring any guides to fair-trading faith groups from contacts at churches, Traidcraft, Tear Fund, Fairtrade Foundation and Oxfam, for discussion at the next meeting.

There was dismay at the delays and excuses of Harrow Council for failing to reconvene the Fairtrade Steering Group despite specific instructions from the Council Leader to the Policy and Partnership Service Manager. LB pointed out that Watford had attained the required standard. JN queried the criteria for gaining recognition as a Fairtrade borough. JC explained that the status was granted dependent on factors such as the number of major workplaces, schools, shops and cafés with Fairtrade practices. He would ask the Fairtrade Foundation for some materials detailing the criteria. SK produced the draft of a letter to be distributed to the public, for example in Oxfam shops, for sending to the Council Leader demanding action. Some suggestions for improvement were made, including replacing the word town with borough. LB suggested a petition might elicit more support. JN and JC favoured individual letters and JS advocated both methods.

Action Point: SK to redraft letter to incorporate agreed changes for a campaign to be started a after the forthcoming General Election.

LR recalled an issue that had arisen between the council and the organisers of the Duck Pond Market. JS confirmed that there had been a lack of support and promotion of the monthly market from the council. Publicity of French markets for tourism purposes was felt to be disproportionate and unhelpful to local traders

SK called for suggestions about products for trial or boycott. Ideas included boycotting Israeli products, which was felt to be too political, but promoting Palestinian goods on humanitarian grounds was thought acceptable. Avoiding palm oil was difficult because of its ubiquity.

LB felt strongly about ethically produced cotton and wished to target the message at young people.

5. LOCAL GROUPS EXCHANGE

For joint projects between participant groups, LR suggested showing a film being promoted by Friends of the Earth, called Food Inc, about the global effects of meat production. JC knew another film, Black Gold, about Fairtrade.

**Action Points: JS to find out about obtaining Food Inc. for screening.
JC to find out about obtaining Black Gold for screening.**

JC mentioned Oxfam Live, due to take place in Holloway on Saturday 20 March. Details were available on the Oxfam website.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

LB stressed that it was vital that the group had input from the Council to bring credibility to the group's initiatives. This was agreed by all and further discussion will take place at future meetings.

7. FUTURE MEETING DATES

Date of the next meeting: Tuesday 11 May 2010 at 6.30pm in the Meeting Room at the Community Premises, 27 Northolt Road, South Harrow.

Future meeting dates were agreed for the same time and place on the following dates:

Tuesday 13 July 2010

Tuesday 14 September 2010

Tuesday 09 November 2010

Minutes produced by Karmel Seth and Linda Robinson