

Rainbow Turtle Chair's report April 2023 – March 2024

Introduction

Welcome to the AGM for the Rainbow Turtle charity. As you know Rainbow Turtle consists of two arms, the charity whose aim is to educate about and promote Fair Trade in Renfrewshire, and the shop, Rainbow Turtle Just Trading, Ltd which is a business and runs the shop in Gauze St which also supports and promotes Fairtrade.

This AGM is for the charity and fulfils part of our requirements as a charity. As such we shall cover what the charities activities and finances but also, for interest and information, there will be short account the shop's progress.

This report covers April 2023 to the end of March 2024

Trustees and Members

The charity is required to have a board of trustees. At present we have six trustees and, as we are always looking for more, if you are interested in becoming one please let us know.

Trustees as of 1st April 2023

Colum Scriven (secretary)
Gillian Henry (treasurer)
Steph Mayo
Chris Johnstone (chair)
Anne MacInnes
Marianne Sermanni

Trustees at 31st March 2024

Colum Scriven (secretary)
Gillian Henry (treasurer)
Steph Mayo
Chris Johnstone (chair)
Ann MacInnes
Marianne Sermanni

There were no changes in trustees in the past year. The trustees met six times, face to face in 23/24. I am grateful for all their help, time, and good nature in keeping me on the straight and narrow. Rainbow Turtle could not exist without their commitment.

Charity Finances

Rainbow Turtle is fairly stable financially with ongoing income from members and the Council via Local Partnership and Celebrating Renfrewshire grant funding. The Council has also occasional specific grants for certain events, e.g. the ceilidh. I am pleased to say that the bank balance remains reasonably healthy, though we could always benefit from the security of a regular, guaranteed income.

We received donations from schools, local groups and Google. We are grateful for all their support and generosity.

The finance report is attached and we thank our treasurer, Gillian Henry, for all her work in preparing this. In addition, I would like also to thank Angela Cairns for her help in checking the charity accounts.

Rainbow Turtle Chair's report April 2023 – March 2024

Rainbow Turtle Charity and Education

Covid continued to affect our activities, but less so than last year. Schools still had some covid restrictions and the cost of living affected everyone. Our Education Officer, Linda Okhoya-Ologe, made visits to schools and contacts with other local groups. She attended BAFTS in Birmingham with shop manager, Elise Kelly. We were delighted to hear of her pregnancy and she gave birth to a lovely daughter, Zoraya, in October.

We were very lucky to be able to employ Philippa Jeffrey as Linda's replacement for her maternity leave. Philippa achieved a huge amount in her first six months from a standing start. She has produced several marvellous window displays for the shop. One window focused on Transform Trade and seeds. This was followed up with a successful seed evening in 24/25. Philippa has made several popular educational videos with her hand puppets, Spot and Bruno. She started visiting. We thank Philippa for stepping into the breach and for all her commitment and enthusiasm.

We had a powerful presentation in January about Human Rights Observers in the Palestinian West Bank. We were delighted to have Olive Tree at the presentation and to have them presenting at our next AGM.

We had a stall in the Christmas market in the High St. It was a cold snowy day and we thank Jonathan Barr for his indomitable spirit in the face of the Paisley weather.

Our membership was stable over the year. Colum Scriven continued to write a monthly newsletter/update for the website which was circulated by email to all members.

Last year we were advised by Methodist Halls about steeply increasing the rent for both the office and the shop. We realized we could not afford these increases going forward and started looking for alternative office space and thinking about alternative shop premises. However, the situation was happily resolved when Methodist Halls agreed to rent us a smaller office at a cost we could afford. They also agreed to freeze the shop rent, so there are no rent/premises issues at present. Thanks to David Jackson of Paisley Methodist Central Halls for all his understanding and support for Rainbow Turtle.

Colum published his 2nd series of Rainbow Turtle Rebooted podcast during fair trade fortnight. He interviewed Mary Popple, Sally Sawaya, John Riches and Rachel Farey. These are insightful and inspiring stories about the people who formed and are involved with Fairtrade.

We have increased our presence on social media, mainly Facebook and Instagram. Initially Rainbow Turtle friend, Pauline Krawehl, helped out, but now volunteers, Sarah Hurst and Ania Matuszewska have stepped into the breach. Thanks to them for their help and input. The Scottish Fair Trade Forum made a film about us, The Gatehouse Coffee Roasters and True Origin for a series of Fairtrade films to commemorate 20 years of Scotland being a fair trade nation. You can still see the film they made, 'The Virtuous Circle', on our website.

Rainbow Turtle was instrumental in resurrecting the Renfrewshire Fairtrade Steering Group. Previously, this was run by the Council but had fallen into abeyance since the pandemic. The initial meetings included ourselves, True Origin, the Council (with a named councillor), Lochwinnoch and the Co-op. The groups first tasks were to start reapplying for Fairtrade

Rainbow Turtle Chair's report April 2023 – March 2024

status for Renfrewshire and run an art competition for schools for Fairtrade Fortnight in Sept 24.

There was no Fairtrade Fortnight in 23/24 as the February date was postponed until September 2024. We have informed the Fairtrade Foundation that we prefer FT14 to be in February/March rather than September because it provides an important boost to our shop during a financially difficult time of the year. At present it is unclear when the next Fortnight will be.

We made a donation to Artizan International.

Rainbow Turtle Shop

Elise Kelly, our wonderful shop manager, has continued to build on her successes and the shop continues to flourish under her stewardship. We thank her for her hard work and dedication to the shop and Rainbow Turtle

As always, the volunteers have been wonderful in supporting Rainbow Turtle and being the welcoming face in the shop. Rainbow Turtle is indebted to their time, humour and persistence. We ran a successful volunteer evening in August. Thank you all.

The shop has had stronger sales, but margins are still tight and we need to keep pushing and promoting the shop to increase sales as much as possible. We continue to look at the best ways of doing this and all suggestions gratefully received.

I would like to thank Colum and our accountant, Pat McCormack, for all help in preparing the shop accounts. This was Pat's last year volunteering to do the accounts and he will be missed.

Summary

2023/24 has been a year of change with Philippa joining and with us moving the office. Despite this Rainbow Turtle has flourished and continues to be a strong, valued presence in Renfrewshire. As always Rainbow Turtle thrives on all the people who give their time to support the charity including the volunteers, trustees and many others across Renfrewshire.

Thank you all for help this past year and we all look forward to working together in the coming years to keep promoting Fair Trade in a more equitable, greener world.

Chris Johnstone
Chair of Trustees
1st Oct 2024