

WCN AGM, York, 2 July 2010

Participants:

John Bartlett	Mari Jüssi
Ed Beale	Georg Koessler
Anzir Boodoo	Lenka Kukurova
Milan Boric	Anna Nygård
Cigdem Cevrim	Andy Shrimpton
Simon Field	Franz Skala
Randall Ghent	Etienne von Bertrab
Michael Hoag	Andrew Wheeldon
Justin Hyatt	

Facilitator:

Matthew Herbert, Rhizome

Revised Agenda of 30 June 2010:

09:30 – 09:50 Introduction to WCN

- Staff and core activities (*Cigdem Cevrim, Acting WCN Office Manager*)
- The governance structure of WCN Europe and the WCN virtual global network (*Simon Field, Steering Committee and Management Committee*)

09:50 – 10:10 Review of the year: projects, membership, successes and challenges (*Cigdem*)

- Carbusters cost-reduction action plan (*Alex Berthelsen*)

10:10 – 10:15 Introduction to facilitation and the decision-making process (*facilitator: Matthew Herbert – Rhizome Coop*).

10:15 – 11:00 Financial situation (*Cigdem and Simon*)

- 2009-2010 accounts
- Cash-flow issues and financial sustainability

Break

11:15 – 12:45 WCN restructuring – Office closure proposal

- Management Committee decision on ICC office and WCN Europe
- Timing and distribution of assets
- Effect on current projects
- Effect on WCN Global – steering committee and advisory board
- Strategic planning: continuation of WCN Global projects

12:45 Lunch

14:00 – 15:00 Strategic planning: break out groups to discuss how these projects could continue

Break

15:15 – 16:00 Reports from break out groups and conclusions

16:00 – 16:30 Election of SC and AB members

Close.

Notes:

1. Financial situation

There was no administrative grant this year. There is currently a cash flow problem, where the grant money for one project is used for another project or for administrative costs. The finances are therefore always playing 'catch up'. For example, with the youth exchange that took place in York before the conference, the funder paid 80% of the money up-front, but the other 20% had to be covered by WCN until the final payment from the European Commission (EC) comes in, pending the EC's approval of the final project report.

The lack of reserves leads to instability. The EC, which funds the European Voluntary Service (EVS) volunteers/interns in the office, is aware of the situation and has reduced the number of WCN interns from five to two.

Carbusters magazine has undergone a cost saving plan, and has increased the number of subscribers. There is currently no fundraiser on staff. There is a volunteer fundraiser who has recently written six project grants, including EVS but no administrative grants so far because the deadline is not until September.

In addition to the financial problem, there is a problem of capacity (the number of staff, the background and skills of the staff, etc). There is also a quite low staff wage, even for the Czech Republic.

There has been an effort to encourage member organisations to pay their annual membership fee. There was some response to this, but most groups didn't pay. This was also related to the lack of member co-ordinator – so people were being asked for money after having not heard from WCN in a couple years. Many of the contacts were old contacts who don't know WCN, or are no longer with the member organisation, so there were a lot of bounced emails, etc.

WCN has perhaps not had strong enough communication to express the urgency of the financial situation or general instability. Some people feel that the relative silence of forums such as the carfree_network list is not a general reflection of a lack of interest.

There is a problem of reputation with funders. Mistakes have been made that have lowered WCN's reputation with funders including the European Commission and European Youth Foundation.

2. WCN Restructuring / Office Closure Proposal

The Management Committee of WCN Europe has decided to close the current office by the end of August, and to try to continue activities without the office, such as the conference series. This does not affect the status of World Carfree Network as a whole. At a later stage, an office may re-open.

One option is to move into serviced office accommodation. There is such a facility in Prague. Office assets will be disposed of / distributed as per the Statutes i.e. to other NGOs working in a similar field.

Cigdem plans to leave regardless at the end of August, so there is no person whose job is under threat.

There was the possibility of applying for eight administrative grants in September, and work on the assumption that at least one of these would be received. This was seen by the Management Committee as too risky, so it was decided that it would be less risky to close the office now.

The question of reputation was raised again, which affects whether funding will be granted. It is necessary to have long term committed staff in order to regain the confidence of funders. Regarding whether to maintain the organisation World Carfree Network Europe o.s., it will be necessary to receive legal advice, which will be done soon after the AGM.

Regarding Cigdem's status, she is resigning based on the decision to close the office. She feels that she isn't anyway the best person to fill the role of office manager, in terms of background/skills and also she doesn't speak Czech. She would have been able to continue as a project manager if the office would have continued.

Regarding continuity, the structures of the global network such as the Steering Committee and Advisory Board will continue to exist. The election will take place later in the AGM.

Regarding a membership drive, there was a comment that other means beyond email and a few phone calls are necessary. There was a response that these other methods didn't actually work when we did have a membership co-ordinator. Members do not help us enough financially – we would need sponsors and donators rather than members.

The current situation requires a lot of energy just to maintain the office. One comment suggested that we need a new start with a more efficient structure, where 90% of our energy is spent on projects and 10% on administration.

3. Current Projects

Carbusters magazine

Carbusters website

Carfree Blogosphere

World Carfree News e-bulletin

Conference

Worldcarfree.net

Resource Centre

(plus communication tools: mailing lists)

4. Immediate Priorities

A brainstorming session was held to determine a shortlist of possible discussions for the remaining time. Participants then cast three 'votes' for which of these they would prefer to discuss in break out groups in the remaining time available:

- i. Vision
- ii. Decentralisation strategy
- iii. Conference
- iv. Website (worldcarfree.net)
- v. E-mail Bulletin: World Carfree News
- vi. Fundraising (later merged with Decentralisation group)

i. Vision

Disagreement among two participants in group of two on the vision – whether we're just about carfree or beyond into specifics of proposals to create the world we want to see. Discussion did not go further, as not considered to be helpful in producing a practical plan for the near future (*note: strategy documents available on website*).

ii. Decentralisation and Fundraising

How do we close office and maintain activities? Some member organisations will need to take on certain roles/activities. A Decentralisation Working Group would be charged with developing this concretely in communication with participating (active) member organisations and individuals. A 'Hub' system would involve member orgs coordinating administration and certain projects in their region.

Suggested hubs:

N America: Carfreecity USA.

Europe: Carfree UK or a Prague-based organisation?

We need more suggestions...

Fundraising:

Conference registration cut: 1,000 Euros / year.

Membership fees: should be lower, automatic renewal should be investigated, try to improve benefits for members. Could bring in 6,000 Euros / year.

Costs:

Pay 1 person day / month for bulletin: 2,000 Euro / year max.

3 people to work on web redesign: 5,000 Euro needed.

People doing paid work would do so on a self-employed basis, invoicing their nearest hub. each hub does these activities.

Regarding printed Carbusters, this could be decoupled from WCN membership and be financially self-sufficient. If online only, would people pay for pdf? Requires volunteers to agree to continue working on it.

Comments from the floor:

- Although people want something printed, this is likely to be too much work for volunteers.
- Need new channels to reach people: the elusive distribution strategy.
- The Decentralisation Working Group should come up with a concrete plan for Carbusters; suspension of the printed magazine should only be temporary.
- The funding plan is unworkable, as it assumes significant regular income rather than the reality of irregular small payments.
- Carbusters volunteers could raise money to be used to pay other people e.g. editors and major contributors.

There was provisional support for the decentralisation idea: this should be taken forward by a working group. Cigdem Cevrim, Simon Field, Randy Ghent, Justin Hyatt, Etienne von Bertrab and Andy Shrimpton agreed to contribute to this group.

iii. Conference

There needs to be a means for those who can't physically take part to virtually participate. This could involve local meetings organised in conjunction with the conference, based on

conference presentations/materials. Or there could be a European meeting in the year where the conference is in the Americas, working in parallel with the conference. The highlights of the conference could be available to everyone, with presentations only provided to members as a member benefit (as well as to delegates).

Higher profile blogging could be organised.

There could be different categories of meetings, not just Towards Carfree Cities conferences. The conference wouldn't have to occur every year, but there could be more regional meetings.

One strong opinion against paying for online information, whether it be for the magazine or conference presentations.

iv. Website: worldcarfree.net

We should continue it as our portal/hub. It's financially viable. The content looks after itself to some degree. We can delegate maintenance of sections to different people. The site would be an information hub and an interactive tool (Wiki pages).

Proposal – Set up a website group to carry plan forward. Anna was volunteered to participate by going through the site and update the content (her availability is likely but unknown). A Steering Committee member would need to be part of this group. A web designer could apply for a grant for the project.

Cigdem's draft website re-design could be used.

v. E-mail Bulletin: World Carfree News

This has 2000 subscribers, but only 5 people responded to a recent survey. People are bombarded with electronic information; the format of the bulletin should be improved, and html e-mails investigated. Justin Hyatt offered to continue writing a monthly bulletin in English on a voluntary basis, using the existing strategy of asking carfree_network list subscribers to send in news.

CONCLUSIONS

**The Decentralisation Working Group (DWG) consists of:
Cigdem Cevrim, Simon Field, Randy Ghent, Justin Hyatt, Etienne von Bertrab and
Andy Shrimpton**

The DTF must produce a workable plan based on the outcomes of this AGM by **31 July 2010**, incorporating the thoughts and concerns raised here. **The 6,000 EUR also needs to be raised by 31 December 2010**. The report will be sent to carfree_network and wcn-intern discussion lists, which reach the Steering Committee members who are members of those lists. The Advisory Board members are also to be consulted. The scope of the recommendations will be the following four projects: TCC Conference, Carbusters Online/Print, World Carfree News e-bulletin, and the Worldcarfree.net website.

5. Steering Committee Election

The current seven members are Alex Berthelsen (ICC rep), Eda Beyazit, Simon Field, Sam Fleet, Jane Harding, Jason Meggs and Luis Patricio.

Eda Beyazit and Jason Meggs are ending their terms and need to be replaced.

Applications were received from two people before the AGM: Faizan Jawed and Jessica Mortell.

Faizan Jawed is an architect, avid cyclist, a representative of the Institute for Democracy and Sustainability (WCN member organisation), and a recent contributor to the Carfree

Blogosphere. He is a sustainable transport professional/consultant. A founder of the Open Bicycles Project Mumbai. Will offer Southern perspective to WCN.

Jessica Mortell is from California in the United States, currently living in Massachusetts. She is a transport planner, having worked on several projects as listed in her CV received. She is working on sustainable transport. She is not a WCN member, nor a representative of a member organisation.

Nominations from the floor:

Etienne von Bertrab stood as a full Steering Committee member, and was elected.

Michael Hoag and Andy Shrimpton stood as SC observers and were elected.

Faizan Jawed was elected a full Steering Committee member.

Jessica Mortell was elected as an SC observer, subject to her joining as a WCN member.

New Steering Committee – full members:

Alexander Berthelsen – liaison to the Prague Office, term ends 2011.

Simon Field – term ends 2011.

Sam Fleet – term ends 2011.

Jane Harding – term ends 2011.

Faizan Jawed – term ends 2012.

Luis Patricio – term ends 2011.

Etienne von Bertrab – term ends 2012.

New Steering Committee – observers:

Michael Hoag – term ends 2012.

Jessica Mortell – term ends 2012.

Andy Shrimpton – term ends 2012.

6. Advisory Board election

No action was necessary, as no additional Advisory Board members stood for election.