TATSFIELD FAIRTRADE GROUP POSTPONED AGM REPORT – APRIL 2021

We began 2020 so hopefully on the back of an outstanding 10th anniversary year and at the beginning of February, held a very lively session with the Beavers where we made a collage of the Fairtrade logo whilst sharing with the children what each part represented.

Tatsfield School was once again a hive of Fairtrade Activity for the Fortnight. As well as classroom activities there was a whole school display in the corridor depicting the journey of cocoa from bean to bar. Woodpeckers held a Grandparent’s afternoon tea and there was a whole school Sharing Assembly, both of which I attended.

Thinking back to our Fairtrade Fortnight Chocolate morning on 29th February and the excitement and joy of Rosine Bekoin coming to speak to us accompanied by Sam Pratt from the Foundation, it’s hard to believe that we haven’t been able to hold any Fairtrade or in fact any other events in Tatsfield since.

One of the things that was so special about our Fairtrade Fortnight event was that it was very obvious how delighted Carol Jordan was to meet Rosine and to have the opportunity to ask her many questions. Although Carol was unwell, she insisted on driving Rosine and Sam to Orpington Station after our lunch at the Bakery. It came as a complete shock to us all to learn that Carol had died suddenly four days later, and our thoughts continue to be with her family and close friends.

Carol was one of the founding members in 2008 of the Tatsfield Fairtrade Village Steering Group and was the Group’s original Parish Council representative. Over the years she worked tirelessly as both an advocate and supporter of Fairtrade. Fairtrade was just one of Carol’s many passions. Nonetheless, for her Parish Magazine articles and the Group website she did a great deal of research about the effects of unfair trade and the results on the Farmers, Producers and the Climate. Carol kept abreast of which brands were Fairtrade at their core and as a result was instrumental in Zaytoun Olive Oil becoming available in Linda’s Shop. When Sheree took over the shop it was through Carol building a relationship with Sheree that an increased range of Fairtrade products began to be stocked, including chocolate and coffee. As a committee member Carol prompted and challenged us to be our very best, encouraging us to go further and pointing out inconsistencies. We will miss her and her wise counsel enormously.

With Lockdown looming in March, we applied for and successfully renewed for another two years our Fairtrade Village Status. Initially through Lockdown the Group kept in touch through email, managing a garden committee meeting in August and Zoom meetings since. Throughout, we have continued to produce articles for the Parish Magazine – although, frustratingly, during the periods of Lockdown the magazine has had limited distribution.

As the pandemic unfolded, we tried to keep informed about how Fairtrade producers and farmers were being affected. A number of the Group watched some of the webinars hosted by the Foundation and Fairtrade International. One of our articles in the Parish Magazine highlighted the plight of the garment workers in Bangladesh as orders were cancelled as a result of the pandemic. We also joined in the outcry, including signing the petition and writing an article for the parish magazine, as Nestle announced that KitKat would stop being Fairtrade from October. Although the campaign didn’t change the outcome, the disapproval from both the public and a number of MPs resulted in Nestlé making some concessions.

We had hoped to hold a Tea Tent in September but as numbers began once again to rise, we thought better of it. Throughout the pandemic we have promoted, that Traidcraft stock could be ordered from Moyna for delivery to Tatsfield and a number of people of the village have taken advantage of this service.

During the year, Hilary Vale took on the oversight of Fairtrade stock in Sheree’s. We are so grateful to Hilary for stepping into this role and continuing to build the range of stock available in Sheree’s which now regularly includes more of the Café Direct range and Zaytoun dates. Hilary has now built up a lovely relationship with Sheree. We are delighted to report that during this last year more than £1300 in Fairtrade stock has been sold by Sheree which doesn’t include the stock sold during this year’s Fairtrade Fortnight.

In September, I volunteered for the role of South East Representative for the Fairtrade National Campaign Committee. I have now attended a number of Zoom meetings including with Liz Truss, Secretary of State for Trade during Fairtrade Fortnight. I am finding it very interesting to be part of the NCC at time which seems like something of a transition time for the Foundation and the NCC following more than 25 years of the Fairtrade Mark. One of the benefits is that I am now in touch with many more Groups in the South East. I am grateful for the opportunity to network and the opportunity to represent the grassroot supporters and hope to do us all justice.

Owing to a family emergency we had to cancel the AGM in January which now gives me the opportunity to report on the first part of 2021.

In February, Meg and I began to update the content on the Group website. In the long term, I hope that we might find someone perhaps amongst the younger generation in the village to take over the management of both our website and our social media accounts.

Restrictions meant that we were unable to hold a Fairtrade Fortnight event this year in Tatsfield so we agreed with Sheree that we would organise stock from Moyna for her to sell over the two-week period. We are grateful to Sheree for agreeing to this and for the extra work it meant for her and her staff. We were delighted that Sheree gave a prominent position at the front of the store to the Fair Trade produce and over the fortnight £550 worth of stock was sold.

Despite all teaching being done remotely due to Lockdown, Tatsfield Primary school outdid themselves for Fairtrade Fortnight 2021 with teachers embracing the challenge. Making use of some of the new and older resources provided by the Foundation including two virtual ‘visits’ they set some fantastic tasks for the children. Our thanks go to all the teachers but particularly to Mrs Knock as Co-ordinator.

Nationally, for Fairtrade Fortnight, the Fairtrade Foundation together with supporters around the country put on what proved to be an excellent online festival entitled, ‘Fairtrade, Climate and You - Choose the World you Want’. This provided the public with a variety of ways of engaging with both Fairtrade and the effect of the climate emergency on farmers.

As we look towards the G7 summit in Cornwall in June and COP26 in Glasgow in November I would like to encourage all who are concerned about the climate emergency to write to our MP, Claire Coutinho.

Looking towards the rest of the year, I’m sure the rest of the Group will join me in hoping that some events in the village might again be possible and that we might be able to hold our Tea Tents again.

I would like to thank each and every member of the Fairtrade Group for their continued commitment. We are grateful to Alizon for taking the minutes at our meetings. Special thanks, on behalf of us all go to Hilary Harber, as she steps down as our Treasurer, for all she has done to keep our finances in order since the Group’s formation. We are grateful to Carys for volunteering to now take on this role and we have room in the Group for one more if anyone knows of anyone who would like to join us.

Barbara Hester

April 2021