



News from the

Bridge Collective

Spring 2023



The Bridge Collective CIC

E-mail: info@bridgecollective.org.uk

Web: www.bridgecollective.org.uk

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This newsletter has contributions from people who
share their perspectives and opinions.

The views expressed are not necessarily shared or
endorsed by the Bridge Collective

We have sad news. This will be our last Newsletter from the Bridge Collective, at least in the form we have known it.

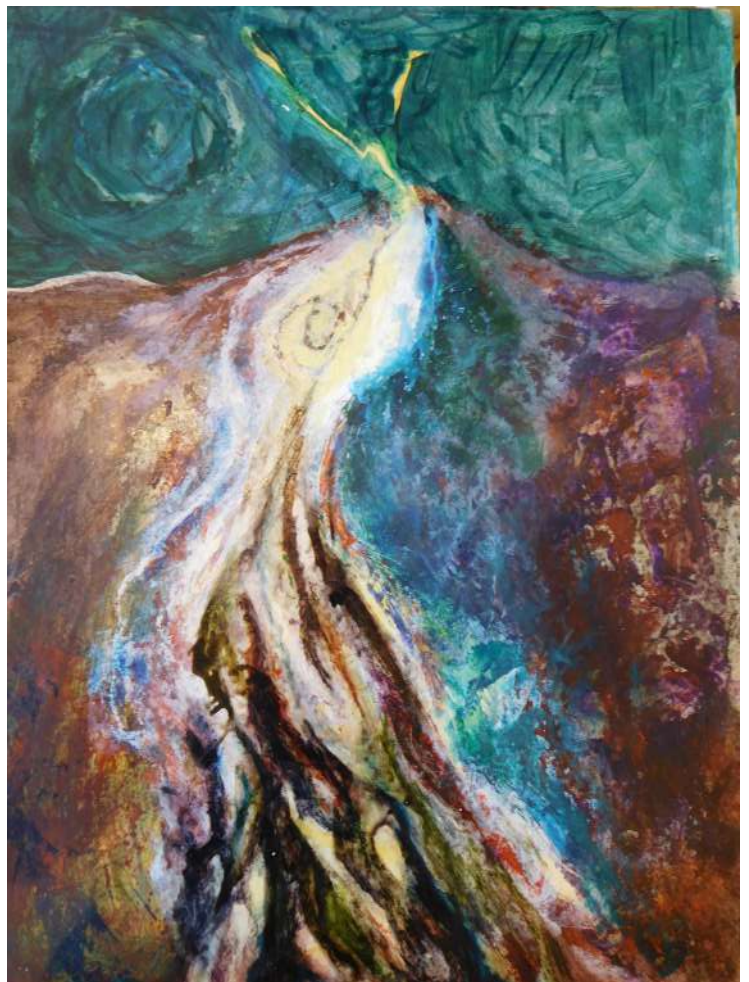
We have let go of our premises in King Street and at the April Community Meeting we agreed we would hold a member's meeting on 25th May so that members can vote on a resolution to close the Bridge Collective CIC as a company.

A combination of circumstances has led us to the conclusion that we don't have enough resources in all the places we need them to continue as we have been.

After 16 years of doing amazing things together as a community, we are taking a rest but with hopes that our mission can go forward in new ways and our community can continue to connect in new places.

We started work on this newsletter before we knew of coming changes and chose themes of "paths" and "belonging". The Bridge has been a coming together for a time of many paths for many people, and we hope our paths may continue to meet as we travel on.

We will keep you informed of any developments and any new opportunities to connect.



"Seedling" by Chris

Bridge Farewell Picnic

You are warmly invited

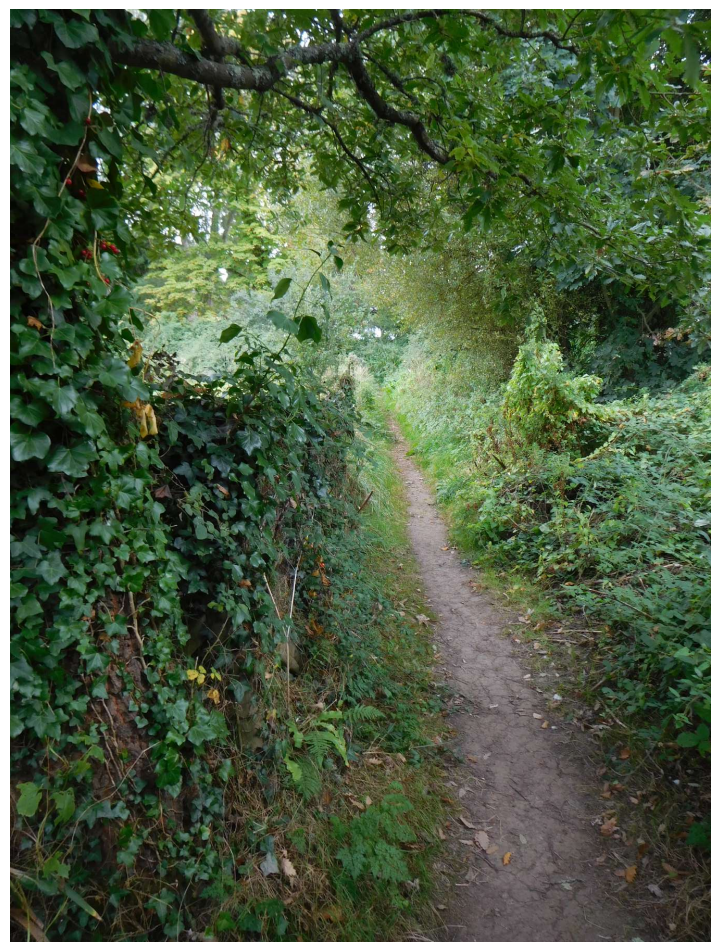
Saturday 27th May 12 noon - 1pm

Meet in Rougemont gardens, by the benches at the back of Exeter Library - if fine weather

If inclement weather we'll go inside for coffee and cake in Exeter Library "Owl and the Pussy Cat" cafe

All welcome 😊





Bridge Collective Principles



What we ask of ourselves and each other

To...

- Be curious
- Be kind and compassionate
- Be encouraging and supportive
- Be self-defining: avoiding judgements of each other
- Recognise the validity of individual experience
- Contribute to strengthening community
- Value relationship
- Recognise that it matters to us that things matter to us
- Appreciate our different beliefs and styles as an opportunity for growth
- Invest time to check our understanding of each others concerns
- Be aware that people who are silent may have a belief or feeling or experience
- Talk one at a time and leave space for each other
- Do what we need to do to look after ourselves
- Practice being responsible for ourselves and accountable to each other
- Trust that everyone wants to, and is doing the best we can with the resources we have
- Respect confidentiality (within our confidentiality policy and legal limits)
- Say if we're not keeping to these principles (anyone can)
- Recognise that these principles are up for discussion, amending and updating

Agreed in the Community Meeting, 10th November 2022

The Bridge Collective family
facing adversities but rising
out of the 'ashes' like a phoenix,
yet coming out the 'other side'
stronger together than ever before.



Bridge 16th birthday celebration and Goodbye to our building



Monday 3rd April 2023 was the Bridge Collective's 16th birthday. So much to celebrate and be proud of, so much done, achieved and created together.

There was sad news too. The Bridge community has reached a time when we don't have the resources we

need in all the places we need them to continue as we have been for the past 16 years, and on 3rd April we had our last gathering at our building in King Street: both a party celebrating our birthday and our collective achievements, experience and history, and a farewell.

We celebrated with party food and bring and share cakes, much conversation and remembering, balloons and photos, and poetry. Thirty people came, from all different stages in the lifetime of the Bridge, to share their memories and good wishes. And well wishes arrived by email and post from those who couldn't join on the day.

We had a Kintsugi group, kintsugi being a Japanese tradition of mending something broken with visible golden 'seams'. The broken pieces are glued together and gold powder mixed into, or brushed over the glue when it is nearly set, so that the mend makes the broken object more beautiful than before. We had a tealight holder which stood for many years on the table at the Bridge, with a light in it at some of our meetings and gatherings, and which was on our flyers and website and facebook pages: a familiar sign of the Bridge. It got broken a while ago, and the pieces were kept, waiting for this moment to be remade with gold. There were plenty of materials to mend the broken items people had brought with them as well.

In the afternoon some of us joined a wellbeing session with Sandhya Dave, who led us in mindfulness, Qi Gong and shiatsu. It was a gentle

and peaceful time and way to be together, a quiet point among the conversation and activity that went on throughout the day.



People had been invited to write goodbye messages and any messages they chose on some strips of birch bark. At the end of the day, a group

walked to the bridge at Trews Weir and let go of the messages into the river to be carried away by the water.





LOVE

please take as much as
you need



DSEN

Devon Spiritual Emergence Network (DSEN) had its origins in the work of Paula Kovacs at Be Heard Devon. When Be Heard ceased trading in 2007, DSEN became part of the Bridge Collective, within the Greenwood Project. Because it differed in its focus from the national Spiritual Emergence Network, it was decided to change the name. For a long time it was “the group formerly known as DSEN”, before becoming the “Sharing Circle”. The regular seasonal Sharing Circles came to an end in February 2015 but the spirit of DSEN has lived on in our celebrations of Nature and the turning of the seasons in the Greenwood Project.

Here's how DSEN was described at a point in time:

- ♣ A growing Devon-wide community of service users, survivors and workers who gather every six to eight weeks, at the turning of the seasons.
 - ♣ In a safe, informal circle, we cook and share food over an open fire in beautiful healing settings.
 - ♣ The group welcomes people who either:
 - ♣ Want to explore a spiritual path as part of recovery and/or
 - ♣ Who are defining their experience of distress as a spiritual crisis and by doing so, give it deeper personal meaning.
- N.B. We have no specific religious affiliation



DSEN DAY

We came by foot, we came by car,
On bike and bus and train,
To meet in greening fields by brooks,
New insights for to gain.

We celebrated season's turn,
The flowers, fields, the hay.
And marked the turning of the year
Upon the DSEN Day.

Throughout the year, come rain or shine,
We followed Nature's way.
And prompted by our inner voice,
We welcomed in the May.

We circled round, in silence sat,
Sometimes a flute did play,
With Nature's mantle all around,
The glorious DSEN day.

Then listening deep we came upon
That quiet inner sound.
Each truth was spoken loud and clear
Communal presence found.

Beltane, Lammas, Equinox
All hail the Halloween,
Summer/ Winter solstices
Where ancestors have been.

So thanks to those that marked the year,
And joining hands we'll say,
"When valuing sweet Nature
It becomes a DSEN day"

by Paula Kovacs
November 3rd 2010

Postcards

The art group produced a set of postcards and sets are being mailed out to Bridge Members.

Here are the designs:



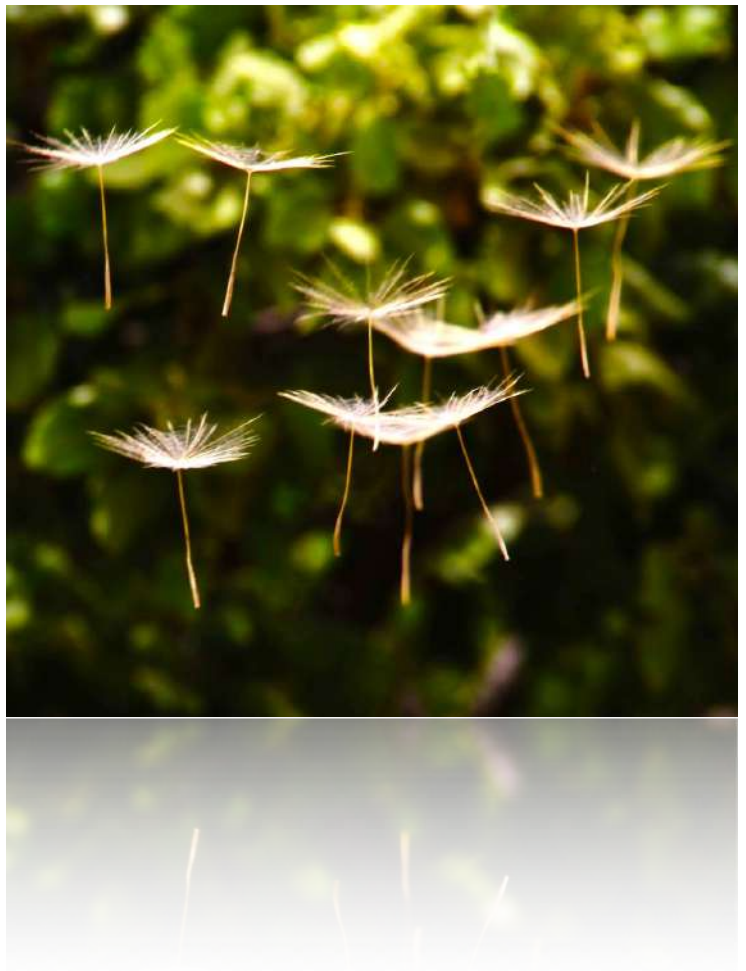
Top two designs by Christine Davison
Bottom two designs by Chris Barkla

Some seed metaphors: shared at this time



*the Bridge is like a fruit
that's fully ripened,
a time for seeds to spread,
some seeds will take
root in new places*

*it's good to think of
the rewarding and
nourishing seeds we
have tended and
scattered and that
have blown to places
known and unknown*



At this time of taking stock and reflection, we were reminded of research produced with the Bridge about how our democratic processes can both nurture and challenge. As we take our next steps into endings and change, tentative ideas have included: how might we “pay forward” our learning.....?

***“It kind of fosters a culture of interdependence”:
A participatory appraisal study exploring participants' experiences of the democratic processes of a peer-led organisation***

Before qualifying as a Clinical Psychologist, Gemma Budge, was on community placement with us at the Bridge Collective (2016), and then worked with the Bridge to produce a piece of research as part of her training (2017), published in the Journal of Community & Applied Psychology (2019).

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/casp.2393>

Abstract

Peer-led mental health organisations operate through participatory democracy, enabling participants to take an active role in decision making about the running of these organisations.

U.K. national policy recommends increased involvement of people accessing statutory mental health services in service development, for example, through co-production.

This study employed a participatory research method to explore participants' perspectives of the democratic processes of a U.K.-based peer-led mental health organisation, The Bridge Collective, and the influence of these processes on participant wellbeing.

A range of data collection methods were used to gather the perspectives of 16 participants. Participatory thematic analysis identified how the organisations' democratic processes both nurtured and challenged participants' wellbeing.

Three main themes captured the influences of the democratic processes on participant wellbeing:

- (a) negotiating relationships,
- (b) feeling the responsibility of involvement, and
- (c) sharing power.

The findings identify the value of democratic processes in enabling meaningful social support and empowerment, and also identify the challenges of inclusion and workload management in participatory democracy.

These insights may inform the development of co-production methods and enable The Bridge Collective and other peer-led organisations to further develop their processes.

Rhubarb Cake

5 oz butter or vegetable baking margarine

2 eggs

8 oz caster sugar or soft brown sugar

Small teaspoon almond essence

8 oz self raising flour

1 ½ level teaspoons baking powder

About 1 tablespoon of any milk (oat, soya, dairy etc)

12 oz chopped rhubarb

A few flaked almonds

Melt butter/margarine, pour into a bowl.

Add eggs, sugar, flour, baking powder, essence, milk.

Whisk all together with a wire whisk, to make a thick batter.

Grease well an 8" cake tin - with a removable base, or line with baking paper

Put 2/3 of the mixture into the tin.

Spread rhubarb pieces over the mixture, then drop the rest of the batter on to the fruit (doesn't have to cover it).

Sprinkle with a few flaked almonds.

Bake at 170 degrees C, 325 F, gas mark 3 for 1 ½ hours.

Variations:

Replace 2 oz of the flour with ground almonds and leave out the almond essence.

Use peeled and chopped apples or apricots instead of rhubarb.

Also good with frozen fruits – no need to thaw.

Vegan version –

8 oz self-raising flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

6 oz caster sugar or soft brown sugar

6 tablespoons oil or melted baking margarine

8 fluid oz water

12 oz chopped rhubarb

1 teaspoon almond essence

Mix and use in the same way as above.

n.b. This may make a slightly smaller quantity of cake mix; use a 7-inch cake tin and adjust the amount of fruit

Spring Haiku

Pale and clear as rain
Washes of silver sunlight
Splash the wall, and fade.

The Greenwood Project held a Wassail for the apple trees at Yeo Vale Wood in Lapford in January, with a wassail song and verse, music and noise provided by penny whistle, tubular bells strung between trees, and pan and stick percussion. There was hot mulled apple juice to drink and toast the trees. Here's a drawing by Laura of the wassailers gathered round the fire.





On grief

.....what's difficult is leaving the dreams that you shared together. And you know that somehow — no matter who you meet in your life in the future, and no matter what species of happiness you would share with them — you will never, ever share those particular dreams again, with that particular tonality and coloration. And so there's a lovely and powerful form of grief there that is the ultimate of giving away but making space for another form of reimagination ~ David Whyte

Your grief for what you've lost lifts a mirror up to where you're bravely working.

Expecting the worst, you look, and instead, here's the joyful face you've been wanting to see.

Your hand opens and closes and opens and closes.

If it were always a fist or always stretched open, you would be paralysed.

Your deepest presence is in every small contracting and expanding, the two as beautifully balanced and coordinated as bird wings.”

~ Rumi

*Anger and tenderness: my selves.
And now I can believe they breathe in me
as angels, not polarities.
Anger and tenderness: the spider's genius
to spin and weave in the same action
from her own body, anywhere -
even from a broken web.
~ From “Integrity” by Adrienne Rich*

“Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy—the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light.”

— Brene Brown

“Every person’s map of the world is as unique as their thumbprint. There are no two people alike. No two people who understand the same sentence the same way...”

- Milton Erickson

“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.”

- Heraclitus.

“We shrink from change, yet is there anything that can come into being without it? Change is part of nature itself. Do you not see then, that change in yourself is of the same order, and no less necessary than to nature?”

- Marcus Aurelius

“Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance.”

— Brené Brown, Daring Greatly

“Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.”

-Maya Angelou

“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your soul.”

- Jeremiah 6:13

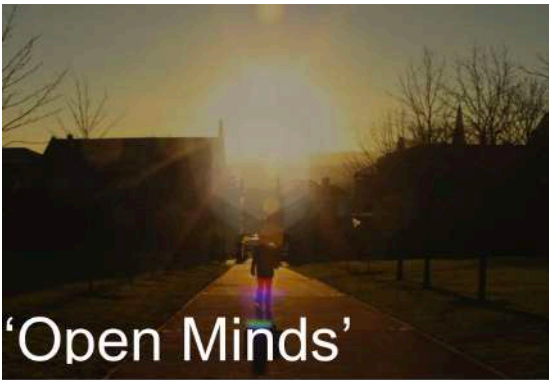
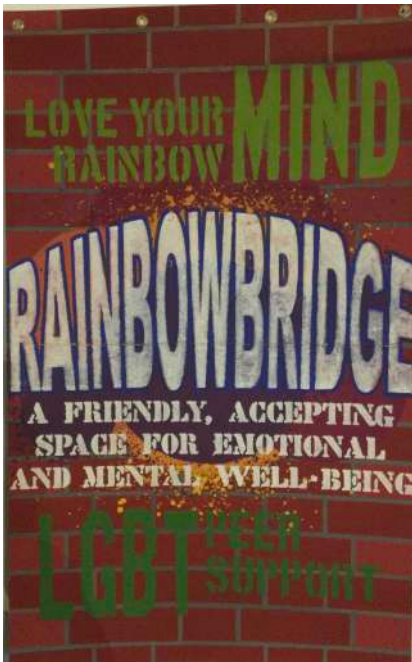
"Create a clearing in
the dense forest of
your life"

- Martha

Postlethwaite

A Little Lane, the brook runs close
beside
And spangles in the sunshine while
the fish glide swiftly by
And hedges leafing with the green
spring tide

- John Clare



A peer support group for people who see, hear or sense things other people don't (sometimes labelled 'psychosis').





Clay eggs painted with natural pigments at the Greenwood Project

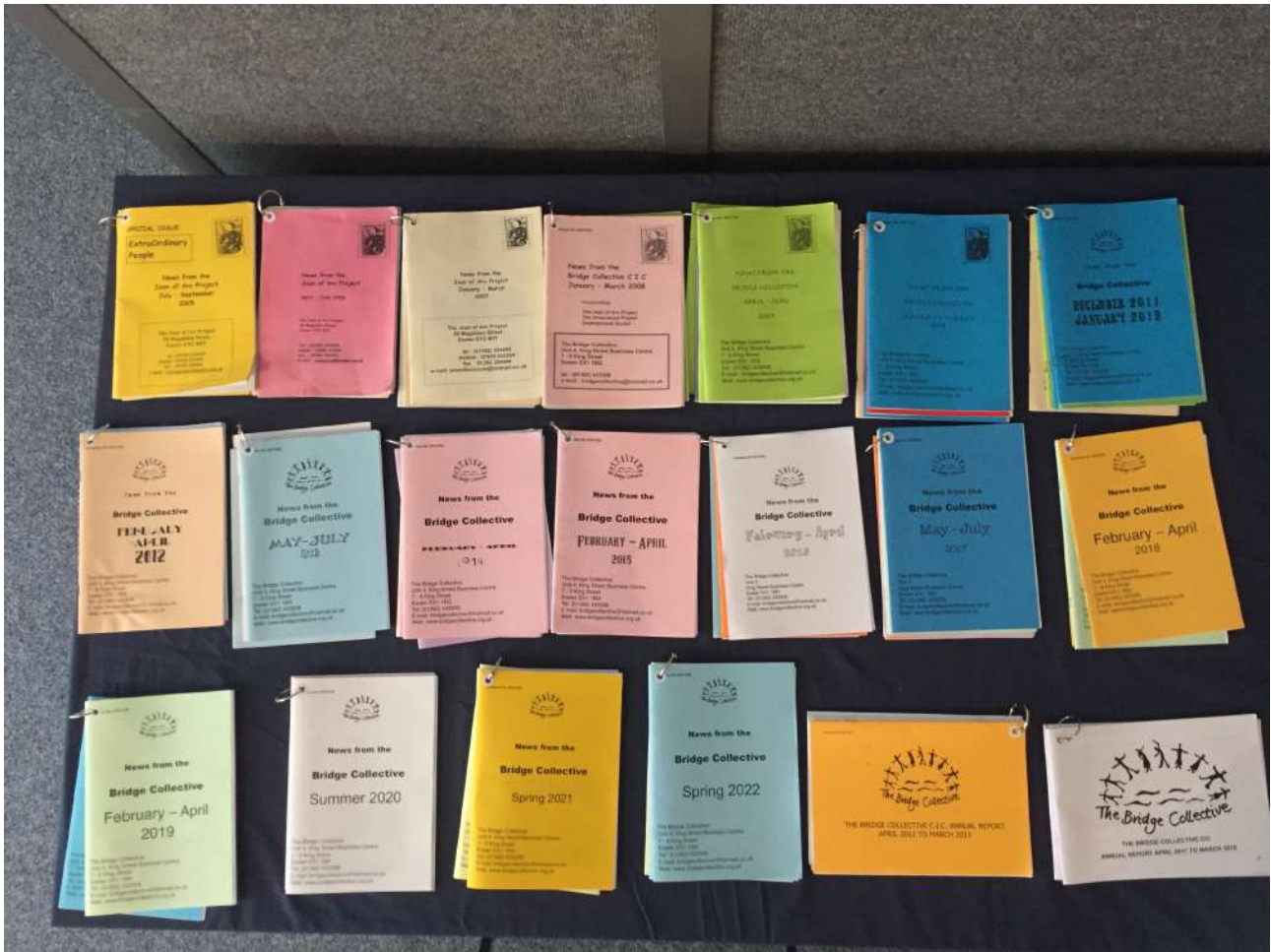
Community Meeting Minutes		
Below is a summary of minutes from recent Community Meeting Minutes. The full minutes can be found https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1z1ojViL3RHXuDLNyUy24AzyasCmwqKpq		
Item	Action/Decision	
10th November 2022		
June leaving the Bridge Collective	1. June to leave 14 hour post 1/12/22. 2. Exit interview to be arranged. 3. June will continue on a zero-hours contract up to 14 hours a week until 31/03/23. 4. Well wishes and many thanks to June for all her time working with us.	
2023 AGM date	18th May 1-3pm with open space 12-1pm. blended.	
Budget review	Funding bids will be the topic for community meeting working space 17/11/22 10.30-noon and funding meeting 17/11/22 3-4pm	
Budget review	Schedule a time to discuss alternative plans in case of a shortfall in January 19/01/23 10.30-noon	Finance team
Concerns and complaints team role	Agreed document with amendments	
Concerns and complaints team	June to be part of concerns and complaints team for remaining duration of employment with the Bridge Collective	
Concerns and complaints training	1. Recommend people with responsibility for concerns and complaints and/or disciplinary and grievance do free ACAS e-learning modules. 2. Agreed to research training costs to ensure sufficient training and confidence of people with concerns and complaints responsibility and grievance responsibility.	
Enquiry into formal investigations	Arrange a meeting to discuss next steps.	June, Ben, Tamasin
Bridge Principles	Agreed to adopt principles as a working document	
8th December 2022		
Annual Report	Agreed with amendments	
Accounts	Reviewed, amendments to be checked, and to be agreed by directors	Director team
Winter review - Covid risk assessment	Agreed with amendments	
Bridge funding scenarios for 2023/2024 and impact on potential employee contracts	Agenda item for community meeting working space 15/12/22 10.30am-noon	

Extra hours for Gill	Agreed an extra 9 hours for Gill between October-December 2022 (retroactive)	
Grant application	Agreed for application to be made for funding from Persimmon and DCC Growing Communities To be brought back to January 2023 community meeting.	
12th January 2023		
Open Reflection topic	Good endings, transformation and the future	Communications team
Employee redundancy notices	Issue notices to all employees of redundancy on 1st April, or when the legal notice period ends where this is after 1st April. In the event that we have enough income to pay employees next financial year redundancy notices can be withdrawn.	Operations team
Funding applications	Agreed to submit funding application to Persimmon Homes for £1000	Chris and Gill
Funding and future planning	Community meeting working space 19/01/23 10.30-noon: discuss plans for next financial year	
Thursday open space	Agreed to increase Thursday open space from 1 to 2 hours	Chris
Wellbeing sessions	Agreed to increase payment from £120 per session to £150 per session	
9th February 2023		
Review - bank employees paid time for taking part in concerns/complaints processes	Agreed to continue paying bank employees until end of financial year	Bank workers and Sarah
Printed annual reports	Agreed to print copies of the annual report for members with some additional copies	Andrew
Review sending Devon Mental Health Alliance funding bid	Decided not to submit current draft application bid to DMHA	
What makes the Bridge the Bridge?	Topic for community meeting working space 16/02/23. Suggested sharing document widely, details TBC	
Some ideas about a transition for the Bridge	Suggested bringing document for further discussion at community meeting working space 16/02/23 10.30-noon. A rich, interesting discussion was had, which we wish to continue. What we want to keep, hopes for the future, and remembering the seed from which the Bridge grew (and flourished).	

Communicating about transition	Agreed to post notice via email to all on our mailing list, as a post on facebook, and at the top of the What's On page of the website. Include 'what makes the Bridge the Bridge?' document (as an evolving, living document)	Communications team
9th March 2023		
Director resignation	Tamasin has resigned as Director. Many thanks for her time and contribution to the Bridge Collective. An exit interview will be offered.	
Community meeting working space	Community meeting working space on 16/03/23 1030 to 1230 will be a full Community Meeting	
Letting go of Bridge Collective's King Street premises	Agreed not to renew lease with P and S Properties and letting go of King Street premises on 25/04/23. Agreed to put valued items into commercial storage. Essential documents to be stored with responsible members of the Bridge Collective. Contact Colab regarding migrating registered office.	
Communication with funders	Communicate our current position to Tudor Trust and Self Heal.	Communications team
Questions about redundancies and HR matters	Send any questions regarding HR advice to communication team: info@bridgecollective.org.uk	
Delay Sarah, Nicola and Andrew's redundancy	Agreed to delay redundancy dates for Sarah, Nicola and Andrew until 31st May at 16 hours per week from the 1st of April. Sarah to receive contractual redundancy as applicable at 31st of March.	
Give notice to Bridge Collective volunteers	Agreed to give notice to volunteers	
Employee and volunteer feedback interviews	Agreed to offer employees and volunteers exit (feedback) interview.	Communications team
16th March 2023		
Filling director vacancy or calling a general meeting	Agreed to co-opt Andrew as a director from today	
Guidelines for disposal of Bridge contents	Agreed to guidelines and agreed to pay for storage	
Organise saying goodbye to the Bridge and Bridge Collective celebration day.	Agreed for third of April online and in-person event, budget from the well-being grant	Nicola and Andrew
Newsletter	Agreed to include a set of postcards with newsletter. Agreed up to £50 for well-being grant to cover costs.	

Outstanding leave	Agreed an option if employees prefer to take untaken leave as additional pay	
Clarification space – Open space	11 am to 12 noon online drop-in clarification space on 30th of March	
19th April 2023		
Members meeting	Agreed to hold an extraordinary general meeting on Thursday 25th May 1 to 2 pm to vote on a resolution that directors wind up the business of the company and apply for voluntary strike off. Noticed to be sent with enough time to allow any alternative resolution is to be submitted to the company secretary and circulated to members	Company secretary team
Registered office	Registered office to be moved to Colab on 19th of April	
Learning from director and concerns and complaints teams	Our recommendations are to review and remedy: 1. psychological safety in our organisation e.g. safety to clarify expectations, to speak up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes 2. How we give each other a fair hearing when giving critical feedback e.g. by ensuring we give specific examples of what was seen or heard, when and where – and an opportunity to respond 3. Shared understanding of confidentiality and concerns and complaints processes 4. Confidence and competence to conduct investigations (individually and as an	
Paying it forward: Bridge Peers	Explore creating a Bridge peers email address. Before the Bridge Collective closes invite people to send memories for public sharing	
Well-being grant	Agreed to hold a summer picnic on Saturday 27th May. Details to be confirmed	









Mission Statement

*To be a company whose members are creating:
A democratic community where people who
have experiences, beliefs, and feelings that
have sometimes been labelled as mental
illness are welcomed and can talk about
these experiences freely, safely and without
judgement; a place to participate in
friendship, support, learning, teaching,
discussion, being active, and making a valid
contribution both within the collective and
the wider community.*