

Transition

in the

East

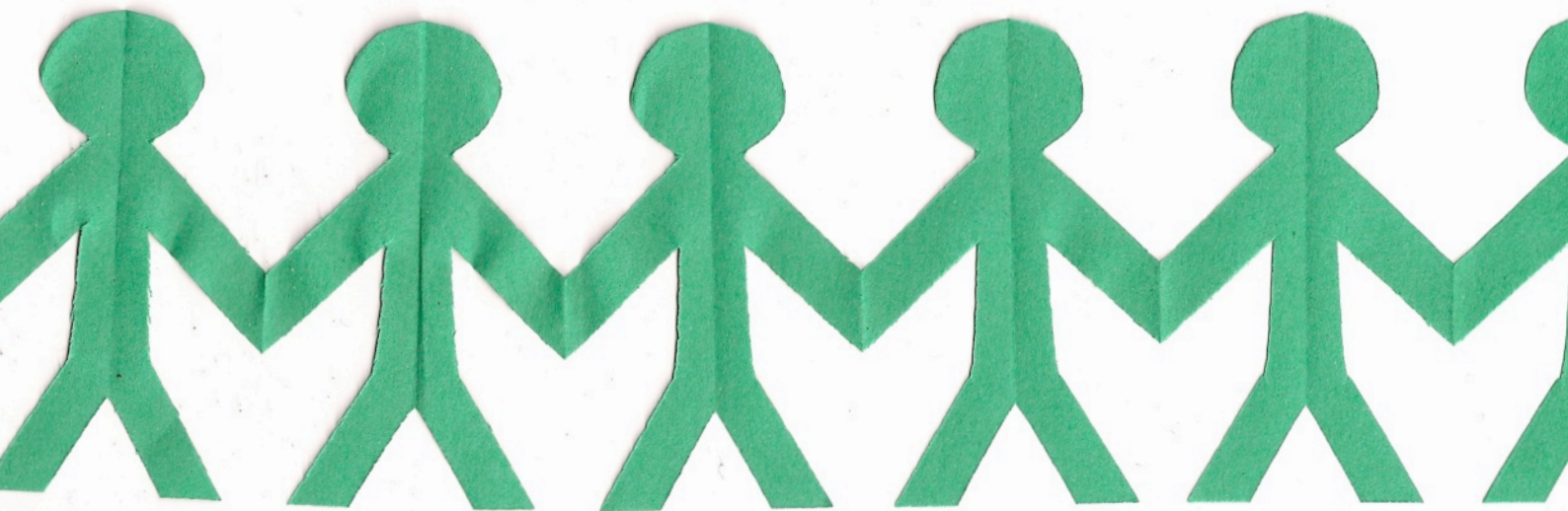
co-operation

collaboration

support

and

influence



2nd Regional Gathering

Diss

14th November 2009

Introduction

Supporting the 2nd Transition East Gathering

The idea for this document came out of one of our Transition East Support Group meetings. We wanted to know what our fellow Transitioners were experiencing in the Eastern region. How could we best help each other make this great shift together? How could we share our knowledge and practices, give each other a hand, swap references, contacts and good ideas?

The following pages contain a round-up, in alphabetical order, of all the up-and-running initiatives - some are 'official', some Unleashed and others neither. We've also included a few of the Mullers; some are very active, others just starting out and looking for local support. For the purposes of this document we used the government's definition of the Eastern region and found 29 initiatives from Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex (no doubt we've missed a few). There's a brief description of what each group has been engaged in during the last two years, including film screenings, community landshares, food conferences, energy fairs, talks, parties and all the activities that draw ourselves and our communities together to plan for a low carbon lean energy future.

The research was based on some general themes and each initiatives was asked about their:

- achievements
- plans
- hopes
- difficulties

In addition we collected some more specific information about the history and location of each initiative.

During the many telephone conversations and email communications several common challenges emerged and these are compiled into a separate section at the back called Transition Troubleshooting. These responses from everyone (including ourselves!) acted as an inspiration for a new open-space-style workshop that we will be facilitating in Diss this Saturday.

Looking forward to meeting and greeting you there!

Best wishes,

Charlotte, Gary, Jane, Josiah, Mark, Matt and Nigel

For the Transition East Support Group

I can't save the planet on my own. It'll take at least three of us. (Bill Mollison)

The Initiatives

The following initiatives are all up and running, though not all are officially so. Several have also “unleashed”.

Bassingbourn Cambs.

Village: pop. 3000

Timeline: Started March '08

Website:

www.bassingbourntransitionvillage.ni ng.com

Transition Bassingbourn meet regularly and have a core group of 12-15 people. They work within four main areas – Food, Water and Biodiversity, Social and Awareness, Transport and Travel (including safer routes to schools) and Energy and Homes. They have several working parties around these themes which have just begun to develop beyond the core group.

TB have a good working relationship with their village hall. Their screening of *The Age of Stupid* was a sell-out and the indoor Village Market, selling everything from food to paintings to duvets made within the parish, launched in September and now plans to run quarterly.

At present the Energy and Homes group are working towards to becoming local energy advisors, gathering information and setting up an insulation project with the local council, as well as working with the local Primary School who have just installed a wind-turbine. The Food group has spent the last 18 months setting up a CSA with the local council and a local farmer and the Transport group meanwhile is working on an engineering plan to create a cycling and pedestrian route to nearby Royston.

Beccles Suffolk

Market town: pop. 10,000

Timeline: Started November '08

Website: www.transitioneast.net/groups/sustainable-beccles

Inspired by Sustainable Bungay's Growing Local Food Conference, Sustainable Beccles began last November. Originally the group was supported by members of a local church who had a strong interest in the environmental and community aspects of Transition, and their first event was a successful screening of *Power of Community*. The initiative stalled when numbers dropped and there was a lack of commitment to move projects forward.

However a renaissance occurred when a working party began the Apple Share project in the summer. This is a scheme to collect unwanted apples from gardens and neglected orchards to redistribute back into the community and make into apple juice. The scheme was inspired by the many urban gleaning and scrumping projects that have recently sprung up all over the country, from Sheffield (www.growsheffield.org) to Walthamstow (www.growingcommunities.org). On October 10 SB had a stall in the High Street identifying and giving away many different varieties of apples, apple recipes and freshly-pressed apple juice. Next year they hope to team up with neighbouring Sustainable Bungay to map and document the fruit trees of the surrounding district. Another high profile event SB organised was a well-being day on October 31 when Neil Chadbourn (of Transition Town Totnes, responsible for the planting of the TT well-being garden) came to talk about the relationship between Transition and the health service in the future.

Beccles are now waiting for other members to join the steering group who will take SB forward. (“We would become official provided we can maintain sufficient interest.”) Meanwhile another working party is negotiating with the Town Council to renovate an old school playground and turn it into a community orchard and educational centre.

Bedford / Castle ward Bedfordshire

County town / electoral ward:
pop. 140,000 / 5000

Timeline: Zero Carbon Castle started in June '07, unleashed in April '09 and seeded Transition Bedford in June '09.

Website: www.zerocarboncastle.org
and www.transitionbedford.org

Castle is an urban village within the town of Bedford and was already engaged in low-carbon community activities before becoming a Transition initiative. Zero Carbon Castle began on a similar time-line to Transition Town Totnes. Unusually they unleashed before becoming official (still to do so) by holding a Street Fair in the high street with stalls, a cycling event and children's competitions (with Mr Zero). Their other very successful events have been a Garden Give Away with 30-40 gardens actively exchanging plants and produce in the neighbourhood, all-day clinics on energy, transport and waste, and several film showings. They have four very clearly defined food-growing areas within the neighbourhood - a herb-planted roundabout, a corporate space behind a restaurant, an allotment in a Christian Society and a guerrilla garden - and many of their present activities are based around the growing cycle in these gardens. Their recent Food Day at the roundabout attracted about 100 people with workshops and harvesting of herbs.

In June the ZCC Core group (about 6-7 people) moved to seed Bedford the town. Unusually for an Eastern town Bedford started within a neighbourhood first (Norwich, Ipswich and Cambridge for example started as a hub and now are beginning to branch out into the suburbs and hinterlands). "We're in the next phase," said organiser Shane Hughes. "Asking ourselves how can we replicate and support both these groups? How can these two groups work together and evolve?"

After a successful and well-attended open meeting, Transition Bedford has grown quiet and reflective. It's a certain stage of evolution many initiatives are experiencing at the moment. High activity followed by a period of dormancy ("Four months meditating in a corner," laughs Hughes). The present Bedford core group is larger than ZCC (about 12-14) and has pro-actively sought people with the right skills and knowledge base, so that all areas are covered, such as media, politics, well-being etc. They are therefore now at a planning stage and developing a series of events in 12-13 segments, designed so each one will build on the success of the previous one with a follow-up mechanism afterwards (something Transition events tend not to do). They have deliberately fended off the attractions of funding in favour of constructing a base with strong working partnerships, in order to find "creative ways of taking people over the threshold".

Bungay Suffolk

Market town: pop. 4500

Timeline: Started November '07, became official in June '08 and unleashed in May 09.

Website: www.transitioneast.net/groups/sustainable-bungay

Contact Person:

Josiah Meldrum

Tel: (01986) 897 097

Email:

sustainablebungay@gmail.com

Sustainable Bungay was formed at the end of a Climate Change conference organised by the local Emmanuel Church. At the beginning the group were primarily engaged in discussing local environmental issues and the way forward before they became an official Transition initiative. One of the original group had met Rob Hopkins at a Soil Association conference and was keen to use the Transition structure. The core group then shifted its focus and began to hold stalls at local events, talk with local groups in the town (Rotary Club, Royal British Legion, Horticultural Society) and to neighbouring towns, giving advice on local food and starting up initiatives (Beccles, Diss, Halesworth, Framlingham and Woodbridge). They also held a series of Peak Oil films during the summer at the local Fisher Theatre.

Bungay's most successful events have been their Growing Local Food conference, A Give and Take Day in the Community Hall and a Carfree Day, as part of World Carfree day (Sept 22) in which local schools participated. At their Unleashing in May they invited Shaun Chamberlin to talk about his recently released book, Transition Timeline, and invited everyone at the celebration to join in with creating the Bungay Timeline for the



Poster promoting Bungay's recent energy day (Oct. '09)

next 20 years. Recently they have held an Energy Day at the local library (where they have a shelf for books on low-carbon living, climate change and peak oil) and presented their Carbon Audit, using the ReapPetite carbon calculator, which they plan to distribute to 400 households in different neighbourhoods in the town.

At present Sustainable Bungay has a core group of about 10-15 people, a mailing list of 100 and working parties engaged in setting up a solar panel buying club, a car share, a pig club, land share and community-supported beehives. The core group comes together twice a month, officially for a core group meeting and unofficially for Green Drinks at the Green Dragon pub. They also produce a quarterly newsletter which is distributed throughout the town and to their mailing list as a PDF, and have made positive links with the local press and enjoyed interviews on BBC Radio Suffolk and Politics Show on BBC1.

Their main focus in the coming year is the creating of a permaculture garden and Living Library in the local Library courtyard. Like other initiatives in East Anglia they are running a Permaculture course (taught by Graham Burnett of Transition Westcliff) which will take place this January.

Cambridge Cambs.

City: pop. 100,000

Timeline: Started in February '07, official in February 08

Website:
www.transitioncambridge.org

Transition Cambridge is one of the Eastern region's longest running initiatives and so far has successfully run 50 events. Helped by being in a thriving university town with a tradition of strong green and grassroots activities, TC has a particularly strong food group which works closely with the Trumpington allotments. They have a core group, several active theme groups and a mailing list of 1,100 people.

The Transition Café is held fortnightly at a community café. TC also has an action-packed website and runs a concise weekly bulletin, keeping everyone in touch with what is happening. Their most successful events have included a participation with the Environment Festival in June in which they organised events every day, including workshops on wild food, education and psychology, a plant swap, The World Needs Your Passion and local and global food. They have also run two Storytelling events, two Open Space sessions, a Grow Your Own course and several film screenings (their *Age of Stupid* screening sold out, helped by distributing 250 posters through the town "we could have sold the tickets twice over," reports core member Anna McIvor).

In spite of this high activity the group is keen to evolve and is aware of many of the difficulties faced by a movement that is itself in Transition: how to keep momentum and not suffer from burn-out; how to proceed with new people once the theme groups are up and running (not same energy as when at their initiating creative stage); how to capitalise on the events. These are all questions now being asked.

TC are presently forming a new training group for facilitators of Transition groups that will include Non-Violent Communication and a process known as Dream Weaving, "because it's about being in groups as much as it is about being in Transition." Recently the area of Cherry Hinton has become a Transition initiative and in the future TC see themselves developing into a communication and co-ordination hub with smaller neighbourhoods and villages in Transition working on a more local level, and facilitating their unleashing.

Colchester

Transition Colchester has just embarked on its Transition journey and is being guided by their neighbouring initiative, Transition Wivenhoe. TC began with Transition Drinks in a local

Essex

County town: pop. 155,000

Timeline: Started in October '09.

Website: transitioncolchester.org.uk

pub and formed a steering group of 8-10 people. Their first project is to collate information and find out the state of play. Each person in the steering group is responsible for a certain subject e.g. food, transport, and how takes it shape within the local area.

Colchester is the fastest growing town in Britain and has one of the few streets that falls below the air pollution EU regulations due to its heavy volume of traffic. The group did discuss working within a smaller part of the town as well as the place-as-a-whole, but given its size and these particular "peak oil" challenges decided it would split their enthusiasm at this stage.

Dereham

Norfolk

Market town: pop. 18,000

Timeline: Started in October '08.

Website:
www.transitiondereham.org.uk

Contact Person:

Matt Walker

Email:
transitiondereham@googlemail.com

Matt Walker began promoting the Transition idea around Dereham with a blog and the first of several letters to the local newspaper about Peak Oil. TD has shown The End of Suburbia twice locally: first in the town in May 09 and later to a gathering of young adults near Mattishall in July. But despite some interest a core group has yet to form.

Each Transition initiative is helped or hindered by the place in which it arises. Dereham lacks the kind of social infrastructure that makes it easy for Transition to spark off. Everywhere has its challenges. However Transition is based on a market town with a tradition of alternative and future ways of thinking and strong connections with its hinterland. Dereham, though it is a market town, has few of these links outside the town's Green Party.

In October 08 Matt created both the regional map and the Transition East GoogleGroup, which he continues to maintain. This was one of the early elements in the development of the Transition East regional network. If anyone would like help in any way to keep the regional map updated please get in touch.

Diss

Norfolk

Market town: pop. 7,000

Timeline: Started in June '08, official in April 09

Website: www.transitioneast.net/groups/transition-diss

Contact Person:

Gary Alexander

Email: garyalex@earthconnected.net

Transition Diss has a core group that meets every few weeks (originally the core group was closed but has recently opened). They have had one main event, a Knit-In, held outside the just-closed Woolworths store in town. They have also had stands at the Farmer's Market and local environmental events such as the Greenpeace Fair and the Zero Carbon Fair in Norwich, given talks to local initiatives, Slow Food (Diss is a Citta Slow) and the Community Partnership and hosted an evening of Future of Food talks. Diss is also home and operations centre for the Transition East web portal and support group.

Transition Diss arose out of an existing community group. This has had both advantages and disadvantages. Stable and sustainable emotional relationships between people are quite rare in Transition (due to its relative newness) but they do not always foster the boldness and drive required to move initiatives forward. Gary Alexander says Transition is like building a fire with wood that is not quite dry. After an initial burst the flames die away. You add kindling, it catches somewhere and people say I want to be part of that. Then it dies down again. We are past those early stages and it is now the time to blow on the flames to

the point that the fire takes off on its own. When it reaches critical mass and people get it and it takes off.

Downham Market and Villages Norfolk

**Market town and surrounding
villages:** pop. 10,000

Timeline: Started in October '08

Website:
www.transitiondownhamandvillages.co.uk

Downham Market and Villages in Transition was the first place to host the Transition East Gathering (March 8) in which many initiatives got to experience the Transition technologies of Open Space and World Café for the first time, as well as meet fellow Transitioners from outside their own core groups. TD have put on a series of films (Crude Awakening, Power of Community, The 11th hour) and threw a highly successful party in conjunction with a screening of *The Age of Stupid* (two core members are part of a great band, The John Preston Tribute Band) to which 150 people came. They have held stalls at various fetes, offering debates and information and collecting ideas.

In August the core group put aside one whole day to reflect, digest and reconnect, in which they engaged with what being in a Transition group entails without any business-of-the-day. This was a crucial step: "It's quite hard for that space to exist," said John one of the movers and shakers of the group. Carol expanded: "It became clear that we need to make time to meet together without goal-orientated agendas or our capacity to reflect on the deeper currents of our activity and motivation would be in danger of becoming swamped by the planning and administrative mind."

TD's recent Our Food, Our Future conference on October 31 received funding (£2,500) from local councils and businesses which allowed them to invite Bob Flowerdew as one of their speakers, pay for half the public liability insurance, buy a projector and other events costs which can sometimes be beyond the scope of many initiatives. They plan to tour the food event in all the surrounding villages. They are presently running a Copenhagen month leading up to the Climate talks in December and actively engaged in the local campaign for allotment provision in the only town in Norfolk without any allotments.

Ely Cambs

City: pop. 15,000

Timeline: Started June '08, official October '08.

Website: www.transition.org

Contact Person:

Martin Black

Email: info@transitionely.org

Transition Ely "started from scratch" in 2008. They have interacted with the city using "the gradual coaxing approach", talking with groups such as the Rotary Club and the Ely Society, and taking an active part in local events such as Apple Day (where one of the core group, a yurt builder, erected a yurt and held workshops). TE now enjoy a friendly relationship with the Farmer's Market and have hosted *The Age of Stupid* and *The Power of Community* in their local cinema.

Last month TE held a successful Local Food Conference with speakers Ben Reynolds from Sustain and local farmer, Ken Kelso. It was opened by James Paice MP, the Shadow Secretary for Agriculture. Core to the event was an Open Space session where the participants talked about what was needed in the area, and in the future the group plan to launch several food projects on the back of this event. They would also like to strengthen their core group and build up their contacts.

Framlingham Suffolk

**Market town and surrounding
villages:** pop. 2700 / 7500

Greener Fram was already up and running as a group before it decided to adopt the Transition structure. Like Sustainable Bungay, GF were inspired by the Climate Change conference in Bungay in 2007. They have a core group of 12 people (four of whom have done the Transition training) and strong affiliations with local food networks. Says organiser David Price: "In this shift into becoming a Transition initiative, Greener Fram are very keen to identify our objectives and move forward, what they are and how to achieve them."

Timeline: started June '08, official in October '08.

Website: www.greenerfram.org.uk

Contact Person:

David Price

Email: greenerfram@me.com

So far GF have put on a series of events: a screening of *Power of Community* and talks on Local Food and Transition and Car Clubs (by Kesgrave based car-share initiative Wombat) and taken a stall to local events. They are presently engaged in a solar-panel bulk buy and free insulation project, funded by Suffolk Coastal Council and will be running a Greener Saturday, showing *The Story of Stuff*, *Inside Out* and *In Transition*.

In the future Greener Fram are planning a second series of films including *End of Suburbia* and a second showing of *Power of Community*. They are also setting up a talk for next March with David Strahan, leading peak oil expert and author of *The Last Oil Shock*.

Halesworth Suffolk

Market town and surrounding villages: pop. 6000

Timeline: started June '09, official in September '09.

Website: none at present

Transition Halesworth are very much at the planning stage of their initiative and have deliberately so far kept all their actives in-house. They have a core group of 9 people with a support group of about 20. In this preparation period they have shown *Power of Community* and run a series of workshops (with food sharing) on eco-systems and visioning. Several of the group have also done the Transition Training. They are planning to show *The Age of Stupid* to their support group as a run-up to showing the film in public with a Q&A and have set up talks to the Town Council, local WI and the Halesworth Business Group and are working on a leaflet to distribute in town.

Ipswich Suffolk

County town: pop. 140,000

Timeline: started October '08, official in September '09.

Website:

www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/transitionipswich

Contact Person:

John Taylor

Email: ttipswich@googlemail.com

Transition Ipswich have a core group of about 8-10. Their main activities have been holding film screenings and discussion evenings, such as the BBC documentary *Farm for the Future*, *Home* and *In Transition*. During May TI held a week-long series of events during a local May festival, centred around a Bedouin tent. They launched their very popular Backgammon Nights during this week, which now runs once a month at the local Museum Street Café.

Ipswich consider themselves in the awareness raising phase and are making links with existing groups, such as the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Recently they organised a Massed Bike Ride for the International Day of Climate Action.

Meanwhile they have also formed a food group and a solar-panel buying club. The food group are working with the local co-op (Ripple) who have recently moved into the city centre and are actively engaged in organising wild food walks, the mapping of fruit trees and gleaning projects. They also work very closely with the People's Community Garden in Mildenhall, which has a permaculture club, as well as an office powered by solar panels and a newly installed wind turbine.

King's Lynn Norfolk

Market town: pop. 35,000

"Our main success is our edible garden in the local park" reported one of Transition King's Lynn's prime movers, Viv Manning. Helped by a Greener Neighbourhood Grant, the land grows different kinds of vegetables, herbs and fruit trees, and forms the focal point of this group, as well as providing a way of forging links with the local town council. They have also recently taken part in another scheme (Do Something Different) to help

Timeline: started January '09

Website:

www.transitionkingslynn.wordpress.com

Contact Person:

Viv Manning

Email:

transition.kingslynn@googlemail.com

advise local residents how to grow vegetables on the local Fairstead estate.

Other activities follow the Transition tradition of showing *The End of Suburbia* (5 people!) and having stalls at local events, such as the Burnham Deepdale Earth Day. They have also made links with local beekeepers and the Hardings Pits Association, formed to help protect a community-managed wildlife site.

TKL have a steering group of six at present but are looking for more active members to take the initiative to a more dynamic level.

Lavenham Suffolk

Village: pop. 1,750

Timeline: started March '08

Website:

www.transitionlavenham.co.uk

Contact Person:

Carol Reeve

Transition Lavenham is a community interest company. They have a core group of 8 people (4 very active), some of whom are also on the Parish and District County Council. Their main focus of attention has been to get the village involved in community projects to generate local energy sources, including incentives for solar panels and insulation.

One of the key provisions Transition can offer communities is that of synthesis. In Lavenham many groups have reached a plateau and TL find that by encouraging people to get involved with the Transition energy project, they also promote other activities and groups at the same time.

Next spring TL are conducting a Village Appraisal in collaboration with the Energy Savings Trust. A former village survey had a successful return rate of 60-70%, which catalysed the new Village Hall where none existed and a community bus. It was found that the survey worked because people spent time knocking on doors and interacting with people.

Other activities include planting of apple, pear and plum trees around the church, holding a stall at the local Farmer's Market and showing *The Age of Stupid*, where in spite of terrible weather (!) 70 people turned up. TL are also working towards a landshare. Recently they have been given a £5000 grant by the Suffolk Foundation to get the initiative off the ground.

Transition Mersea Island Essex

Bio-region: pop 7000

Time line: started April '08, became official June '08

Website: none at present

Contact Person:

Beveley Perkins

Transition Island Mersea have had several successful events and, like several initiatives, have had a mixed reception to date. After finding some islanders resistant to the Transition "brand" and the idea of another group telling them how to live their lives the initiative decided to go "Transition light" and use its cohesive nature to facilitate greater working relationships between everyone. Mersea has 120 community groups and Transition has served to bring many of these into awareness of each other and work in collaboration.

In 2008 TIM ran a series of films in the two parts of the island and an Open Space session in which the community defined particular areas they wished to concentrate on. They also facilitated a partnership between the Co-op and the local primary school.

This summer the first Mersea Island Food, Drink and Leisure Festival was run along Transition lines and included a children's marquee, food stands and local oystermen, farriers and beekeepers. In summer the numbers on the island swell to 20,000 and time becomes a rare commodity for most committee members (numbering 6) who already have other community commitments. Key member, Beverley Perkins reports that the main challenges are now enabling those outside the committee to lead specific areas or projects and maintaining momentum.

TIM are working towards creating a Skills Sharing and Growing

project with the recently secured allotments. A base will provide tools as well as a place in which to interact, share food and seeds and pass on the kitchen and garden knowledge of generations.

Nayland Suffolk

Village: pop. 1200

Timeline: started March '09

Website:
www.transitionnayland.co.uk

Contact Person:
Will Hitchcock

Email: info@transitionnayland.co.uk

Transition Nayland began with one person who after making a pitch to the Community Council, negotiated the use of the local community hall and film equipment and enlisted support from 2 members of the Community Council to help set up a film night to which 65 people came. Out of this film night and inaugural meeting a core group of seven people was formed, who now meet on a monthly basis, with an open meeting every two months.

Their core group is unusual in that everyone is under the age of 45, in full-time work, and many with young families. It also includes the owner of the local pub, The Anchor (recently voted the Greenest Pub in Suffolk, which grows its own vegetables). The wider and very supportive general group of a further 10 people includes a local Parish councillor, District councillor and a County councillor as well as representation from the WI.

TN feel that the awareness raising stage is crucial to get people up to the same level of understanding. So far they have had two screenings at the local village hall. At the first they showed *Farm for the Future* and *The Story of Stuff*, and at the second *The Age of Stupid*. They are conducting a local Transition Survey of the village (based on the Totnes survey) asking people questions about where they shop, whether they use the allotments etc., to find out what the community wants. They are also in negotiations with the Parish Council over an extension of the local allotments, introducing battery recycling and investigating location options for a bottle bank.

Like many village or smaller town initiatives TN benefits from having a closely defined community and the fact most places of activity are within walking distance. Some projects are more easily achieved as a result. Nayland is also helped by a common pride of place and being socially rich, with several active societies and groups, two village shops, post office and an eco-plan school.

Transition Nayland are also initiating plans for hydro-power in the River Stour and have a regular column in the local community paper. In the future they also plan to run an informal green "clinic" at the pub, where people who want to can speak with those who have knowledge and experience of renewable energy and can share their resources.

Norwich Norfolk

City: pop. 132,000

Timeline: Started January '08, became official in May '08 and unleashed in October '08.

Website: www.transitionnorwich.org

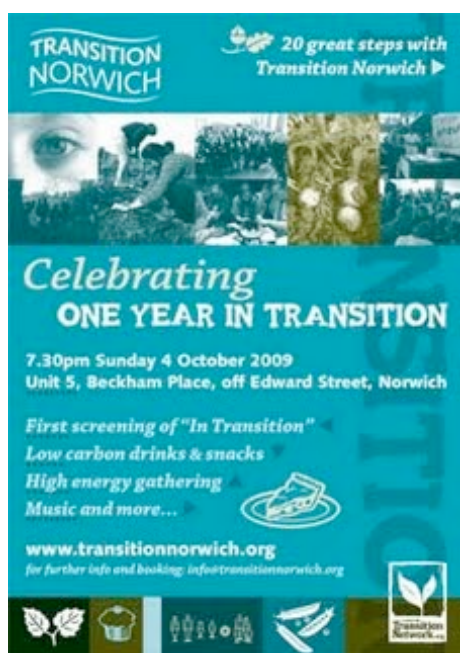
Contact Person:
Chris Hull

Email: info@transitionnorwich.org

Transition Norwich began with a core group of five people who focussed all their attention on awareness raising and the build up to an Unleashing which was to feature Rob Hopkins and local Labour MP, Ian Gibson. These steps included the showing of films, talks with local schools and churches and a day of activities shared with other Climate Change groups with stalls, a Cuban band and screenings of *Power of Community* at the city's Arts Centre. The night before the Unleashing the City Council passed a unanimous motion to give support to TN.

The Unleashing was a highly successful event (in spite of the fact Hopkins could not make it – Ben Brangwyn stepped in at the last moment) with 450 people attending, most of whom joined TN's mailing list. Following shortly after that event 14 theme groups began to meet in the city centre on a regular basis and explore the many aspects of Transition.

A year later TN have reorganised their core group which now



Party Poster! One year of Transition Norwich (Oct. '09)

numbers six people. Outwardly TN is actively engaged with other groups to bring about sustainable change. They are looking at government plans for the region, supporting the sustainable initiatives and challenging the pressure for more roads, houses etc. as well as supporting national campaigns for climate action. Their main in-house focus has shifted towards building up the Resilience Plan (formerly known as the Energy Descent Action Plan!), while the theme groups, ranging from Heart and Soul to Transport to Textiles, having undergone many changes, are now concentrating their efforts on working with this plan. The other two drivers are the Transition Circles and the Communications group which organises events, outside communications, press and publicity and the website (with two blogs) and a monthly bulletin.

Transition Circles mark a departure from the structure set out in the Handbook (though paralleled by the Totnes Together scheme that began at the same time). Their focus is on personal commitment and includes a hub circle known as TN2 and several neighbourhood groups (TN2 is made up of a group of “descenters” who have committed to radically reducing their carbon footprinting, using a calculator devised by one of the group who works at UEA). All groups discuss the effects of carbon reduction, especially home energy, transport and food, as well as the wider, more philosophical issues. The future plans of TN include the training of several councillors on the City Council and the development of several growing projects – a CSA, a community mill for local flour, a school market garden – as well as their own Transition allotment. The Communications group has also recently been invited to join the co-operatively run OneWorldColumn on the EDP, specifically to discuss the Transition movement.

Saffron Walden Essex

Market town: pop. 16,000

Timeline: started October '08, became official May '09

Website: www.walden-in-transition.org.uk

Contact Person:
Stephen Willoughby

Walden in Transition began when a group went to visit Adrienne Campbell of Transition Lewes and were inspired to start their own initiative. They have run a series of ambitious and successful talks, ranging from Jeremy Leggett, talking about The Triple Crunch, David Strahan, author of *The Last Oil Shock*, talking about Peak Oil, and Joe Smith, social and political scientist at the OU. At the end of May they had an open meeting to discuss the different information gleaned from the speakers and decide how to deal with the issues raised in the community. Part of this meeting was an open space discussion around the question: how do we see Saffron Walden in 10, 20, 30 and 50 years time?

In a second open meeting they decided what they were going to do. “Transition is about doing stuff”, said Stephen Willoughby one of the six core group members. They formed several theme groups as a result, including the Walden Pound, Skills Shares, Trees and Open Spaces and Values (educating people to question assumptions, to ask questions such as what do we mean by choice/economy/progress/development?). They have now decided to abandon the open meetings and concentrate on the projects organised by these groups.

WIT have two food community interest companies, a food market and a community-run sheep farm with ancient woodland on the outskirts of the town that is in conversion to organic husbandry. There are plans to coppice some of the wood.

The Walden pound group meanwhile is supporting the local business forum's loyalty scheme and hopes to launch the pound in the near future. The local Lets scheme and very active Freecycle in the area mean there is already an engagement in swapping and recycling, ways of doing things which the Skills

group can build on for future activities.

In spite of a “rather difficult” relationship with local councils, the core group recently went to speak to the District Council regarding the EERA plans for massive development in the area by 2031. “This is not going to happen,” Willoughby told them, “We just have to powerdown.”

Westcliff / Southend Essex

Seaside town: pop. 170,000

Timeline: Started March '08

Website:

www.transitionwestcliff.org.uk

Contact Person:

Kamil Pachalko

Transition Westcliff began in 2008 and shifted to becoming Southend in Transition this year mainly because they wanted to involve everyone in the locality. They began by showing a series of environmental screenings (*End of Suburbia*, *Transition Towns* and *Power of Community*), connecting with other groups like Friends of the Earth, building up contacts and grounding themselves in the subjects of peak oil and climate change.

SIT are assisted by three “drivers” in the area: local incentives for Southend to become a Cycling Town, a Cultural Capital for 2016 and strong links with the growing University and College. Southend in Transition also work in partnership with several local groups, an interconnectedness which is reflected in their website and their monthly newsletter. They have a mailing list of 300 plus, 50 facebook members and the website enjoys over 1000 visitors per month. They have also made a YouTube video.

Last month they ran a permaculture course with their resident permaculture author and teacher, Graham Burnett, in partnership with Milton Community Partnership and SpiralSeed, and showed the peak oil marathon film *What a Way to Go – Life at the End of Empire*.

Like many other groups they have a Transition Drinks once a month and have sub groups in development e.g. Food, Transport, Heart and Soul. “Last year we focused on events to get people involved,” said key member, Kamil Pachalko. “2010 will be our year of projects.”

Stour Valley Suffolk & Essex

Bio-region: pop. 7,434

Timeline: Started February '07

Website:

transitionvalley.blogspot.com

Contact Person:

Mark O'Connell

Email: info@theapricotcentre.co.uk

Transition Valley had their first meeting on the snowiest evening of the year when 9 people turned up resiliently to start this burgeoning initiative. They have recently branched out from their core group and started Communications and Heart and Soul groups. The Communications group have founded a very active blog, while the Heart and Soul group is concentrating on engaging with the slower and steadier pace of Transition.

One of their most successful events has been the Great Food Swap which formed part of the local Beach Bash. Swaps are now part of their repertoire (even the groups' children are organising their own toy swap). They show regular films, such as *Power of Community* and *In Transition* and have recently been awarded funding from the Dedham Vale AONB for a series of workshops called Reskilling the Valley.

At the heart of the initiative, like Transition itself, is the practice of Permaculture. A permaculture course is presently being run by horticulturalist Marina O'Connell, one of the core members. Transition Valley are also presently working with a local primary school to become a Transition School.

Wivenhoe Essex

Transition Wivenhoe did ‘seeds for change’ over the summer at local events - giving out custom packaged sunflower seeds in return for a donation. No flower could perhaps signify Transition so well - bold, useful and composite. There are 9 people in the core group (two of whom have done the Transition training) and they have put most of their energy in the past year

University Town: pop. 10,000

Timeline: Started November '08, official April '09, planning to unleash in the spring

Website: transitionwivenhoe.co.uk

Contact Person:
Jo Wheatley

into awareness raising, showing a series of films, building their mailing list (200) by attending lots of local events and making links with other groups including 2 residents associations, the local football club, the Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society at the University of Essex and the local Green Party. They enjoy good relationships with the Town and Borough council. Some of the core group previously worked on the community-led Town Plan in 2008 which led to starting the Transition project.

One of the most innovative creations is TW's bike-powered cinema which has been used for screening *The Story of Stuff* and *Crude Awakening* so far. They took it to an Eco Schools conference which fascinated the young participants. They have strong links with nearby Transition (Stour) Valley (whose communications group gave advice on how to set up a blog) and are currently applying to the Low Carbon Communities Challenge. As well as regular steering group meetings TW run Transition & Green drinks at the local pub, the Greyhound. A recent fruit picking walk prompted ideas for a food group, though this has yet to start.

Like many Transition initiatives, managing the balance between doing stuff and taking time to embed a deep understanding of the issues of peak oil, climate change and to learn about permaculture in an already busy life, is a key challenge. They are thinking about unleashing in the spring or summer.

Woodbridge Suffolk

Market town: pop. 12,000

Timeline: started October '08, became official April '09

Website:
www.transitionwoodbridge.org.uk

Contact Person:
Nigel McKean

Email: twoodbridge@gmail.com

Transition Woodbridge started with a steering group of 10-12, this has dwindled to five, they are hoping to attract more people at their AGM on Friday 13th. During the last year they have shown several films at local church halls, including *Power of Community*, *Akenfield* and *Farm for the Future*, held a hustings for the local candidate just before the European elections and a series of talks. The talks have been on diverse range of subjects from the Problem of Population, Local Food, Climate Change and Energy to local artist Fran Crowe's installation using some 48,000 pieces of rubbish found on local beaches (www.flyintheace.com). Spokesperson and TE Support Group member, Nigel McKean, felt that the speakers were not radical or hard-hitting enough to provoke a response or create an impact. The initiative is now concentrating on more practical projects.

Transition Woodbridge have also started having Transition Drinks once a month at the local Cherry Tree pub, as well as forming an allotment association and hosting the Permaculture club that recently built a clay oven at the Mildenhall Community Garden in Ipswich.

TW's future plans include starting a food coop and an educational Permaculture Project. They are hoping to unleash in the spring and to become a hub for the surrounding villages and smaller initiatives.

The Mullers

The following initiatives are in the mulling stage. Some are active groups that are thinking of using the Transition model as a way to proceed. Some are interested but have not formed a regular group or engaged in any activities yet. Some have shown films and hosted talks from neighbouring initiatives. All are looking for active members so do get in touch if you know of people in their areas who would like to join (a full list of all the initiatives in the Eastern Region can be found on the regional Transition map – see www.transitioneast.net)

Gipping Valley Suffolk

Bio-region, including Needham

Market: pop. 8,145

Timeline: Started '09

Contact Person:

Lisa Lindsell

Transition Gipping Valley are based in Needham Market and have so far run several Give and Take events in the village hall, including a plant swap and a Swishing Party. TGV are presently working with the local allotments and also on a leaflet they plan to distribute to households (publicity and connections with local government so far has been thwarted by a resistant Parish Council). Even though there is both a light and dark green presence in the Valley, the initiative has yet to get into gear and would welcome anyone who would like to join.

Hadleigh Suffolk

Village: pop. 8,150

Timeline: started June '09

Contact Person:

Jane Haylock

Hadleigh have held two environmental screenings at the village hall, An Inconvenient Truth and The Age of Stupid. After the second Jane Haylock asked if anyone was interested in taking Transition forward and Transition Hadleigh was seeded. Although very much at its early stages (they plan to have a first open meeting in early 2010), there are many elements that would make an initiative take root and flourish in the village. The Chamber of Commerce has begun a food initiative that has included farm visits and a talk on 1940's food (looking at the effects of rationing and home-growing). The medieval Town Hall has just had a carbon footprint survey and the council have just started up an allotment association and intend to apply for grants for a meeting hut and compost toilet that will enable people to come together and share seed orders etc. There is a growing groundswell of interest, reports Jane, and she hopes the initiative will take off next year.

Otley Suffolk

Village: pop. 1,100

Timeline: Started May '09

Contact Person:

As well as Transition initiatives there are several up and running low-carbon and energy groups in Suffolk, some of which have subsequently followed the Transition model. Otley Green has a committee of 8 people and has put on two main events, both of which were very successful. 96 people came to the village hall to watch *The Age of Stupid*, followed by a talk by Schlumberger's (an oil exploration services company) Research Fellow for Energy, Carbon and Climate Change who verified the facts of the film and spoke about carbon sequestration.

The second event, an Energy Saving Fair, had several stalls run

Tony Barrett

by renewable energy companies, including composters and recyclers. The village shop served local food and helped publicise the advantages of shopping locally. The school had an art competition about the environment. They also invited Otley Pioneers - local people who had made significant steps towards using alternative energy, such as photovoltaics and installing wind-turbines to talk about energy saving beyond insulation. "There was a real buzz," reported organiser Tony Barrett. A connection with nearby Otley Agricultural College helped with publicising both events.

On the day Otley Green gave people who signed up for the 10:10 scheme a free pack of briquettes made from waste material produced by Mencap's furniture workshops. These people could also borrow an electricity monitor. They also launched a solar panel buying club, supported by Suffolk Coastal District Council, a garden-share scheme and a cycling club. As well as delivering the results of their village carbon survey, they began making plans for a community woodland.

Mundesley Norfolk

Coastal town: pop. 2,695

Timeline: Started '09

Contact Person:
Sally

Transition Mundesley came to the last Transition East Gathering and began with talks from local initiatives in Diss and Norwich, as well as a screening of *The Age of Stupid*. Due to unforeseen circumstances their most active member had to withdraw their support and as a result TM are waiting for someone to take the initiative forward.

St Neots Cambs

Market town: pop. 26,390

Timeline: Started February '09

Contact Person:
Sarah Newton

Email:
transitionstneots@googlemail.com

Transition St Neots had a lively first meeting in which ten people came forward to be involved in setting up an initiative. The group then dwindled in subsequent meetings and now consists of three people connected through home education. The town of St. Neots lacks an alternative infrastructure or grassroots activity, though there was once a thriving Letts group and Green Fair (the original woman behind these initiatives, now 80, has been very supportive of TSN). "There is a lot of me-thinking and not much sense of community," reports would-be Transitioner Sarah Newton, so the kind of time and energy required to move forward is quite high. The group are hoping to connect with nearby Huntingdon who have recently shown *The Age of Stupid* and would be happy to hear from anyone in the area who would like to get involved.

Sheringham Norfolk

Coastal town: pop. 1743

Timeline: Started September '09

Contact Person:
Janet Farrow

Sustainable Communities have just formed their committee of 15 people and plan to make Sheringham and surrounding villages more sustainable. They are presently gathering ideas and investigating whether or not to adopt the Transition process. They have had four meetings and already having several projects in mind, including planting a coppice wood. They are working closely with the Upcher community.

Transition Troubleshooting

everything you wanted to know about Transition
but were too correct to ask...

*how to unleash: how to design a poster: how to host an event: how to blog:
how to boost a flagging initiative: how to get initiative funding/official
status/publicity/: looking for a good speaker?: am I the only person to feel
like this?: serial e-mailer?: had enough of the word sustainable?:
Downshifted and downhearted?*

The Troubles We Have to Shoot

There comes a point when you realise - Transition is hard work. The Handbook makes it sound like a breeze. Doors are supposed to be open when they are shut. You're supposed to be positive and you feel downhearted. People are telling you the movement is too radical, not radical enough, not inclusive, too middle class. Your inbox has 101 emails. The press don't return your calls. You NEVER want to put on an event again. Nobody turned up to the screening. Your family doesn't want to hear one more thing about Local Food or Peak Oil (even your cat has turned against you – so what happened to all those nice radiators that used to be on, huh?)

Somehow however you know that you can't just give Transition up. Peak oil and climate change are not going to go away, whether you are part of the movement or not, and nothing out there quite captures the *zeitgeist* and makes such sense as Transition culture. *Tell me*, you say to yourself, *What are you planning to do with your one wild and precious life?* Before you know it you are heading off to another core/communications/transport/food meeting.

This document came out of one such meeting and one such moment when the Transition East Support Group met in Norwich just as autumn arrived, and I was beginning to think resilience was a modern version of the stiff upper lip. It started when Josiah admitted as we began our shared meal that his dish of perfectly gleaned beefsteak fungus was in fact quite inedible and we didn't have to be polite about it. We all roared with laughter. Afterwards we sat in a circle and went round introducing ourselves as is customary in our meetings, saying how Transition was going in our respective initiatives. Nigel from Woodbridge spoke first.

“I would say it had a negative effect,” he reported calmly.

Several small gasps were unleashed into the room. *Negative?* We're supposed to be positive, aren't we? Part of this uplifting, fantastic, power-of-now, power-of-community Great Reskilling of Humanity, aren't we? Before we knew it everyone was admitting that things weren't going quite as smoothly as the Handbook suggested they might be. None

of us wanted to indulge or offload the bad news (most of us having joined Transition as a welcome relief from the doom-laden anti-everything activist stance taken by most environmental groups). However we didn't want to do a jolly Transition marketing spin on our experiences either.

One of the key facts about Transition is that we have to face the very real realities of the triple crunch and the radical changes these will effect in our lives. Not just in the way we go shopping but in the way we think and feel and perceive the world. Another fact is that we can't do this on our own. We can't go forward unless we learn how to work and communicate as a group. And those groups are tricky things to negotiate. By its very nature Transition is a process ("A verb not a noun," said Nigel) , and even though we would like it to be plain sailing, sometimes you have to weather the storm and go through *stuff*.

Shortly after our meeting Josiah sent round Rob Hopkins' post on Transition Culture from September 22. It was from the initiative in Oxford that had stalled. All of us recognised the situations that were recorded so frankly. It seemed like we had simultaneously reached a turning point. We had come so far and now we had to start inventing ways of dealing with our common difficulties. Transition Troubleshooting was born.

Transition Troubleshooting aims to take the form of a freestyle workshop that can address any issues people would like to look at: Head issues, Heart issues and Hands issues (practical things like funding, publicity, how to run events, running a community allotment, a community blog etc). It's a chance to share our experiences and give each other a hand and voice things out loud that might not get said otherwise. In preparing for the Gathering many initiatives shared their difficulties that ranged from unhelpful and antagonistic Town and Parish Councils to lack of success with publicity and events.

Some of these were practical questions which we could help each other with:

- how to find funding, what are its advantages and disadvantages
- who to ask about public liability insurance, entertainment licences etc.
- what kind of official status (charity, public company) works best for Transition?
- What is the most effective way we can publicise through the media?
- What is the best way to deal with officialdom?

Other difficulties are the kinds of things that are easy to admit to oneself but hard to articulate with people you don't know that well. Transition challenges the status quo and old ways of doing things. We have to work co-operatively and we're used to running things our way as individuals. Control and power issues often arise within groups. It might be rosy at the beginning but then the storm hits the rigging. Sometimes people use Transition as a way to further outside agendas or to tick boxes. This can create unrest (not of the blessed kind) and sometimes tips the boat rather than the point.

Of all the difficulties spoken by far the greatest number were those that occurred within the core and theme groups: people losing interest, walking off in a huff, groups dissolving, initiatives stalling. ("You are not on your own" was a line I found myself repeating several times in the course of speaking to everyone involved).

What helps is that we create real working relationships with one another and that our meetings are warm and friendly. It's not easy to know how to speak to people you don't live or work or have lifetime experiences in common with. Meeting in people's houses and sharing food often encourages this, rather than draughty church halls or noisy

public places. It is an art to create the kind of flexible communication that is neither too stiff and committee-like - which inhibits free speech and creativity, nor too relaxed and social - which results in nothing being discussed in a structured way or at any depth.

Here are some of the difficulties mentioned during the in-depth phone conversations I had with the people in Transition East initiatives and that we might be able to look at and address on November 14:-

Individual Effects of Transition

- **Overwork** (40 hours regular work, plus Transition work) – balancing two worlds at once, whilst bringing another world into being
- **Feeling on one's own** as core organiser
- Pressures for **time** and work (especially when everyone in the core group is in full-time work and with children)
- **Exhaustion**
- Feeling you haven't **achieved** anything
- **Overload** of negative feelings to deal with after meetings
- So easy to get **dispirited** and say sod it
- Zero energy return on energy invested
- **Struggling with time and money**

Working in Groups

- **Too few active** members, **too little willingness** in planning stage, people limited to helping or attending events (once organized) and making comments
- Restricted to a **small group of doers** within initiative
- Working with enthusiastic volunteers without necessary expertise, leading to bull-in-china shop situations
- trying to get **people involved** and engaged at any level, having to persuade to *do*
- Lack of steering group
- Lack of people to **commit** to anything
- **Lack of warmth** in human relationships in meetings; lack of fellow feeling.
- Shooting off with **mega-projects** to rule the world and not having enough volunteers
- Fall out within **groups** - people participating and drifting away, booms and busts of energy
- **Slowness** and reluctance of group to engage in projects and events, leading to **frustration**
- **Steering group in-fighting, not dealing with the conflict**
- **Storming** within some groups, leading to fall out (especially within Heart and Soul)
- **Not enough awareness** within core group about what we are doing and need to do, that **Transition is a process**, something we are doing, not just a label we can stick on ourselves (i.e. Transition Town)
- **Resistance** to visioning and other Transition techniques to do with inner work
- **Lack of realisation of the profound changes we are going to experience**
- Danger of dwindling (numbers in group), **theme groups** dwindling
- Unsure how to proceed with **new people** once the groups are up and running (not same energy as when at their initiating creative stage)
- Different levels of understanding about the **process of Transition** within the core group, some of whom are sceptical and concerned that Transition is too radical and will put people off.

- Not seeing how to evolve, not having the energy to **evolve**
- Not enjoying meetings at all
- **Talking too much and no action**
- Too much **fixed and conventional thinking** in group, affiliations with **outside institutions** (church, university, councils etc) leading to people pushing their own agendas, often unconsciously
- **Tendency to rush analysis** which could derail the whole thing

Places

- Towns without any grassroots infrastructure

Events

- Difficulty with events without proper booking system or team (one person running around all the time) and being dependent on people turning up
- No way of properly measuring and **valuing** the activities (beyond our own sense of personal integrity and purpose)
- Not sufficient people working for events, key people working too hard
- **Exhaustion**, too many events at once

Working with local government

- Old School **Town Council** – negative, badly-disposed towards anything environmental. Fall out suffered in group after clashes with council, leading to loss of confidence and depression.
- **Parish Councils** too parochial (!), lacking in leadership, not structured for social enterprise, antagonistic regarding publicity
- Struggle to find **suitable official status** e.g. charity. company etc.

Working with Public

- **Conflict of interest** when working with local business *and* Transition (wanting to encourage business outside of town)
- **Initial interest not maintained** after event (example of planting a community woodland with 150 people turning up, but only 6 people afterwards continued to manage the wood)
- **Apathy** within village
- **Low response** from public in spite of publicity, leading to loss of enthusiasm and common Transition feeling **of zero return on energy invested**
- Lack of engaged relationship with public
- **Climate change deniers** and the Daily Telegraph (!)
- Not good at catching people's energy at events and capitalising on them
- Not seeming to make any **impression**
- **Getting people involved**

Publicity and Communications

- Lack of **press attention** beyond notices and reports of events. “They don't tell the story.”
- Unsympathetic press. Cognitive dissonance “They just don't get peak oil” and see us as an environmental green fringe group
- Being dismissed as “tree huggers”
- Organisation of publicity

- **Information overload** and too many **emails**, leading to difficulties in group
- Lack of awareness in on-line forum **discussions**, leading to negative feedback and misunderstandings
- **Anti-tech bias** within Transition
- **Swamped by emails**

About us

The Transition East Support Group are a small group of Transitioners from East Anglia (mostly Suffolk and Norfolk). We're not a closed group and welcome anyone from the region who would like to take part. Obviously for geographical (and peak oil) reasons we are limited by the distances we can travel to meet each other. It is for that reason, following a recent googlegroup discussion about exactly what East means in terms of territory, that Matt Walker of Transition Dereham has suggested we organise ourselves into four regional sub-groups (see under **Dereham**).

Our main function so far is to report on our own initiatives' activities in the interest of regional coherence, communication and networking. We have also worked to assist Transition Diss in the running of this second TE gathering. We meet in each other's houses and also work closely with the Transition East website.



***The first Transition East Regional Gathering (7th March 2009)**
Hosted by Downham and Villages and drawing together 50 people from 12 initiatives*

**We'd like to thank everyone who
helped in the creation of this
document.**

Written and produced by the Transition East Support
Group



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