

transition news

December 2007

Communities acting on climate change

As the UN Climate Change Conference met in Copenhagen, Transition Stratford's December meeting heard how communities are responding to climate change - in developing countries and closer to home.

Margaret Gardner from Rugby-based Practical Action described the charity's work in countries which are already suffering the effects of changing climate. In Sudan, a five-year drought, in combination with civil war, has devastated food production. Margaret spoke movingly of seeing the carcasses of cattle and goats - the principal source of livelihood for local people - littering the sides of roads.

Practical Action has been working with local communities to build irrigation schemes to capture available water and helping farmers to switch to non-traditional drought-resistant crops. Local women have been trained to process, preserve and market the new food crops, so helping them to improve their economic and social status.



Sand-bar cropping in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the problem is not drought but too much water. Flooding is leaving farmers dependent on precarious and poor-quality soil, for example on sand bars in rivers. Practical Action has been helping

to develop new ways of growing plants: manure pits help to retain nutrients and are more resistant to flooding, while "floating gardens" rise and fall with water levels, minimising flood damage.

Closer to home, Bernard Perkins and Rick Smith described how Leamington-based Action21 is helping people in Warwick and Leamington to live more sustainably. At its reuse centres, volunteers learn new skills and unwanted items are repaired and sold at low cost. There is a thriving bike refurbishment project, which is so popular that people queue to buy newly-repaired bikes!

Action21 runs three food co-ops, which bulk-buy fresh vegetables for sale through local children's centres, and holds weekly classes on seasonal cooking. Run-down allotments are currently being prepared for new growers in 2010.

Action21 is also helping local people save energy and reduce fuel bills. One project is helping people in south Leamington to improve their home insulation, while the Solar 300 project aims to double the number of homes using energy from the sun through bulk-buying of solar heating systems. Proposals are also being developed for hydro-electric schemes on the River Leam in central Leamington.

We heard from Practical Action how changing climate is adversely affecting poor communities in other countries. But as Action21 shows, there is much that we can do locally to live more sustainably. To learn more about what these organisations are doing, visit their websites at www.practicalaction.org.uk and www.action21.org.

By popular demand....

Our popular "Film Fridays" will continue in 2010 with the following:

Fri 8 Jan: The Power of Community When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1990, Cuba's oil imports were cut by over 50%. This film shows how communities pulled together and thrived. In the context of concerns about peak oil, an inspiring vision of hope.

Fri 5 Feb: Koyaanisqatsi In the Hopi language, the word Koyaanisqatsi means "life in turmoil, life out of balance". The tone of this classic film is set by the combination of stunning images of landscape and Philip Glass' minimalist music.

Fri 5 March: Pig Business Four years in the making, this film argues that intensive pig farming is "bad for our food, our health and the livelihoods of our rural communities."

Fri 2 April: The 11th Hour This documentary shows the fragile state of earth's ecosystems, but concludes that if we can reduce our footprint, there is still time to change the future.

All films will be shown at Life-ways, 30 Albany Road, CV37 6PG, starting at 7.15pm. Admission £2. To book, call 01789 292052 or 01789 298503 - or just turn up!

Energy visit sparks new ideas

A visit by Transition Stratford representatives to energy projects in Shropshire in November generated new initiatives in Stratford, as well as giving support to existing Transition Stratford projects.

First stop was the South Shropshire Biowaste Digester in Ludlow, a demonstration project funded by Defra and Advantage West Midlands to evaluate the potential for producing green energy from food waste. The plant converts 5,000 tonnes of food waste a year into methane (which is then used to generate electricity) and fertiliser (which is sold to farms). A presentation from the plant operators provided valuable information about the commercial and practical aspects of using anaerobic digestion to convert food waste to energy.



The Ludlow biowaste digester

The group then met Jon Hallé, West Midlands representative of Energy4All, which promotes community investment in renewables. Jon works with community groups to identify opportunities for renewables and develop them commercially. Proposed community projects in Shropshire and Herefordshire include wind and hydro

schemes and a biowaste digester.

The last stop was Marches Energy Agency in Shrewsbury, whose projects include:

- *Action Heat* which works on alleviating fuel poverty
- *Low Carbon Enterprise* which supports small businesses and community organisations through energy audits, feasibility studies and carbon management
- *Carbon Forum* which provides education on climate change and ways to cut CO₂
- *Low Carbon Communities* which supports action on climate change through work with schools and community groups
- *Sustainable Energy Communities in Historic Urban Areas*, an EU looking at energy efficiency in listed buildings and conservation areas

The visit provided lots of information for existing Transition Stratford projects such as “Energy from Waste” and “Greening Your Street” and also generated some great new ideas. Coming soon:

- a workshop to promote sustainable energy solutions for Stratford’s historic buildings, to be organised jointly by Transition Stratford, Stratford Town Council and the Stratford Society: for more details, contact Peter Burgess (pandjburgess@waitrose.com)
- an “open mapping” workshop, to be facilitated by Energy4All, to investigate the opportunities for commercial-scale renewable energy projects in Stratford and the surrounding area. Contact Barbara Cooper for more details (see Contacts).

It’s here— new website launched!

At the inaugural general meeting in September, top of supporters’ list of priorities was a new website for exchanging news and ideas. Well, thanks to registered supporter Matt Sharpe—it’s here!

The new website is designed to provide easy access to a wide range of information and can be edited by a number of different contributors, so the work of keeping the site up to date can be shared. The site also has a forum function to enable you to communicate with other Transition Stratford supporters.

The new site is currently in a trial format – and we’d love to hear your views:

- Can you find all the information or links that you are looking for? Is anything missing or hard to find?
- Does the forum function work for you?
- How does the site look? Is it easy to find things and navigate around? What improvements would you like to see?

The trial version will be open for comment until mid-January, when we will look at the changes and improvements suggested and prepare the final version for launch on the World Wide Web in February.

Contacts

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VISIT

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TODAY!