



Newsletter

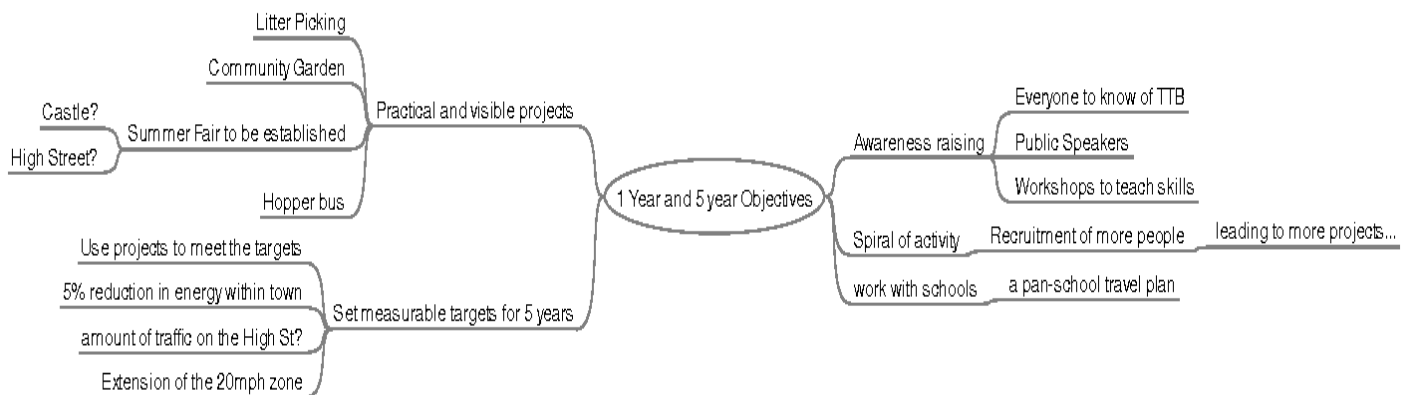
March 2009

Welcome to our first Transition Town Berkhamsted newsletter.

We plan to use newsletters to keep our 'membership' up to date with progress on local projects, our ideas about where we want to go, and how you can get involved. We plan to have regular updates from the action groups, as well as using this as a forum for exchange of ideas. We will be on the lookout for contributions on TT related subjects, so please keep that in mind when you next come across something interesting in the paper, internet, over the kitchen table, etc.

TTB Aims and Objectives

We've been doing some thinking about where we would like to be, and what we hope to have achieved by the end of 2009, and by the end 2013 (about 5 years). Below is a 'mindmap' of some of the ideas we came up with, **and we'd love it if you could contribute more:**



There is a strong feeling that our first year needs to build on our very successful Great Unleashing; the action groups all have a variety of possible projects, and within the first year we need to be seeing the results with shorter projects being realised. This will allow us to demonstrate to interested parties, including ourselves, that we are making progress in changing our town for the better, even if only in small ways. Project successes will help to recruit new active members, and will also spawn follow-on ideas, leading to a spiral of activity.....

In the longer term we are looking for some **measurable objectives**, such as a reduction of traffic on the High Street, a reduction in household energy consumption, or an increase in the number of solar thermal panels installed on Berkhamsted roofs. BUT, It's not just about traffic and energy – how about targets for reductions in water use, increase in locally sourced food, reduce outward commuting from the town, etc, etc? We need to sit down and think about what these **measurable objectives** should be, ensuring that we can measure where we are today, as well stand a good

chance of making significant progress towards those objectives. If we can divide our journey up into achievable steps, this will keep our momentum and enthusiasm up. We expect that several of the objectives may follow on from project ideas that we have, so we'll be updating this list of objectives all the time. [Please let us know if you would like to help us with this.](#)

ACTION GROUP UPDATES

Energy Group

Seb Beloe, as convenor for the Energy Group, has provided this update on the activities of that group. The group has a healthy mix of expert and non-expert members, and they have several project ideas which are already being put in motion. These are as follows:

1. A renewable energy project on one of the public buildings of the town: They are exploring possible buildings that might be suitable for this, and have approached one school (so far) and the library, and the leisure centre. The technology may be solar panels for hot water, solar panels to produce electricity (photovoltaics or PV for short), use of biomass heating or perhaps use of ground source heat to heat buildings. So far enthusiasm from building managers is high, but further permissions are being sought. If permission is granted, a detailed assessment will be carried out before grant funding is raised.
2. This idea seeks to make better use of one particular resource that Berkhamsted has lots of, woodland. The idea is to set up a woodland management scheme with an emphasis on sustainable collection of wood as biomass fuel. This has a historic precedent in the management of woodland through coppicing, and on a national scale biomass has the potential to provide a significant proportion of our heat requirements. This is very early stage at present, but potential partners are being approached with the aim of making better use of this abundant resource.
3. Finally, the energy group have been in discussions with British Gas about a scheme where energy efficiency and renewables projects can be done to your property for no capital outlay. How does this work? Well, the utility companies are under legal obligations to help consumers save energy (offering people cheap loft insulation and cavity wall insulation for example). So, the utilities are now offering to fund works which will reduce your energy bill, and will pay-back over a period of 3-5 years typically – the householder enters an agreement with the utility to continue paying their utility bill as if no savings have been made, and the extra (between your new reduced energy costs and the bill you carry on paying) goes to pay for the capital cost of the work. It's simple and effective, but does require a legal framework to make sure the loan is all above board and so on. The plan is for some members of Transition Town Berkhamsted to trial this scheme, and if it seems to work well, to roll this out to those who are interested in cutting their carbon footprint.

Transport Group

Anna Penning-Rowse gave this update on the plans afoot at the Transport group.

They have had some discussions with the Tring and Berkhamsted Cycle Campaign (TBCC). Many of the objectives of TTB and TBCC are well aligned, and it looks like some joint initiatives will be forthcoming shortly. This is very much in the spirit of Transition, where work done by other groups will be built on and reinforced, so maximising the overall benefit and not re-inventing the

wheel. Also, the transport group have had some very positive discussions with Val Male, the Herts County Council School Travel Plan Coordinator. The schools in Berkhamsted have nearly all got travel plans, and there is a real appetite to do something which will build on this and make a town-wide initiative. The idea being that routes to certain schools will overlap in places, school busses can serve several schools, safer streets will benefit all those who want to walk or cycle and so on.

Exchange/Food group

Bridget Wilkins, Marion Baker & Susan Holmes have provided this update.

Partly motivated by a shortage of allotments, (at present there are long waiting lists for all the Berkhamsted allotments) the Exchange/Food groups set about finding a patch of land in Berkhamsted to develop as a community vegetable garden. We were thinking that a variety of activities could take place there like re-establishing old local varieties of fruit & vegetables (does anyone know the name of the local rhubarb or have a clump ?) to helping newcomers to learn the when & how of gardening, getting schools and young people involved & so the list goes on.

After researching several possible options, including the garden to the rear of the Quaker Meeting House we haven't yet come up with a venue, so we're still looking. However, the Quakers have generously offered the use of their building and kitchen at a reduced rate, and we decided that we could still do some of the exchange ideas at the Quaker Meeting House. We had originally thought of a soup or salad Sunday once a month using produce we had grown for the soup or salad. We can still do this & also extend into more of an exchange where people with surplus plants, seeds and produce can exchange them as well straight purchase of items. We can also use the venue as a base for offering advice: the Energy group providing information on green tariffs, renewables, insulation and ESCOs; the transport group providing bike servicing and bike-doctor surgeries; etc. In essence, whatever TTB are active in doing, some of this can be expressed at our **Sunday Exchanges**. They will run from 11.30 to 2pm on the following dates:

12th July

9th August

13th September

We are excited about the possibility of an exchange 'centre' for TTB but obviously we need some help too. Let us know if you can help making soup, washing up, bringing vegetable plants (OK you won't know exactly until the time comes), seeds to exchange, advertising & organising.

We look forward to exchanging & working with you in our sustainable, community initiative.

Upcoming Events

We'll send out a flyer to remind you of our upcoming events, but here is a brief round-up for your diaries:

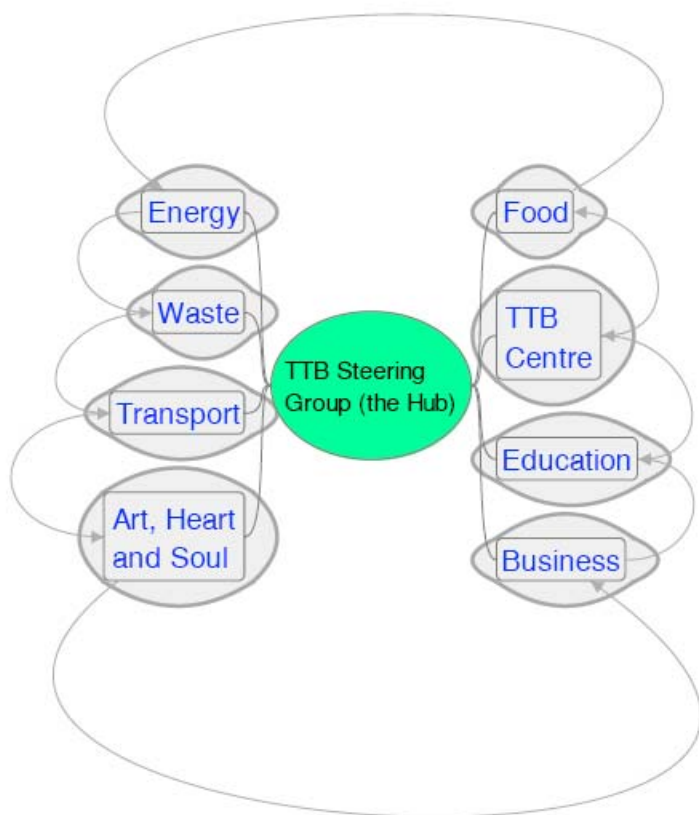
15th March – Vue cinema in Watford, WD25 7JZ – **Premiere of The Age of Stupid** from 5.15pm

8th April 2009 – 7.30pm All Saints Church hall – Tom Chance of BedZED and Bioregional talking about "Building Design and Planning for a Sustainable Future"

1st July 2009 – 7.30pm Venue TBC – film showing and panel discussion – "A Convenient Truth" – Curitiba in Brazil and the amazing transformation of this city to an eco-model for the globe.

Transition Town Berkhamsted Structure

The TTB Steering Group has been looking at the structure of TTB, post-unleashing. Here is what we've come up with so far...



There will be **groups** – the groups do most of the 'projects' and they are focussed on their particular areas. They have a convenor, and they may also have more of a structure as they try to do more things, and as they need it. The groups are shown in the diagram to the left. Some of the groups exist now and we hope that others will emerge as TTB grows.

In the centre of the groups we have **the Hub**. The Hub co-ordinates the activities of the groups, sends information out to them, and makes sure that they don't overlap in their actions.

Also, within the hub there will be certain central services that the groups can draw on, such as publicity, printing, planning and organising events, and so on. The groups will just borrow this expertise when they need it.

The hub is responsible for running an ongoing programme of events through the year. ***This year we'll hold at least 4 public events, which may be talks, films, skills sessions, and so on.*** These activities aim to keep sending out the TT messages, and to also to continue to attract new people. We'll always need new people, and we also want to keep extending our reach. Finally, the hub also undertakes to keep our 'membership' informed with what we're up to. That's the point of this newsletter, and we'll need to work out if there are other ways we'll communicate with you.

Please let us have your feedback on all that is reported here. We'd like your ideas and suggestions, and we'd love for you to be involved in any way.

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