

Update for Marlborough Area Board from Transition Marlborough – March 2019

Since the last Transition report to the Area Board seismic shifts have occurred in public awareness and activity around climate change, plastic pollution, biodiversity depletion, food security and sovereignty, trust in political processes and the urgency that is required in taking effective action to address them all. The IPCC report, Blue Planet, Greta Thunberg and the school strikes for climate, and Extinction Rebellion have all been key drivers in that shift. **Wiltshire Council is one of 48 councils who have made a Declaration of Climate Emergency** so far and are now seeking to plan for radical carbon emission reductions.

Transition Marlborough continues to offer an effective route to active involvement in creative solutions and community-building for resilience and adaptation to the fundamental changes to our ways of life that are on the horizon. We have extended an invitation to Wiltshire Councillors to join us in attending a conference, organized by Climate Emergency UK, in Lancaster on March 29th (in person or online) which offers practical guidance on how to proceed with effective action to honour the declaration and intention to become carbon neutral by 2030.

The Bee Roadzz Project

Funding from the Science Museum at Wroughton enabled the Bee Roadzz project to develop across the Marlborough Downs through The Space for Nature farmers group over the past year. The project was represented at the Oxford Real Farming Conference in January and the National Honey Show last October. It will be covered with full articles in two national publications in April too - Permaculture Magazine and Bee Craft. Interest in developing new roads has been sparked or actively started in Bishops Cannings, Woodborough, Melksham, Swindon and, further afield in Reading and Preston.

Introduction to Permaculture course

Permaculture is a design system that is consciously applied to all aspects of living. It closely observes and seeks to replicate the principles by which natural systems flourish. For 2019, the 12 Saturday morning sessions of the course will be open for people to attend as individual sessions too. They cover the ethics, principles and design tools of permaculture, low energy living, caring for soil as a living system, understanding renewable energy, managing garden pests through supporting biodiversity, composting and re-thinking 'waste' and much more. It continues to be facilitated by, and hosted in the homes of, local permaculture practitioners and students. The first session is on March 16th and the last in September.

Permaculture- connection to the National Self Build Centre in Swindon

We are working with a representative from the Permaculture Association to bring permaculture design to the National Self Build and Renovation Centre in Swindon. A presentation was given at their last Eco-building workshop in February and was very well received. We plan to continue that connection in future courses and encourage the centre to include workshops for landlords and tenants on what can be done to retrofit and improve the rented housing sector with regard energy efficiency etc too.

St Mary's Primary School student Eco Committee

We are building our connection with St Mary's school through meeting with their student Eco committee. Their termly themes focus on different aspects of sustainable living and they are currently addressing plastic pollution and littering. They have also recently created a school garden that is pollinator friendly (contributing to the Bee Roadzz) and will allow the children to grow their own fruit, veg and herbs.

Film Nights

We continue with seasonal free film nights hosted at the Community and Youth Centre. In February we screened 'Burned', a documentary highlighting the scandalous destruction of old growth forest and unique wildlife habitat in the Southern States of America to feed our biomass power stations here in the UK. It was supported by a member of Biofuelwatch attending for Q&A following the film. On the strength of watching the film, we have encouraged more local screenings to raise wider awareness and will be taking Biofuelwatch materials to the Devizes Vegan Fest on March 24th.

The next film night will be Thursday May 2nd and a screening of 'Down to Earth'. This is currently on a national tour and follows one family's journey, over 5 years, to live with indigenous communities on six continents to capture the wisdom of 'The Earth Keepers' and inspire a more sustainable way of life.

Repair Café

A varied group of potential menders have shown strong interest in being involved with a Repair Café in Marlborough. This needs focused coordination time and skills to establish a new project and this is, as yet, beyond the capacity of the existing active core group to deliver. We are seeking the human resources to take that forward in the coming year and welcome volunteers to coordinate the project. .

New Transition Marlborough website

A completely refreshed, updated and active website will be live from the end of April. This has been patiently constructed by Rich Pitts and we look forward to using our new online presence to build our reach and effectiveness in the local area.

Air Pollution & Transport

We look forward to hearing progress on the 20mph limit and 'No Idling' signage. Our Transport Group is not currently active and it is a challenge for us to maintain the lobbying energy to keep these important contributions to safety and air quality in focus and prioritized at present.

Local Sustainable Food Network

A budding new project is emerging in the wake of the opening of Marlborough's first no packaging shop and interest from the proprietor of Sarsens restaurant to support the aims of Transition in the town. Interested parties are gathering to create a local sustainable food network and more concrete plans and actions will be coming soon.

Networking with other local groups

Much of the past year for us has been focused on building and strengthening our relationships and connections with other like-minded groups and individuals. We remain a

small core group and we are most effective in collaboration – with, for instance, the Citizen’s Climate Lobby and similarly focused community groups in neighbouring towns and villages.

We remain active contributors to regional development of the Transition Network and will be using, later this month, a ‘Transition Healthcheck’ tool to analyse what is going well and what could be developed in our group. This will feed into an international project to analyse the ‘health’ of Transition across the globe. Our Chair – Milly Carmichael - has been approached to become a Trustee of the Permaculture Association. If her application is successful this will bring Transition Marlborough into the sphere of strategic direction planning for this internationally recognized organization.

*Prepared by Milly Carmichael
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Contact chair@transitionmarlborough.org for more information on any of these topics