

Transition Initiatives Primer

- becoming a Transition Town, City, District, Village,
Community or even a Transition island

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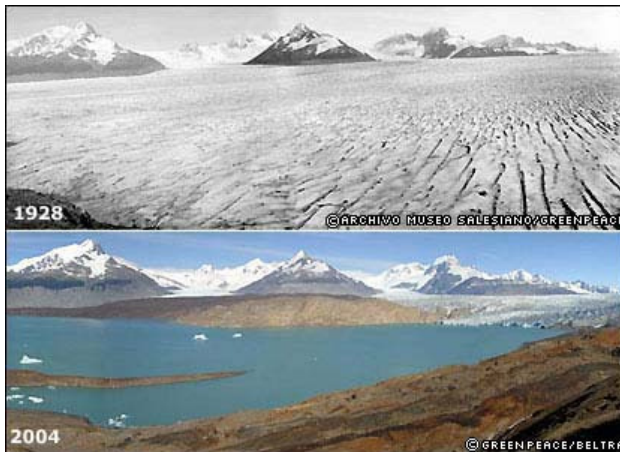
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4	- Added " Becoming a Transition Town – 12 Steps"
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7	- Added "Becoming a Transition Town – criteria
9	- Added "Becoming a Transition Town – 7 but's" - Rewrote Peak Oil section
12	- Added "Movies for raising awareness" section
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Introduction

In response to the twin pressures of Peak Oil and Climate Change, some pioneering communities in the UK and Ireland are taking an integrated and inclusive approach to reduce their carbon footprint and increase their ability to withstand the fundamental shift that will accompany Peak Oil.

This document provides an overview of these initiatives for transitioning to a lower energy future and to greater levels of community resilience.



*Upsala Glacier, Argentina,
once the biggest in South
America – 1928 and 2004*

Why Transition initiatives are necessary

The two toughest challenges facing humankind at the start of this 21st century are Climate Change and Peak Oil. The former is well documented and very visible in the media. Peak Oil, however, has been kept under the radar for most people. Yet Peak Oil, heralding the era of ever-declining fossil fuel availability, may well prevent the economic and social stability that is essential if we are to mitigate the threats posed by Climate Change.

The transition initiatives currently in progress in the UK represent the most promising way of engaging people and communities to take the far-reaching actions that are required to mitigate the effects of Peak Oil and Climate Change.

Furthermore, these relocalisation efforts are designed to result in a life that is more fulfilling, more socially connected and more equitable.

More about Peak Oil

You may not have encountered the principles of Peak Oil in the media. Don't let that lull you into a false sense of security. There was a time when Climate Change suffered the same lack of exposure.

Peak Oil is not about "running out of oil" – we'll never run out of oil. There will always be oil left in the ground because either it's too hard to reach or it takes too much energy to

extract. Ponder on a fact that the economists conveniently gloss over – regardless of how much money you can make selling oil, if it takes an oil barrel's worth of energy to extract a barrel of oil, the exploration, the drilling and the pumping will stop.

Peak Oil is about the end of phenomenon of cheap and plentiful oil, the recognition that the ever increasing volume of oil being pumped into our economies will peak and then inexorably decline. It's about understanding how our industrial way of life is absolutely dependent on this ever-increasing supply of cheap oil.

From the start of the 1900s, plentiful oil allowed a coal-based industrialised society to massively accelerate its “development”. From that time, each year there has been more oil (apart from the two oil shocks in the 1970s when middle east crises caused worldwide recessions). And each year, society increased its complexity, its mechanisation, its interconnectedness and its energy consumption levels.

The problems start when we've extracted around half of the recoverable oil. At this point, the oil gets more expensive (in cash and energy terms) to extract, it's lower quality and it flows out more slowly. At this point, for the first time in history, we aren't able to increase the amount of oil that's coming out of the ground, getting refined and reaching the market.

At this point, oil supply plateaus and then declines, with massive ramifications for industrialised societies. Very few people are paying attention to this phenomenon, and it's easy to understand why.

The misleading petrol tank analogy

Most of us have experienced running out of petrol at some time while driving, and this can subtly misinform our expectations around oil depletion.

The pattern is simple. Your car runs smoothly as you use up the petrol, right until the last fraction of a litre – when it's about 97% empty. That's the only time you start to feel the impact of your “petrol depletion”. The car starts juddering and sputtering, letting you know that you'd better act fast otherwise it'll come to a sudden standstill.

This pattern means we can ignore the petrol gauge until very late in the depletion cycle.

However, the way oil depletion affects industrial society couldn't be more different. The key point isn't when you're close to running out of oil. It's when the “tank” is half full (or half empty). Here's why...



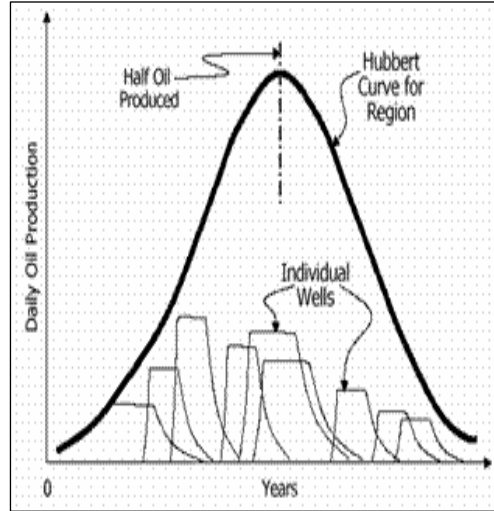
Back to Peak Oil

Peak Oil recognises that we are not close to running out of oil. However, we are close to running out of easy-to-get, cheap oil. Very close. That means we're about to go into energy decline – that extended period when, year on year, we have decreasing amounts of oil to fuel our industrialised way of life.

The key concepts and implications of this are as follows:

- of all the fossil fuels, oil is uniquely energy dense and easy to transport.
- ever-increasing amounts of oil have fuelled the growth of industrial economies.

- all the key elements of industrial societies - transportation, manufacturing, food production, home heating, construction - are totally reliant on oil.
- understanding the depletion pattern of oil fields is crucial. There is a consistent pattern to the rate of extraction of oil - and this applies to individual fields, to an oil region, to a country and indeed to the entire planet - namely, the first half of the oil is easy to extract and high quality. However, once about half the recoverable oil has been pumped out, further extraction starts getting more expensive, slower, more energy intensive and the oil is of a lower quality.
- this pattern means that the flow of oil to the market, which has been steadily increasing over the past 150 years, will peak. After that, every successive year will see an ever-diminishing flow of oil.
- a growing body of independent oil experts and oil geologists have calculated that the peak will occur between 2006 and 2012 (a few years of hindsight is required in order to confirm the peaking point).
- technological advances in oil extraction and prospecting will have only a minor effect on depletion rates. As an example, when the US (lower 48) hit their oil production peak in 1972, the rate of depletion over the next decades was high, despite a significant wave of technological innovations.



It's difficult to overstate what this means to our lives in the developed countries.

To understand the degree to which this will affect the industrial world, here is the opening paragraph of executive summary of a report prepared for the US government in 2005 by an agency of experts in risk management and oil analysis:

"The peaking of world oil production presents the U.S. and the world with an unprecedented risk management problem. As peaking is approached, liquid fuel prices and price volatility will increase dramatically, and, without timely mitigation, the economic, social, and political costs will be unprecedented. Viable mitigation options exist on both the supply and demand sides, but to have substantial impact, they must be initiated more than a decade in advance of peaking."

Peaking of World Oil Production: Impacts, Mitigation & Risk Management.
Robert L. Hirsch, SAIC



This report only came to light after being buried by the US administration for close to a year. A perusal of the far-reaching implications of the report give a clear indication why the government was so keen to keep it out of the public domain.

Despite the denial by governments, their agencies and oil companies that there is a problem, both Chevron and Total have both admitted that we're at the end of the era of cheap oil.

Jeremy Gilbert, former Chief Petroleum Engineer at BP, in May 2007 said the following:

“I expect to see a peak sometime before 2015... and decline rates at 4-8% per year“ (May-2007)

Several US senators, principally Republican Roscoe Bartlett, are raising the issue in the upper house.

In New Zealand, Jeanette Fitzsimmons, co-leader of the Green Party, is raising awareness about the threats of Peak Oil. In 2006, Helen Clark, the Prime Minister of New Zealand said this:

“...oil price is very high because probably we're not too far short from peak production if we're not already there.“

In Australia, the MP Andrew McNamara is heading up the Queensland Oil Vulnerability Task force.

But in general, national leaders are not stepping up to address these problems in any meaningful way. Yet.

So if the political leaders aren't going to fix the problem, what is?

Technology is often touted as the panacea for Peak Oil and Climate Change problems. However, a careful review of the reality of these technological solutions indicates their immaturity, their often disastrous environmental consequences and their lack of connection to the real world.

We could dither about, waiting for technology or governments to solve the problem for us. However, general consensus now appears to be that this is a rather high risk option.

It's up to us in our local communities to step up into a leadership position on this.

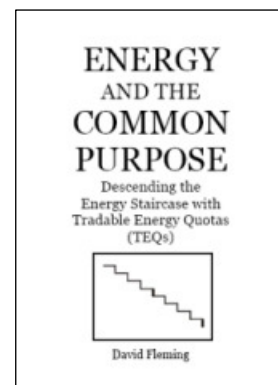
We have to get busy NOW to mitigate the effects of Peak Oil. The good news is that many of the solutions and mitigations for Climate Change will also address the threats from Peak Oil - and vice versa.

Taking action: the big picture - initiatives at global, national and local levels

Global

- the Oil Depletion Protocol provides a way for nations to cooperatively manage their descent to lower oil use levels. This protocol provides a model for both oil producing and oil consuming countries to systematically reduce global oil consumption. For further information, go to www.oildepletionprotocol.org.
- Contraction & Convergence offers a mechanism for reducing global carbon emissions and establishing much greater levels of equity in peoples' and nations' right to emit carbon. An excellent resource for this scheme is <http://www.climatejustice.org.uk/about/>

National: energy rationing systems appear to hold the greatest



promise for reducing our fossil fuel consumption at the national level. The government is already tentatively talking about this highly practical solution. See www.teqs.net for the full story.

Local: this is where local Transition Initiatives play a significant role. In essence, this is a process of relocalising all essential elements that a community needs to sustain itself and thrive. It builds local resilience in the face of the potentially damaging effects of Peak Oil while dramatically reducing the community's carbon footprint. In this way, it addresses both Peak Oil and Climate Change.

Several cities in the US and well over 100 communities around the world are setting off on their own relocalisation journeys. For example, at the city level, Portland in Oregon (population 550,000) has just published their Peak Oil initial report for public consultation. Their opening paragraph explains their concerns:

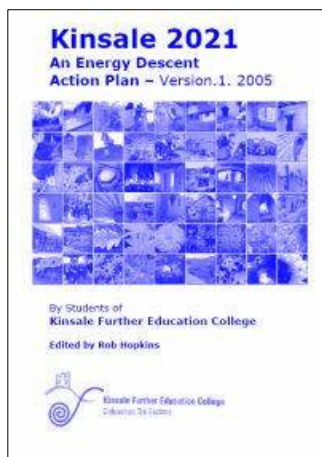
"In the past few years, powerful evidence has emerged that casts doubt on that assumption [that oil and natural gas will remain plentiful and affordable] and suggests that global production of both oil and natural gas is likely to reach its historic peak soon. This phenomenon is referred to as "peak oil." Given both the continuous rise in global demand for these products and the fundamental role they play in all levels of social, economic and geopolitical activities, the consequences of such an event are enormous."

Portland has actually incorporated the Oil Depletion Protocol in its targets - it aims to reduce its oil and gas consumption by 2.6% per year, reaching a 25% reduction by 2020.

Here in the UK, a growing number of communities are looking towards the energy descent planning work that began in Kinsale in Ireland and is continuing in Totnes in Devon. There are many excellent examples of energy reduction programmes in place in the UK under the "sustainability" banner. However, it's only when sustainability principles are combined with an understanding of Climate Change and Peak Oil that a fully integrated approach to the solutions can follow.

Kinsale 2021 – an Energy Descent Action Plan

The first draft of the Kinsale Energy Descent Action Plan (EDAP) was completed in 2005. It sets out how Kinsale, an Irish town in West Cork town of about 7,000 people, could make the transition from a high energy consumption town to a low energy one in response to the challenge of the impending peaking of world oil production.



This report, prepared by permaculture students from Kinsale Further Education College under the tutelage of Rob Hopkins, looks at how Kinsale could navigate this uncertain time by setting out a clear vision of a lower energy future, and then identifying a clear timetable for achieving it.

These efforts were one the first attempt at this kind of project anywhere in the world. The report looks at most aspects of life in Kinsale, including food, energy, tourism, education and health. The report was also structured in such a way to enable other communities and towns to adopt a similar process and transition themselves towards a lower energy future.

The EDAP was awarded the Cork Environmental Forum's prestigious 2005 Roll of Honour Award and, even more

importantly, was formally adopted in a unanimous vote by Kinsale's town council at the end of 2005.

It's worth remembering that this was a student project, working with a completely new approach. There's much work to be done to turn it into a lasting project with deep roots within the community, but it's a great start.

The lessons learned at Kinsale have resulted in the 12 steps, featuring later in this document.

The document can be downloaded here:

<http://transitionculture.org/wp-content/uploads/members/KinsaleEnergyDescentActionPlan.pdf>.

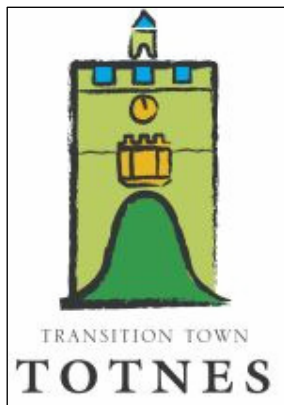
Transition Town Totnes

Transition Town Totnes was initiated by Rob Hopkins to address the twin challenge of Peak Oil and climate change. The initiative builds on Rob's seminal work in Ireland to develop an Energy Descent Action plan for the town of Kinsale.

Transition Town Totnes (TTT) is the UK's first "Transition Town" and draws on the collective genius of the local community to build resilience through a process of relocalising, where feasible, all aspects of life.

The thinking behind TTT is simply that a town using much less energy and resources than currently consumed could, if properly planned for and designed, be more resilient, more abundant and more pleasurable than the present.

Given the likely disruptions ahead resulting from Peak Oil and climate change, a resilient community - a community that is self-reliant for the greatest possible number of its needs - will be infinitely better prepared than existing communities with their total dependence on heavily globalised systems for food, energy, transportation, health and housing.



Through 2007, the project will continue to develop an Energy Descent Action Plan for Totnes, designing a positive timetabled way down from the oil peak. TTT strives to be inclusive, imaginative, practical and fun.

The TTT project started in late 2005 with an intensive programme of awareness raising on the issues of Peak Oil and climate change. When the population had been sufficiently primed, the project was kicked off with a "Official Unleashing of Transition Town Totnes" in September 2006, attended by 350 in the Town Hall. Since then, in an ever-expanding range of presentations, training courses, meetings, seminars, interviews, documents, blogs and downright hard work, the initiative has captured the imagination of the town and is progressing well.

Here's a rundown of the events, screenings, workshops etc so far (as at Apr-07):

- film screenings: 8 (with audiences up to 150)
- keynote presentations: 7 (with audiences up to 350) including such experts as:
 - Richard Heinberg (www.richardheinberg.com)

- Aubrey Meyer (Contraction & Convergence - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contraction_and_Convergence)
- David Fleming (www.teqs.net)
- Mayer Hillman (Climate Change author and activist)
- events: 7 (with audiences up to 400), including:
 - the "Great Unleashing of Transition Town Totnes"
 - open space meetings for Food, Energy, Heart & Soul and Housing
 - "Seedy Sunday"
 - Local council "open space" meeting at Schumacher college
- training courses: 10-week "Skilling Up for Powerdown" evening classes
- workshops: Oil Vulnerability Auditing (with 3 local businesses signed up to receive this service)
- resources: Local food directory
- Solar Hot Water challenge: getting 50 people to sign up for the programme
- pilot projects: Local currency (Totnes pounds, accepted by 20 local businesses)
- Oral history archives: gathering data from people who lived when everyone had a lower energy lifestyle.

The programme of activities and events continues at a similar pace into Spring 2007.

In addition to the above activities, six sub groups are meeting regularly to investigate lower energy and more resilient solutions for these areas: Energy, Healthcare, Food, The Arts, Heart and Soul - the psychology of change, Local Government. Further groups are in the process of starting up to round out this holistic approach to building the community resilience plan for Totnes.



The up-to-date situation can be viewed at either www.transitionculture.org (Rob Hopkins' personal blog) or www.transitiontowns.org/Totnes.

Other Transition initiatives

A number of other communities in the UK have adopted the Transition Model to increase their local resilience and reduce their carbon footprint (list current as at April-07).



- Bristol – population: 400,000
- Penwith (West Cornwall district) - population: 64,000
- Stroud - population: 12,000
- Lewes - population: 16,000
- Cheltenham - population: 10,000
- Falmouth - population: 20,000
- Forest Row - population: 5,500
- Lampeter – population: 4,000
- Mayfield – population 2,500
- Glastonbury – population: 9,000

There are many other communities in contact with us regarding setting up their own Transition initiative. We're expecting many of them to appear on this list over the next months.

Once we get a critical mass of communities embarking on these energy descent planning processes, we'll be able to build a thriving cooperative network where people are sharing best practice, helping each other and creating a way of life that is far better than the atomised, disconnected unsustainable and inequitable society that we've grown into, largely on the back of super-abundant cheap oil.

Becoming a Transition Town – criteria



We've established a draft set of criteria that tells us how ready a community is to embark on this journey to a lower energy future. If you're thinking of adopting the Transition Towns model for your community, take a look at this list and make an honest appraisal of where you are on these points. If there are any gaps, it should give you something to focus on while you build the initial energy and contacts around this initiative.

These criteria are developing all the time, and certainly aren't written in stone.

- an understanding of peak oil and climate change as twin drivers (to be written into constitution or governing documents)
- a group of 3-4 people willing to step into leadership roles (not just the boundless enthusiasm of a single person)
- at least two people from the core team willing to come to Totnes for initial training - probably just one day, but if two, we'll try to make spare rooms, attics etc available
- a potentially strong connection to the local council
- an initial understanding of the 12 steps to becoming a TT
- a commitment to ask for help when needed
- a commitment to keep the wiki updated (collaborative workspace on the web that we'll make available to you)
- a commitment to write up something on the Transition Towns blog once per month (the world will be watching)
- a commitment, once you're into the Transition, for one of your group to give a presentation to another community (in the vicinity) that is considering embarking on this journey (a "here's what we did" talk)
- a commitment to network with other TTs
- a commitment to work cooperatively with neighbouring TTs
- minimal conflicts of interests in the core team
- a commitment to work with the Transition Network re grant applications for funding
- we recommend that at least one person on the core team should have attended a permaculture design course... it really does seem to make a difference.

Once you can demonstrate to us at Transition Network that you're on board with these, you open the door to all sorts of wonderful support, guidance, materials, webspace, training and networking opportunities. The door is open... contact details are at the end of this document.

Becoming a Transition Town – 7 “buts”

So, having got this far in this Primer, you may well be thinking that a Transition Town initiative would be appropriate for your community.

The section after this (12 Steps) will provide you with an outline roadmap for that journey, but first you'll have to navigate the initial barriers – real and imagined – that stand in your way. We call these 'The Seven Buts'.

But we've got no funding...

This really is not an issue. Funding is a very poor substitute for enthusiasm and community involvement, both of which will take you through the first phases of your transition. Funders can also demand a measure of control, and may steer the initiative in directions that run counter to community interests.



We'll show you how you can make sure your process generates an adequate amount of income. We're not talking fortunes, your Transition Town won't be floated on the Stock Market, but, as an eco-village designer Max Lindeggar told me years ago, "if a project doesn't make a profit it will make a loss."

Transition Town Totnes began in September 2005 with no money at all, and has been self-funding ever since. The talks and film screenings that we run bring in money to subsidise free events such as Open Space Days. You will reach a point where you have specific projects that will require funding, but until that point you'll manage. Retain the power over whether this happens... don't let lack of funding stop you.

But they won't let us...

There is a fear among some green folks that somehow any initiative that actually succeeds in effecting any change will get shut down, suppressed, attacked by faceless bureaucrats or corporations. If that fear is strong enough to prevent you taking any action, if the only action you're willing to take is to abdicate all your power to some notional "they", then you're probably reading the wrong document. On the other hand, Transition Towns operate 'below the radar', neither seeking victims nor making enemies. As such, they don't seem to be incurring the wrath of any existing institutions.

On the contrary, with corporate awareness of sustainability and climate change building daily, you will be surprised at how many people in positions of power will be enthused and inspired by what you are doing, and will support, rather than hinder, your efforts.

But there are already green groups in this town, I don't want to step on their toes...

We'll go into this in more detail in Step 3 below, but in essence, you'd be exceedingly unlucky to encounter any "turf wars". What your Transition Town initiative will do is to form a common goal and sense of purpose for the existing groups, some of which you might find are a bit burnt out and will really appreciate the new vigour you will bring. Liaising with a network of existing groups towards an Energy Descent Action Plan will enhance and focus their work, rather than replicate or supersede it. Expect them to become some of your strong allies, crucial to the success of your Transition.

But no one in this town cares about the environment anyway...



One could easily be forgiven for thinking this, given the existence of what we might perceive as an apathetic consumer culture surrounding us. Scratch a bit deeper though, and you'll find that the most surprising people are keen advocates of key elements of a Transition Initiative - local food, local crafts, local history and culture.

The key is to go to them, rather than expecting them to come to you. Seek out common ground, and you'll find your community to be a far more interesting place than you thought it was.

But surely it's too late to do anything...?

It *may* be too late, but the likelihood is that it isn't. That means your (and others') endeavours are absolutely crucial.

Don't let hopelessness sabotage your efforts - as Vandana Shiva says, "the uncertainty of our times is no reason to be certain about hopelessness".

But I don't have the right qualifications...

If you don't do it, who else will? It matters not that you don't have a PhD in sustainability, or years of experience in gardening or planning. What's important is that you care about where you live, that you see the need to act, and that you are open to new ways of engaging people.

If there was to be a job description for someone to start this process rolling it might list the qualities of that person as being;

- Positive
- Good with people
- A basic knowledge of the place and some of the key people in the town.

That, in truth, is about it... You are, after all, about to design your own demise into the process from the start (see Step#1), so your role at this stage is like a gardener preparing the soil for the ensuing garden, which you may or may not be around to see.

But I don't have the energy for doing that!

As the quote often ascribed to Goethe goes, "whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it!" The experience of beginning a Transition Town certainly shows this to be the case. While the idea of preparing your town (or city, hamlet, valley or island) for life beyond oil may seem staggering in its implications, there is something about the energy unleashed by the Transition Towns process that is unstoppable.

You may feel overwhelmed by the prospect of all the work and complexity, but people will come forward to help. Indeed, many have commented on the serendipity of the whole process, how the right people appear at the right time. There is something about seizing that boldness, about making the leap from 'why is no-one doing anything' to 'let's do something', that generates the energy to keep it moving.

Very often, developing environmental initiatives is like pushing a broken down car up a hill; hard, unrewarding slog. Transition Towns is like coming down the other side – the car

starts moving faster than you can keep up with it, accelerating all the time. Once you give it the push from the top of the hill it will develop its own momentum. That's not to say it isn't hard work sometimes, but it is almost always a pleasure.

Becoming a Transition Town – 12 key steps

Below is an abridged version of a document shortly to be published by the Transition Network to help communities step onto this path of energy descent.

To begin with, it is important to note that although the term “Transition Town” has stuck, what we are talking about are Transition Cities, Transition Islands, Transition Hamlets, Transition Valleys, Transition Anywhere-You-Find-People.

#1. Set up a steering group and design its demise from the outset

This stage puts a core team in place to drive the project forward during the initial phases.

We recommend that you form your Steering Group with the aim of getting through stages 2 – 5, and agree that once a minimum of four sub-groups (see #5) are formed, the Steering Group disbands and reforms with a person from each of those groups. This requires a degree of humility, but is very important in order to put the success of the project above the individuals involved. Ultimately your Steering Group should become made up of 1 representative from each sub-group.

#2. Awareness raising

This stage will identify your key allies, build crucial networks and prepare the community in general for the launch of your Transition initiative.

For an effective Energy Descent Action plan to evolve, its participants have to understand the potential effects of both Peak Oil and Climate Change – the former demanding a drive to increase community resilience, the later a reduction in carbon footprint.

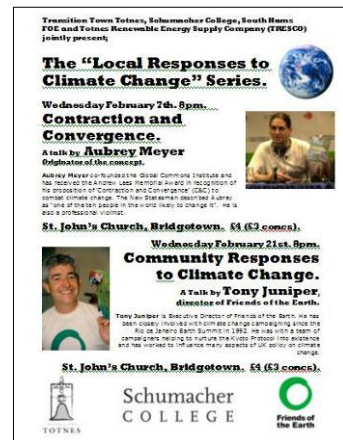
Screenings of key movies (Inconvenient Truth, End of Suburbia, Crude Awakening, Power of Community) along with panels of “experts” to answer questions at the end of each, are very effective. (See next section for the lowdown on all the movies – where to get them, trailers, what the licencing regulations are, doomster rating vs solution rating)

Talks by experts in their field of climate change, peak oil and community solutions can be very inspiring.

Articles in local papers, interviews on local radio, presentations to existing groups, including schools, are also part of the toolkit to get people aware of the issues and ready to start thinking of solutions.

#3. Lay the foundations

This stage is about networking with existing groups and activists, making clear to them that the Transition Town initiative is designed to incorporate their previous efforts and future



inputs by looking at the future in a new way. Acknowledge and honour the work they do, and stress that they have a vital role to play.

Give them a concise and accessible overview of peak oil, what it means, how it relates to climate change, how it might affect the community in question, and the key challenges it presents. Set out your thinking about how a Transition Town process might be able to act as a catalyst for getting the community to explore solutions and to begin thinking about grassroots mitigation strategies.

#4. Organise a Great Unleashing

This stage creates a memorable milestone to mark the project's "coming of age", moves it right into the community at large, builds a momentum to propel your initiative forward for the next period of its work and celebrates your community's desire to take action.

In terms of timing, we estimate that 6 months to a year after your first "awareness raising" movie screening is about right.

The **Official Unleashing of Transition Town Totnes** was held in September 2006, preceded by about 10 months of talks, film screenings and events.



Regarding contents, it'll need to bring people up to speed on Peak Oil and Climate Change, but in a spirit of "we can do something about this" rather than doom and gloom.

One item of content that we've seen work very well is a presentation on the practical and psychological barriers to personal change – after all, this is all about what we do as individuals.

It needn't be just talks, it could include music, food, opera, break dancing, whatever you feel best reflects your community's intention to embark on this collective adventure.

#5. Form sub groups

Part of the process of developing an Energy Descent Action Plan is tapping into the collective genius of the community. Crucial for this is to set up a number of smaller groups to focus on specific aspects of the process. Each of these groups will develop their own ways of working and their own activities, but will all fall under the umbrella of the project as a whole.

Ideally, sub groups are needed for all aspects of life that are required by your community to sustain itself and thrive. Examples of these are: food, waste, energy, education, youth, economics, transport, water, local government.

Each of these sub groups is looking at their area and trying to determine the best ways of building community resilience and reducing the carbon footprint. Their solutions will form the backbone of the Energy Descent Action Plan.

#6. Use Open Space

We've found Open Space Technology to be a highly effective approach to running meetings for Transition Town initiatives.

In theory it ought not to work. A large group of people comes together to explore a particular topic or issue, with no agenda, no timetable, no obvious coordinator and no minute takers.

However, we have run separate Open Spaces for Food, Energy, Housing, Economics and the Psychology of Change. By the end of each meeting, everyone has said what they needed to, extensive notes had been taken and typed up, lots of networking has had taken place, and a huge number of ideas had been identified and visions set out.

The essential reading on Open Space is *Harrison Owen's Open Space Technology: A User's Guide*, and you will also find *Peggy Holman and Tom Devane's The Change Handbook: Group Methods for Shaping the Future* an invaluable reference on the wider range of such tools.

#7 Develop visible practical manifestations of the project

It is essential that you avoid any sense that your project is just a talking shop where people sit around and draw up wish lists. Your project needs, from an early stage, to begin to create practical, high visibility manifestations in your community. These will significantly enhance people's perceptions of the project and also their willingness to participate.

There's a difficult balance to achieve here during these early stages. You need to demonstrate visible progress, without embarking on projects that will ultimately have no place on the Energy Descent Action Plan.

In Transition Town Totnes, the Food group launched a project called 'Totnes- the Nut Capital of Britain' which aims to get as much infrastructure of edible nut bearing trees into the town as possible. With the help of the Mayor, we recently planted some trees in the centre of town, and made it a high profile event (see left).



#8. Facilitate the Great Reskilling

If we are to respond to peak oil and climate change by moving to a lower energy future and relocalising our communities, then we'll need many of the skills that our grandparents took for granted. One of the most useful things a Transition Town project can do is to reverse the "great deskilling" of the last 40 years by offering training in a range of some of these skills.

Research among the older members of our communities is instructive – after all, they lived before the throwaway society took hold and they understand what a lower energy society might look like. Some examples of courses are:

repairing, cooking, cycle maintenance, natural building, loft insulation, dyeing, herbal walks, gardening, basic home energy efficiency, making sour doughs, practical food growing (the list is endless).

Your Great Reskilling programme will give people a powerful realisation of their own ability to solve problems, to achieve practical results and to work cooperatively alongside other people. They'll also appreciate that learning can truly be fun.

#9 Build a bridge to Local Government

Whatever the degree of groundswell your Transition Town initiative manages to generate, however many practical projects you've initiated and however wonderful your Energy Descent Plan is, you will not progress too far unless you have cultivated a positive and productive relationship with your local authority. Whether it is planning issues, funding issues or providing connections, you need them on board. Contrary to your expectations, you may well find that you are pushing against an open door.

We are exploring how we might draft up an Energy Descent Action Plan for Totnes in a format similar to the current Community Development Plan. Perhaps, one day, council planners will be sitting at a table with two documents in front of them – a conventional Community Plan and a beautifully presented Energy Descent Action Plan. It's sometime in 2008 on the day when oil prices first break the \$100 a barrel ceiling. The planners look from one document to the other and conclude that only the Energy Descent Action Plan actually addresses the challenges facing them. And as that document moves centre stage, the community plan slides gently into the bin (we can dream!).

#10 Honour the elders

For those of us born in the 1960s when the cheap oil party was in full swing, it is very hard to picture a life with less oil. Every year of my life (the oil crises of the 70s excepted) has been underpinned by more energy than the previous years.

In order to rebuild that picture of a lower energy society, we have to engage with those who directly remember the transition to the age of Cheap Oil, especially the period between 1930 and 1960.

While you clearly want to avoid any sense that what you are advocating is 'going back' or 'returning' to some dim distant past, there is much to be learnt from how things were done,

what the invisible connections between the different elements of society were and how daily life was supported. Finding out all of this can be deeply illuminating, and can lead to our feeling much more connected to the place we are developing our Transition Town projects.

#11 Let it go where it wants to go...

Although you may start out developing your Transition Town process with a clear idea of where it will go, it will inevitably go elsewhere. If you try and hold onto a rigid vision, it will begin to sap your energy and appear to stall. Your role is not to come up with all the answers, but to act as a catalyst for the community to design their own transition.

If you keep your focus on the key design criteria – building community resilience and reducing the carbon footprint – you'll watch as the collective genius of the community enables a feasible, practicable and highly inventive solution to emerge.



#12 Create an Energy Descent Plan

Each subgroup will have been focusing on practical actions to increase community resilience and reduce the carbon footprint.

Combined, these actions form the Energy Descent Action Plan. That's where the collective genius of the community has designed its own future to take account of the potential threats from Peak Oil and Climate Change.

So far, we have taken many practical actions in Totnes. However, they add up to just a mere fraction of the final range and scope of initiatives that are currently being devised by our community.

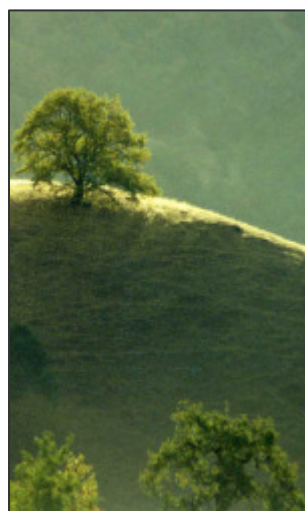
Regarding specific timescales for Energy Descent Action Plans, here's part of a presentation made to Glastonbury at their inaugural "Shall we become a Transition Town meeting?" in April 2007.

"You may be wondering about timescales for Energy Descent Action Plans. There are no rules - each community will embark on a plan that's right for them in terms of timing. Kinsale took a window of 15 years, Lewes is looking at 20.

If you're looking for greater precision and specified dates, here's my response:

When I recognise the effort that's gone into setting today's meeting up and the effort that each of us has made in getting here and devoting most of our Saturday to these pressing issues, when I think of all the wonderful efforts of pre-existing groups in Glastonbury that hopefully will be incorporated into, and reenergised by, a wider "transitioning" initiative, I say that the work has already started.

And if I look at what we need to do to create the communities that we're happy for our grandchildren and their grandchildren to grow up in, then that work certainly won't finish in our lifetimes..."



Incidentally, the embryonic steering group at Glastonbury decided at the end of that day to indeed adopt the Transition Town model for designing their lower energy and more resilient future.

Movies for raising awareness

In the right hands, these can be extremely useful tools. In the wrong ones, they can burden the viewers with feelings of doom and despondency, reducing their willingness to take action.

It's important to create a bit of an event, rather than just a screening. This isn't too hard – here's the recipe:

1. Introduce the film personally by putting it into the context of your overall hopes for your community

2. Show it
3. Have everyone pair up (preferably with someone they don't know) and do an active talking/listening exercise about their impressions of the movie (ie one talks for 3 minutes while the other listens, then they switch over). You can give direction with something like "Say what gives you cause for concern and then what gives you cause for hope about the movie"



4. Run a Q&A on Peak Oil and/or Climate Change – whichever is relevant to the movie. Make sure you have someone there who knows what he/she is talking about – though it's no shame to say "I don't know, but I can find out and get back to you".
5. Watch out for the "I'm alone in the depths of my fear" type questions – they're typically a cry out for counselling or connection and can paralyse a room. What can work in that situation is to acknowledge the person's fear and then to ask in the room "if there's anyone here who has a part of themselves that is full of fear around this, please put up your hand". Put yours up first... and hope! Unless you're sitting in a room full of denial, you'll see a lot of hands shoot up. You can then explain that the Transition Model has a place where people can move through their fears and into a place of action (usually handled by the "Heart and Soul" group, once it's formed).

Here are the movies, listed .

Title and details	Review – by Rob Hopkins unless noted otherwise	Doom rating ----- Solution rating	Where to get it ----- Licensing ----- Trailer	Production values ----- US / Euro bias
End of Suburbia: Oil Depletion & The Collapse of the American Dream ----- 2004 ----- 78 mins ----- Canada	http://transitionculture.org/?p=146 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What I love about EOS is that it leaves no convenient back door to sidle out of, really it boils down to no oil, no transporation infrastructure; no transportation infrastructure, no globalised economy; no globalised economy, no nothing, apart from localisation. It is obvious isn't it? Or is it just me? I think the film puts it so clearly. I have often seen how screenings of EOS in towns act, in hindsight, as a catalyst for all sorts of things that follow. 	hi ----- lo	www.powerswitch.org.uk/order.htm ----- From the film website: You are free to show the documentary to as many people, as many times as you wish, as long as it is not for profit and the DVD or VHS is an original. You are welcome to charge a modest admission to cover costs or fundraise for a non-profit group. ----- www.endofsuburbia.com/previews.htm	hi ----- US
Peak Oil: Imposed by Nature ----- 2005 ----- 30 mins ----- Norway	From the web: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally speaking, this DVD is hard to watch - not because it's boring, but because the viewer comes to the realisation that lifestyles are going to change. Along with global warming, our consumerist ways will be the stuff of legend in another 50 years. It makes many concrete arguments that are difficult to rebut. Simply put, if Peak Oil is in fact true, then our current way of life - from driving our cars to buying fruit from the supermarket - will never again be the way are. Unless you are filthy rich, you will have to make massive sacrifices. This DVD interviews highly respected scientists from around the world, but mainly from Europe. 	hi ----- lo	www.powerswitch.org.uk/order.htm ----- According to PowerSwitch: You are free to show the documentary to as many people, as many times as you wish, as long as it is not for profit and the DVD or VHS is an original. You are welcome to charge a modest admission to cover costs or fundraise for a non-profit group. ----- www.powerswitch.org.uk/order.htm	med ----- Euro

Title and details	Review – by Rob Hopkins unless noted otherwise	Doom rating ----- Solution rating	Where to get it ----- Licensing ----- Trailer	Production values ----- US / Euro bias
Power of Community – how Cuba survived Peak Oil ----- 2006 ----- 53 mins ----- USA	http://transitionculture.org/2006/04/28/transition-culture-presents-the-uk-premiere-of-the-power-of-community/#more-315 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o It is a wonderful and inspirational film and is one not to be missed. o film has been premiered in the US and in Ireland to rapturous reviews 	lo ----- hi	www.powerswitch.org.uk/order.htm ----- From the film website: "All public screenings must be non-commercial, though you may collect a small fee to cover expenses or to raise money for a non-profit organization." ----- www.powerofcommunity.org/	med ----- even
Crude Impact ----- 2006 ----- 97 mins ----- USA	http://transitionculture.org/2006/12/12/review-new-peak-oil-film-crude-impact/#more-550 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o clearly and passionately presents the argument that we are at or near the peak, which will be a transition of historic importance. o possibly suffers from being too long. It runs for over 90 minutes, and despite my being avidly keen to watch it, I did catch my eyelids drooping occasionally. o Little is discussed in terms of what our lives might look like without it, but that is not the film's purpose. Crude Impact focuses our minds not only on our dependence on oil, but also on all that has been done in order to sustain our habit. As such it is a very powerful tool in our attempts to break our collective addiction. 	med ----- lo	www.powerswitch.org.uk/order.htm ----- For non-profits and other organizations who wish to screen the film to a small group of 50 people or less, where there is no admission fee, we ask for a screening fee of \$115 plus the cost of the DVD, which you can purchase online. Otherwise contact screenings@vistaclarafilms.com ----- www.crudeimpact.com/page.asp?content_id=9587	hi ----- US
A Crude Awakening: the oil crash ----- 2006 ----- 85 mins ----- Switzerland	http://transitionculture.org/2007/02/07/film-review-a-crude-awakening-the-oil-crash/#more-586 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o very impressed, the best exposition of the peak oil argument yet committed to film o Crude Awakening keeps its gaze purely on peak oil, and presents a well argued, well-paced, and well-edited summary of what peak oil is and what it will mean for us all o It is a film which avoids over sensationalising the material, allowing the facts to speak for themselves. It isn't overly explicit about what the impacts of peak oil might be, allowing the viewer to follow those trains of thought in his or her own head. 	med ----- lo	not for sale yet. Check here for updates: www.oilcrashmovie.com/dvd.html ----- UPDATE 14-May-07: The film makers have said that as soon as they've agreed a distributor in the UK, they'll arrange premiers with all the Transition Towns here!!! Watch this space. ----- www.youtube.com/watch?v=Or-TyPACK-g	hi ----- even

Title and details	Review – by Rob Hopkins unless noted otherwise	Doom rating ----- Solution rating	Where to get it ----- Licensing ----- Trailer	Production values ----- US / Euro bias
<p>An Inconvenient Truth</p> <p>-----</p> <p>2006</p> <p>-----</p> <p>100 mins</p> <p>-----</p> <p>US</p>	<p>http://transitionculture.org/2006/11/17/a-review-of-an-inconvenient-truth/#more-530</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o what is so powerful about this film is that it makes the whole subject comprehensible to the lay person. Such a thing could be dry and dull, yet it is completely engrossing. It is well edited and paced, I have to say I was on the edge of my seat. As a film designed to shock the world into action, it is very powerful and, hopefully, effective. o He ignores peak oil (something he has since spoken widely on), which would profoundly affect many of his proposed solutions. He doesn't really take on the role that global capitalism has played in creating the mess that is climate change. His solutions imply that low energy bulbs alone will save the planet, and that biodiesel can run all our cars, in other words that business-as-usual is still viable with light green trimmings. o Gore sets out the case clearly, tugging at the heart strings, and concludes by telling people that there is still time to avert the worst scenarios. All of these he does brilliantly. 	<p>hi</p> <p>-----</p> <p>lo</p>	<p>Everywhere!</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Contact Paramount UK: Jiella Esmat (jiella_esmat@paramount.com) or Terry Jones (0207 534 5224) with the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o who you are o venue o when o number expected o purpose o an statement that you won't charge <p>(Note: in May-07, a community "no charge" showing in Wolvercote village hall to 75 people was permitted for free by Paramount)</p> <p>-----</p> <p>www.climatecrisis.net/trailer/</p>	<p>hi</p> <p>-----</p> <p>even</p>
<p>Escape from Suburbia: beyond the American dream</p> <p>-----</p> <p>2007</p> <p>-----</p> <p>?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>?</p>	<p>From the movie website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The END of SUBURBIA explored the American Way of Life and its prospects as the planet enters the age of Peak Oil. o In ESCAPE From SUBURBIA director Greg Greene takes us "through the looking glass" on a journey of discovery – a sobering yet vital and ultimately positive exploration of what the second half of the Oil Age has in store for us. o Through personal stories and interviews we examine how declining world oil production has already begun to affect modern life in North America. Expert scientific opinion is balanced with "on the street" portraits from an emerging global movement of citizen's groups who are confronting the challenges of Peak Oil in extraordinary ways. 	<p>?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>?</p>	<p>www.escapefromsuburbia.com</p> <p>-----</p> <p>not yet on sale</p> <p>-----</p> <p>www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2y9BbNjLAY</p>	<p>?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>US</p>

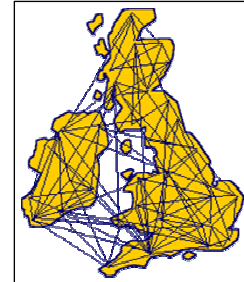
Title and details	Review – by Rob Hopkins unless noted otherwise	Doom rating ----- Solution rating	Where to get it ----- Licensing ----- Trailer	Production values ----- US / Euro bias
<p>Energy Crossroads: a burning need to change courses</p> <p>-----</p> <p>2007</p> <p>-----</p> <p>54 mins</p> <p>-----</p> <p>US</p>	<p>From TT Forest Row's Mike Grenville:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the film focuses on the US situation, it still has relevance elsewhere and takes a positive view on where we are and what can be done. <p>From the film website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As our global population and its appetite for energy rise drastically, resource depletion and global warming have become the most pressing issues facing humanity today. Most experts agree that global peak oil production, when demand exceeds supply, will occur within the next 15 years and will drastically change the very fabric of our industrialized world. It is clear that in order for us to survive our modern self-destructive societies, we will have to change course drastically and as fast as possible. Scientists and experts agree that the use of renewable energy such as solar and wind power, coupled with higher efficiency and conservation, will be key factors in preserving our quality of life and paving the way to a sustainable world for our children. 	<p>hi</p> <p>-----</p> <p>hi</p>	<p>www.energyxroads.com/buydvd.html</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Public performance policy:</p> <p>Buying this public performance rights version of the DVD (\$59.95) gives you and your organization the right to show the film publicly in a non-theatrical setting as many times as you want, as long as no admission is charged. This educational DVD has an extra hour of bonus materials, which includes a 25 minutes documentary produced in 1974 soon after the 1973 oil embargo, extended interviews and more.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>www.energyxroads.com/trailer.html</p>	<p>hi</p> <p>-----</p> <p>US</p>
<p>Money As Debt</p> <p>-----</p> <p>2006</p> <p>-----</p> <p>47 mins</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Canada</p>	<p>From www.themoneymasters.com</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This excellent, entertaining and animated feature by graphic artist and videographer, Paul Grignon, explains – in careful detail - today's magically perverse debt money system. <p>From Ben Brangwyn of Transition Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essential viewing for everyone. Explains, simply and clearly, the rise and rise of banking from its earliest origins into the dominant form it is today. Basically, without money reform and a removal of the debt/interest basis of our economy, all attempts at sustainability are doomed to failure. Will make you want to set up a local currency in your community! Perhaps best used as an awareness tool for identifying the people who will form the Economics group in your Transition Initiative 	<p>hi</p> <p>-----</p> <p>hi</p>	<p>http://www.moneyasdebt.net/</p> <p>-----</p> <p>From the publisher: "purchase a box of 10 wholesale, screening rights included . Hold a FREE (or by donation) public showing and sell them retail"</p> <p>Ben comment: box of 10 wholesale with FULL SCREENING RIGHTS is \$135 CAD (that's about £55). If you sell 6 at the retail price of c.£10, you've recouped the costs of the batch of 10. My guess is that at a screening at least one in twelve viewers would buy it.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>http://www.moneyasdebt.net/ click Trailer</p>	<p>ok – it uses simple animations with excellent voice over</p> <p>-----</p> <p>relevant to entire world</p>

Transition Network

In parallel with these efforts at Totnes, we have set up a national charity, "Transition Network" to support the Transition Initiatives that are springing up around the UK and Ireland.

The charity, with initial funding from the Tudor Trust, has 5 principle activities:

- raising awareness about the need for community-lead initiatives that will look unstintingly at the challenges of Peak Oil and Climate Change
- gathering best practice from the participating groups and making it available to all
- training the core teams and those leading the specialty groups
- building networks (across the varying Transition Initiatives around the country, and to other groups)
- campaigning



The charity is located in Totnes to stay close to where the main innovations are happening right now.

At The Personal Level

It's easy to overlook the psychological effects of learning about Peak Oil and facing up to the world that runaway Climate Change may bring.

Rob Hopkins presentation a slightly light hearted discussion of this to the Soil Association in Jan-2007. Below is a lightly edited extract. (Full transcript here: <http://transitionculture.org/2007/02/08/my-talk-to-the-soil-association-conference/#more-607>).



Through the work that I've done I've observed the same sort of pattern that happens in people when they find out about peak oil.

I've come to identify it as what I call "**Post Petroleum Stress Disorder**". It has a number of key symptoms which some of you might have experienced over the last couple of hours.

The first one is slight **clammy palms**, a sort of **nausea**, a sense of feeling slightly not very comfortable, **mild palpitations** and the possibility that actually things as you saw them when you came in here might not look quite the same when you go outside and look at them with your new way of looking.

There's a **sense of bewilderment** and **unreality** when you realise, as I was overhearing some people in the tea room just now, talking about

'Well actually, well that's made of oil and that's made of oil and this is made of' and once that sinks in, it's quite a shift.

There's an **irrational grasping at unfeasible solutions** which is where you'll say 'Oh no we'll be fine, we'll just go to hydrogen, yeah that will be fine, I feel a lot better now.' And again you see that lots of times, people just grasp at something instantly, nuclear power, hydrogen.

Fear, it's quite scary, and I've been involved in showing a film called *The End of Suburbia* which I'll talk a bit more about later, but a couple of times I've had people I've had to really counsel down afterwards. This information can be quite upsetting for people.



There's also **outbreaks of nihilism** and feeling, 'Well, what does it matter anyway', or **survivalism**, the sense of you just look after your own and head to the hills and **sod everybody else**, which is a strong trend in certain circles.

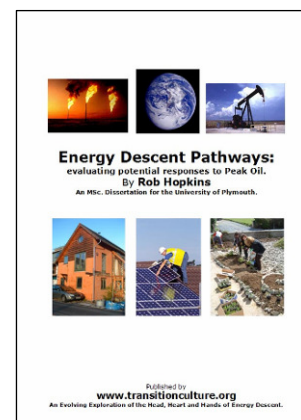
There's also **exuberant optimism** where people say 'Fantastic! Peak oil! Fantastic! Solves climate change at a stroke! Fantastic!' It's not quite that straight forward.

And finally, there's the danger of the '**I always told you so**' syndrome which is where the Soil Association now might be saying 'Well we always said that you should go organic', and I might be saying 'Well I always said that you should build with straw bales and teach permaculture to people', and you see that in lots of different places.

My own peak oil moment was in September 2004. I was teaching at a further education college in Kinsale in the south of Ireland, where we ran the first two year full time permaculture course in the world. I had been involved in environmental things for a very long time and I hadn't seen it coming at all. So if you're sitting there thinking '**I didn't see this coming at all**', it's a common thing.

The Transition Initiative in Totnes includes a group called "Heart and Soul". They are responsible for making sure the emotional impacts of Peak Oil and Climate Change within the community are considered carefully, providing help to groups and individuals as they navigate the challenging changes towards relocalisation.

For those of us who have gone through our own "Post Petroleum Stress Disorder", and come out the other side relatively unscathed, it's important to remember how traumatic that process can feel.



Conclusion

The three levels of action – global (oil depletion protocol and C&C), national (tradable energy quotas) and local (transition initiatives) – hold much promise to see humankind through the great energy transition of the 21st century. With cooperation, coordination and a following wind, we have the potential to create a more fulfilling, more equitable and more sustainable world.



The challenge is to find a way to proactively navigate the down-slope of Peak Oil while taking actions to address Climate Change.

As a species, we'll be transitioning to a lower energy future whether we want to or not. Far better to ride that wave rather than getting engulfed by it.



Further Reading

Website links are current as 24-Feb-07.

On Community Transitioning

- Rob Hopkins "Energy Descent Pathways: Evaluating potential responses to Peak Oil"
 - www.transitionculture.org/?page_id=508

On Peak Oil

- Energy Bulletin
 - excellent Peak Oil primer: www.energybulletin.net/primer.php
 - multiple news feeds on energy issues: www.energybulletin.net
- ASPO – Association for the Study of Peak Oil. The source of much data and inspiration and where Peak Oil awareness started.
 - www.peakoil.net/
- The Hirsch Report – produced for the US government in 2005. Was almost lost until it gained prominence in 2006. Remarkable for the unequivocal call to urgent action in order to mitigate the effects of Peak Oil.
 - www.netl.doe.gov/publications/others/pdf/Oil_Peaking_NETL.pdf
- Richard Heinberg – any of his books.
 - The Party's Over: Oil, War and the Fate of Industrial Societies
 - Powerdown: Options and Actions for a Post-Carbon World
 - The Oil Depletion Protocol : A Plan to Avert Oil Wars, Terrorism and Economic Collapse
 - Additionally, his essays on Peak Oil often appear on the Energy Bulletin website above.

Climate Change

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – the world's most authoritative body assessing climate change
 - www.ipcc.ch

- A commentary by working climate scientists on breaking climate news stories
 - www.realclimate.org
- Hadley Centre – the Met Office’s bureau for researching the potential effects of climate change.
 - www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/hadleycentre/

Contact Details



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