



Newsletter No 40 – February 2019

www.transitiontownbridport.co.uk

Transition Town Bridport - a project working to bring together the people of Bridport to plan a life beyond dependence on oil, to reduce the carbon footprint of the town and to make it resilient to change.

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From the editor

I **was** going to do this editorial as a rant about Brexit. I read a really good [piece by Pankaj Mishra](#) in the NY Times which summed up my feelings so accurately I just wanted to share it: he compares the 'malign incompetence' of the Conservative Government's actions over the last three years to the hasty and ill-prepared Partition of British India in 1947 which brought about suffering for millions on an unimaginable scale. He mentions also the Partition of Ireland, the consequences of which keep coming back to haunt us. He describes the astounding spectacle of 'mendacious, intellectually limited hustlers' leading Britain into its worst crisis, overseen by a 'chumocracy' - a 'self-involved clique that rewards group membership above confidence and self-confidence above expertise'. I found his polemic refreshing but his prognosis is unsurprisingly gloomy.

Then, on the resilience.org website, I read an [interview with Wendell Berry](#), and thought how it resonated with our upcoming Green Fortnight theme of "Food, Farming and the Future". I wanted to share some of his insights, which although they come from an American perspective, are nevertheless relevant to our local concerns.

Berry is a farmer, a thinker, a writer and a philosopher. His many books have restated over and over again the value of place, of smallness, of local action, values which underpin the Transition movement. Here is his list of the 'agrarian values' he has developed and tries to live by, each one raising questions and sparking thoughtful reflection:

- 1. An elated, loving interest in the use and care of the land.*
- 2. An informed and conscientious submission to nature.*
- 3. The wish to have and to belong to a place of one's own, as the only secure source of sustenance and independence.*

4. *A persuasion in favour of economic democracy; a preference for enough over too much.*
5. *Fear and contempt of waste of every kind, and its ultimate consequence in land exhaustion.*
6. *A preference for saving rather than spending.*
7. *An assumption of the need for a subsistence or household economy.*
8. *An acknowledged need for neighbours, and a willingness to be a good neighbour.*
9. *A living sense of the need for continuity of family and community life.*
10. *Respect for work, and (as self-respect) for good work.*
11. *A lively suspicion of anything new, contradicting the ethos of consumerism and the cult of celebrity.*

He acknowledges that, inspired by his writings, people have told him they wanted to quit their job and start their own small farm. (Back in the seventies, John Seymour, author of *Self Sufficiency*, had the same thing happen to him in Britain.) Berry responds with a dose of realism: "Don't do it. If you want to buy a little farm instead of a house in town, that's fine. But you better keep your city job. And don't bet your life on your ability to farm if you don't already know how." He continues:

"You don't want to discourage people, but you want to help them to think. You don't want to be responsible for somebody quitting a well-paying job and moving to some little farm, and trying to make a living from it against the odds. The agricultural economy has almost always, from the earliest times, been slanted against the primary producers—the real risk-takers, the real workers. It's terrible. Right here in my own county, two families of dairy farmers—third-generation, well-intentioned young people—have been essentially put out of business by Walmart. One hundred of them in this region. How cynical is it then to tell these young people, "You can be anything you want to be?"

So let's not be unrealistic about how hard it is to bring about real change in farming and food production. Many of our local enterprises are, for a variety of reasons, struggling in the current climate. Let's support those real workers, those risk-takers, who have been brave enough, against the odds, to take on the challenge. Berry says he no longer talks about hope – he talks about "doing the right thing". Our Green Fortnight should be a celebration of the local farmers, growers and producers who are indeed doing the right thing. CW

Transition Town Bridport's Third Annual Green Fortnight!

Plans are well under way for our third Green Fortnight, to take place from the 9th of March to the 22nd March. Previous themes have been "Buy Local", and "Reduce Plastic". The theme this year is "**Food, Farming and the Future**", an absolutely essential topic with a lot of local significance. As in previous years, the Town Hall clock will turn green for the fortnight!

Our programme includes:

Launch Event on the evening of the 9th, featuring local speakers and story telling from Martin Maudsley;

Participation in the Community Orchard Working Party and a Bridport Soup event, both on Sunday 10th;

The famous Green Quiz at the Ropemakers on Tuesday 12th;

A film show at the United Church on Thursday 14th;

Green Day in Bucky Doo Square on Saturday 16th ;

Panel discussion with local farmers on Wednesday 20th ;

Grand Finale with music and poetry on Friday 22nd .

There will also be visits to the anaerobic digester at Piddlehinton on the 14th and 22nd (Details and booking through [Eventbrite by clicking this link](#))

We hope this third Green Fortnight will be even more successful than previous years, bringing together many groups in the area who are working in different ways to protect, enhance and regenerate the environment we all depend on for our daily food. Look out for the programme of events on [our website](#) and [Facebook](#) page and around the town, and join us for what will be a great fortnight!

St Mary's Edible Garden – Mud Pies, anyone?

The Edible Garden project is contributing to the education and wellbeing of the children at the school in many different ways, not only by providing carefully grown fresh vegetables for school lunches, and teaching children how to grow their own food, but also by providing play opportunities. The team have been successful in getting a grant from Dorset Gardens Trust for creation of a Mud Kitchen. Headteacher Kate Batorska says:

“There are key benefits in a number of areas for our children. It provides opportunities to develop social and emotional skills as it provides the chance to problem solve and work alongside others, learning to take turns and gain confidence as they test out and develop their own ideas.

A further key benefit for us involves language development as many of our children enter school working well below expectations in this area. A mud kitchen provides an inviting context for talking and listening as children question, describe and discuss what they are doing.

Fine and gross motor skills can also be developed through use of the tools and movements that the environment will provide.

Core maths and literacy skills also have a natural context here as children count items, measure water, weigh ingredients, write recipes and menus or practice formation in the mud and sand.

Children's understanding of the world can be developed as they explore the properties and textures of the mud and discover how their decisions affect the properties of the materials they are working with. There will be opportunities within curriculum time but also access during children's playtimes and as part of provision for children with additional needs as a regular part of their nurture and targeted support time”.



Here is Sarah Wilberforce's plan of the garden – the mud kitchen will be in the area next to the cob oven.



Robert Golden has kindly allowed us to use his lovely photo of another Mud Kitchen

Local Currency? No problem, we have had one for 25 years (almost), but can we keep going?

Anne Rickard sent us this piece which featured in the local press recently. They need new members and support! Please contact her if you would like to become involved with this creative initiative which has for many years offered a real local alternative to mainstream finance.

SW Dorset LETS (Local Exchange Trading System) – not a letting agency - has been successfully trading skills, goods and services between its members, using 'NETS' instead of cash, for almost a quarter of a century, but urgently needs some new blood to keep it going.

The Bridport-based group, one of an international movement of Local Exchange Trading Systems, was set up in the early 90s and over time, nearly 500 members have passed through their books.

When asked how it works, Anne Rickard, a long-time Core Member in Bridport and co-founder of Dorchester's group, said "When people join, they are given a current directory of members' offers, a contact list and state what they'd like to offer to the group. They can then contact other members, 'buying' from one and 'earning' from another. For instance, they might get some gardening done and pay in NETS. The gardener can then spend their NETS on whatever they need, at any time that suits. All the transactions are recorded by the relevant Core member.

"Our directory of members' offers is very varied – it lists all sorts of things all such as accommodation, childcare, cooking, DIY, gardening, items for hire, through to sewing, transport and tuition and loads more, so lots to choose from.

"The beauty of it all is that it's OK to be in debit. It's not like the 'normal' monetary system where we cannot spend before we earn – in fact if all members were in credit, the system couldn't work at all! People worry that some may take advantage, but as the currency can't be invested and as it can only be spent locally and only within the group, that doesn't happen, and anyway, as it's a notional currency, no-one ever loses out. In fact the best place for an account to be is at zero. Nothing owed, nothing hoarded.

"The question of tax often crops up. Simply, the tax office is only interested if a member earns NETS for work they normally do for a living and therefore would pay tax on – not if it's something totally different. It's all perfectly legal.

"In the present climate this is probably one of the most useful groups we could have in the community, where people who may be short of time and/or cash can be helped and enjoy helping others. Sad though it may be, we won't be able to continue without people coming forward to take over some admin tasks. Currently we need a **Sterling Treasurer** (not everything is always available for Nets – room hire, stamps, printing etc), **Directory Editor**, and **Trading & Membership Secretary**. All Core posts are paid in NETS. Time and technology has moved on, but the concept is still as brilliant as ever and deserves to continue. It's a worldwide system, but could easily have been invented here – it's so very 'Bridport'."

If the group is to continue, it is imperative that people offer their help. Could it be you?

Anne Rickard is on busychicks@phoncoop.coop

AGM report:

We held our AGM on 22 November 2018. About 25 people were present and were very gracious about our hasty relocation to the Chapel in the Garden on a very cold night. We heard reports from the Chair, the Treasurer and from the Edible Garden, Green Fortnight and Eco homes projects. Anne Rickard gave an illustrated talk on 10 years of TTB and Joe Burlington introduced us to the book *Drawdown, the most comprehensive plan ever produced to reverse global warming*, by Paul Hawken. We then repaired to the Tiger Inn where we had a buffet provided by the pub and a cake to celebrate our tenth birthday.



Dave,
Anne,

Caroline, Sarah, Sam and Kelvin – and cake.



Green Drinks! Come to our monthly gathering (third Thursday of the month) at the Tiger Inn, Barrack Street, Bridport and enjoy the wonderful beers and free sandwiches while talking over local, national and international green issues. Solve the problems of the world one sip at a time. **Next date: February 21; no Green Drinks in March.**

GETTING INVOLVED

TTB subscribers receive this newsletter via email, but if you are reading it from our website, and would like to subscribe to our mailing list, please [click here](#), fill in the short form, and submit. Our mailing list is GDPR compliant, and you can unsubscribe via the link at the foot of every email from Mailchimp, should you wish to.

Come along to any event /workshop. Check out our What's On section [here](#), and/or on our website.

Membership of TTB is open to all on application – details [here](#).

We are very keen to expand the pool of active people for the local projects and to get other strands going. Please [get in touch](#) if you would like to help.

If you have any events of a local and eco-friendly nature that you would like us to advertise on our website or in the newsletter, please [contact us](#) and we'll see what we can include. If your local group wishes to collaborate with TTB on any project, or has ideas and energy for a new project, just let us know.

NB We do not use our mailing list other than for our own regular mailings.