



Newsletter No 43 – April 2020

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:

First of all, I am hoping this finds all readers of Transition Town Bridport's Newsletter safe and well. In such a fast moving situation anything I write is likely to be out of date before this gets on the website and I was seriously challenged to find a way in to the subject which is the overwhelming preoccupation of most of us right now.

Then I was lucky enough to get an email from Shaun Chamberlin inviting me to watch the new film [The Sequel](#) which was due to have been launched in London last week but instead went online, making it accessible to a wide audience. The film features the work of David Fleming (one of whose great ideas was the notion of Tradeable Energy Quotas as a way to reduce carbon emissions). After the film there was a fascinating conversation between Caroline Lucas, Kate Raworth and Transition's own Rob Hopkins, looking at how relevant Fleming's work is to the challenges presented by current virus pandemic. To access this conversation go to [this link](#) and scroll to the 5.02 time slot. I thoroughly recommend it.

David Fleming (one of the major influences on Rob Hopkins and the Transition Movement) knew that our civilisation would sooner or later come up against a major challenge which would test the resilience and creativity of human society. He called such a moment a 'climacteric': "A stage in the life of a system in which it is especially exposed to a profound change in health or fortune."

If this isn't one of those, I don't know what is. As he says (all quotes are taken from Lean Logic, the masterwork published after his death),

“the climacteric could be one of those rare historical turning points when society switches into a new mode of production—into a radically different way of using its resources; its labour, capital and land—changing its expectations and values. The shift could be partly voluntary and partly an involuntary reaction to circumstances. Potentially, this could be an opportunity, for it is at such turning points that it is practical to make deep, radical breakthroughs, before new conditions settle in which we can do little to change. We do not know, of course: the climacteric may be so severe that opportunity is the last thing on anyone’s mind; this hinge of history may turn out to be just dust and grief, but if rational judgment is to be salvaged from the depths where it has lain for so long, the coming climacteric could be the moment for it.”

It is in just such times that the ideas we have lying around may come in useful – Universal Basic Income for example, which is practically what the government is giving all those workers who have no work right now. And already we are seeing ingenious local schemes to provide fresh produce, and delivery services, and pop-up shops outside people’s houses; telephone buddy systems to keep in touch with isolated people, community support schemes and so on. Not least maybe some parents are discovering they quite like their children and enjoy teaching and learning with them? Allotments have never been so vital right now: both as sources of exercise as we dig and plant, and sources of food later this year.

We are facing major challenges: let’s hope it brings out the best and most creative in us all.
- Caroline Walker

Fashion Revolution

Sam Wilberforce reports on the Opening Night:



Fashion Revolution is an international organisation which was set up in wake of the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh, which killed over 1000 garment workers. Their aim is to unite people and organisations to work together towards radically changing the way our clothes are sourced, produced and consumed.

FR’s Gloria Davies-Coates opened our campaign with an overview of the problem.

The Fashion industry produces more greenhouse gases than aviation and shipping put together. Every year 100 billion items of clothing are produced, but 2/3 of them end up in landfill within a year. The UK buys more clothes per person than any other European country. Gloria outlined the choices we can make to lower our impact – buy quality, consume less, repair and recycle. FR produce a Fashion Transparency index which can be seen [here](#). Page 32 has the most recent list.

One of the above-average companies on the list is New Look, which source its clothes from Bangladesh, China, Turkey and elsewhere. Sue Fairley, Head of Sustainability at New Look came to explain the complexity of a major fashion retailer trying to clean up its act. The company has made considerable efforts to visit the factories and ensure that the conditions for the textile workers are safe and that they are well treated. 30% of their cotton is organic, and much of the rest follows the Better Cotton Initiative BCI, a protocol to improve the environmental effects of growing cotton, using less water and pesticides.

The discussion focussed on whether a company which tries to clean up its supply chain is exercising Corporate Social Responsibility or merely using greenwash to improve its marketing image. Despite the serious progress New Look has made, it has not publicised this initiative in its marketing, which would favour the former interpretation.

The problem with fast fashion is that the clothes are so cheap, but can one expect a company like this one to move upmarket and sell higher priced clothes? Should the problem be laid only at the feet of the consumer? Should clothes shops be forced to publish facts about the supply chain?

Several shorter presentations were given including Celia Marsh, who introduced her Boomerang bags. The Bridport Community Shed has made some of these but anyone can make them to a design which she has, from recycled cotton material you may have. The idea is that shops stock these bags and lend them for free; hopefully they will come back and remain in circulation a number of times, reducing the need for plastic bags.

- Sam Wilberforce

The True Cost



There are roughly 40 million garment workers in the world today, many of whom do not share the same rights or protections that many people in the West do. They are some of the lowest paid workers in the world and roughly 85% of all garment workers are women. This film focussed on clothes factories in Bangladesh, and the employees who work there. The contrast between their lives and the glamorous world of the catwalk, the world of the West's high street outlets, and the obscene scramble of black Monday sales, showed the real disconnect between the producer and the consumer. In addition, the environmental costs of growing cotton, treating leather and land fill are not factored into the price of the clothes we wear.

After the film, a panel of Caroline, Lesley and Sarah led a lively discussion of points raised by the film.

Some of the questions which the film raised include:

- Why are clothing companies outsourcing labour to factories in the Global South? Do you think that so much production has been relocated there because of, or in spite of, the bad conditions that factory workers there face?
- As demonstrated in the film, some economists argue that conditions in garment factories, bad as they may be, are better opportunities for workers in "developing" countries than they would have otherwise. Do we buy this argument? Even if the argument is true, does that mean that conditions should not be improved? How are women's rights particularly affected?



- Given that labour and environmental laws are weaker in “developing” countries, are fast fashion companies’ voluntary codes of conduct sufficient to improve working conditions in garment factories? If not, how can domestic and international law be changed to make this improvement?
- How can we become better buyers of clothes? How can we investigate the supply chain in terms of the environment – use of water and fossil fuels, pollution and degradation of the soil – and of the conditions of work? – Sam W

Some scenes from “Love your Clothes” evening at Soulshine



Celia, Lucy, Rosie and Rajah telling the story of some of their favourite clothes.

A Stitch in Time!

Lesley Windsor writes:

I am one of the many people of Bridport who have spent months organising events that have had to be cancelled due to the world's present circumstances. We had managed to complete three of the nine events on the Bridport Fashion Revolution programme but there have also been extra fringe events.

In an effort to include young people in our revolution I contacted Colfox School. A lovely science teacher there, Juliet Hicks, was very enthusiastic about the subject and really helpful. She arranged for me to do four mornings of assemblies, to cover each of the house groups. I explained the issues but my main message was in the extraordinary times we live in, where young people can feel they have very little influence on what goes on, this is a significant industry where every time they choose to buy or not to buy an item of clothing they make their vote.

Juliet wanted to take this further, by setting up a school Upcycling competition. Whilst on visits to charity shops to talk about our 'Charity Shop Challenge', the manager of the Sue Ryder shop said she would love to encourage young people. I put her and Juliet in touch and she gave the school some bags of clothes. They then had a morning where a team from each house group had the use of the textiles room, a T.A. and a teacher to create 4 upcycled outfits.

Local community artist, Sally Lemsford, the head teacher and I were invited to judge the winning outfit. The staff were thrilled that the pupils had got so enthused and not only created some very original ideas but thoroughly enjoyed the process.

A few weeks later TTB arranged an upcycling workshop at Bridport Youth Club. We asked the young people to bring in something in that they would like to upcycle. We had a bag of extra clothes that was destined for the charity shop (nothing too special) and a bag of assortments, kindly donated by Livingstone Textiles. Celia Marsh from Bridport Community Shed, Sally Lemsford and I spent an action packed couple of hours supporting the young people to create new outfits from old. It was all very quick 'fast fashion' at its best. It was definitely more to do with the process than the finish but to see their confidence grow from 'I'm not allowed to touch pins or needles' to 'Has anyone got a needle?' all in the space of two hours was heart-warming. I commented to two girls about how great they had been at working independently and they both said how they had done sewing with their grandmas.

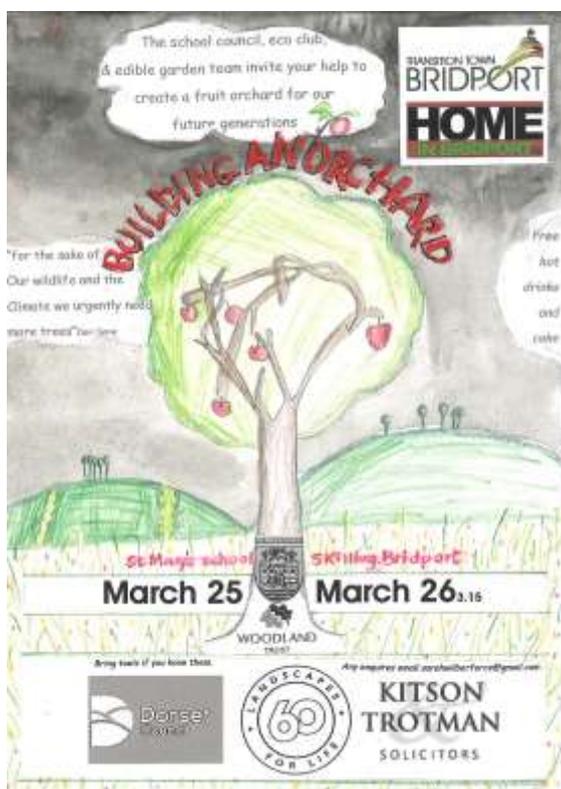
What this has shown me is that given support and encouragement how enjoyable all of those young people found upcycling clothes and how soon creativity started to emerge. Hopefully these little tasters will give them the confidence to try our 'charity shop challenges' later in the year.

The other issue this illustrates is how important it is that we teach the younger generations basic sewing skills. Where is this on the curriculum these days? We haven't all got grandma's nearby and with the time to give. If we want to 'mend our ways', using mending and upcycling to keep our clothes in circulation for longer we need to value it as a skill to be taught to all.

- Lesley Windsor

St. Mary's School - Hedge fund pays dividends!

Sarah Wilberforce reports:



2020 is the year of an ambitious plan to plant trees and shrubs in the school grounds. Our triple aim is tackling climate change, enhancing biodiversity and providing fruit. **Building an Orchard and planting an edible hedgerow fit the bill, and this teaches children** about the role of trees in cleaning our air, absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen.

The children at St. Mary's have been busy in playing their part at a local level. Simon Jordon, who runs [#5 things clear](#), made a presentation, at an assembly, highlighting plastic pollution and its impact on marine life. The school's Eco committee investigated this further and with the collaboration of the Headteacher, devised a sponsored 'litter picking' month, to raise money for paying for the fruit trees. This event, helped by Joe Hackett of [Litter Free Dorset](#), raised around £500.

The **Edible Garden Team** arranged two events on 25th and 26th March to create an edible hedgerow and orchard avenue, and we

were expecting a large team of volunteers ready to help the planting. Advice and tools were to be available, as well as hot drinks and cake.

But then Covid19 took over! The planting was cancelled because the school was closed. By this time all the trees and the wild harvest saplings had been dug out of the ground and delivered. So the trees, their supports and cardboard protectors were planted by five brilliant garden and tree experts – Mitch, Martin, Tia, Sam and Sarah. They kept their distance very carefully. The next day, the few children in school, with their teachers, planted the 105 saplings of the hedgerow. We can look forward to harvesting apples, pears, plums, figs and cherries in a year or two. Furthermore, the hedge will create beautiful blossom in the Spring, and foraging of nuts and berries in the Autumn.

Many families of children at the school have sponsored a specific tree, so we hope to run an event celebrating this achievement in the Autumn, as well as inviting friends who



Tia, Martin, Sam and Mitch

have been so generous in money or 'in kind'. Our grateful thanks to Dorset Council Community Fund, Kitson and Trotman and AONB for their support and some others who gave help 'in kind'.

If you would like to sponsor Tia and Mitch, our part-time gardeners, please pay money into Transition Town Bridport account sort code 08-92-99 acct no 65372278 marked Edible Garden and your name
- Sarah Wilberforce



New hedgerow on the left, and the fruit orchard

Joe Blogs ... We can rely on ... can't we?

Brambles scratched me – I know it wasn't personal and, in their defence, I had just cut them. I thought, I must buy gardening gloves at RKL ... but RKL is locked up. I wish I had bought timber to make shutters – to keep winter warmth in and summer heat out – but now the builders' merchants are closed. Food? Are the supermarkets still open and stocked? Headache? Can I get paracetamol? Broken arm? How long before an ambulance can get to me? A friend used to be able to fly out to see a grandchild in Asia - but not any more. A holiday cruise no longer sounds as though it's a reliably healthy option.

I thought that I could ask my older sister about our childhood ... and I did. We had the best conversation ever this week partly because this virus made me realise that she might soon be gone ... but the visit to her care home near London that I had vaguely planned cannot happen soon – if ever.

So, what can be learned from the Covid-19 fiasco? What do we take for granted that may not always be there?

Clean drinking water in the tap? Hot water for that shower? Cheap energy for warmth? Plenty of fuel for travel? Essentials in the shops – and a money system that is reliable and durable?

Surely we must make greater efforts to anticipate where weaknesses may develop. You don't have to be a socialist or a communist to realise that it is now a practical necessity to ensure that everybody has access to basic human needs: food, clean water, clothing, shelter, security, health services and education and, in these days, some access to electricity ... and travel? Bicycle speeds open up great possibilities.

Asked how he survived the holocaust one person said, "Mostly luck but also three of us had a rock-solid determination to support one another come what may."

So, we can anticipate better. We would be wise to prepare ourselves. It would be sensible and rewarding to extend our support networks – and make them rock solid.

Albert Einstein said:

"A human being is a part of a whole, called by us 'universe', a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest ... a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."

- Joe Burlington

Dave Rickard looks on the bright side.

A former colleague of mine from my 'pollution control' days expounded frequently on how the best way to preserve wildlife was to exterminate the human race! Always a tad too extreme for my sensibilities but I understood exactly where he was coming from.

Covid 19 has temporarily shut down many of the activities which pose those threats and if you had told the founders of Extinction Rebellion in May 2018 that within two years 70% of all global flights would be grounded they wouldn't have believed you.

If we add-in: reduced car journeys; reduction of unnecessary consumer purchasing; closing down of polluting factories around the world and more reliance on local food sourcing, we have at the very least a chance for the planet to take a deep breath of fresh air and start an ecological and climate change 'time-out'.

I suspect that when this is over, business will inevitably gear itself up – back to and beyond in order to stabilise what has been exposed as a very un-resilient global economy. Even if that doesn't change we will have the evidence that it is a seriously flawed model and that might come in handy in the future.

I am very hopeful that there will be some positive legacy, but it is much more likely to be at the community level. Bridport is a much more coherent and resilient community than most, and this is already showing itself in the Community Support Network which has grown so rapidly in only about 2 weeks – see www.bridport-tc.gov.uk/covid19.

So what is happening that will potentially last long beyond Covid 19?

People are appreciating and using local services, with many producers, suppliers and shops rallying round providing a much appreciated service. Thanks and loyalty will hopefully continue long after this is over, boosting the local economy.

Young people, with a specific community focus to spur them on, including looking after their parents and grandparents, are stepping up to the plate and becoming a valuable part of society in a very practical way. That memory of a sense of worth and purpose will last for the rest of their lives.

People are rediscovering the make-do and mend ethos which surged during the 1930s recession and World War 2, and will learn or rekindle skills and mind sets which will linger on and hopefully be passed on to the next generation.

Allotments and gardens as places of food production are coming even more into their own, and whilst Bridport is blessed with more allotments per capita than any other town in Britain, I think the joy of growing your own and eating fresh veg will grow, infecting a new generation of gardeners.

Schools closing will be giving a whole generation the chance to think for themselves and embrace learning at their own pace, largely untested and driven by curiosity not curriculum. In this case lets hope it lasts long enough to make a real change.

Transitioning is all about building personal and local resilience. If not now – when?
As Eric Idle once said, "Always look on the bright side of life!"

Bridport Plastic Free Town Status

Sarah West writes:

One of the objectives under the excellent Bridport Town Council's response to the Climate Emergency is to achieve Plastic Free Town Status. Plastic free communities was set up by Surfers Against Sewerage over two years ago. The initiative is to bring together individuals, groups, businesses, and organisations to reduce the amount of single use plastic they use. They developed the scheme to tackle the plastic problem specifically in coastal areas where unfortunately we see examples of single use plastic in our seas and rivers every day.

The first town In Dorset to achieve 'Plastic Free Status', was Lyme Regis in June 2018. We joined forces with West Dorset Friends of the Earth and went along to talk to two of the campaigners from the [Plastic Free Lyme Regis](#) group to learn how we could do this in Bridport. We were amazed how much they had achieved in such a short time and were excited and keen to do something similar in Bridport.

They gave us so many inspiring examples of how businesses, community, and schools and the council have come together to tackle this issue and then through it explored other ways of reducing the effect on the environment collectively.

The first thing we need to do in this journey is to establish a small working group to help us, we are looking for local businesses and schools to join us in this. We are already aware that many local businesses have made huge steps over the past few years to switch over to other alternatives. If you are interested in getting involved in the project please contact info@scottstudio.co.uk

- Sarah West



Picture taken on River Brit during lockdown

We have been asked to publicise the following online event:

Deep Adaptation to Climate Change: Engaging body, heart and soul (Online Workshop)

Saturday April 18, 9.30 – 4.30 (4 sessions) with Alan Heeks and John Harley

Deep Adaptation is a different way to engage with the climate crisis, created by Jem Bendell. It means adapting to climate impacts, as well as trying to reduce them; facing the emotional stresses to enable us to take clear practical steps; seeing this as a spiritual crisis too, and finding its meaning for our life purpose; and exploring all this in local communities.

This four-part online workshop is part of an initiative started by Alan in December 2019 to help the Bridport community use Deep Adaptation approaches to respond to the climate crisis. The day will include some time for us to discuss this as a group. We will use a range of approaches including group sharing, guided visualisations and pairs work.

Leaders

Alan Heeks has been involved in sustainability for 30 years, this includes founding the Magdalen Farm charity, near Thorncombe, and Bridport Cohousing. He was named by Jem as a Deep Adaptation Advocate, and is working with community groups, individuals and businesses on these issues.

John Harley is a facilitator, drama therapist and Unitarian minister who is passionate about creative and holistic ways to engage with the climate crisis.

Venue: The sessions will be hosted on Zoom (similar to Skype); you will need access to a computer or smartphone

Timings: Session 1: 9.30-11 Session 2: 11.30-1 Session 3: 2-3.15 Session 4: 3.30-4.30

Cost: £10 waged, £5 unwaged, Under-25s Free

Booking: Contact Rosalind, rosalindrg@gmail.com Tel 07808808278

Also see http://www.transitiontownbridport.co.uk/Content/whats_on.asp



Green Drinks!

Next date: to be announced!

GETTING INVOLVED

Contact admin@transitiontownbridport.co.uk and you will be added to our mailing list and/or put in touch with the group or activity you would like to join. If you are receiving this you are already on the mailing list, but if you'd rather not be, just [tell us](#).

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 via an [email](#)
Membership allows voting at the AGM and eligibility to stand for office. We welcome new members.

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.

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.

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