

Newsletter No 44 –June 2020

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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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Comment

Lockdown is beginning to be eased for now, and the prospect of schools reopening in September, the tourists returning and people going back to work. But will things ever be the same? And should they?

In a TTB core zoom meeting we asked what aspects of the lockdown we liked, and what could we try to continue after the immediate threat is lifted. These included:

- Peace and quiet, the emboldening of nature, and time to enjoy birdsong.
- Communities sharing time and skills, a greater sense of mutual support
- Buying local produce from source, buying less but of better quality
- No planes, clearer skies, cars off the road, cleaner air
- Working from home, no commuting; zoom meetings more efficient and focussed.
- Taking more exercise, getting the bikes out and rediscovering the joys of cycling and walking.
- A realisation that public health is more than local, it affects everybody in the world (although some more than others -poor countries, BAME people, the vulnerable etc)
- The furlough system introducing a move towards a Universal Basic Income, supporting people whether they have a job or not.
- Spending more time with our families and our children.
- Gardening
- Decluttering.



The glorious weather we had over the last two months helped, but it masked the serious changes in the world's climates, with floods, mudslides and failed crops elsewhere in the world. We will hear reports of a recession or depression, where the economy fails to grow, and shrinks even. Unfortunately we can't keep

growing in a finite planet we can't keep burning fossil fuels and trashing the biodiversity. But we must not reach a low-growth society through austerity, which hits the poor and unemployed.

Last month a group of academics working in the fields of development and environmental sciences in the Netherlands wrote a manifesto for post-corona recovery based on degrowth principles. You can read their report [here](#). It includes five key policy proposals:

1. A move away from development focussed on GDP growth
2. An economic framework based on redistribution
3. Agricultural transformation towards regenerative agriculture
4. Reduction of consumption and travel
5. Debt cancellation of workers, small businesses and for countries in the global south.

Frome Town Council had a webinar entitled 'Climate Emergency - What Next'. Their proposals include a wealth of useful links – click [here](#).

Let's not go back to normal. Normal is the problem.

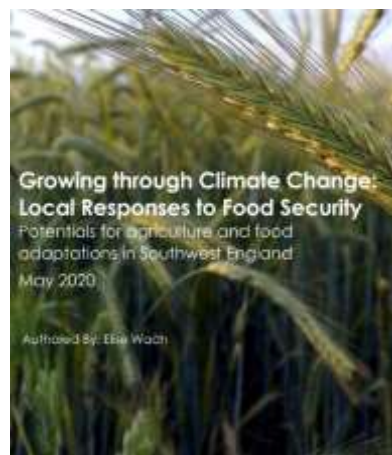
Sam Wilberforce

Growing through Climate Change: Local Responses to Food Security

– Sarah Wilberforce

The rescheduled webinar took place last week. It was hosted by [Seeding our Future](#) with inputs from TTB and Bridport Local Food Group.

Climate change is likely to produce wetter winters, dryer summers and more freak weather events in Dorset, and this has clear implications on what crops we grow and how. Alan Heeks commissioned a report from Elise Wach on how we can grow food more resiliently in West Dorset – the summary can be read [here](#).



The webinar discussed many things specific to Bridport and its rural community nearby; specifically horticulture for smaller scale producers and allotment keeper's in relation to fruit and veg. In the UK we provide only 55% of its fresh veg and 7% of its fruit. Food security will become an even more serious concern in 2021 with the triple effect of Covid 19, leaving the EU and Climate Change.

This was a very well attended seminar with many key representatives of the local food scene. Some of the concerns raised were:

- Lack of availability of land for horticulture
- The need for young people to enter the agroecology enterprises
- The growing gap between the rich and poor
- The normalisation of the Food Bank, increasing essential for more families.

On the positive side it was felt that our community has short supply chains and that during lockdown independent local food shops, and farm shops were doing very well.

TTB, and Home in Bridport are playing their part through St Mary's Edible Garden project. We plan to run workshops for allotment holders and gardeners on growing in a changing climate. This will be held at the edible garden and include – composting, mulching, and choosing crops which suit the changing climate and water management. Allotments have an important part to play in food security and we need to get the message out. If you wish to take part or contribute please [email](#) me.

Other initiatives will look at setting up a box scheme or distribution network for local food producers; and Community Supported Agriculture. An example of what can be done is through [Tamar Grow Local](#).

Eating healthy, locally and sustainably produced food is more important than ever in this time of climate change. But deals being negotiated by our government with the US are accepting low standards for environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards – see [this article](#) for example. It's not just chlorinated chicken. The negotiations are a recipe for [Disaster Capitalism](#) and we need to fight against it.

Black Lives Matter – Sam W

Bridport is a Rights Respecting town, and the turnout on the Millennium Green on Saturday proved this is not just a paper declaration. It was a very well organised event, with physical distancing and masks worn, and a large, enthusiastic and respectful crowd. The personal stories, readings and poems from the young organisers were an inspiration. Well done Bridport!



How can we 'build back better'? – Joe Burlington

Does individual action alone change anything? Could we have reduced the impact of Covid-19 on our own? Government intervention was crucial but scientists and health officials did make preparations – and NHS and other essential workers have got most of us through this first phase. National, community and individual action were all needed to contain the disease.

The climate and ecological emergencies do require us as individuals to grow trees and vegetables – but they also need us to do what we can to influence one another as well as the government. We have to *think, talk and write* about the impending difficulties no matter how hard that may be.

We want to return to the way of life that we had while we know (sort of) that we need to stop emitting carbon dioxide - eventually [but please not yet]. We have learned to buy less and it's inescapable that if our children and youths are to thrive, we need to consume less still; we can be still more frugal in the use of the earth's precious resources. It is worrying to hear politicians desperate for 'growth'. [For clear and convincing economic principles read Richard Murphy's Tax Justice blog. Perhaps start with "[Spend and tax, not tax and spend](#)" or "[The Old and New Economic Orders](#)" – both articles short but revealing]

Government ministers ignored compelling scientific warnings about coronaviruses. They (we) don't ignore climate science completely, but proposals so far are weak.

A few years ago there was a scheme to promote the sales of diesel cars. It was based on scientific facts: a) petrol cars emit too much CO₂ and b) a diesel-engined car will travel further on a litre of fuel than **an identical car** running on petrol. People scrapped small petrol cars and bought large diesels. Result: greater emissions of CO₂ (and exhaust pollution) but the lesson has not been learned: 'Boris considers giving drivers up to £6000 in diesel and petrol car scrappage scheme.' (Telegraph 7 June 2020).

Yes, an electric car is better than a petrol or diesel vehicle *of the same size and weight*. But electrics still require some fossil-fuel generated electricity and precious metals to build them. Poor people will not be any better equipped to get to the Dorset County Hospital. Covid had delivered a blow to the 'car culture'. It's a start but if we are ever to get to zero carbon we need i) to travel less and ii) a 'walking, cycling and public transport' approach.

Read more:

1) [Principles for post-Covid Britain](#)

2) [Envisioning a post-Covid-19 transport landscape: surface travel](#)

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.