



Futures Forum

Report for VGS AGM 17th June 2015

(the same day as the Climate Lobby of Parliament)

The Futures Forum has been comparatively dormant in the past year. Though not meeting regularly, we may claim some significant achievements, chiefly due to Jeremy Woodward, who has maintained the Futures Forum blog with regular updates of news and comment. Jeremy also led and almost single-handedly organised the successful Climate Week in early March.

This year, I am for the first time unable to attend the AGM, but I would like to express my gratitude to Jeremy for his persistent, detailed, unstinting work over many years, with the hope that we can prevail upon him to persevere in giving the valley the benefit of his skills.

As a tribute to him I give below a brief historical context:

The Town Council and the Sid Vale Association founded the Vision Group for Sidmouth in 2005 with Jeremy Woodward as secretary, to consult the town and produce a draft town plan, which was written by Dr Brian Golding of the Met Office in 2006. The VGS Chair Alan Darrant was taken aback by the dismissive contempt of the District Council towards the work of the VGS.

In 2007 Rob Hopkins of the Transition Town movement spoke at the launch of *Sustainable Ottery* and, in answer to a question, explained that the movement is non party political, always works with the established authorities, and generally meets with no political opposition. In 2008, launching the *Sustainable Sidmouth* brand, a group including the Chair and Secretary successfully steered the VGS to recognition as a Transition Town. (See Appendix).

The District and Town Councils have ignored various drafts for a sustainable town plan prepared with broad consultation by the VGS under Jeremy's oversight over the ensuing years. In 2011 the Town Council noted that Transition status was not in the gift of the movement but could only be given by the town's elected representatives, who were not minded to apply for this. At the 2011 AGM Jeremy stood down as Secretary to the VGS but took up the role of Secretary to the Futures Forum.

Sidmouth Town Council, having promised year after year to develop its own Town Plan in due course, finally in 2013 made a steadfast decision never to do so citing the unfinished District Council's local plan as an impediment.

However, with the active support and encouragement of many individual Councillors from all political groups, the Vision Group has taken several positive independent

initiatives towards sustainable living and awareness in the town, including the Cafe Scientifique, the Farmers' Market, SidEnergy, Climate Week, the Science Festival and, through the Futures Forum, has attempted to contribute to local planning for flood defence, beach management, food security, water security, public transport, traffic management, cycling enhancement, the regeneration of Port Royal and the Drill Hall, housing, health provision, education, and employment in the valley. We have also welcomed and encouraged the emergence of several hopeful initiatives in the valley including the Sidmouth Arboretum, the Friends of the Bays, the community centre at Dissenter of Sidmouth, the Friends of Sidmouth Drill Hall, Sea Fest and others. Throughout this time Jeremy has been the indefatigable secretary of the Futures Forum

During Climate Week 2015 Rob Hopkins spoke at Kennaway House. In answer to a question from the floor he acknowledged that Transition Totnes had been fortunate in having a sympathetic and supportive local council, whereas in Frome and Bristol, where sustainability projects had been thwarted by obstructively hostile councils, the transition movement had opted to put forward a slate of independent candidates who have been returned to change the political context.

These towns are now engaging at the vital local level with the global challenge of an unsustainable and unprecedented shift in the environment, now recognised as the dawn of the Anthropocene epoch.*

While acknowledging the value of conciliation and cooperation VGS Futures Forum has also, with some regret, joined the *Save Our Sidmouth* campaigning group to challenge some decisions of the local planning authority and has affiliated to the campaign group *Community Voice on Planning*.

Recent small changes in representation at District and Town level may produce new challenges and new opportunities, which might lead to a renewal of activity by the VGS Futures Forum.

But who can foretell the future?

Robert Crick, May 28, 2015

*For examples of ways in which the science of climate change is denied and hijacked by powerful hostile forces, providing myopic political representatives with excuses for inaction, see <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/30961-hijacking-the-anthropocene> or *This Changes Everything* (2014) by Naomi Klein.

Transition Initiative criteria – response from

Date:

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to help you prepare the groundwork for a successful transition initiative.

We're finding that the most unobtrusive way of influencing the development of initiatives and hubs is by setting a few criteria that ensure each group/initiative is heading in the right direction with the right kind of mindset and with the right intentions. These criteria have been developed in conjunction with other transition initiatives and by observing what's worked, and what hasn't.

In essence, these criteria will tell you how ready your community is to embark on this journey to a lower energy future. 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.

We've introduced this formal approach to registering Transition Towns/villages for several key reasons:

- Our trustees and funders want to make sure that while we actively nurture embryonic projects, we only promote to "official" status those communities we feel are ready to move into the awareness raising stage. This status confers additional levels of support such as speakers, trainings, wiki and forums that we're currently rolling out.
- In order to establish coordinated programmes (such as combined funding bids to the National Lottery) we need a formally established category of Transition Initiatives that we're fully confident can support and deliver against such programmes.
- We've seen at least one community stall because they didn't have the right mindset or a suitable group of people, and didn't really understand what they were letting themselves in for.
- The distinct roles of "Local Transition Initiative", "Local Transition Hub" and "Temporary Initiating Hub" are very different and need to be discussed at the outset (see below).

This form contains:

- an initial checklist
- two sections for you to tell us about your initial core team, your community and your initiative
- a section for you to respond to the list of criteria for becoming an official transition initiative

2. Checklist

	Point
1	Have a careful read of the Transition Initiatives Primer. Up-to-date version is here: http://transitionnetwork.org/Primer/TransitionInitiativesPrimer.pdf
2	Review the criteria (see section 5 below). They're designed to gauge a group or community's readiness (in our opinions) to embark on this kind of initiative. If there are some things that you need to put in place before you get back to us, that's fine.
3	Respond to "Readiness criteria". When you're ready, fill in this form and email it back to us, cc'ing in the rest of your core group – that acts as an implicit approval by the rest of your core group regarding the content of your response. Once we've reviewed it, we'll let you know when you're "official".

3. About your community

	Point	Response			Additional comments
1	What's the population of your community?	14 000			
2	How would you describe your community?	City	Village	Other	Civil parish/ valley
		✓Town	Rural		

4. About your initiative and your team

	Point	Response			
1	Where did you find out about the Transition Initiative approach?	Ottery St Mary Transition Initiative			
2	What will you call your Transition Initiative? (full title please)	Sustainable Sidmouth			
3	Do you need a wiki site or are you developing your own?		Preferr ed name for wiki space:	eg http://transitionnetwork.org/exeter or http://transitionnetwork.org/transitioncityglasgow http://transitionnetwork.org/	
		✓	If you have your own website, tell us here- we'll link to it from the Transition Network site	http://www.visionforsidmouth.org/sustainablesidmouth	
4	What form will your initiative take? (tick just one)	✓	Local Transition Initiative		
			Local Coordinating Hub (<i>needs to be discussed beforehand at length with Transition Network team</i>)		
			Temporary Initiating Hub (<i>needs to be discussed beforehand with Transition Network team</i>)		
5	Who will be the primary contact for Transition Network?	name	Jeremy Woodward		
		email	jaydoubleyou@onetel.co.uk		
		phone			
		address			
6	How many people do you have right now potentially wanting to work with you on this initiative?	core team	8		
		community at large (eg on emailing list)	100+		
		name	Brief bio	No of years in community	A Additional comments







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Please write a brief snippet about some of the (between 4 and 8) core members of the team including how long each has lived in your community

<p>Jeremy Woodward</p>	<p>Attended Town Assembly Meeting of 6th May 2005, when Sidmouth's 'Vision for the Future' was first presented to a public meeting by the Chair or the SVA. Chosen as Secretary at the preliminary meeting of the Vision Group for Sidmouth of 8th June 2005, chaired by the Leader of the Town Council. Attended various events organised by Sustainable Ottery 2007 Appealed for 'follow-up' to Al Gore film event sponsored by Sidmouth Rotary Club Oct 2007. Helped launch sustainability agenda of the Vision Group Nov 2007</p>	<p>Resident of Sidmouth since Dec 2002.</p>	
<p>Robert Crick</p>	<p>Involved with Schumacher in 1970s as Director of the Isle of Dogs Human Development Project setting up an urban farm before Canary Wharf took over; worked with Forum for the Future as Middlesex University representative in 1990s; now growing lettuce and tomatoes in a small garden on the Sid Valley floodplain; personally car-free since May 2007. Chair of Vision Group for Sidmouth since 2007. Drafted Constitutional arrangement to graft Sustainable Sidmouth onto the existing Vision Group for Sidmouth.</p>	<p>2 years personal residence in Sidmouth since retirement; 9 years family residence in Sidmouth</p>	<p>Supporter of Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Amnesty International, CND, Unite Against Fascism. Previously Woodcraft Folk Leader. Currently Stop the War activist; supporting Dyson Wilson's Lizard Peninsula based "Euro-peasants of the 21st century" initiative for over ten years. Remembers post war rationing. More recent experience of living extensive periods free of electricity or petrol dependency.</p>
<p>Jo Curran</p>			
<p>Rob Mitchell</p>			
<p>Joe Canti</p>			

		Louise Woolley			
		Sharon Howe			
		Mark Gold			

5. Criteria – (develop over time in response to feedback from Transition Initiatives)

	Criteria	Response
1	An understanding of peak oil and climate change as primary drivers and the intention of writing them into your constitution or governing documents	 1) Vision Group helped organise 2 film evenings: a) 'An Inconvenient Truth' with the Rotary Club, October 2007; b) 'The Power of Community' with the Observatory. February 2008. 2) All Sustainable Sidmouth core team attended Sustainable Ottery launch, with Rob Hopkins as headline speaker, May 2008. 3) These principles are central to the Sustainable Sidmouth constitution.
2	A group of 4-5 people willing to step into leadership roles (not just the boundless enthusiasm of a single person)	 See list of Core Team
3	At least two people from the core team willing to attend a two day Transition Training course (information re locations and timing can be found at: http://transitiontowns.org/TransitionNetwork/TransitionTraining)	 Jo Curran, Rob Mitchell, Joe Canti, Louise Wooley
4	A potentially strong connection to the local/district council	 The Vision Group has formally requested Sidmouth Town Council to consider Transition Town status.
5	An understanding of peak oil, climate change and the 12 steps of Transition (see Primer) across the entire core team	 These issues are raised in the Transition Town Handbook: Graphically summarised on page 38.
6	A commitment to ask for help from the Transition Network and other Transitioning communities if/when needed	 Contact was established with Ottery St Mary in spring 2007.

7	A commitment to keep the wiki updated (collaborative workspace on the web that we'll make available to you or your own webspace)	✓ Sustainable Sidmouth is initiating its own webpage.
8	A commitment to write up something on the Transition Towns blog <i>periodically</i> (the world will be watching...)	✓ Sustainable Sidmouth will be reporting regularly.
9	A commitment to network with other TTs	✓ eg: Rob Mitchell will be attending the event 'Exeter beyond the Car' on 7 th July, organised by Transition Town Exeter.
10	A commitment, once you're into the Transition, for one of the group to give a presentation to at least two other communities (in the vicinity) that is considering embarking on this journey (a "here's what we did in our community" talk)	✓ Possibly Beer, Buddleigh Salterton
11	A commitment to work cooperatively with neighbouring Transition Initiatives	✓ Ottery St Mary, Exeter, Seaton, Crediton
12	Minimal conflicts of interests in the core team	✓ See Core Team biographies
13	A commitment to work with the Transition Network re grant applications for funding from national grant giving bodies. <i>Your own local trusts/sources are yours to deal with as you see fit.</i>	✓ Awards for All, Devon Renaissance
14	A commitment to strive for inclusivity across the entire initiative	✓ Contacts already established with: Chamber of Commerce, Hospitality Assn, Sid Vale Assn, Rotary Club, Schools and Sidmouth College, Youth Council, local Clubs and Societies...
15	A recognition that although your entire county or district may need to go through transition, the first place for you to start is in your local community. It may be that eventually the number of transitioning communities in your area warrant some central group to help provide local support, but this will emerge over time, rather than be imposed. (We've seen several instances of people rushing off to transition their entire county/region rather than their local community, and it doesn't work very well.) In exceptional situations where a "Local Coordinating Hub" or "Temporary Initiating Hub" needs to be set up (such as Bristol, Forest of Dean) that hub is responsible for making sure these criteria are applied to all the initiatives that start within their area. Further criteria apply to initiating/coordinating hubs – these can be discussed person to person.	✓ Our area of operation: The Sid Vale, although events will be held outside this immediate area.
16	We recommend that one person (preferably more) on the core team should have attended a permaculture design course... it really does seem to make a difference	Everyone willing to attend course: Joe Canti will be attending a course in Coed Hills near Cardiff on 9 th -10 th August. Funding would be appreciated.

Additional Comments

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