

# TRANSITIONSTROUD

## Directors Report for Year Ending 31st August 2014

### 1. Introduction and summary

This report describes the activities carried out by Transition Stroud (TS) over the 12 months to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014. The activities are reported under the following headings:

- **Public events**
- **Community resilience initiatives**
- **Partnership initiatives**
- **Programme of workshops**
- **Developing and servicing our member support base**
- **Mainstreaming and publicity**
- **Grants and donations**
- **Working Groups**
- **Governance**
- **Proposed future activities**
- **Directors report on finances**

### 2. Public events

We run public events to inform and educate people about sustainability in the face of rising energy costs, climate change and the economic situation. These events are free to enter, with donations invited to cover costs.

- **Eco Open Homes** The sixth Open Eco Homes weekend ran on 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> May attracting 700 visitors (last event 300) to 27 (12) homes to view environmental home improvements in situ. 4 ‘taster workshops’ were run in homes. This was sponsored by national organisation Green Open Homes. The Installers Fair in the Stroud Sub-Rooms had 100 visits with traders reporting many enquiries to follow-up. This was sponsored by national organisation Ready for Retrofit. A demonstration display of electric bikes on the forecourt by Stonehouse bike shop Tarmac and Trail was very successful and they have since opened an electric bike shop in Stroud. 60 volunteers helped run the event (440 volunteer hours). Considerable support was received from Stroud District Council with meeting support, contacts with retrofitted homeowners, and opening public housing; and Severn Wye Energy Agency who jointly organised the Installers Fair. (Separate report available).
- **Winterfest** The third Winterfest event took place in the Ale House, Stroud all day on Saturday 7th December. The purpose was to showcase sustainable local products and services. Our partners and other ‘transition’ minded organisations attended, displaying their services and products on 8 indoor and 3 outdoor stalls. Many people visited throughout the day and 7 people signed up for the TS newsletter.
- **Potato Day.** The 4th annual Stroud Potato Day took place on February 1st in partnership with Merrywalks shopping precinct, Stroud, and Chris Evans from

Dundry Nurseries, supporting food growing by focussing on seed potatoes and potato recipes. Main points:

- 18 sacks of 25 kg seed potatoes sold, ie approx. 4,500 seed potatoes, which will generate about 6 times that volume of cropped potatoes
- £410 raised for funds.

See <http://stroudcommunity.tv/stroud-potato-day-2-feb-2013/>

- **Spring Gardening Event** This took place in the garden of The Market Tavern, Stroud on April 20<sup>th</sup> in collaboration with our partner organisation Down to Earth. The purpose was to promote gardening, growing your own food, composting and bio diversity through gardening. Plants, seed and gardening items were sold.
  - There were 12 stalls from local groups linked to food / gardening
  - Demonstration of willow weaving
  - Many people passed through to and from Farmers Market so engaged new people in Transition ideas. 30 people signed up for our newsletter.

### 3. Community resilience initiatives

These activities are designed to engage the community and help develop sustainability resilience.

- **Textile Group** – meet twice a month. About 50 members on email and about 4 – 8 people turn up to each meeting. Teaching mending and making skills (e.g. knitting, sewing, felting, weaving). Several visits to mills and weavers were organised over the year.
- **Edible Stroud** The aim of Edible Stroud is to grow more food on un-utilised public spaces, with the agreement of the relevant local authority. This project has built a mailing list of 55 people, of whom 20 have been actively involved in preparing and planting on public sites such as parks, Stroud Maternity Hospital, a car park, Stroud Brewery and the revived canal on the edge of Stroud centre. A key element of the project has been interfacing with 10 public bodies, land owners and like-minded organisations, to seek their engagement with the ‘transition’ concept, and the growing of free food on public land. This has provided an opportunity to introduce Transition Stroud and our raison d’être to the above, and enabled a very productive team building activity for the 20 volunteers. Stroud News and Journal has publicised the project on two occasions.
- **Hub Stroud** Since hubStroud.org.uk was made public in September 2013, the site has been visited 2, 200 times, by a total of 1,200 individual people. Since the end of June, the website has been viewed at least 100 times a week. 600 events have been listed on the website’s calendar, with 64 different twitter accounts posting events for their organisation/venue in the Stroud District. The twitter account has 1,260 followers with regular re-tweeting of events. A hubStroud Facebook profile was launched just before the Stroud Fringe, and now has 268 friends. We also have a presence on Instagram (58 followers, 95 posts - usually of event posters: [http://instagram.com/hub\\_stroud](http://instagram.com/hub_stroud)). We appreciate the support of The Big Lottery grant for this project this year.

- **Renewable Energy kick off meeting follow-up.** The meeting TS organised and facilitated in March 2013 has led to the development of a Stroud community power cooperative known as Verdant Future Co-operative Limited. The Cooperative is in the process of securing its first community investment.
- **Wood Fuel Group** This group works in partnership with the National Trust and provides a green 'gym' to 30 residents, collecting fire wood to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emission from 24 houses and contributes to the NT biodiversity action plan target for Randwick woods. The group met 6 times this year.

#### 4. Partnership initiatives

Developing partnerships with like-minded organisations is our strategy to 'lever up' all the 'transition' minded organisations in the District and create economies of scale and effort.

- **Community renewables in schools**  
This Project has been led by Anna Bonallack of Creative Sustainability CIC, with grant support from The Big Lottery and built on last years' Youth Exploring Sustainability (YES!) project This years' Project has increased the understanding of the issues around energy, water use and waste, ways to reduce associated carbon emissions and costs for local schools, and the staff and students involved. Following a pilot study in Marling Secondary School and support work in St Roses (SEN) School and Minchinhampton Primary School, 70 plus other schools in the Stroud District have been provided with information on the benefits of undertaking an energy audit and invited to participate in consortium purchase of 100% green tariff energy from Good Energy Group plc. The pilot study carried out at Marling Secondary School benefitted the school community with a full audit of waste, energy and water use with recommendations for change in buildings, plant and behaviour. Senior management, teaching staff and non-teaching staff, about 60 adults, have all benefitted from plainly put information about the impact of behaviour change both on the school and, by default, in their own homes. 20 students have benefitted from a long and detailed process involving a student led behaviour audit, presentations by professionals in the field and a series of seminars leading to a more empowered student body and a greater student role in a sustainable future for the school. The school funded a Green Day in June for a cohort of 126 students to re-enforce and widen participation in improving the campus environment. The whole student population of 800 have benefitted from the dissemination of information about the project.
- **Citizens on Line.** We strengthened our partnership with COL for the hubStroud project. COL made a considerable contribution to the development of the project that is much appreciated. We have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for on going development.
- **Hawkwood College.** This years' Building Skills Action Group work has strengthened our partnership with Hawkwood College and we are developing a Memorandum of Understanding for continued use of the Hay Barn.
- **Stroud Valleys Project (SVP)** We are grateful to SVP for the provision of an office desk space and the storage of our display material.
- **Severn Wye Energy Agency** SWEA helped us with organising the Open Eco Homes event, and are keen to continue with similar work next year.
- **Down to Earth** We continued our partnership this year through the Spring Gardening and Edible Open Gardens events as well as supporting the Selsley

Allotment Gardens project and Stroud Potato Day stall.

- **Stroud District Council** We were delighted to receive on going funding support from SDC. We have made contact with the Health & Wellbeing department which is enthusiastic about hubStroud and interested in increasing awareness of it among SDC staff and SDC housing tenants, and people in the District more widely. We have been invited to speak about hubStroud at a meeting of the 40 people who attend their Health & Wellbeing partnership meetings.
- **National Trust** As stated above this partnership collects wood from NT land in the Randwick area. This year we completed 180 volunteer hours for the NT. A short film on this work was made this year and is available on SCTV.

## 5. Programme of workshops

Our workshops are designed to enable people to learn skills that will be needed in the future, and deliver practical benefits as part of the process.

- **SkillsGain Workshops** Nine SkillsGain Workshops ran to train people in community resilience skills. 92 people attended this year's workshops which included:
  - Surplus Vegetables – what to do with them!
  - Communicating and Campaigning
  - Seed Saving
  - Make Cakes out of Vegetables!
  - Developing Personal Resilience – Joanna Macey
  - Zero Carbon Britain - A Practical Reality
  - Zero Carbon Britain - How to reduce your carbon footprint
  - Make Your Own String
  - Willow supports for the garden
- **Repair Cafés (Fix-it-for-free)** Three Repair Cafés were run at The Lockkeepers Café (October) and Nailsworth Subscription Rooms (April and July). The Nailsworth workshop led to the setting up of an on-going group. 60 people benefitted from seeing TS's skilled volunteers repair their items.
- **Building Skills Action Group (BSAG)** Meets in a workshop in the Hay Barn at Hawkwood to increase the confidence and competence of individuals to undertake basic DIY skills in their home. The purchase of woodworking tools and a forge through the Big Lottery Grant has enabled those attending the group sessions to be fully active rather than having to wait to share tools. 6 group sessions were run involving 25 attendees. The majority were women and they valued learning about tools and DIY, increasing their capacity to do projects in their homes, their confidence in dealing with tradespeople and the social network and comradeship, see typical quotes from the feedback below:
  - "Very positive experience for me; I really enjoyed it and really treasure the skills I have learned."
  - "Meeting each other and feeling supported - single women especially seem isolated and feel vulnerable about hiring tradesmen or fixing things."
  - "A huge leap in confidence using my tools and managing and maintaining my house."

## 6. Developing and servicing our member support base

We have a growing support base and are constantly trying to evolve and develop ways we communicate with members and prospective members.

- **"Stroud in Transition" newsletter** Four newsletters were issued in the year to our mailing list.
- **Social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.)** We have grown our social media interactions over the year as follows:
  - **Mailing** list from 512 'subscribers' to 633
  - **'Discuss'** e-mail discussion group for active Transitioners from 79 to 88 people. Our Discuss list is: [groups.google.com/d/forum/tts-discuss](https://groups.google.com/d/forum/tts-discuss)
  - **Twitter** followers from 752 to 1010. Our Twitter page is: [twitter.com/ttstroud](https://twitter.com/ttstroud)
  - **Facebook** likes from 200 to 318. Our Facebook page is: [www.facebook.com/TransitionStroud](https://www.facebook.com/TransitionStroud)

## 7. Mainstreaming and publicity

We offer talks and films to interested groups and the public as part of our education efforts.

- **Films** 4 public film evenings were arranged, with the format of showing short 'transition' films at the start, followed by a feature film, followed by a discussion. These have proved to be very successful with average attendance of 50 people.
- **Outreach** We have given talks to Stroud Business Women's Network; this led to 31 sign ups to Transition Stroud and a free entry into the Cotswold Directory; and Stroud Older Persons Forum, which is linked to Gloucestershire Older Persons' Association, and sponsored by Stroud District Council.
- **Outreach to young people.** Screenings of a film introducing energy issues, climate change and Transition Stroud were made to two groups of young people. These were followed by discussion of the challenges featured in the film, and developing the ideas young people have for projects that could contribute locally. These sessions were undertaken with the 'League for Environmental Justice' at Marling Secondary School (10 attendees) and the 'Our World' project that brings together young people from schools around the Stroud District (12 attendees).
- **Press articles** TS has had better local press coverage this year in both local papers with articles on the Winterfest, Repair Cafés and Edible Gardens events.
- **Stroud Community TV** This continues to grow and we now have over 1,400 films on the website. Highlights are:
  - We have 2,000 views per month on our website
  - Our Facebook page has 170 likes, Twitter has 400 followers
  - We are looking at possible Awards 2014 being brought forward from January 2015 to November to tie in with Stroud Young Film Awards.

## 8. Grants and donations

Our core costs are only £1,200 per annum (less sub-contractors) and this is met by direct debit donations from individuals. However our marketing and event management work require some staff payments, and our projects have material costs, so whilst we try and support these donations from attendees, we also seek grants for these costs. The following grants and donations have been received during

the year:

	£
Ecotricity	280
Stroud District Council	1,536
A4A Big Lottery Grant (restricted fund)	8,150
Green Open Homes	3,247
Energy Saving Trust (Retrofit Grant)	565
Stroud Town Council	500
Stonehouse Town Council	500
Winterfest 2013	82
Permaculture Design Course	200
Down To Earth	50
Installers Fair 2014	240
Various donations to Edible Gardens	160
Standing order donations	1,755
Sundry donations	412
<b>Total</b>	<b>£17,677</b>

We would like to record our thanks to all those organisations and individuals who continue to support our work.

The total grant figure is similar to last year, with new grants from Green Open Homes and The Energy Saving Trust helping to compensate for the anticipated reduction in Stroud District Council's grant. Continued support from Stonehouse Town Council and Ecotricity is much appreciated. The Big Lottery grant, awarded last year, supported Edible Stroud, Community Renewables in Schools, BSAG and the hubStroud project. We are grateful to Stroud Town Council for agreeing to support a 'transition' action leaflet to go to all homes in central Stroud in October 2014. We have managed to increase our standing order donations by 40%, which helps provide resilience to our core costs.

## 9. Working Groups

The following Working Groups have been active this year:

- SkillsGain (including Fix it for Free Cafés)
- Textiles Group
- Web / communications Group
- Randwick Wood Fuel Group
- Stroud Community TV
- Film planning group
- Building Skills Action Group
- Open Homes and Open Gardens events planning Group
- Transition Book Group
- Heart and Soul Group

## 10. Governance

- **Council meetings** 9 Council (Directors) meetings were held in the year.
- **Members** The number of Guarantor Members is 16, a reduction of 1 due to one resignation at the September 2013 AGM.
- **Directors** The current Directors are:  
Martin Whiteside  
John Meadley  
Simon Allen  
James Beecher  
Helen Royall  
Crockett Cresswell (resigned 18 May 2014)  
Mark Keogan  
Seb Buckton
- **Company Secretary** Mark Keogan
- **Public liability insurance** We have made no claims against our public liability insurance this year.

## 11. Proposed future activities

The following activities are planned for the year ahead.

- **Potato Day** – February
- **Spring Garden Day** – March
- **Eco Open Homes** – an ongoing support group
- **Building Skills Action Group** - throughout the year
- **Edible Stroud** – two weekends in June and July 2015 plus open gardens available throughout year.
- **Hub Stroud** – on going development
- **SkillsGain Workshops** – How and Why to Build Your Own Wind turbine, Active Hope Day (Joanna Macey 6 hour workshop) and a Seed Saving Workshop, and throughout the year
- **Repair Cafés** – throughout the year
- **Website Development** – ongoing updates and development (also Facebook updates)
- **Economy event** – setting up REconomy Fair

## 12. Directors report on finances

See separate report for finances for the year and budget for the next year.

Signed for and on behalf of the Directors,

Mark Keogan  
Company Secretary  
12 October 2014