

Transition and Hertford Churches

Report of a presentation to the meeting of Hertford and District Churches Together on February 28th by Ray Bomber of Hertford Quaker Meeting and Transition Hertford's Steering Group

1. What is Transition?

A grass-roots response to 2 major challenges: climate change and peak oil. Global oil production is peaking about now, so we need to start learning how to live with less of it. Nearly all our goods and economic activities are dependant on it, and increasing scarcity means rising prices of nearly everything. Local communities need to start planning together how they will adapt to using less energy.

2. How did it start?

A permaculture lecturer, Rob Hopkins, with his students in Kinsale, Ireland developed a model for the town – steps to work towards an “energy descent plan”. (Permaculture is an approach to food production which works in harmony with nature and is sustainable).

3. What are its aims?

First to spread awareness of the issues, so that our species might survive by “living within our means” i.e. avoiding the continuing destruction of our life-support systems. So the idea is to encourage communities to re-discover and share the skills which will enable them to work towards greater self-sufficiency, and decreasing dependence on global corporations and finance systems.

4. What progress is being made?

Since the beginning, in 2003, the idea has spread world-wide, and there are hundreds of initiatives, including Transition Hertford. There are over 200 in the UK, four of which have already launched a local currency; this is designed to reduce the outflow of capital, and encourage communities to invest in their local businesses. There is Transition Network which guides and trains activists, and is involved in lobbying government.

More information can be found at <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/> and at <http://transitionculture.org/>

5. What's going on in Hertford?

Our 12-person steering group has demonstrated to the Transition Network the qualities necessary for us to become “Transition Hertford”, and we meet twice monthly to plan activities.

These include:

- an annual Eco Film Festival in collaboration with EHDC
- open monthly film nights including discussion
- seasonal community events
- supporting suitable national campaigns e.g. the Big Lunch
- co-operating with other bodies e.g. Town council, the Civic Society, other local green groups, Herts without Waste etc.
- running a website to exchange ideas and attract support (nearly 100 members). Here (www.transitionhertford.org.uk) you can see what is going on and read our constitution.

You can also find a page called “What is Transition?”

6. How can churches relate to Transition?

- Kyoto Local meetings show that local churches are already involved in the discussion
- Some Hertford churches are already taking part in the Cobra battery recycling scheme. All could do this.
- The Methodist Oasis Cafe has agreed to Transition Hertford having a Transition Corner on the first Tuesday of each month.
- Christians should be exercising good stewardship of the planet
- Churches are places which are already creating community. This role can include offering a secure forum where people can discuss values and review how far their lifestyle is contributing to the consumerism which is causing the pillaging of the planet. This self-questioning needs to go as far as reviewing whether we are inclined to deny the seriousness of the situation because we feel our values and lifestyle are under threat.
- Churches can help in the development of a positive vision of simpler, but more convivial and less competitive society. For ideas they can consult 'Churches in Transition' - www.christian-ecology.org.uk/cit.htm