



# Towards a resilient Wellington

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# Towards A Resilient Wellington

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In April 2010, something historic happened. Taunton Deane's Local Strategic Partnership enabled members of Taunton's Transition Town voluntary group to lead a series of workshops, across the Borough, to help residents consider the potential impacts of climate change and Peak Oil on their way of lives and their locality. Kick started in the summer of 2009, this initiative first involved 11 workshops for over 375 staff and elected Members of Taunton Deane Borough Council to look at their own responsibilities for tackling carbon emissions and creating a resilient Borough.

On Thursday 13th May 2010, it was the turn of residents from Wellington to meet together to discuss the implications of Peak Oil and climate change. This document is a result of that meeting, and contains their unique vision of what a low carbon, resilient life for Wellington might be like in 2025.



## Why this story matters

Changing minds, changing expectations and changing what we do in our day to day lives has never been more pressing. Climate change isn't something that will happen to future generations: it is happening right here, right now. Some parts of the world, both developing and developed, already suffer deeply and regularly with droughts, failed crops, dying livestock, floods, fires, destroyed homes and shattered lives.



“We’ll be all right,” people say here, “we’ll get a Mediterranean climate”. But if we do, what about the Med itself? What about the 60% of our food which we import from countries that may struggle to grow food – for themselves, never mind us? What about the way we have based our lives on cheap supplies of oil, a world commodity that will peak in production soon (and certainly within the next decade) and then start to decline - for ever?

The Transition Town approach isn't one of doom, gloom and huddling over a candle flame in a chilly garret! It is about fostering a response to the challenges we face at a community level. It is about getting people aware, interested and willing to take steps to make a difference. The ingenuity and creativity we used to invent so many ways to use oil are still with us as we start to reinvent our lives from a low-carbon perspective. This story is part of a growing set of stories emerging here, across our Borough, our country and the world. Bring those stories together, take those first steps, and unimaginable change suddenly becomes possible.

## The Wellington story

We begin with a story of one possible future, a 2025 in which the good folk of Wellington have made the transition to a lower carbon lifestyle, based on the ideas that emerged from the workshop. This is followed by a compilation of what people saw as the immediate priorities for themselves as individuals, for the communities of Wellington, and for the Borough Council.



## Energy in 2025

*As the ongoing international energy crisis made the national grid (gas and electricity) more unreliable, many communities set out to become more energy resilient. By 2025 the Borough as a whole is producing over 50% of its own energy needs.*

*What has happened on your own doorstep and elsewhere to make this possible?*

Energy generation and conservation at a local level had become the norm by 2025, and Wellington was no exception. People's homes had, over the years, transformed to become microcosms of "do it yourself" power: the now standard solar panels on all appropriate roofs working alongside the new generation ground source heat pumps. Low energy light bulbs were not only common – they were the only ones available! The "Community Pledge" to reduce year on year consumption meant that people's habits in the home had changed, and jumpers once again ruled as the most popular Christmas present – obtained, of course, from the local knitting co-op that used only local wool!

At a neighbourhood level anaerobic digestion (making good use of local



chicken waste!) served the energy needs

of one of the larger housing estates, another being sited at Gudenham Dairy, whilst other area generation schemes, such as wood fired boilers, also served community clusters. Industrial premises had also become centres of energy generation, making best use of their warehouse and factory roofing. The popular new co-housing projects were also designed to maximise efficiency, not least through having communal facilities.



Serving Wellington as a whole were the new water powered generators, using the water at the Basins and from Fox's factory. Most exciting, however, was the Wellington wind farm that proudly overlooked the town, providing residents with very cheap electricity, and funded initially from money left over from the old Monument Restoration Fund. And what of the old Monument? Time and tide took its toll, and once night time floodlighting was no longer seen as desirable, its presence became less of an important feature to the town. Indeed, so keen were Wellingtonians on getting rid of unnecessary lighting, that the big "Christmas Switch Off" drew people in – not to see the old fashioned Christmas lights, but, in the absence of light pollution, to gather together and watch the Christmas night time stars.



## **HOMES in 2025**

*In 2010, homes were identified as the largest single source of CO2 emissions in the Borough. Yet by 2025, emissions from homes (old and new) had dropped by a dramatic 70%, and household energy consumption overall dropped too. What happened in your area to make that possible? What did people do, and what habits did they alter?*

Wellington had to respond to the Government legislation of 2016, banning oil and gas fired central heating, which was, without question, challenging. The accompanying legislation and grant aid that made it mandatory for all new builds to have the requisite energy generation systems, and the new “Ultimate” insulation standards helped some. Overall, the wind, water and waste means of local electricity and heat generation meant the town was secure in energy – but only if it made significant other changes too.

First amongst these, thanks to some brilliant foresight back in 2010, was the burgeoning community owned sustainable woodlands for the ever popular wood fired heating systems, which helped many people on the old oil tanks switch to something just as snug – and much prettier to look at!



Next was the relaxation of local planning laws to permit the sensitive but energy efficient restoration of older, “hard to treat” properties. The desire to keep Wellington beautiful made sure that the town’s architectural character remained intact whilst enabling the latest insulation and generation technologies to be installed.



The nature of new builds changed too. Land that could be used for agricultural purposes was, due to the increased need to grow local food, now never considered for building. A surge in both interest - and the necessary skilled labour - in using local materials for building, Wellington’s new homes took on a local distinctiveness that made the town proud.

With huge local support, any new housing was created with “community” in mind. This meant much more communal space – both indoor and outdoor – where people could store food, cook and eat together, share and store tools and equipment, have workshop space for making and mending, wash clothes and hang them out to dry, and grow food together. From sheer energy efficiency, this was a great leap forward, but even more important to the town was the increased sense of real community. Driven by need initially, but then welcomed as another element of increased community, was a shift to multi-generational living for many families, and



a higher general level of occupancy than had been seen back in 2010.

Other things had also become normal that might have seemed something of a stretch fifteen years before. Tumble driers had long been banned, but other electrical appliances were also used less, or used more wisely. Homes were only ever heated to a maximum of 18 degrees, and only in the rooms actually being used. Street lighting only illuminated “priority areas”, and indeed became less necessary as people’s living and working habits shifted to be more in tune with natural daylight, rising early in the summer months to make the most of both work and leisure time. Causing much wry amusement locally was how the national winter warmth campaign “Stay Snug, Cuddle a Friend”, sat alongside the Government’s encouragement to keep the population at a sustainable level!

## ***WATER in 2025***

*Even the UK experiences regular summer droughts now and water is seen as a hugely valuable resource worldwide. By 2025, people in your area use water very differently, at home and at work, to prioritise and conserve supplies. What’s different?*

Along with the energy efficiency of new buildings, water efficiency was now the norm too. All new homes had two water systems: one for clean, drinking water; the other for use or re-use of so-called “grey” water. This meant the collection and use of rainwater in the home and garden, and recycling used water such as bath water for toilet flushing. Appliances used much less water too, and some (especially washing machines) got used much less – as did baths! Showers with timers were

standard, and a long hot soak was considered the ultimate treat.

Wellington, never a squeamish town, also made excellent use of the traditional composting toilet. Using barely any water, it also provided excellent fertiliser for the land. However, just coming on stream (pardon the pun) was the French system of harvesting urine from conventional toilets through a revolutionised sewer system which again was transformed into highly effective soil fertiliser.



Water capture and conservation extended beyond the home, however. Experiments in the town centre with the new permeable road surfaces were producing pleasing results, as were the different means of efficient water storage. It became the responsibility of every Wellington resident to sweep and store snow, care for the town’s irrigation systems, and keep an eye to the streams to make sure they didn’t get blocked.

Out in the garden much had changed too, as the Food section will show. Central to this, however, was the increase in water efficient forest gardens and other Permaculture designs, together with new irrigation systems and plenty of good, old fashioned mulching.



Wellington was also proud to become the first settlement in the Borough to ban bottled water!



## **FOOD in 2025**

*Rather than relying on high levels of food imports to the UK (as in 2010), Taunton Deane and its surrounding neighbours have become over 80% self sufficient in food.*

*What happened in your local area and further afield to make that possible?*

The UK's need to produce food within its borders revolutionised people's lives. Gone were the days of cheap food imports and oil-intensive agriculture. There was no messing around possible here: people needed to eat, and Wellington didn't waste any time.

At a local level, if you could grow food on it, you did. From allotments, to garden share schemes; from reclaimed land for community plots to the planned roll out of fruit and nut tree planting, Wellington went green. Growing your own veg (as well as, where possible, growing your own chickens and pigs too) had become as natural a thing to do as watching the telly had been for so many back in 2010. Indeed, special (and rarely granted) planning permission was needed to take any homeowner's land out of food

production to build, say, a drive to park their car!

Knowing how to do all this stuff was helped hugely by the new national curriculum which ensured that all children got hands on learning of the basic



skills of cultivation – and cooking and preserving. Intergenerational skill sharing was crucial here, both within schools and in the community generally. School holidays were no longer spent in front of the X-box, but working alongside adults at the family allotment, or volunteering at the local Community Farm. At more advanced educational levels, courses in Permaculture and other forms of sustainable agriculture were everywhere (spearheaded by the new Food Academies) – and filled with eager students, as employment on the land and in food production generally had risen ten-fold in the last fifteen years.

The way farmers could produce food had also changed. No longer solely dependent on supermarket outlets, farmers could now guarantee a local market for their produce through farmers markets and food co-ops, resulting in far stronger links between town and country. Moreover, recent legislation meant Councils now had a legal responsibility to carry out an audit of local food production so that gaps could be plugged, ensuring a balanced year round diet for local people.

Of course the local diet had changed. Gone were the imported year-round



tomatoes, avocados and exotic fruits. Eating seasonally was now not only acceptable, but a source of great pleasure as each new season's food came into the markets or the garden trug. With agricultural land globally being at a premium, land (and water and grain) intensive meat production was also gone, to be replaced by a sustainable local industry. However, meat had, once again, become a luxury, and one that was relished rather than taken for granted.

Recognising our historic economic relationship with other food producing countries (many of whom now suffered from extreme water stress), Britain hadn't just abandoned them, and there was huge political support for helping other countries return to their own sustainable food economy.

## **SHOPPING in 2025**

*By 2025, there is less (mainly plastic) "stuff" around to buy, and fuel costs make imported goods expensive. We also tend to keep things for longer. With more goods (including food) coming from within the UK, and indeed the local area itself, the face of shopping has changed in towns and villages. What is different where you live?*

Wellington, already known and loved for its unusually high proportion of local shops back in 2010, was definitely ahead of the game when the shopping revolution finally hit. Oil starved Britain could no longer rely on the national transport infrastructure in the same way, so local and regionally produced goods took the retail trade by storm. The Council had quickly recognised the value of this to the local economy and had introduced a "community benefit" weighting in favour

of small, locally owned retail businesses, including favouring premises owned by local landlords.

"Bog off to BOGOFs" said the placards outside the former supermarket site before its closure some five years previously, now replaced in the town centre with "Buy What You Need" signs in small food outlets, a response to the increasing dislike of the bulk packaging of fresh food. Of course, in line with current thinking, all small shops had to comply with energy efficiency standards, and plastic bags were a thing of the past – replaced with paper, cloth and corn. Goods had to comply with new durability standards too, and the phrase "planned obsolescence" had to be patiently explained to incredulous schoolchildren!

However, it was the massive increase in bartering that set Wellington's local economy up as strong and independent. The new Community Bartering Centre offered free space for anyone with a surplus of produce, or other goods to sell or exchange, whether on a regular basis or just when the onion crop got overwhelming.



Other businesses that flourished were those devoted to mending and repairing – one such premises notable for its "Horse and Cart Only" parking bay at the back! Others operated as outlets for people who



could make toys, clothes and other home goods from natural products such as wood, hemp and wool. The food co-ops and knitting co-op complemented the overall retail trade sustainability, whilst the new trend of “Shabby Chic” turned the town centre into a rainbow of unpredictable colours, fabrics and textures.

## **TRANSPORT in 2025**

*With cheap petrol a faint memory, the way people travel has had to change, and so have their reasons for travelling. Yet in 2025, people still work, shop, see friends and family - but with a vastly reduced carbon footprint. What did people in your area do to make this possible? What else helped?*



The day that Wellington’s train station was finally reopened was declared a public holiday for the town, and people still tell stories about their first ride on the new electric train into Taunton – just as

their grandparents could remember their first car ride on the then newly built M5 motorway. Wellington had as much emphasis on individual ownership of the now affordable electric cars as they did in encouraging use of car clubs. These made access to a car affordable to all, as they could be hired for as little as one hour at a time.

Bike clubs were popular too, although the massive improvements to cycle lanes on main routes, and other “cycle only” designated routes meant that cycle ownership had been on a continuous rise. Other public transport links had been strengthened too, in particular between Wellington and its outlying villages – but the electric buses had to take their turn on the main roads with the very popular horse and trap! And let’s not forget the cheapest form of transport of all – the foot. Footpaths and walkways could take one all around the town and out into the countryside without fear of being squashed by a speeding vehicle!

Interestingly, people’s need to travel had changed. The historic pattern of large, centralised education centres had gone by the wayside in favour of local, high quality secondary and college education centres. School buses were a thing of the past. These centres were networked via video conferencing technology, so specialist knowledge could be shared widely.

The same technology meant that people could work from home more too, so all in all, there were simply less vehicles on the road, making for a very peaceful, safe and unpolluted place to live.



## WORK in 2025

*Low carbon living has changed the jobs we do, how we do them, and even where we do them. Some jobs have disappeared, others have been invented. With more emphasis on “local” rather than “global”, the work people in your area do in 2025 has been transformed – in a good way! What has happened?*



The town planners had made sure that the aspiration of people to live close to their work meant that all sorts of small scale businesses now had sustainable premises in Wellington, Taunton, and elsewhere within a reasonable commuting distance. The emphasis on decentralisation also helped this. With education facilities becoming smaller and more locally oriented, so was the health care system. You could expect to find eye specialists, physiotherapists, osteopaths and other health professionals in your health centre.

Equally, local trades folk were on hand with every skill you might not possess yourself, such as gardeners, builders, menders, tailors, carpenters, cobblers, machine repairers and so on. The new programme for sustainable buildings in particular meant Wellington was rich in

traditionally skilled people as well as those up-to-date with the latest green technologies.

The bigger workplaces did still exist, such as Fox's, and Musgrove Park Hospital, all of which laid on workplace buses for their employees who didn't want to cycle – and who kindly provided on-site showers for those who did! Not all workplaces were static, either. The return of the mobile sales van, with everything from milk, fish, meat, veg and dried goods carried produce to the outlying housing estates and into the villages and back – and the clip clop of the rag-and-bone cart could be heard in the lanes again too.

More work on the land, relying less on the large machinery of the past, meant that many workers were in much better physical (and indeed mental) health – helped, of course, by the much improved diet of fresh, seasonal food that everyone enjoyed.

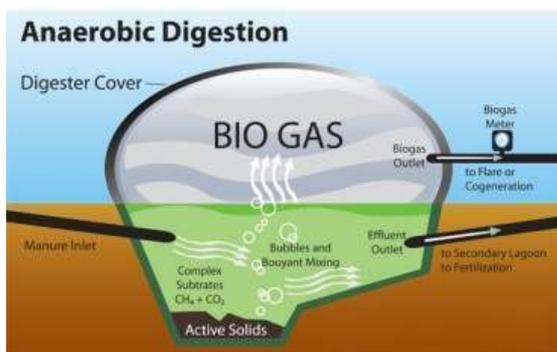
Some new initiatives were being waited on to see what might transpire. First was pending governmental “Citizen's Income” scheme, guaranteeing everyone a living wage whether they officially worked for money, or simply played their part in the community in whatever way they could. Second was the eagerly awaited Wellington Communal Wood-fired Bread Oven – a business venture based on similar contemporary models in Morocco (and indeed back in our own Victorian era) which offered a one-stop-bake-your-own shop, and promising a crustier finish to your bread than any conventional oven can achieve!



## EDUCATION AND TRAINING in 2025

*In the period 2010 – 2025, some undervalued skills became crucial. Many forgotten skills were revived. A whole range of new skills became essential to the local economy - and the community as a whole. In 2025, what skills (old and new) are now seen as really useful? How and where did people in your area learn them?*

Not surprisingly, given all of the above, the British education system had changed. An appreciation of the artistic, linguistic and philosophic skills were, as ever, important in our culture, but the emphasis had had to shift to helping children to “help themselves” from an early age. Having a close relationship to, and understanding of the land that sustains us became part of the core curriculum, which drew heavily on the wisdom and knowledge of the elders in Wellington. More holistic approaches to education were popular, such as Steiner schools, and gave children a rounded



approach to life and an appreciation of what is local and natural.

As they grew older, the new, highly practical skills based economy meant that students were eager for the new raft of apprenticeships in horticulture, carpentry, building, plumbing, woodland management, baking, butchery, tailoring, repairing and so on. These more

traditional skills sat alongside the burgeoning career opportunities in green technologies, from mad scientist-inventor, to mechanical engineer; from computer-based designer to renewable energy installer.

## LEISURE AND HOLIDAYS in 2025

*Time off is just as important in 2025 as it was in 2010. But a low carbon life has changed what people want, or are able to do with their leisure hours. Climate change here and in the wider world has also affected people's habits. In 2025, what do local people do with their spare time and their holidays?*

Don't imagine that everyone has turned into scientist-farmers! Wellington is as rich in cultural and artistic skills as ever and even more so now that home grown entertainment has become the norm. “Doing things with friends” was rated first in a regional poll of “Best Evening Out” – in which the “friends” element was far more important than what you actually did together.

With the old habits of unlimited international travel no longer viable, people turned to each other for stories of other places, other cultures and other world views. Most people did take advantage of the “Big Trip” in some form or other: the once-in-a-lifetime rite of passage or pilgrimage to another, usually significantly different part of the world. Not unlike the old student gap year idea, these significant journeys were still the source of tales for friends and family many years afterwards.

The carbon credit travel card meant that you could also save up to go to places a bit closer to home, and you could top your

own up by buying the allowance from those who didn't have such itchy feet.

However, it was the general trend to slowing down that changed people's reasons for leisure travel. No longer bent on getting to the sunny destination as quickly as possible, the journey itself became the thing, and getting "there" something that would happen – eventually!



## So what needs to happen now?

Whether or not this is an accurate picture of a possible future for 2025, this is what people imagined could happen. There is a Chinese proverb that says "The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The next best time is now." So, in the light of that urgency, here are some of the highlights of what people said were the immediate priorities: for themselves, for the community of Wellington and for the Borough Council. As all views listed here are individual, and will need greater community debate to prioritise them for action.

### *Me*

*It must be acknowledged that many of the people who came to this workshop had already embraced some of the changes that the future "vision" threw up as necessary. However, these are some of the commitments that people made at the end of the workshop.*

You said you would mend and maintain your bike, get it onto the road and cycle more. You want to use the car less for short journeys, make the effort to car share to work, and even convert it to run on LPG. You will drive to do a supermarket shop only once a month, and commit to supporting and promoting your local shops more, including the local food co-op. And you will walk more often too.

You intend to grow more of your own food too, perhaps experimenting with more productive ways of food growing, or installing a greenhouse to extend the growing season. You are willing to share your growing skills, and keen to do more



home cooking as well. You might even cut down on working hours to give you more time to do this.

Your homes will benefit from energy efficient appliances, increased insulation in lofts and passageways and new double glazing. You want to install solar energy generation on south facing roofs, and get better at collecting and using your grey water. Generally, you are willing to waste less heat and water – even if it means washing the kitchen floor less often!

Finally, you want to talk to other people about this stuff, to “agitate” or just chat with neighbours and friends – or even get more people enjoying the simple pleasures of making music and dancing together. And one of you, quite simply, commits to smiling more!



### ***My community***

*Again, there are people in this group who have been working at a community level on these issues already, sometimes for nearly a lifetime. However, these are the things that people wanted to make happen in Wellington.*

As far as food goes, you are committed to getting people growing! You want to set up a garden group of some kind to encourage vegetable growing on all available space. You want to reclaim derelict land for allotments, and have a garden share and seed swap schemes. You would like to make use of leaves for mulching, rather than letting a lorry sweep them all up. You want young and old working together, sharing skills in growing and cooking fresh food – in fact, you would like to do far more cooking for each other, and sharing meals together! In the longer term you would like to have a co-op run farm for the town.

And it’s not just about growing your own. You would like to involve the Chamber of Trade in helping source and provide local produce, and be active in getting people to support local shops and local produce. You want that produce to be easy to find and buy, based on the community spirit of traders working together to make this possible. You would also like to find a public space for regular bartering and “swap shops”.

You want to set up a community car share scheme and/or a car club. Of course, you want to get the Wellington Railway Station open again! You are also keen to find practical ways to share other things, such as appliances, garden and other tools and useful skills such as trades and crafts.

On the energy front, you want an energy group to look at this issue. You can envisage having a buying co-operative for local biomass energy. You want to see renewable energy generation on the Municipal Buildings. And there is a call for wind farms! Is this a way forward for the Wellington Monument site?



Finally, you want to connect with like minded people in Wellington to learn from each other and help make these things happen, perhaps through a Community Sustainability Celebration of some kind. Some of you are certainly up for more fun together such as dancing, and non-competitive games – an alternative to the TV!

### *The Council*

There were representatives from the Town Council at the workshop, but the comments requested were ones that were more in the domain of the Borough Council. However, Town Council – you have your role to play!! Here is the workshop participants’ list of requests.



- Provide a One Stop Shop of skills people to advise on sustainability issues and possible schemes to increase resilience
- Provide grants to buy renewable/sustainable energy improvements and projects
- Make these improvements financially accessible to all, not just those who are really needy (or really wealthy)
- Allow solar panels on listed buildings
- Support the creation of “community” when planning new housing, rather than creating urban sprawl which leaks the soul from a community
- Be stronger with new building developments’ energy efficiency measures

- New building regulations to force “solar gain” – with ground source heat pumps, solar PV and solar thermal, rainwater harvesting on all new developments
- Use planning law to favour community initiatives, not to block them
- Make the planning department more helpful towards people who want polytunnels in their own spaces
- Allow planning permission for people and small scale communities to build sustainable homes (e.g. straw bale) in the countryside in their bid to be self sufficient
- Invest in renewable and sustainable energy e.g. biomass production
- Have a wind farm here
- Release derelict or unused land for growing food
- Give us more allotments – and not just in out-of-the-way places
- Create more green spaces in the town, and vegetable growing which is central and visible
- More trees in the town centre
- Stop planting decorative trees – fruit and nut trees are decorative too!
- Give us our own grants to plant edible trees



- Pedestrianise the centre of Wellington – the road currently dominates the centre of town



- Build a cycle lane between Taunton and Wellington
- Have more 30mph limits between Taunton and Wellington
- Give us more cycle paths and places to secure our bikes
- Create cycle routes separate from roads and through the countryside
- Create footpaths to join communities and shops together so you don't have to "walk the long way round"
- Support car clubs
- Re-open the railway station – we need it, with or without the ring road
- Integrate bus and rail transport
- Subsidise public transport
- Provide sustainable transport
- Respect the green belts!
- Try to get street lighting turned off earlier – or off at night completely
- Encourage small, local schools
- Don't give us a new garden centre
- Acknowledge the contribution by unwaged people who are trying to live greener!
- Use less stamps and hand deliver local Council agendas and papers
- Email all local Council papers and don't photocopy unnecessarily!
- Encourage training for your plumbers in grey and rainwater harvesting measures
- Encourage more garden courses
- Encourage outdoor hiking and cycling for young people
- Encourage young people to learn sustainable skills



## And finally.....

There is no single right answer to the challenges that face us all. However, the consistency of stories, ideas and answers that have emerged from the individuals attending this workshop mirror very closely the stories, ideas and answers that have come out of workshops with Taunton Deane Borough Council staff and Members, and other community groups. The level of support for change here reflects that which is emerging elsewhere.

From a Transition Town (Parish, village, street, home!) point of view this is a very inspiring time. Paul Birch and Chrissie Godfrey, workshop leaders and members of the Taunton Transition Town group would like to thank the Wellington Transition Town group and Wellington Town Council for kindly publicising and hosting this event. As more communities go through this process, there will be more and more momentum for making our Borough resilient. What we do as individuals, together in our communities, and are enabled to do through the support of our local Council can, and will, be extraordinary. So thank you to all of you who took part. Congratulations on your brilliant thinking, and keep the momentum going!

If you would like more information on the Transition movement, go to <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/>

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Taunton Transition Town  
May 2010.

This workshop was organised by Taunton Transition Town group members Paul Birch and Chrissie Godfrey, and made available to the community with support from the Local Strategic Partnership. For more information on the work of the different volunteer Transition groups across the Borough, contact Chrissie at [chrissie@visionjuice.com](mailto:chrissie@visionjuice.com)

For more information on the international Transition movement as a whole, go to <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/>

