



Warwickshire Climate Change Community Newsletter

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/climatechangepartnership

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Practical Action

While climate change will affect all people, poor people are the most vulnerable because they depend the most on climate sensitive natural resources. They often live in fragile environments and they have fewer resources to buffer them against the shocks and stresses caused by climate change.

Practical Action, a rugby based charity enables poor women and men to drive their own development. In the last year alone, they have worked with over 660,000 people, tackling poverty through simple, sustainable and small scale technologies.

For the poorest communities, the effects of climate change are fast becoming a daily reality and a constant concern. Whether through droughts in Sudan, land erosion in Bangladesh or flooding in Nepal, it is the millions of poor women, men and children in developing countries who are hit first and hardest, despite being least responsible for rising carbon emissions.

In response to this, all of Practical Action's projects, which totalled some 130 last year, are now 'climate-proofed'. One such project is the 'Disappearing Lands' project in Bangladesh which was recently awarded the Gold Prize at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Environment and Development

Bangladesh, and the region of Gaibandha in particular, is prone to frequent and heavy floods. By introducing flood resistant housing, innovative, small-scale technologies and essential education and health services, local families are better able to meet their nutritional needs, generate more income and plan their futures, without fear of losing their lives and livelihoods during the next monsoon.

The flooding in Gaibandha over the summer of 2007 was of a scale not seen for decades. However, the emergency served to test the project's effectiveness and it proved its value. The families and livestock of the project's 'cluster villages' (and those further afield) were protected and, although some income-producing assets,

such as fish cages, were washed away, the majority remained in place.

During times of flood, when cultivating crops becomes impossible, 'floating gardens' provide a convenient way of producing food. A raft is constructed, using aquatic weeds such as water hyacinth, on which a wide variety of vegetables can be grown and seedlings can be raised, ready for early plantation after the floods recede. At the end of the growing season, the raft is used as compost for land-based farming.



Outside of the monsoon season, Practical Action has introduced a technology to enable families to farm on dry river beds.

Traditionally seen as unfertile, there is no competition to make use of this land. Growing crops on the river bed (or sandbar) therefore provides an opportunity for landless households to access common property resources.

The technique is simple yet effective: four vegetable seeds are planted into a pit deep in the sand, which is filled with compost (often made from the remains of the floating gardens). The results are dramatic: some 1,283 women and men have been involved in creating 200,000 sand bar pits. In one season alone, this has generated over 10,000 metric tonnes of pumpkins.

If you are interested in finding out more about Practical Action and the numerous projects they are working on go to

http://practicalaction.org/?id=about_us



As part of its ongoing Carbon Management Programme, the University of Warwick has recently acquired three fully electric MEGA vehicles. These vehicles are used for a variety of operations around the central campus, including sandwich delivery, plant maintenance operations and litter collection. The vehicles have a range of approximately 25 miles on a single charge from a 13 amp supply. Although they still look a little quirky, the University has generated immediate benefits from their introduction to the fleet.

Transition Towns

The term Transition town is becoming more and more familiar, but what is a Transition town? A member of Leamington transition town initiative explains more...

“Peak oil” (short for peak oil production) appears to have been reached. This is the point at which demand for oil begins to exceed the readily available supplies, leading to a permanent rise in oil prices. The oil will not suddenly run out, but extraction will become more difficult and expensive. In the end, the same amount of energy will be needed to exploit the more difficult sources of oil as the oil itself will yield, and extraction will stop. Later there will be similar “peaks” for gas and coal.

Climate change is the most serious problem facing the world at present. Happily the solution to climate change, namely burning less fossil fuels, coincides quite well with the solutions to “peak oil”. Transition towns are aiming for a transition to a low fossil fuel economy, not only by replacing existing energy sources by renewables, but by an energy descent,

It is essential to simplify and localise the economy, particularly with regard to food. The present system involves putting goods in plastic packaging (made from oil), moving them large distances in lorries, and finally displaying them in supermarkets. These buildings with their intense lighting requirements and open freezers have huge energy requirements. A daily farmers market for basic produce is far more sustainable, especially if the farming is organic so that fossil fuel based fertilisers are not needed.

Public transport will have to be greatly improved. Also a mass shift to cycling rather than driving will have to occur if we are to save enough energy. This will have immense health benefits and fewer traffic fumes.

Close co-operation at the grassroots is the key to introducing all these changes which will be necessary to make our society resilient and able to withstand the challenges of the future. In fact the social benefits could be considerable.

Totnes was the first transition town in England and now there are over thirty. Communities have become fed up with waiting for the government to act and are taking matters into their own hands. We have recently started this process in Leamington. The idea is to harness everybody’s particular talents rather than imposing solutions from above.

Funding



[Groundwork Community Spaces Programme](#)

A Lottery funded grant programme aimed at not-for-profit community groups based in England, including church based and faith groups, tenants and residents associations and registered charities. A number of grants are available: Small grants from £10,000 to 25,000; Medium grants from £25,001 to £49,999; Large grants from £50,000 to £100,000; Flagship grants from £100,001 to £450,000. Projects eligible for funding must be within two miles of a residential area and open to the public. The types of funding likely to be supported include: Community gardens and parks, nature reserves, ponds and projects that improve the local community's access to green space.

Calling All Community Groups

Community groups and community funding sections have now been added to the Partnership web pages. If you know of any other local groups involved in climate change projects or are aware of any other funding opportunities, please get in touch with the Climate Change team at Warwickshire County Council.

climatechange@warwickshire.gov.uk

Tip of the Month

Buy your fruit and vegetables from the market or shops that stock local produce. You will be supporting the local economy, and your purchases will be more environmentally friendly since they involve less transport and packaging, and therefore less waste and pollution.

