



Transition Haslemere

RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE CAN BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY

This is the first in a series of monthly columns by Transition Haslemere, a community group developing local responses to the long-term threats of climate change and the decline of cheap oil (known as 'peak oil').

Recently, the Haslemere Herald has carried a series of letters debating whether climate change is real and man-made. Many readers who have looked at the science will have concluded that the evidence is overwhelming. Others may harbour doubts, but believe that the risks are serious and therefore we should err on the side of caution. The question then is what can we do? The Government is taking a number of steps, but many argue that they are too little, and politicians are too distracted by other issues. Individually, we can install energy efficient light bulbs and insulate our lofts, but these can seem tiny efforts in the face of a huge problem.

The 'transition town' movement – a worldwide network of grassroots groups of which Transition Haslemere is part – looks at the problem from another angle. Within our community there is an enormous wealth of creativity, expertise and energy that we can tap into, and that if we work together we can find the best solutions for our particular town that make the most of our particular talents and resources.

Transition Haslemere has been going for just 18 months, but already we have a number of projects under way. On Saturday 27 March, we organised the first Haslemere Green Fair. Talking to many of the 550 visitors to the fair, it was clear that people are deeply concerned about the future their children or grandchildren will face. They wanted to know what actions they could take. We had stalls on home composting, bee and chicken keeping, home energy efficiency and more. And we were able to tell them about the community garden we have recently started on land donated by Lower Roundhurst Farm, about the research we have done with the Council for the Protection of Rural England on our local food network, about the dialogue that Transition Farnham, Transition Godalming and ourselves have begun with Waverley Borough Council on how we might work together on sustainability issues. Meanwhile, pupils from Woolmer Hill School, which already has an Eco-Schools Bronze Award, asked us if we could help them achieve a Silver Award – one of several projects we have with local schools.

Climate change and peak oil are major long-term challenges to Haslemere, Britain and the world. But we don't have to wait for governments to respond, nor do we have to feel isolated and ineffective. We can get together and create our own solutions. It's not just doom and gloom. The Green Fair was fun. The Town Band generously gave of their time to play for us in between the rain showers. Children ran around with painted faces eating locally made ice cream. And there was a real sense of a community taking responsibility for its future, and enjoying itself in the process.

To get find out more or to get involved go to www.transitionhaslemere.org, or email us at transitiontown@haslemere.org