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## **“Sustainability? What we need is education!”**

In this month's column by Transition Haslemere, a community group developing local responses to the long-term threats of climate change and the decline of cheap oil, Ann Finlayson, Commissioner for Education and Capability Building for the Government's Sustainable Development Commission and director of the charity Sustainability and Environmental Education (SEEd), says that when it comes to sustainability, we are all on a learning journey together.

I am still amazed after 35 years in environmental and education work how often I hear the cry “What we need is education!” The worldwide Transition Town movement, of which Haslemere is now officially a part, is no exception.

Whether we mean educating ourselves by trying to live in a low carbon way, or educating ourselves about the impact we are having on the planet and its resources and systems, or by educating others in our community, we are all on this learning journey together. As part of this journey, Transition Haslemere is offering evening talks and films on all matters sustainable on the last Wednesday of each month. (The next talk is by Joyce D'Silva on “Is our diet damaging the planet?”, 7.30pm, Wednesday 26 May at Haslemere Educational Museum.)

Unlike the way many of us may have been educated – by looking at the past – education for sustainability has to have a more forward looking focus. We have to imagine a more sustainable future, we have to learn from our experiments and we have to have the courage to try new things. If we do this in our schools, what an addition to our children's education that would be! We need experiential action learning, linked to our communities, linked to issues of the day and the future, and engaged in the science of sustainability. We need to learn how to design, deliver and communicate our action learning projects. As an ex-teacher I know how stimulating these approaches are for

children.

All over the country schools and communities are dipping their toes into this sort of education. Happily for schools this work is endorsed by the Government. The Government has a current target of making all schools 'Sustainable Schools' by 2020. It also has a very tough target of all schools reducing their CO2 emissions by 53% by 2020. This will need the help of the community if schools are to achieve this.

So what help is out there for schools? Transition Haslemere is exploring what schools feel they need locally to support them.

A very useful website is available as part of Teachernet, the Government website:

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools/index.cfm>, or you could visit [www.se-ed.org.uk](http://www.se-ed.org.uk), which is a gateway to all sorts of resources, events, training, and conferences.

Meanwhile, coming up is the annual National Sustainable Schools Conference, run by SEEd and sponsored by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, which will take place in London this year on 18 June. If you are not free then, you can join the online conference at your leisure through the month of June and early July. Find out more at [www.se-ed.org.uk](http://www.se-ed.org.uk).

The first Haslemere schoolteacher who emails me about attending the June event will get a *free place* – [ann.finlayson@se-ed.org.uk](mailto:ann.finlayson@se-ed.org.uk). See you there!

Press contact: Clive Davidson

Tel: 01428 641241 work/01428 656671 home

Email: [cdavidson@cix.co.uk](mailto:cdavidson@cix.co.uk)