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# History of the Transition Town movement

The idea of 'Transition Towns' was originated in Kinsale, Totnes, Stroud and Lewes and is spreading fast including one other city - Bristol. A Transition Town is a space where people have taken control over the changes that will need to happen - to make the transition to low carbon future.

## 10 First Steps for a Transition Town Initiative

by Rob Hopkins

[ The Transition Town concept, as championed by Rob Hopkins, has been celebrated in recent days at the Soil Association conference in Cardiff. Transition Town initiatives engage community in peak oil and climate change awareness, planning and action, building on the influential Kinsale Energy Descent Action Plan concept. The following headlines link to full articles on the process so as Rob and the people of Totnes, UK are developing it. These tips should be indispensable to anyone involved in local post-peak planning, and inspiration to anyone who isn't involved yet.

-AF ]

## 10 First Steps for a Transition Town Initiative #1. Awareness Raising.

There are a number of groups now wanting to initiate Transition Town projects, and their first question is usually 'where do we start?' In order to answer this question and to clarify our own minds on this whole subject, we have prepared this collection of the first 10 steps as we see them. At this point we cannot offer an A-Z map for how to do a

Transition Town project. But having travelled from A-C, we can at least give you some indicators as to what has been successful for us through the Totnes experience. While they don't necessarily run in the order they will here, today's is by necessity the first. (more)

Thu 11 Jan 2007

10 First Steps for a Transition Town Initiative #2. Lay the Foundations.

It is extremely unlikely that you will be starting a Transition Town project in a place where absolutely no environmental initiatives have ever happened before (although it is possible that such places exist: if you are in such a place it might be worth contemplating why). Within the community there will be people who are just finding out about environmental ideas, people who have been familiar with the intellectual side of it for years but haven't done much practical action, those who are gardeners, growers and builders, and people who are burnt out from doing all this stuff for years while no-one listened. (more)

Fri 12 Jan 2007

10 First Steps for a Transition Town Initiative #3. The Official Unleashing.

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Despite one overexcitable Transition Culture reader writing that 'Organising the great unleashing' has the added bonus of

sounding totally filthy,  
it is, perhaps disappointingly, nothing of the sort. We use the term  
Unleashing because that is the sense that this event should embody.  
Through the first 2 stages, ideally you now have a groundswell of  
people fired up about peak oil and climate change and eager to start doing something. The aim of this event is to  
generate a momentum which will propel your initiative forward for the next period of its work. (more)

Mon 15 Jan 2007

10 First Steps for a Transition Town Initiative #4. Form Groups.

You  
can't do this on your own. Part of the process of developing an Energy  
Descent Action Plan is that of tapping into the collective genius of  
the community. One of the most effective ways to do this is to set up a  
number of smaller groups to focus on specific aspects of the process.  
Each of these groups will develop their own ways of working and their  
own activities, but will all fall under the umbrella of the project as  
a whole. (more)

Tue 16 Jan 2007

10 First Steps for a Transition Town Initiative #5. Use Open Space.

Open Space Technology is an extraordinary tool. It has been described as a

simple way to run productive meetings, for five to 2000+ people, and a powerful way to lead any kind of organization, in everyday practice and ongoing change. In theory it ought not to work. A large group of people comes together to explore a particular topic or issue, with no agenda, no timetable, no obvious co-ordinator and no minute takers. (more)

Wed 17 Jan 2007

10 First Steps for a Transition Town Initiative #6. Develop Visible Practical Manifestations of the Project.

It is easy to come up with ideas, harder to get practical things happening on the ground. It is essential that you avoid any sense that your project is just a talking shop where people sit around and draw up wish lists. Your project needs, from an early stage, to begin to create practical manifestations in the town, high visibility signals that it means business. The power that doing this has in how it affects both people's perceptions of the project and also in people's willingness to engage is huge. (more)

Thu 18 Jan 2007

10 First Steps for a Transition Town Initiative #7. Facilitate The Great Reskilling.

In

my experience, peak oil is a better motivating issue than climate change, because it holds a mirror up to an individual community/individual/society and asks where is the resilience? Where is its ability to withstand shocks? Beyond the realisation that very little resilience actually remains, comes the realisation that very few people still have the skills a more resilient society needs. This is where your Transition Town initiative comes in. (moreý)

Mon 22 Jan 2007

#### 10 First Steps for a Transition Town Initiative #8. Build a Bridge to Local Government

Whatever the degree of groundswell your Transition Town initiative manages to generate, however many practical projects you manage to get going on the ground and however wonderful your Energy Descent Plan is, you will not progress too far unless you have cultivated a positive and productive relationship with your local authority. Whether it is planning issues, funding issues or whatever, you need them on board. You may well find, in many places now, that you are pushing against an open door. (moreý)

Tue 23 Jan 2007

#### 10 First Steps for a Transition Town Initiative #9. Honour the Elders.

For

those of us born in the 1960s when the cheap oil party was in full swing, it is very hard to relate the idea of life with less oil with our own personal experience. Every year of my life (the oil crises of the 70s excepted) has been underpinned by more and more energy. I have no idea of what a more localised society looked like in the UK, the closest I have is how towns were in rural Ireland when I moved there in 1996, the shops all owned by families, the most memorable ones slightly damp smelling with wooden floorboards that sold the most unusual combinations of things (paraffin lamps, boxes of biscuits and aprons) generally run by a couple in their late 60s. There is a great deal that we can learn from those who directly remember the transition to the age of cheap oil, especially the period between 1930 and 1960. (morey)

Wed 24 Jan 2007

10 First Steps for a Transition Town Initiative #10. Let it Go Where It Wants to Go and Reflectionsý

This

final one won't take long, as it is really pretty straightforward, requiring very little elucidation. In essence, although you may start out developing your Transition Town process with a clear idea of where it will go, it will inevitably go elsewhere. You need to be open to it going where the energy of those who get involved want to take it. If you try and hold onto the idea that it will be a certain way it will, after a while, begin to sap the energy that is building to do certain things. It is what is so exciting about the whole thing, seeing what emerges. (morey)

For more information see Rob's blog [www.transitionculture.org](http://www.transitionculture.org) and the Transition Towns website [www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)

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