

# GROWING OUR OWN

APRIL 2010

ISSUE 1

## WE HAVE LANDED!

Hello everyone and welcome to our inaugural newsletter - hopefully the first of many!

As the Kidderminster Shuttle article reprinted below shows, we got some good publicity following our first gathering and this also resulted in more interested people getting in touch with us.

We very much hope to see as many people as possible at our next get together at **Bewdley Baptist Church on Thursday 29th April (7.30 - 9.30)**. This will give us a chance to get to know one another a bit better, discuss our interests and consider how we would like to see this group develop. What would we really like to see happening around our town and how can we help this happen?

For those of you fortunate enough to have a functioning diary, our next proposed meeting will be on Thursday 20th May at Uncllys in the Wyre Forest - a treat indeed!

## TRANSITION BEWDLEY LAND GROUP

"Gardeners, farmers and landowners gathered at a meeting to raise awareness of sustainable land use in Bewdley. About 50 people, including Wyre Forest MP, Dr Richard Taylor and Bewdley Mayor, Derek Killingworth, attended the first public event, organised by Transition Bewdley's Land Group. The group aims to increase the amount of local food that is grown and eaten in the town and to return the community to a more sustainable food system.

Chris Leck, group member, said: 'This felt like a really positive first get-together. It was great to meet so many local people with enthusiasm for getting involved with growing and eating local food. It is crazy that so much of our food is flown in from around the world when we could, instead, be enjoying fresh, local and seasonal produce. We were particularly grateful to Dr Richard Taylor and Mr Killingworth for their support and very much hope that Wyre Forest District Council will be equally supportive in the future.'

Although Bewdley is set in a rural location, the town currently has no allotments where residents can grow food for their families. The Land Group is supporting the provision of allotments in the town and residents are petitioning the town council to encourage it to meet its responsibilities under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act (1908). Other initiatives currently being promoted by the group include the development of a community garden in the town. It is also promoting a land share scheme to connect people with space in their gardens to other residents who are willing to work the land and share the produce."

(Cadisha Brown - Kidderminster Shuttle reporter)



## SERENDIPITOUS LINKS

Isn't it funny how when you buy a new car, you notice that same make round every corner or you give your child an original name and Bob's your uncle, every second child is named the same. Well since I've become involved with Transition Bewdley the same thing has happened. Is it because I've joined a bandwagon that's on a roll or am I just aware of it more. Today capped it though when I read about Incredible Edible Todmorden in the Sainsbury's Magazine. Guerrilla Gardening goes mainstream! You can read all about the happenings in Todmorden by clicking this link <http://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/>.

Another magazine I was reading the other day informed me that National Beanpole week runs from 17th to 25 April. If you go to their website, [www.beanpoles.org.uk](http://www.beanpoles.org.uk) you will find out all about using sustainable beanpoles grown locally. We even someone in Bewdley listed in the Directory. It seems that not only is it better for the environment to use locally grown poles but also beans prefer them - slippery. shiny bamboo doesn't offer enough purchase for their tendrils.

My best serendipitous link, however, came whilst watching the River Cottage programme. As soon as I heard about the Channel 4 Landshare site, I logged on and signed up. It seemed pretty hopeless as there was little in our area and I promptly forgot about it until one day in November when something prompted me to check the site again. I couldn't believe it but there was a posting from someone with land on the Bewdley side of Stourport. Well 2 weeks ago a small group of us removed the first turfs of grass to begin our adventure in growing. If you want to grow and haven't the land to do it, give the site a go but remember to keep checking it. <http://landshare.channel4.com/>

Finally Transition is following me about even beyond these shores. On a visit to Dieppe, France over Easter we came across a whole week's worth of events under the title "Quoi de neuf dans votre assiette?". The events included a film - Food Inc., exhibitions throughout the town on a range themes - The role of algae in the ecosystem; Eat Local, eat in season; the benefits of aromatic plants; The effects of atmospheric pollution; recycling rubbish; and the preservation of the coastal area. In addition they had a display of renewable energy in the major shopping centre. I couldn't help thinking that this would be a great thing to copy.

If you come across any interesting sites let us know so we can share them with the group.

## ONE POT PLEDGE!

Garden Organic's campaign to inspire and recruit 30,000 new growers for Britain has launched! The One Pot Pledge, aimed at getting people to grow something edible and organic for the first time in 2010, is all about helping put people back in touch with food and the environment.

The campaign aims to inspire new people to give growing their own a go and will help gardening newcomers to grow an edible crop by using simple steps and clear advice to encourage and enthuse them.

Despite the surge of interest in 'grow your own' many people, although keen to have a go, still don't know where to start when it comes to food growing - put off because they think they don't have space to garden, the time or knowledge. By encouraging people to start small with just a pot, the One Pot Pledge campaign will combat this, promising to make growing easy and successful.

To make the pledge visit [www.onepotpledge.org](http://www.onepotpledge.org) And don't worry if you already grow your own, the campaign has something for experienced growers too - Garden Organic want you to sign up to the pledge as Gardening Gurus and offer your expertise to some-one in need of a helping hand.

Now go and get growing!



## WHAT YOU SAID.....

At our first public meeting we asked participants to fill in a brief questionnaire to indicate which aspects of 'Growing Our Own' were of interest to them. Strikingly, out of the 46 questionnaires returned 26 people were looking for access to more land for growing food, including two people wanting to find out more about smallholdings and one looking for an unused greenhouse.

On the other side, we had four people with gardens that they would consider sharing, together with two farmers interested in the potential of land share plots.

Because we do not at present have the structure to act as brokers, we would like to suggest that if you have land you would like to share or if you're looking for land for growing, you should register on the Channel 4 Land Share site at <http://landshare.channel4.com/> .

The site is a useful tool for matching people up, with features such as 'Code of Conduct' and sample legal agreements. Your registration will help boost the Land Share movement and may well deliver what you're looking for.

At the same time we are well aware that not everyone has access to the internet. If those of you who have the means would like to register for yourselves (and we'd be interested to know how you get on), we at the Land Group will try and help those who could use some support in accessing the website.

We shall also continue to ask for allotments to be provided by the Town Council. The Town Council is under a legal obligation to provide these. Please write to the Town Clerk at the Guildhall if you would like your name to be added to the waiting list.

## FURTHER NEWS

A woman from Wolverley has been in touch to let us know that they have a similar group that has also been petitioning their Parish Council for allotments. They are keen to offer their support and wanted to invite anyone interested to a talk that they have arranged on the subject of raised beds (**May 11th**).

## Covering Costs

Your donations for refreshments at the last meeting raised enough to cover the room hire for our first Land Group meeting (and very many thanks to all those who provided the delicious home-made cakes). John Iles of the Wyre Community Land Trust has now kindly offered the Trust's support in covering the costs of our meetings as part of its work around volunteering and community engagement.

# Energy, Food and Agriculture

## Peak Energy and Food Supply

As the UK has globalised its food system we've allowed agricultural production to decline. At the same time even those parts that are still productive have seen their earnings reduce due to the pressure of global commodity markets, reinforced by the power of the supermarkets, pushing down the price of food (which puts pressure on farmers to intensify further, with damaging effects on the environment). Over the last decade food prices have fallen, but now the cheap oil that has enabled supermarkets to make large profits from food retailing, using longer supply and distribution chains, is gone – and the end of the era of cheap food will soon follow.

Even for those goods that we do produce in the UK, the current system is unsustainable: we're using large amounts of energy in the production of food; we're losing significant quantities of topsoil due to intensive methods, which demands higher inputs to remedy the loss of fertility; and we're locked into centralised, 'just-in-time' systems of food production and supply that will become increasingly unreliable and expensive to operate as oil supplies deplete. This situation is unlikely to change as UK food policy is now dictated by global market orthodoxy, not environmental or social criteria.

## Food Miles

Food miles are a measure of how far the different components of our diet travel. Food miles are an excellent indicator of how globalised our food supply system has become, and by extension, how insecure our food supply has become (because our consumption is reliant on both global transport networks and amicable political relations between or within states). But food miles are not an indicator of the energy consumed or carbon emissions created by our diet (although some people believe this to be the case). Food production abroad often uses less energy, and so creates less carbon emissions (even factoring in the transport impacts – air-freighting one tonne of goods requires around 16 mega Joules (MJ) of energy, whereas by road it only requires 4MJ, by rail less than 1MJ and by water ½MJ). For example, a study for DEFRA estimated that growing one tonne of tomatoes in a heated greenhouse in the UK would consume 39,600MJ of energy, but growing them in polytunnels in Spain, and transporting them by road and sea, would use only 8,200MJ (and emit less than a quarter of the carbon dioxide).

## Food Security

"Food security" is the ability to feed ones-self – today, without large quantities of oil, gas and long-distance transport we cannot! So, in advance of the peak in global energy supply, we have to shift production to smaller, more localised systems of agriculture that integrate ecological systems to minimise inputs. As a nation, but also as individuals, we must also learn the value of a practice that our "modern" society has tried to eliminate – *subsistence*. To close the nutrient cycles, and reduce consumption, we have to become more involved with the production of our own food, and we have to re-learn the value of cooking food from raw, seasonal ingredients.

The most important thing to understand is that living with a lower amount of energy requires practical skill, but the last 50 years of consumerism has, through the option of convenience, 'de-skilled' the UK population. Many people no longer have a viable set of skills for cooking, assessing the quality of food and undertaking small-scale food production. Regaining these skills is a four-stage process:

**Networking** – to regain these skills you need to contact and work with local people or groups who can communicate these skills to you

**Re-skilling** – learning skills by carrying out the activities that teach you what you need to know

**Practice** – you have to carry out the activities that teach you each skill in your own life to perfect them

**Acclimatise** – you need to integrate these different activities into your life to slowly change your patterns of living and consumption.

(written by Paul Mobbs: <http://www.fraw.org.uk/ebo/>)

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please email [gill@hollandhome.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:gill@hollandhome.eclipse.co.uk) or phone Gill on 01299 400952