



## What is a Transition Town?

It all starts off when a small collection of motivated individuals within a community come together with a shared concern: how can our community respond to the challenges, and opportunities, of Peak Oil and Climate Change?

They begin by forming an initiating group and then adopt the Transition Model (see overleaf) with the intention of engaging a significant proportion of the people in their community to kick off a Transition Initiative.

A Transition Initiative is a community working together to look Peak Oil and Climate Change squarely in the eye and address this BIG question:

"For all those aspects of life that this community needs in order to sustain itself and thrive, how do we significantly increase resilience (to mitigate the effects of Peak Oil) and drastically reduce carbon emissions (to mitigate the effects of Climate Change)?"

After going through a comprehensive and creative process of:

- awareness raising around peak oil, climate change and the need to undertake a community lead process to rebuild resilience and reduce carbon
  - connecting with existing groups in the community
  - building bridges to local government
  - connecting with other transition initiatives
  - forming groups to look at all the key areas of life (food, energy, transport, health, heart & soul, economics & livelihoods, etc)
    - kicking off projects aimed at building people's understanding of resilience and carbon issues and community engagement
    - eventually launching a community defined, community implemented "Energy Descent Action Plan" over a 15 to 20 year timescale

This results in a coordinated range of projects across all these areas of life that strives to rebuild the resilience we've lost as a result of cheap oil and reduce the community's carbon emissions drastically.

The community also recognises two crucial points:

- that we used immense amounts of creativity, ingenuity and adaptability on the way up the energy upslope, and that there's no reason for us not to do the same on the downslope
  - if we collectively plan and act early enough there's every likelihood that we can create a way of living that's significantly more connected, more vibrant and more in touch with our environment than the oil-addicted treadmill that we find ourselves on today.

Remember

There are just three steps to consider:

- Climate change makes carbon reduction transition essential
- Peak oil makes it inevitable
- Transition initiatives make it feasible, viable and attractive

More information is available at:

<http://www.transitiontowns.org/>

The Sunshine Coast's webpage is:

<http://seac.net.au/main/>

The Bellingen website is:

<http://www.ecobello.org.au/>

For details of local people trained in the Transition Towns process, contact:

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## #1. Set up a steering group and design its demise

This stage puts a core team in place to drive the project forward during the initial phases. We recommend that you form your Steering Group with the aim of getting through stages 2 – 5, and agree that once a minimum of four sub-groups (see #5) are formed, the Steering Group disbands and reforms with a person from each of those groups.

## #2. Awareness raising

This stage will identify your key allies, build crucial networks and prepare the community in general for the launch of your Transition initiative.

For an effective Energy Descent Action plan to evolve, its participants have to understand the potential effects of both Peak Oil and Climate Change – the former demanding a drive to increase community resilience, the later a reduction in carbon footprint.

## #3. Lay the foundations

This stage is about networking with existing groups and activists, making clear to them that the Transition Town initiative is designed to incorporate their previous efforts and future inputs by looking at the future in a new way. Acknowledge and honour the work they do, and stress that they have a vital role to play.

## #4. Organise a Great Unleashing

This stage creates a memorable milestone to mark the project's "coming of age", moves it right into the community at large, builds a momentum to propel your initiative forward for the next period of its work and celebrates your community's desire to take action.

## #5. Form sub groups

Part of the process of developing an Energy Descent Action Plan is tapping into the collective genius of the community. Crucial for 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.

## #6. Use Open Space

We've found Open Space Technology to be a highly effective approach to running meetings for Transition Town initiatives. By the end of each meeting, everyone has said what they needed to, extensive notes had been taken and typed up, lots of networking has had taken place, and a huge number of ideas had been identified and visions set out.

## #7 Develop visible practical manifestations of the project

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, high visibility manifestations in your community. These will significantly enhance people's perceptions of the project and also their willingness to participate.

## #8. Facilitate the Great Reskilling

If we are to respond to peak oil and climate change by moving to a lower energy future and relocalising our communities, then we'll need many of the skills that our grandparents took for granted. One of the most useful things a Transition Town project can do is to reverse the "great deskilling" of the last 40 years by offering training in a range of some of these skills.

## #9 Build a bridge to Local Government

Whatever the degree of groundswell your Transition Town initiative manages to generate, however many practical projects you've initiated 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 providing connections, you need them on board. Contrary to your

expectations, you may well find that you are pushing against an open door.

## #10 Honour the elders

While you clearly want to avoid any sense that what you are advocating is 'going back' or 'returning' to some dim distant past, there is much to be learnt from how things were done, what the invisible connections between the different elements of society were and how daily life was supported. Finding out all of this can be deeply illuminating, and can lead to our feeling much more connected to the place we are developing our Transition Town projects.

## #11 Let it go where it wants to go...

Although you may start out developing your Transition Town process with a clear idea of where it will go, it will inevitably go elsewhere. If you try and hold onto a rigid vision, it will begin to sap your energy and appear to stall. Your role is not to come up with all the answers, but to act as a catalyst for the community to design their own transition.

## #12 Create an Energy Descent Plan

Each subgroup will have been focusing on practical actions to increase community resilience and reduce the carbon footprint.

Combined, these actions form the Energy Descent Action Plan. That's where the collective genius of the community has designed its own future to take account of the potential threats from Peak Oil and Climate Change.

"You may be wondering about timescales for Energy Descent Action Plans. There are no rules - each community will embark on a plan that's right for them in terms of timing. Kinsale took a window of 15 years, Lewes is looking at 20.

See <http://www.transitiontowns.org/> for full details.