

2015 Spring Gathering - What Went On

A quick review of our CRNS 'Stuff' workshop

There were 5 delegates in my workshop and after introductions I started by giving a brief overview of the history of CRNS and where we are now as a member network for reuse, repair, recycling community activities.

There was a discussion about how 10 years ago the focus was recycling but, for various reasons the focus has now shifted up the waste hierarchy to reuse and repair activities.

There were general questions and discussions on: architectural salvage & reuse, paint recycling, bike repair, WEEE items, wood reuse & recycling, textile recycling, office furniture, reuse in student accommodation, deposit & return legislation, biodiesel, and the circular economy.

Feelings About Carbon

Six of us met in this session. Our first reflection was that ours was the only all-female group, which felt sadly predictable, but maybe also something about how the session was framed (and also what else was on offer!).

We went round the circle, each person saying a bit about who we were and why we'd chosen this group. Then we moved on to an exercise from Carbon Conversations where we had useful conversations in pairs about our responses to some written statements under the heading 'why bother doing anything about climate change?' The statements ranged along a continuum of values, beginning with care for the planet and shifting towards more self-centred values as it went down the list. There was also the option of writing your own statements reflecting why you would bother. We ticked which of these statements were part of our personal rationale for being active on climate change and then discussed the differences and similarities with a partner. We noted that abstract statements might be hard to relate to personally, instead of more practical words which might be easier to relate to one's everyday life. This led to a discussion the pros and cons of different ways of engaging with people: for instance, in general discussion or in developing personal strategies.

As we moved on to consider whether, why and how we should we make time for feelings in relation to our work on climate change, we discussed how best to tap into other people's motivations when trying to get them engaged in taking action. There was a real concern that talking about our personal motivations (which tended to be more about anxiety about climate change and concern about the future of the planet) might put some people off. In response, there's a temptation to play to more tangible, everyday concerns - mostly financial. It was clear that from the Common Cause point of view that sharing from our own values was more likely to build trust and create more meaningful relationships -so that even though you might attract fewer people initially, those who joined in on that basis were more likely to be strong supporters and to have a long term commitment.

We identified that there are at least two areas where paying attention to our emotions are particularly important. The first was in relation to our responses to the threat of climate change itself, where we often bury difficult feelings in order to be able to get on with life. This can be necessary, but we acknowledged that it's also very helpful to find time to air these feelings in a safe environment sometimes, so that we don't become locked in 'doing' mode - and possibly at risk of burnout. The second was in the interpersonal issues that can come up when we're working with others on projects, and where unaddressed emotional issues can get in the way if they're allowed to fester.

This was an enjoyable way to spend an hour, although it's always easier to talk about feelings in a slightly more extended timescale. Perhaps there will be more time for this kind of thing in the September gathering at Comrie Croft.

MAJI

Kerry started by showing a short video made by JHI about scenario planning

She explained the background to the Scottish Govt Climate Justice Fund, and the WATERS project, led by VSO with technical support from JHI, which has been funded through the Climate Justice Fund from 2012 -2015.

The WATERS project has supporting District planners in four Districts of Malawi that are most prone to climate change problems to work with Village natural resource management committees to develop climate resilient action plans. International volunteers have been placed in each of the 4 districts. The WATERS project adopted an Ecosystems Services approach – helping people to think about the upstream and downstream connections of activities.

In theory, Malawi has a great planning system, where village level plans are developed and feed into District level plans. In practice resources to implement the plans are often lacking.

MAJI is the new Climate Justice project, delivered by VSO with support from JHI, which Scottish Communities CAN is joining as a partner. MAJI will work in three districts of Malawi – Salima and Karonga, which were part of the WATERS project, and in a new District, Dowa. JHI will advise District planners and VSO volunteers on the use of a Scenario planning approach to consider the future impact of climate change when drawing up plans. As before, the VSO volunteers will be placed within the District planning departments, supporting them to work with Village NRM committees. CISON ECC, the Malawian national civil society network of climate change organisations will have a volunteer who will help to build the capacity of this network, especially around communications. The Agriculture School of the Lilongwe University, LUANAR, will also be involved.

Some of the ideas discussed included twinning (or triplet-ing) villages or towns, connecting with resources available from Transition International (and/or using that to find out more about other places, such as Kakamega Transition Town in Uganda, who may share technical insights or practical challenges similar to Malawi).

The attendees were keen to learn more about Malawi's planning and policy system which sounds like it might have lessons to offer for Scotland, and to learn about values they have that perhaps we don't or we have lost.

The attendees felt they Scotland in general could offer 'don't do this' examples! But more positively, they also thought the general experiences and activities of communities in the network might offer useful encouragement or ideas to those in Malawi – as a minimum offering a kind of 'solidarity' for trying to do things differently.

Means of contact could be writing letters, the face-to-face visit next year, providing resources via email or skype (although rural web access is rare, slow and unreliable in Malawi so cannot be relied upon as an easy means of sharing information as we would here).

Discussion about role of Scottish Communities CAN in the MAJI project

There will be an international conference in Malawi in March 2016, which will be attended by representatives from Scottish Communities CAN, James Hutton, the Malawian partners plus VSO Zambia, VSO Rwanda and VSO Tanzania. The purpose of the conference will be to share experience of best practice.

As well as attending the conference, Scottish Communities CAN members will be encouraged to communicate with CISONNECC and other partners in the MAJI project, probably via the VSO volunteers, before and after the conference.

The Scottish Govt want to present information from the Climate Justice funded projects at the Paris COP conference in December

We discussed what Scottish Communities CAN members might want to share with Malawian organisations – how NOT to do things, the story of the disconnect and lack of control over natural resources. On a more positive note, there will be common issues of organising a climate change civil society network with few resources. Land reform policy and practice in Scotland may be of interest. Scottish Communities CAN members were wary about being seen as being more knowledgeable or experienced than Malawians and stressed that they wanted to learn from them, or to have two-way learning.

We discussed practical difficulties of connectivity, lack of access to email and internet. It was suggested that Scottish Communities CAN members could write letters rather than rely on new technology.

Kerry explained that she was leading a partner workshop in Malawi later in March and would feed in points from the discussion.

How can we set up regional networks to provide mutual support for community led climate action? Lessons from Fife

Why do this ?

Intro: My name is Alistair and I work for Transition University St Andrews. Our group works across the University and local community on a range of climate action projects funded through the CCF and University.

I was asked to run a workshop to explore the pro's and con's of setting up regional climate action networks through our initial experiences in Fife.

Whilst Transition UStA we are stuck out in the north sea in the bubble as students like to put it, we are very aware of the need for partnership and linking to other groups. With Fife being a bit of a hotbed of activity with groups like Fife Diet, Greener Kirkcaldy and we really on the experience and knowledge of many local groups to assist us and vice versa. These are informal partnerships and knowledge sharing that goes on. To facilitate this there has been an informal gathering of fife green groups for a number of years at irregular intervals. Whilst

we all found these useful it required considerable effort to organise and arrange this outside of normal work obligations.

Recently though a number of people from these groups have used the power of the internet (well a google group) to increase contact and information sharing. Initially this enabled us to arrange meetings more effectively and discuss fife wide issues such as fracking, fuel poverty and engagement on community planning. This led on to a meeting held at the stewardship centre in Falkland that discussed the idea for setting up a formal structure for our network of fife green groups This came hot on the heels of discussions with the Transition groups around the need or not of a regional hub. So groups, networks, regional hubs and consortiums what a lot of descriptions for the same things.

So we are looking to set up a Fife Community Carbon Action Network (Fife CCAN)

This would be a network of voluntary groups working on diverse projects, all of which share a carbon cutting theme. But why do this?

We already have an excellent and new organisation in Scottish Communities CAN so why create a regional hub?

Lesley Riddoch in her book blossom (which I bought here last year) spends quite a bit of time talking about scale of democratic structures. To big and you lose localism and contact, too small and you loss the power. Lesley argues that our council structure is too large and . The jimmy Reid foundation concluded that Scotland is one of the least democratic countries in the EU with one in 2000 people standing for election.

A local network does not replace the benefits of a national voice such as Scottish Communities CAN but rather looks to work with the scale of fife council, even if, as Lesley argues, it is far too large to be democratic and respond effectively to residents and community needs,

So far we have met a few times over the past years and have always found our meetings supportive and valuable, but have struggled to find the capacity to have them regularly.

We are looking at a Consortium Co-op model, to facilitate our network. The members of a consortium coop can be businesses, partnerships or individuals By working together there is opportunities to reduce costs, share risks and develop new joined projects. Consortium co-operatives run on a shared and equal way by, and for the benefit of, their members. Member groups can retain their own brands, independence and control, while reducing costs or sharing the risks of doing something new or big together. The co-operative could be for any purpose that supports its members

We think that consortium like this would have measurable impact on the quality and effectiveness of our work. We also believe that it would enable significantly more collaborative working across the area, increasing effectiveness, profile and engagement for groups involved. We are working towards a funding application to test the viability and usefulness of this idea.

We identified a number of needs for a local network

Our shared organisation would exist to:

1. Organise and publicise network meetings (2 themed meetings over 12 months) whose focus would be to explore and facilitate sharing of information, resources and project work e.g 1 meeting on how to better share existing resources between groups and 1 meeting on possibilities for collaboration on energy generation projects.
2. Share news and resources (12 e-news bulletins over 12 months)
3. Promote and possibly respond to consultations (features on consultations in bulletins and at least 1 network response in 12 months)
4. Give us a shared 'voice'- particularly with the local authority on community planning issues (at least 50% of meetings have an invited council rep; group is invited to at least 2 council meetings)
5. Help us spread the word about what we do (at least 2 press releases over 12 months)
6. Pilot a way of working which other regional groups could use (put a thorough monitoring and evaluation structure in place; produce and distribute a report at the end of the project).

Think about group projects such as developing local renewables, tackling waste or car clubs

Should this model prove itself, we will develop a funding strategy to enable it to continue.

We would measure the effectiveness of this by charting the development of:

1. Attendance of existing and new groups at network meetings; members views on impacts of attendance.
2. Growth of our e-news mailing list and number of opens/responses/submissions; readers views on impact of e-news.
3. Numbers of members responding to consultations etc.
4. Network's visibility within the local authority; members and key local authority staff views on impact of this.
5. Public awareness of our groups and our network.
6. Take up of shared working possibilities; members and possibly funders views on impact of this.
7. Reports on our work to local or national bodies such as Scottish Communities CAN; responses from bodies shared with; news coverage; take up by other groups

Workshop bit

Lets Build a case (or not) for a Local Community Climate Action Network

So would a similar local network be of use in other areas and Does one already exist in your area? 2 no's and one yes. Informal group in Lothian that does not meet but does share resources and info

Hands up if you have a network that already exists like this? Measure Yes / No

5 mins - Those with could talk to those without – main benefits and issues

Together ask why develop ? – Main reasons for developing a local network? Brainstorm

Resources, shared bids for funding, knowledge and training

Who – mapping the groups that have a climate change agenda or deal with climate change on some basis. Post its onto a spectrum chart that runs from

100% focused on climate change to 0%

Then add another access of ACTION ON CLIMATE change

See flipchart. Church groups had variable activity as we housing associations / committees

Do the issues identified meet the needs of your potential network

How do we influence these existing groups ? By appealing to their interests and being easily reached / flexible

What – structure or legal framework

Reaching beyond the usual suspects: how to engage with hard to reach and minority groups - E.G.

- young people
- BME communities
- those experiencing social exclusion or isolation

A facilitated discussion took place around local engagement with community projects, particularly focused on engagement with hard to reach and minority groups. Participants shared their experiences of things that had worked well for them, and also things that had been less successful.

Some key learnings came from the conversation, which should hopefully provide some advice for community projects looking to improve on their engagement, and attract more participants from more diverse backgrounds.

- PATIENCE – it takes trial and error to find out what works and what doesn't, and what kind of activities attract different groups of people. Be aware that people's priorities and motivations will vary.
- Make links with other groups, especially those without an environmental focus, e.g. housing associations, social clubs etc – will help you to reach out beyond the 'usual suspects'. One energy efficiency project brought their volunteers to visit a community growing project, to highlight the wider aspects of reducing carbon. Arrangements like this can help both parties to widen their reach.
- Highlight the multiple benefits of your work – it may not just be about reducing carbon emissions, or even reducing fuel bills; it's also about improved health, and a better quality of life. Food growing projects in particular have many mental health, physical health and social benefits.
- Think about the 'face' of your organisation – your staff/volunteers are at the forefront of your work, so should be welcoming, approachable and good with people. It's likely a lot of your community will find out about you through their peers and word of mouth, rather than your direct marketing.
- Tailor your approach to different groups. For example by providing marketing material and information in other languages, and using symbols on signage wherever possible.
- Hold social events that involve food. Encourage people to bring/share food from their own culture.

- Women only workshops/events/gardening sessions may be necessary for Muslim communities.
- 'No pressure' sessions work well: drop-in, no pre-registration, stay for as long as you like, lunch provided.
- Offer childcare or run activities for children alongside sessions for adults.
- The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens have produced a guide to engaging with ethnic minorities. Pdf downloadable here <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/publications/143-chillies-a-roses>

Transition Animal - is your organisation resilient?

a small roundtable discussion with participants. Alan gave a quick intro to all the resources and toolkits available on the Transition Network website which are open for anyone to use. You don't have to be a registered Transition community to use these. Resources range from 'ingredients' which help you develop the kind of community initiative you need, through formal training, support forums, blogs, newsletters and the new support toolkit. Within this toolkit is the Transition Animal, which is a great fun way to engage with members of your organisation and to discuss key matters such as, vision, funding, measuring success, celebrations, looking after the heart of your group, and making firm foundations of networking, projects, community engagement, etc.

We rounded up the session by looking at the Transition Ingredients cards which can be downloaded and printed. The cards come with instructions on how to use them in an interactive way to stimulate discussions on what your group is doing well as actions it might take to strengthen it's viability and long term objectives.

Transition Network - <https://www.transitionnetwork.org>

Ingredients - <https://www.transitionnetwork.org/ingredients>

Training - <https://www.transitionnetwork.org/training>

Core Elements Support Structure - <https://www.transitionnetwork.org/support>

Healthcheck - <https://www.transitionnetwork.org/support/healthcheck>

Blog on Healthcheck and Transition Animal - <https://www.transitionnetwork.org/blogs/rob-hopkins/2015-03/sally-ludwig-transition-guelph-transition-animal>

Ingredients Card Game - <https://www.transitionnetwork.org/resources/ingredients-and-tools-cards>

What would communities like from TESS?

On the 10th March Joshua and Liz, from the James Hutton Institute, one of the Scottish consortium partners in TESS, attended the Spring Gathering of the Scottish Communities Climate Action Network (ScotCCAN <http://www.scottishcommunitiescan.org.uk>), a network of community groups taking action on climate change. Their current chair, Philip Revell is also a researcher on TESS from Climate Futures, which gives us opportunities to link ScotCCAN with TESS. The theme of the 2015 gathering was 'Planning with Hope – Transformational Change from the Bottom Up'. Joshua and Liz were asked to organise a session on findings coming out of the TESS project and we decided to focus on the 'ecosystem of CBIs' which Joshua has written about in this previous blog <http://www.sustainable-communities.eu/ecosystem-not-monoculture/>. However, we didn't get quite that far as the discussion took a different turn. Here's what happened...

We had four people at our session, plus the two of us from TESS. We started off by introducing the TESS project and one participant said it sounded very similar to Green Surge, <http://greensurge.eu/>. However, whereas TESS focuses on community-led action towards sustainability, Green Surge is looking at green spaces.

We then got into a discussion about how we define communities in TESS – as communities of place or interest? Again, this meant a diversion away from our planned topic for the discussion, to how community is not one thing but can mean different things to different people. One participant asked what we were giving back to communities who had been part of our research and we asked them, as members of community groups, what they would find useful. This elicited further interesting and wide-ranging discussion about whether training was useful, or whether it was better to give groups an idea of what training was already available. Our conversation partners also thought that it would be useful to give an indication of what is successful in one place, and what other groups could learn from this success. They were strongly in favour of naming and valuing groups that were doing something well that could be held up as examples of ‘success stories’, and motivation for groups that might be struggling or feeling that they are not achieving. We would be very interested to hear what readers of this blog think of this. Would you like to be named and have your successes appear here? Could you share a story of something that went well, and how you did it?

We then got into a discussion about different patterns of volunteering between different places, and Joshua was able to describe the main key differences between the areas that we have covered in the TESS project. We had a discussion about the similarities and differences between leadership and facilitating, and how projects can benefit from strong support from a partner organisation (the example given was the Royal Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh, who have supported a lot of growing projects in this area). This got us thinking. Do you have examples of how you have been helped by a supportive partner? Perhaps through receiving funding, or developing confidence and/or leadership skills, or attracting and keeping volunteers?

Although we didn't get to talk much about the ‘ecosystem of community-based initiatives’ as planned, we did have a very illuminating chat about the sorts of findings that groups would like to hear about – what works in some places, and personal success stories. Do you agree? What is your group good at that you could pass on to others via this space? We'd love to hear from you ...

Be the Change? with Osbert Lancaster

Whether or not Gandhi actually said: “You must be the change you want to see in the world” this idea has been influential in the peace, justice and environmental movements. This roundtable discussion was started by Osbert introducing a model he and colleagues use in their work, which shows how what we feel, think, say and do influences the world around us, and in turn how the world in which we live influences us.

Everyone was invited to reflect on their own experience of this, and to share that with others at the table. Comments and reflections were noted and have been grouped into themes below (participants' words in italics):

Our attitudes and behaviour influence the world around us, but not always as we might expect, *because greens can be unthinking fundamentalists: “Extreme” role models*

can be unhelpful: they can present an off-putting image; they can make it seem unachievable. However, "Cool" green can be an attractive role model. Therefore: It's important to make being green normal, so it's not considered a freak.

But we should remember: It's not just about what we do day to day, it's about bigger changes to systems. For example: *I could help reduce CO2 emissions of low income groups by changing public transport rather than influencing their behaviour directly. Using smart, elegant and practical design, we can help shape the 'material' world so it's easy to do the right thing.*

If we are consciously setting out to influence others through our behaviour **we need to be**



especially aware of what we are doing and how effective it might be. *People have to start from where they are. People's identity is important to them. Your actions (e.g. turning off lights in a meeting room) might be seen as an implicit criticism of them. Values we condemn in others may be important to them (e.g. driving a big car). This raises the question: Do we have the 'right' to influence others? And if we do: "How can we influence people while respecting them?"*

We must be aware *there can often be dissonance between people's behaviour and experiences at home and at work and that some issues, e.g. family, can take priority of others, e.g. low carbon.*

We can draw on research to help us: *How to engage values? For example, a "smiley" on an honesty box increases contributions. There is lots of evidence of how the messages we use influence values. Is there any research on the power of example?*

We need to think about what being the change means for us as people, as well as the influence we hope to have on others: *We should try to be the change, we can't always be the change because we aren't saints all the time. We are not perfect. It's a journey where you do what you can given your circumstances.*

Understanding ourselves is important: *It's important to be aware of what one is doing. One needs to know what ones values are.*

And finishing on a crucial question: *How can we help each other to do better?*