

Transition Network Conference 2010 - Ann Bushell and Chris Samra from Transition Bro Gwaun attended and this is their report:

This was a very interactive conference, planned to create as many opportunities as possible for us to connect with each other, shape the event, raise questions and to learn from each other's experiences. And given that there were over 350 delegates, coming from all over the UK, Europe, and the world, what we learned about the development of the Transition movement was fascinating and varied.

We largely set our own agendas, choosing from a huge and somewhat bewildering selection of open space sessions, presentations and workshops. On offer were sessions ranging from 'Social Entrepreneurship' to 'Mindfulness and Personal resilience' and 'Inspiring a Young People's Transition' - lead by a group of 13 and 14 year old from mid-Wales. There were also guided walks and trips, filmshows, dance and relaxation sessions, a Transition's got talent evening, and the opportunity to see England play in the world cup on a big screen! So there was never a dull moment.

Early in the conference an exercise involving everyone, 'Exploring the Future context of Transition', gave us all the opportunity to contribute our visions of social, financial and ecological systems in 2011, 2015 and 2021. This was depicted in evocative images (see them on the website given at the end of this report). Results showed mixtures of systems breakdown, resultant grief and chaos and new opportunities, hope and stronger communities.

It was also noted that a mixture of polarized opinions in Transition Groups is common, and the importance of recognizing that both 'urgent action' and 'reflective' people have valid contributions to make. See the U- tube clip on 'Day 2 of Transition Network Conference' with Andy Goldring, Permaculture Assn. and Ann as a group participant.

The sessions Chris attended focused on these key issues:

- The need for the Transition handbook to be revised to reflect the way in which the movement has developed. Out go the 12 Steps to Transition, seen as too linear and inflexible, and in comes a new model based on 'Pattern language' which identifies a series of stages to respond to the more complex, multi-faceted movement which has evolved. Rob Hopkins, the author of the new handbook, wants feedback – google 'Re-thinking Transition as a Pattern Language' to get information and a copy of the conference handbook which gives an outline of his work so far.
- The importance of engaging a wider cross section of the populace in the Transition movement – looking particularly at diversity and our engagement and communication skills. Transition has a new Diversity Co-ordinator to support us in this work - she can be contacted at catrinapickering@transitionnetwork.org
- A greater sense of urgency to what we are trying to achieve. Nicole Foss (who writes under the name Stoneliagh at <http://theautomaticearth.blogspot.com>) explained how the convergence of peak oil and the collapse of global finance

create a 'perfect storm' that threatens to sink our age of prosperity. She warned that most people are woefully unprepared to face the consequences of the devastating deflation that is now unfolding and urged us to focus on ways of making ourselves and our communities more resilient.

Ann concentrated on sessions offering practical direction for energy descent.

- 'Becoming a Zero-Carbon Farm'(although admitted to being a farm in transition). Measures taken can be summarized as; tractors run on biofuel from chip-fat, Animal diversity with indigenous breeds of cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, pheasants and rabbits.
Renewable energies; large (water tank) heat store with 2 heating coils, warmed by solar thermal and wood burner (lots of wood from hedges), solar photo-voltaic panels
Income from a simple meat box scheme.
- 'Totnes Energy Descent Action Plan (EDAP)' In Ann's opinion this represented a huge effort for small return (2 employees for a year) but bought a copy of the book – Transition in Action-Totnes and District 2030, An Energy Descent Action Plan. However, contact was made with 'Sustainable St Margaret's' (Kent) for a more manageable EDAP pro-forma.
- 'Zero Carbon Britain 2030 – a new energy strategy. Published by the Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynllech. Exclusively previewed at the Transition Network Conference prior to presentation to the government's climate change committee. The study addresses climate, energy, economic and international security and how to reduce everyone's carbon footprint to 2 Tonnes per annum by 2050. [mine was 3.1T, calculated at TBG's energy advice day; I thought I was mid-green!!]
- Another insight gained while attending a Research in Transition workshop, was that researchers are very keen to base their theses on Transition Initiatives but clarity is needed to ensure that Transition Groups gain useful, comprehensible (Action Research) information from the research Projects.
Andy Goldring, Permaculture Association, asserts that a lot of study templates are already available and urges co-operation between like-minded organizations to maximize resources and therefore results. I'm with him on that!

So it was all very challenging and thought provoking. At times we both needed to find a quiet space to process all that we were learning – no problem as the conference was held in a lovely, peaceful venue in stunning Devon countryside. And if you're thinking of going to next year's conference, we'd definitely recommend it.

For detailed report and reflections on the conference see www.transitionculture.org and follow the links.