

TRANSITION NETWORK'S STRATEGY 2014/2017

OUR VISION

[our view of what the Transition movement is seeking to achieve]

When we use the term "Transition" we're talking about the changes we need to make to get to a low-carbon, socially-just, healthier and happier future, which is more enriching and more gentle on the earth than the way most of us live today.

In our vision of the future, people work together to find ways to live with a lot less reliance on fossil fuels and on over-exploitation of other planetary resources, much reduced carbon emissions, improved wellbeing for all and stronger local economies. The Transition movement is an ongoing social experiment, in which communities learn from each other and are part of a global and historic push towards a better future for ourselves, for future generations and for the planet.

OUR PURPOSE

[what Transition Network is here to do]

Transition Network is a charity which works to inspire, encourage, connect, support and train communities as they self-organise around the Transition model.

We set out below four distinct roles that our organisation currently undertakes. We intend to be much clearer in future about when and how we're carrying out each of these roles. In the longer term it may not make sense for one organisation to perform all four roles. We're keen to explore new structures and governance arrangements as the Transition movement spreads and evolves.

Role 1: Holding the Transition 'source code'

Maintaining an up-to-date description of the Transition story – the what, why, how and where of Transition.

Role 2: Catalysing and supporting the spread of Transition globally

Working to ensure that more people in more countries have access to information, training and other support relating to Transition. One important way we do this is by supporting National Hubs to form, encouraging groups of people to take on the role of supporting, inspiring and connecting Transition initiatives in their country.

Role 3: Co-ordinating and supporting the National Hubs Network

Helping National Hubs to share ideas and inspiration, take collective action and become part of a worldwide learning network.

Role 4: Acting as the UK National Hub

Identifying and developing resources, networks, training and events specifically geared to the UK context and representing the UK within the National Hubs Network.

THE CONTEXT

[what we see happening in the world, across the Transition movement and within Transition Network as we develop and implement this strategy]

As part of our strategy review, the Transition Network team used a number of methods to explore our ideas and feelings about the context we're working in. We can't do justice to that process in this short section, but here are some of the key issues that we took into account when considering where to focus our energy and attention over the next three years:

What's happening in the world

- The era of cheap and easy fossil fuels is over, leading industry to resort to extreme methods of extraction with enormous environmental and economic costs;
- For the first time in human history, the concentration of climate-warming carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has passed the milestone level of 400 parts per million.
- Extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and the connection with man-made climate change is becoming ever harder to ignore;
- There is a mainstream expectation that we can maintain and even increase our current levels of consumption, although we live on a finite planet and have come to rely on resources which are becoming more scarce;
- Despite the connections between resource use, carbon emissions and economic growth, most governments and commentators continue to focus their policies and pronouncements on achieving growth at all costs;
- Inequality is increasing globally and within individual countries, as wealth and power is concentrated on a minority, some countries struggle to raise living standards and others implement cuts in public services which hit the most vulnerable;
- Growing numbers of people and organisations are asking questions, getting in touch with their fears for the planet and their yearning for a healthier, more connected way of living - even politicians can express these feelings although few will do so in public!

What's happening within the Transition movement

- From small beginnings in Kinsale and Totnes, the Transition Town idea has spread across the globe in just seven years. As of April 2014, there were more than 1,120 registered Transition initiatives in 43 countries and thousands of people working together to create awareness of climate change and peak oil and set up a huge range of locally-in-

spired and creative projects;

- New National Hubs are forming and existing Hubs are developing fast. There is an increasing sense of connection and appetite for collective action within the National Hubs network, but capacity and access to financial resources is still very limited;
- We're seeing examples of some Transition initiatives starting to really shape their neighbourhoods, establishing imaginative new enterprises and projects, bringing together a wide range of people and organisations to agree joint actions, influencing decision-makers and improving people's quality of life;
- We're also conscious that many Transition initiatives are struggling to maintain momentum. Often a tiny group of volunteers are trying to keep things going, at risk of burn-out and finding it difficult to get new people involved in what they're doing;
- Transitioners have limited time and energy to engage with people or organisations outside their immediate group, including Transition Network. They are often unaware of the support, information and resources that are available to them.
- There is still only limited support, information and resources available in languages other than English with few National Hubs being in a position to translate material produced by TN.

What's happening within Transition Network

- TN has grown organically, trying to keep pace with the demands and potential of a distributed and quickly spreading global movement;
- We recognised as long ago as 2010 that we needed to create more internal structure and pay more attention to how we developed, planned and took decisions. It took us a while to secure the resources we needed to make this happen;
- In 2012, we carried out a review of the organisation and in 2013 we implemented a new staff structure;
- Producing and consulting on this strategy is the latest step in our efforts to be more structured, more collaborative and more open about what we're doing.

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

[the changes we want to help deliver]

These six outcomes represent the key changes that Transition Network will be working to deliver over the next three years. We will use these outcomes to help us prioritise our activities, allocate resources, make plans and decisions and identify potential partnerships with other organisations and networks. We know there is a lot more that needs to change in the world, but this tells you where our organisation plans to focus its energy and attention.

Strategic Outcome 1: People within and beyond the Transition movement hear a clear, consistent and compelling story of Transition that inspires them to act, connect and experiment.

We have developed a number of different ways of presenting the “what, why and how” of Transition – in the Transition Handbook and the Transition Companion, on our website,

through talks, training courses and films. We think the moment is right to update and clarify the story Transition Network is telling, making sure we draw on practical experience from around the world. We want to find ways to communicate more effectively, reaching new audiences, inspiring many more people to get involved and helping conversations flow across and beyond the Transition movement. The world is changing fast, so we want to explore with others how we keep the story dynamic, relevant and compelling. We don't want to turn into a lobbying organisation, but we know people within the movement would like to see Transition ideas and examples become more visible and credible amongst mainstream decision-makers and commentators.

Strategic Outcome 2: People involved in Transition are better able to access and share information, tools, skills, resources, support and training when needed.

Since 2007 we have supported Transition initiatives to develop in many ways: on-line resources, training courses, conferences, themed workshops, email and phone enquiries, talks and visits. We have learnt a lot in the process, but are getting feedback that the material can feel overwhelming, particularly for those from outside the UK. We want to design clearer pathways through the support currently offered by Transition Network and develop new and revised resources for Transition initiatives, with a focus on what it takes to build strong groups. We also think there is scope to build a more interactive "learning network" across the Transition movement, encouraging and enabling more people to learn from, and support, each other.

Strategic Outcome 3: More people are able to create livelihoods which deliver wellbeing, community resilience and social justice while respecting resource limits.

Today's globalised, volatile and deeply unequal economy has been built on cheap, highly available energy. There is an urgent need to create economies that deliver wider benefits without this reliance on fossil fuels. And for the Transition movement to be sustained and increase its impact, individuals and communities have to be able to support themselves economically while making the transition to a resilient, low carbon future. Through our REconomy project and other activities, we want to encourage experimentation and help share learning about what is possible, whether at the level of individuals and enterprises or when Transition initiatives take on the challenge of transforming their local economy.

Strategic Outcome 4: More Transition initiatives demonstrate that they can achieve significant positive impacts within their communities (transforming economies, increasing wellbeing, community ownership and community resilience, reducing carbon emissions, addressing social justice issues, fostering social innovation, improving local democratic processes and establishing more healthy human cultures).

The Transition movement is rooted in a belief that by acting together within our communities we can have a much greater impact than as individuals. We don't want to put

pressure on groups to move faster or in a different direction than feels right for them, but we do want to demonstrate the potential for people to exercise significant influence over the place where they live. We will support people to gather, use and share evidence of what works. And we will have a particular focus on how core groups can ensure they are well-resourced and operating sustainably, because we think that is key to bringing about more substantial and longer-lasting change.

Strategic Outcome 5: The Transition movement spreads, strengthens and evolves internationally, supported by a thriving National Hub network with an increased governance role within Transition Network.

The Transition movement is spreading rapidly as the basic principles and ideas are used, adapted and built upon by communities in many different countries. We know that Transition Network can't adequately inspire, support and connect with all those Transition initiatives and we are supporting the development of National Hubs and local trainers capable of taking on this role in their own country. There is now an emerging international network of committed people who are keen to exchange information and ideas, support each other and together exercise influence over the way Transition Network operates. We want to help extend and build the capacity of this network, sharing power and resources and working with them to create new decision-making processes.

Strategic Outcome 6: Transition Network develops a healthy and creative internal organisational culture, supported by transparent and effective structures, processes and working practices - learning about, and modelling, the change we want to see in the world.

We recommend that Transition initiatives pay as much attention to the health and development of their group - their structures, processes and culture - as they do to taking action within their community. Following our own recipe, we plan to put time and energy into developing a more structured and transparent approach to our planning and decision-making and continuing to find ways to develop a team culture which supports collaboration and responds well to conflict. We want to be open about this work because we know that our challenges and experiences mirror those of National Hubs and Transition initiatives across the movement.

OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES

[what we plan to produce and do over the next three years]

In this section we provide more information about the action Transition Network intends to take to help deliver the changes we want to see in the world. We've grouped outputs and activities under the most relevant heading, but many of them will contribute to a number of strategic outcomes. We will review and revise these outputs and activities annually.

Strategic Outcome 1: People within and beyond the Transition movement hear a clear, consistent and compelling story of Transition that inspires them to act, connect and experiment.

- i. Review, refine and, where necessary, simplify the Transition story (the what, why and how of Transition) in the light of experience across the global movement;
- ii. Develop and implement a communications plan with a view to:
 - i. improving the clarity, consistency and accessibility of communication between TN and Transitioners;
 - ii. supporting the continuing spread and evolution of Transition worldwide, finding ways to reach new audiences;
 - iii. exploring whether and how we can develop and communicate a vision for Transition which is in some way a proportionate response to the scale of the challenge;
 - iv. working with the National Hubs network to develop a more coherent and accessible online presence internationally;
 - v. achieving greater visibility and credibility for Transition ideas and approaches amongst mainstream decision-makers and commentators;
 - vi. ensuring that the Transition story is consistently reflected across all TN outputs and services;
 - vii. helping TN receive, share and act upon learning gathered from across and beyond the Transition movement.
- iii. Explore whether and how TN might encourage the development of policies which support and build upon the activities and vision of people within the Transition movement.

Strategic Outcome 2: People involved in Transition are better able to access and share information, tools, skills, resources, support and training when needed.

- i. Develop, test and launch a new 'support package' which:
 - i. brings together TN's training, online resources and other support into a clearer, more easily understood framework;
 - ii. is designed so that core elements can be shared with National Hubs and translated, modified and built upon to reflect different cultures and contexts;
 - iii. more clearly distinguishes between general support and guidance available to Transitioners worldwide and specific tools and resources developed for UK use;
 - iv. makes it easier for TN and others to identify, prioritise and fill gaps in the support available to Transitioners;
 - v. demonstrably helps a higher proportion of Transition initiatives to deal effectively with the common challenges (group conflict, burn-out etc.) and make a significant difference within their communities.
- ii. Develop, deliver, monitor and review trainings/events/support within the framework of the support package.
- iii. Encourage more effective peer to peer support within, and beyond, the Transition movement by:
 - i. designing and sharing simple processes for individual peer to peer support (learning from current practices within and beyond the Transition movement) and

- identifying and actively promoting opportunities for these relationships to develop;
 - ii. as the UK National Hub, working with UK Transition initiatives to build and strengthen 'regional' networks;
 - iii. working with National Hubs to explore the potential for buddying of Transition initiatives within and across national boundaries;
 - iv. co-ordinating, and helping to resource, peer-to-peer support activities across the network of National Hubs;
 - v. supporting the development of the International and UK Training networks;
 - vi. working with partner organisations to find ways to align and connect the activities of networks operating in a similar space to the Transition movement.
- iv. Pay attention to emerging needs and new opportunities at the 'edges' of the Transition movement and, when funding can be secured, design and implement time-limited projects testing experimental approaches with the potential to be replicated.

Strategic Outcome 3: More people are able to create livelihoods which deliver wellbeing, community resilience and social justice while respecting resource limits.

- i. Gather, share and collaborate in the development of learning and resources which inspire and support communities to:
 - i. start new enterprises that are socially, environmentally and economically viable;
 - ii. create community level support mechanisms and infrastructure, including alternative means of exchange, which support community wellbeing and/or help new and existing local businesses to thrive;
 - iii. take a lead in transforming the local economic system.
- ii. Work in partnership with other organisations to improve access to investment finance for Transition oriented enterprises.
- iii. Establish 1 Year in Transition as a self-financing social enterprise, run by young people for young people, encouraging the development of similar programmes internationally.

Strategic Outcome 4: More Transition initiatives demonstrate that they can achieve significant impacts within their communities (transforming economies, increasing wellbeing, community ownership and community resilience, addressing social justice issues, fostering social innovation, improving local democratic processes and establishing more healthy human cultures).

- i. Explore and help the spread of mechanisms and approaches designed to 'resource the core' of the Transition movement (core groups and National Hubs).
- ii. Work with researchers to develop advice, training, tools and methodology on self-evaluation, to enable and encourage Transition initiatives to monitor and evaluate their activities and contribute to a wider understanding of the impacts of the Transition approach.

- iii. Seek funding to gather examples and develop and share ways Transition initiatives can reduce social inequality, promote community wellbeing, improve local democratic processes and prevent the impacts of peak oil, climate change and a skewed economy being disproportionate on those with least power and resources.

Strategic Outcome 5: The Transition movement spreads, strengthens and evolves internationally, supported by a thriving National Hub network with an increased governance role within Transition Network.

- i. As Transition takes root in new countries, support the emergence of regional and national groups and their development into 'official' Hubs.
- ii. Work with the National Hub network to identify and implement ways of increasing the capacity, skills and resources of National Hubs individually and collectively.
- iii. Support National Hubs to play an increasingly active role in steering the work of TN.
- iv. Work with National Hubs to develop more interconnected web services, sharing control and developing structure and content together.

Strategic Outcome 6: TN develops a healthy and creative organisational culture, supported by transparent and effective structures, processes and working practices - learning about, and modelling, the change we want to see in the world.

- i. Carry out and publish an annual strategy review, seeking feedback on our activities and priorities from the wider movement and remaining open to new opportunities and challenges.
- ii. Develop and implement collective processes which help us plan, monitor and report on our work more effectively.
- iii. Devote time and energy to exploring and developing our organisational culture by:
 - i. deepening our work relationships;
 - ii. maintaining balance between task and process issues in our work;
 - iii. accessing support and downtime to ensure personal resilience and avoid burnout;
 - iv. developing good practices around collaboration and conflict;
- iv. Create a much clearer distinction between TN's international roles, resources and activities and its current role, resources and activities as the UK Hub, finding ways to increase TN's transparency and its accountability to people in the wider Transition movement and exploring the appetite, need and potential for a separate UK Hub.
- v. Develop new ways to work effectively and collaboratively on an international scale.
- vi. Take active steps to develop as a learning organisation which seeks and acts upon feedback, is responsive to relevant experience from beyond the Transition movement and is skilled at disseminating learning.

HOW WE WILL WORK

Transition Network is helping bring about change in the world. To do that well, we think we need

to explore and model ways of working that are different from the mainstream. In this section we describe values and approaches that apply across all the work we've described above. We commit to working to the same principles that guide the process of Transition and welcome feedback about how we can improve.

A. Respecting resource limits

The urgent need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and greatly reduce our reliance on fossil fuels is at the forefront of everything we do. We consider the carbon impact when we plan and make decisions, we use public transport and minimise air travel, we use video/teleconferencing whenever possible, use a web-host with strong environmental policies and practices; undertake comprehensive recycling and composting in the office and source food and other supplies locally and ethically.

B. Promoting inclusivity and social justice

The most disadvantaged and powerless people in our societies are likely to be worst affected by rising fuel and food prices, resource shortages and extreme weather events. We want to increase the chances of all groups in society to live well, healthily and with sustainable livelihoods. In planning our work, we seek to demonstrate an awareness of privilege and rank and the impact of race, gender, cultural difference and economic power. We are actively exploring ways to make our activities accessible and beneficial to disadvantaged groups.

C. Paying attention to balance

In responding to urgent, global challenges, individuals and groups can end up feeling stressed, closed or driven rather than open, connected and creative. Within Transition Network we create space for reflection, celebration and rest to balance the times when we're busily getting things done. We are exploring different ways of working which engage our heads, hands and hearts and enable us to develop collaborative and trusting work relationships. We will share what we learn as we seek to model a healthy balance between being and doing.

D. Part of an experimental, learning network

Transition is a real-life, real-time global social experiment. Being part of a network means we can create change more quickly and more effectively, drawing on each other's experiences and insights. Transition Network is constantly looking for ways to support and encourage the sharing of learning across and beyond the Transition movement. We want to acknowledge and learn from failure as well as success - if we're going to be bold and find new ways of living and working, we won't always get it right first time. We will be open about our internal processes and will actively seek and respond positively to feedback.

E. Freely sharing ideas and power

Transition is a grassroots movement, where ideas can be taken up rapidly, widely and effectively because each community takes ownership of the process themselves. Transition looks different in different places and we want to encourage rather than unhelpfully constrain that diversity. As capacity allows, we will devolve roles and responsibilities to national, regional and local levels. We will work to build capacity across the network and to remove barriers to the dissemination of Transition ideas.

F. Collaborating and looking for synergies

The Transition approach is to work together as a community, unleashing our collective genius to have a greater impact together than we can as individuals. We are very conscious that Transition Network is just one of many organisations working to bring about positive change and will look for opportunities to build creative and powerful partnerships across and beyond the Transition movement. Within our own team, we will continue to develop a collaborative culture, finding links between projects, creating open decision-making processes and designing events and activities that help people make connections.

G. Positive visioning and creativity

Our primary focus is not on being against things, but on developing and promoting positive possibilities. We believe in using creative ways to engage and involve people, encouraging them to imagine the future they want to inhabit. The generation of new stories is central to this visioning work, as is having fun and celebrating success.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

[how we'll know how things are going]

Transition Network already carries out some monitoring and evaluation - for example, we seek feedback from participants on our training courses, carry out surveys and monitor the use of our website - but we know we could and should do more to gather evidence of the impact of our work and use this evidence to help us plan future activities.

We are a partner in a new 12 month knowledge exchange project with the University of Oxford and the Low Carbon Communities Network which is seeking to develop monitoring & evaluation tools with and for low carbon community groups. Alongside this project Transition Network plans to develop our own Monitoring & Evaluation framework - a structured approach to collecting and making use of qualitative and quantitative feedback across key areas of our work.

We're very conscious of the need not to overburden people working in Transition initiatives and/or National Hubs with lots of surveys and questions. We're looking for light-touch, fun (!) or even automated ways to collect and share useful evidence. We will also continue to work with the [Transition Research Network](#) to encourage and support research that is mutually beneficial

to Transition initiatives and academic researchers.

We also don't want to get too bogged down trying to predict specific outcomes in a fast-changing and very complex world. We're conscious that we probably can't and won't know which bit of what we do will make the most difference. We remember a story told by Paul Loeb:

In the early 1960s, a friend of mine named Lisa took two of her kids to a Washington, DC, vigil in front of the White House, protesting nuclear testing. The demonstration was small, a hundred women at most. Rain poured down. The women felt frustrated and powerless. A few years later, the movement against testing had grown dramatically, and Lisa attended a major march. Benjamin Spock, the famous baby doctor, spoke. He described how he'd come to take a stand, which because of his stature had already influenced thousands, and would reach far more when he challenged the Vietnam War. Spock talked briefly about the issues, then mentioned being in DC a few years before and seeing a small group of women huddled, with their kids, in the rain. It was Lisa's group. "I thought that if those women were out there," he said, "their cause must be really important."

<http://www.paulloeb.org/impossible-excerpts.html>