



In this edition of the SOC newsletter, you will see a few changes. These are in response to feedback from a survey about it conducted recently with a number of members. Firstly, it's shorter. Secondly, most of it is now in single column format, which most people find easier to read. Thirdly, there is a shift in the topics focused on and in the emphasis on the geographical level that articles are focused at. In terms of topic areas, the preference was for these to be prioritised in the following order: **C**onsumption, **W**aste Production, **B**iodiversity, **A**ll of the above and/or anything else to do with sustainability. In regard to the colour coded geographical levels of focus, respondents wanted to see these prioritised in the following order: **Local (neighbourhood level)**; **Town and Around (city and region wide)**; **Personal (and domestic)**; **Global**; and **National**. There was also a slight preference among respondents for retaining the colour coding, so that'll continue for the moment. The extent of this shift will be limited however by my ability to find, or get sent, articles on subjects of relevance.

Also in this edition in my continuing search to find humorous approaches to sustainability I've included a fake satirical article. Hope you are all more or less surviving winter, and if you do feel inspired to make comment, write an article for this newsletter or want to make contact please do not hesitate to write to me at [ianandmarlys@actrix.co.nz](mailto:ianandmarlys@actrix.co.nz).

Ian Burn, Newsletter Editor

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#### **Update on SOC Transition Communities group**

As you may be aware from previous SOC newsletter articles mentioning "transition communities", (e.g., Roger Buck's Oct/Nov article re the urban design protocol, and in March/April re the Transition Communities bus tour), a group within SOC have been meeting since late last year to consider how Christchurch could build on the national and global "transition towns" movement, and what role SOC could have in assisting that.

The "transition towns/communities" movement is arising spontaneously all around the world, but the official name 'transition towns' and network arose out of the UK (see interview with Rob Heinberg later in this issue). While it assumes many forms, a common aim amongst transition communities is to make the transition to a more local, renewable energy future and reduce our fossil-fuel dependency. Relocalisation is a key aim for transition communities: moving from an over-dependence on the

**Annual General Meeting  
7.15pm Monday 30 June 2008  
At the Waiatu Theatre,  
Environment Canterbury (enter  
by the eastern most door on  
Kilmore Street)**  
- 7.15pm Annual Reports and  
election of Committee.  
- 8pm SOCs Transition  
Communities sub-group will  
outline the transition  
communities concept and  
network. A role for SOC in this  
process will be proposed and  
the possible roles for all  
interested SOC members!  
- Supper will follow  
[The Transition Communities  
initiative is about responding to  
the challenges of Peak Oil and  
Climate Change by  
transitioning to a civilisation  
less dependent on fossil fuels  
and more oriented towards  
renewable energy sources and  
local self-sufficiency.]

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global economy to producing more of our core needs locally. This leads to towns, suburbs and cities becoming increasingly resilient, ecologically sustainable, self-reliant (but not isolated!), and socially equitable.

Although not officially part of the “transition towns” network, Project Lyttelton ([www.lyttelton.net.nz](http://www.lyttelton.net.nz)) and Lincoln Envirotown ([lincolnevirotown.org.nz](http://lincolnevirotown.org.nz)) offer us two great examples of how people can remake local connections and work together to create more vibrant, resilient local communities. Many other initiatives throughout Christchurch could be catalysts for developing transition communities. The recent transition communities bus tour aimed to draw attention to some of these initiatives and foster links among them.

The SOC transition communities group would like SOC to help stimulate the formation of a network of localised, participatory, ‘transition’ initiatives within and around Christchurch. SOC’s role could be to raise awareness over the next several months, link any people and groups who show interest in starting a transition community in their area of Christchurch, offer support, experiences and resources, and act as an initial hub for people and transition community groups within Christchurch to share, learn from, support, and inspire each other.

There are currently over 30 communities throughout NZ creating peak oil and climate change education and re-localisation initiatives that are listed on the NZ network for transition towns (<http://www.transitiontowns.org.nz/>). Some of these towns may at some stage formally adopt the Transition Towns model as Orewa and Waiheke Island already have, while others will enjoy just remaining part of the social network. The SOC committee would like to add Christchurch to the informal NZ network to connect with other similarly aligned communities throughout NZ and internationally, and to provide a way of connecting anyone within Christchurch who finds out about transition towns and wants to connect with others in their local community.

If you’re interested in hearing more about how Christchurch can become a web of local transition communities, please come along to our upcoming SOC AGM at the end of the month! Members of the SOC committee and the transition communities group will outline the “transition communities” concept and network, discuss with SOC members the potential benefits and challenges for Christchurch, the proposed role for SOC over the next year, and the proposed role for all interested SOC members!

For more information, visit  
<http://www.sustainablechristchurch.org.nz/transitioncommunities>.

### **Christchurch City Council’s Sustainability Working Party**

Over the past year, SOC members Kate Hewson and John Peet have been involved in the Christchurch City Council’s Sustainability Working Party, which was set up in June 2007 tasked with drafting a sustainability policy and a climate change strategy. The purpose of the Sustainability Policy is to help embed sustainability into all areas of the Council. It aims to clarify what the City Council means by “sustainability” and provide an overarching set of principles to guide all CCC strategies and actions. Tony Moore, CCC’s Principal Advisor for Sustainability, hopes that as the new policy is applied

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throughout the Council, sustainability will increasingly become “simply the way we do things around here”.

The Sustainability Policy was approved by councillors on 27 March 2008, and will be officially launched on 27 June 2008. For more information, see <http://www.ccc.govt.nz/SustainableChristchurch/>.

Kate Hewson

### **Healthy Christchurch coordinators speak with SOC**

At SOC’s April committee meeting Kathryn Cannan and Robyn Wallace coordinators of Healthy Christchurch (<http://healthy.christchurch.org.nz/>) spoke with the committee about the Healthy Cities and Communities Short Course that had been held in Christchurch earlier in the month. Chris van Empel and Wendy Everingham of SOC took part in the course. The aim of the course was to convey and increase the understanding of healthy urban planning systems, as articulated by the WHO. A diverse group from Auckland to Gore attended, but disappointingly no elected representatives or high-level decision makers. A visioning exercise showed that everyone wanted the same things, so why is practice so different? Systems and processes are at fault and a mindset change is required: from health to well-being. Health doesn’t begin with doctors and hospitals.

The organisers hoped that the participants in the short course would spread the ideas and insights gained within their areas of influence. There is to be a follow-up evaluation 3 months after the course, to prompt action by participants. It is difficult to get real change, especially when the message is not getting to the leaders and the “market” ethos prevails. The Transition Communities initiative, as promoted by SOC, could be an answer. For example, build neighbourhood communities around shared yards and organic gardens, foster resilience and self-sufficiency. SOC committee members suggested that instead of trying to change the system through submissions on policy and by lobbying, it may be more effective to work with community members and once they begin to change the leaders and governing bodies will follow. Healthy Christchurch’s role can be to support conversations among network members, one of which is SOC as a signatory to the Healthy Christchurch Charter.

by Dave Evans

### **The Living Here Sustainable Partnership Forum 2 April 2008**

Several members of SOC attended this day long forum to not only promote SOC amongst the delegates but also to hear what the speakers had to share about action for sustainability. The forum was promoted as a “meeting of minds: to look at what is possible when partnerships are formed between like-minded organisations in the interests of sustainability” and “for people on the edge of the sustainability circle looking for a way in – and for those who are already doing great things”. It was jointly sponsored by ECan, MfE, SBN, Canterbury Employers’ Chamber of Commerce & CCC, and hosted by Vbase at the Convention Centre.

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Key note speakers included Melissa Clarke-Reynolds, Malcolm Rands (*ecostore*), Margaret Jeffries (*Project Port Lyttelton*) and two students who have won awards for their environmental action, Pauline Robertson and John Evans. All of the keynote sessions were inspiring in different ways but what struck me about the panel presentation facilitated by John Sellwood was how important each felt community engagement was, whether in their schools or town, and how passionate each were about the projects with which they are involved.

Workshops between the speakers offered the opportunity to explore in more detail ways to work and live sustainably but time was brief & only allowed a nibble at the edges of what drives individuals or businesses to act for a sustainable future. It was certainly interesting to hear from Jim Small of *Cyclops Yoghurt* fame just how he has grown his business ethically and sustainably using *The Natural Step* process. His key word: integrity. *Energy Mad's* Natalie Cutler-Welsh told the story of how, light bulb by light bulb, we can make a difference while the *Green Globe* presentation by John Delaney made me want to take action to encourage more tourism ventures to think beyond the bottom dollar.

All of the briefing sessions were interesting but in many ways too brief to really get one's teeth into important issues. During the morning tea and lunch breaks there was time to network; time to discuss what others are doing and how to support each other actually do the things that need doing. Overall, a most interesting and energising day that it is hoped will be the first of many that occur each year in and around Christchurch.

For more information and copies of some presentations see <http://www.ecan.govt.nz/livinghereforum/index.html>

By Jocelyn Papprell

### **UK Plastic bag ban set to completely reverse global warming**

The decision by the UK government to ban shops from giving customers free plastic bags was hailed today by Al Gore as the key to reversing all global warming for evermore. 'Never mind that India and China are opening forty coal fossil fuel power stations every month' said Gore 'The UK's decision to ban plastic bags will more than compensate for that.'



Hilary Benn, the UK minister for the environment, was delighted by Mr Gore's praise. 'By re-using existing plastic bags or better-still moving to carbon free alternatives we expect to reduce global temperatures by 10 degrees Celsius by 2010. Indeed our new plans to make people wear an extra pair of socks in the winter will also contribute to eliminating this global threat.'

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Other major benefits to the environment include using petrol that has come from a green coloured pump, and recycling the four hundredweight of unread free newspapers and pizza leaflets that came through the front door every week.



In the Maldives, which has been threatening to disappear under the rising Indian Ocean at some point during this century, there were spontaneous street parties that their island nation had been saved by a small number of British residents remembering not to leave their televisions on stand-by overnight. 'Our country has a future once more' wept the President. 'And all thanks to those few Britons who went to the bottle bank and sorted out all the different coloured glass.'

Mr Benn dismissed suggestions that the phone calls from Mr Gore and the Maldives may have been the work of a hoaxer and said the government would be pursuing Mr Gore's excellent suggestion that Britain harnesses the electrical energy generated when rubbing a balloon on a woolly jumper.

### **ECO criticises Government over ETS changes.**

ECO (Environmental and Conservation Organisations of NZ) has responded to a Government announcement to delay the full introduction of polluter chargers for liquid fuel users, farmers and industry under the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), stating that households and taxpayers will now have to subsidise big polluters more and longer. The Government's May announcement states that the subsidy to polluters will go on at full rates in 2018 now, instead of starting to reduce in 2013, and also that the term of subsidies will go on to 2030, rather than 2025. The liquid fuels sector will also not have to pay for its emissions until 2011, instead of entering the emissions trading scheme in 2009.

In regard to this ECO considers that the government "...is picking the pockets of the poor and taxpayers to subsidise polluting industry." and that "The changes mean that polluters will lose incentives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, so more emissions can be expected than if the polluters had to pay. That will make the tax payer subsidy to farming and industry heavier."

Source ECO <http://www.eco.org.nz>

**Transition Towns' \*Edited transcript of Brian Crump interviewing Rob Hopkins, on "Nights", National radio, Thursday, 10th April, 2008**

\*Brian Crump \*Rob Hopkins is an environmentalist who is based in the Devon town of Totnes in SW England. The idea is to make Totnes a town that could withstand major changes in the global economy, such as the world running low on crude oil. I spoke to Rob a few days ago and began by asking him, "What needs changing?"

\*Rob Hopkins\* Well, we're transitioning from our current over-dependence on cheap oil and gas and the climate implications of that, to a world where we're actually much, much more independent of fossil fuels, oil and gas in particular. So the transition model is really underpinned by two drivers which are firstly the need to cut carbon emissions with an unprecedented degree of urgency, but also the need to build resilience. And by building resilience we mean building our community's ability to withstand shocks, such as energy shocks or climate shocks, from the outside.

... in the UK in the year 2000, ... the lorry drivers blockaded oil depots and it meant that pretty much all the lorries on the road stopped running, and it became very clear within a couple of days, that all of our supermarkets only had three days' worth of food in them, and that we'd spent the last 30, 40, 50 years vigorously dismantling all of our resilient infrastructure that we had up until then. So, that resilience-building is really, really important, but key in the Transition movement is really the idea that inherent within the challenges of Peak Oil and Climate Change is the potential for an economic, social and cultural renaissance the likes of which we've never seen, as we move towards a more local economy the potential to build a whole range of local employment opportunities and so on.

... there's a very seminal piece of work ... which is a thing called the Hirsch Report that came out in 2005, which was done by the US Department of Energy, and that looked, not at when the peak in world oil production is going to be, but how far in advance of it you needed to start preparing very, very seriously. They argued ideally 20 years, 10 years at a push, on the scale of a wartime mobilization. I mean, most opinion now I think is really coming round to, either we've already peaked or that it is sometime before 2015. I mean conventional oil production hasn't actually increased since May 2005. So this is enormous an enormous question and challenge. I think in the Transition movement we say well actually, if we're going to start this thinking and start designing for this transition, we need to start doing it now, and with an unprecedented degree of bringing people together.

\*BC\* ... [How] can you measure success; are you trying to measure success in terms of energy use, in terms of how many products are being made locally?

\*RH\* Yes, well, basically the first sort of 18 months of this scheme has really been about just really acting as that catalyst, and all these different project initiatives and groups and ideas have sprung up and started to bed down. What we're starting to do now is to develop what we're calling the Energy Descent Plan for the town, which is trying to pull all of that together and create a 20 year plan for the town which says, let's start with a vision. Given peak oil and climate change, given the need to build resilience and the need to cut carbon enormously, and given that we are looking at a world where there's

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going to be a lot less cheap oil and gas around, what could this town look like? What's our vision of how our town could look like if we could pull off something really extraordinary? And then to back-cast from that. So that's the process that we're about to start and which will be really about looking at trying to pin all those solutions down. But as part of that, we've started to think that actually at the moment, the main measure of success for those kind of things is how much carbon are they cutting. And actually, that's only one measure, and we're looking at this idea of developing what we call resilience indicators, which is, how can you tell that your town is moving towards being more resilient? So the amount of local currency in circulation every year; the amount of food consumed in the town from around the town; the amount of building materials used in new construction projects which comes from the local area that kind of stuff. So we're trying to develop this idea of resilience indicators alongside, so we can start to sort of quantify things a little bit. And we're also trying to draw in people who can do – see I think, to really quantify accurately the kind of thing you're talking about actually takes a lot of time and resources that community organisations don't have necessarily.

There are now 45 transition towns in the world 42 in the UK, two in New Zealand (Orewa and Waiheke Island), and one in Australia ... and they have a website, [www.transitiontowns.org.nz](http://www.transitiontowns.org.nz), which is where people can find out more about what's happening in NZ. But then, we have another sort of level, which are called the mullers – people who are mulling to become Transition Projects, so they haven't formally worked through the criteria, but they're at an early stage, and there's over 700 of those now, many in NZ, in Australia, in the UK, all over the world it's really been quite an extraordinarily viral expansion of the idea really.

A U-tube presentation by Richard Heinberg can be found at <http://transitionculture.org/2008/05/02/richard-heinberg-on-resilient-communities/>. For more information on this subject see this international site [www.transitionculture.org](http://www.transitionculture.org), and/or this Kiwi one, [www.transitiontowns.org.nz](http://www.transitiontowns.org.nz).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**AB** *Free Community Garden Plot?* Wai Ora Trust is looking at restructuring its gardens and offering garden plots to community groups, whanau and any other interested parties. If interested please contact [ricky@waioratrust.org.nz](mailto:ricky@waioratrust.org.nz) with information about how many people your group has who are able to be 'actively involved' in the project and whether they are available to work in the week or weekends.

**AB** *Artists for save our water exhibition* Artists based in Te Waipounamu are concerned at the effect the taking and diverting of water in the Mackenzie Country for intensive farming will have on our instream ecosystems, birdlife, water quality, and the cost to our beloved landscape. Opening 5.30 Tuesday June 3rd. 2008 exhibition 3 June – 30 June. NG Gallery 212 Madras St Christchurch

**A** The WEA is hosting a series of sessions on *Peak oil and other global issues*. Starts 29 May, 1 – 3 pm, 5 Thursdays, free 'Peak oil' describes the proposal that there is a finite amount of oil and that sooner or later global oil production will peak. Exactly when this might happen is subject to debate, but it could be within the next few years. This

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series will discuss some of the issues around peak oil and what might happen to western society when oil supplies start to dwindle. Will the effects be catastrophic, or will viable alternatives be found? Each week a documentary film will be screened, followed by discussion. 59 Gloucester Street, for more information contact 366 0285  
cwea@xtra.co.nz

**A** A series of sessions on *Sustainable communities* starts 5 June, 6 – 8 pm, 3 Thursdays, donation, at WEA 59 Gloucester St, 5 June Sustainable Otautahi Christchurch (SOC) on 'Transition Communities'; 12 June Susan Krumdieck on 'Dealing with changes'(cancelled); 19 June DVD and discussion. 366 0285 cwea@xtra.co.nz

**BA** WEA is running an *issues of the day* series starting Wednesdays 14 May, 1.30 – 2.30 pm, \$25 for 8 lectures some of which have a sustainability focus  
11 Jun *Not letting rivers dry up* - Liz Griffiths, Forest & Bird Cttee  
25 Jun *An overview of the resource consent process & with reference to the Central Plains Water Scheme application* – Donald Fraser

**A** 'Are there wiser ways of living?' A world views seminar evening – representatives from Christian, Buddhist, Māori, Scientific, & Deep Ecology communities speaking: Thur June 26th, 7-9pm Environment Canterbury lecture theatre, 58 Kilmore Street [Buses that run close by 13 & 18; parking available on street, bike rack in front of building, ]koha gold coin More information contact: Jocelyn Pappriill, jyc@caverock.net.nz (NZAEE branch sec)

**A** *Green Drinks* is an opportunity to socialise with other 'green issues' interested people. Upstairs at the Dux de Lux, corner of Montreal and Hereford Sts. Next events on 26 and 1 July with unique NZ and Antarctica environmental film footage, courtesy of the Peter Young Stock Footage Library at the latter  
'As usual, those attending will be a mix of Christchurch's environmentally employed and interested: influential local figures, professional consultants, corporate sustainability managers, public servants, educationalists, radical propagandists, itinerant networkers, political aspirants, political non-aspirants, tangata whenua, clothing makers, snow worshippers, cyclic activists, warm home advocates, bird watchers, business development advisers, corporate tree growers and a guy wearing shorts selling recycled paint.'

**BA** This year's *ECO Conference* is being held in Wellington from Friday 27 to Sunday 29 June, at St. John's in the City Church and Tapu Te Ranga Marae. The theme is 'Sustainable New Zealand: Rhetoric or Reality?' See <http://www.eco.org.nz> for more information.

**AC** Short course: *Over-the-horizon sustainable product design*. Dr Ron McDowall and A. Idil Gaziulusoy, University of Auckland, Friday, 18 July 2008, 9 am - 5 pm, MWH Offices, 7 Deans Ave, Christchurch  
Fee: \$295 including GST for members (NZSSES, IPENZ, RSNZ, NZIA)  
\$375 including GST for non-members  
Further information: <http://www.nzsses.auckland.ac.nz/docs/2008-04-14-Over-the-horizon-Sustainable-Product-Design-Overview.pdf>  
Register by emailing [vicky@nzsses.org.nz](mailto:vicky@nzsses.org.nz)

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**B** *Measuring NZ's Water Levels*: The Ministry of the Environment is seeking peoples views on a discussion paper outlining a draft National Environmental Standard (NES) on Ecological Flows and Water Levels. The standard has been developed in response to a major challenge in water management identified by regional councils and others. Its aim is to promote the sustainable management of fresh water by:

- setting provisional limits on the alteration to flows and/or water levels for rivers, wetlands, and groundwater systems that do not already have limits imposed through regional plans
- providing a way to select the right system for evaluating ecological flows and water levels in rivers, lakes, wetlands, and groundwater systems. Public workshops on the proposals are being held around the country at dates still to be announced.

Submissions close on 31 July 2008. The discussion document is available at ["http://www.mfe.govt.nz/laws/standards/ecological-flows-water-levels/index.html"](http://www.mfe.govt.nz/laws/standards/ecological-flows-water-levels/index.html) <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/laws/standards/ecological-flows-water-levels/index.html>. Hard copies of the discussion paper and related scientific documents are available from [WaterProgramme@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:WaterProgramme@mfe.govt.nz)

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## **COMMITTEE ACTIONS**

### *Completed*

- **A** Discussion with Healthy Christchurch re focus of recent conference (see earlier article).
- **A** Holding Transition communities workshop at WEA, 5 June (see above)
- **A** Attendance at Living Here Sustainability Forum (see earlier article)

### *In Process*

- **A** Consideration of relationship between sustainable and Treaty based development
- **AC** Development of Transition Communities Energy Decline Plans
- **W** Waste minimisation project
- **A** Participating in ECAN Proposed Change Number 1 processes
- **AB** Preparation of DVD of Transition Communities Bus tour