

Crystal Palace Transition Town Annual Report May 2012

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Introduction

Welcome to our first Annual Report!

It’s really hard to believe that just over a year ago, a small group of individuals, swamped in a big hall, most of whom didn’t know each other, gathered to talk about something called “Transition Towns”. At the beginning many of us had lots of questions and weren’t really sure what this thing looked like in reality. What can we do to make our community more sustainable and more resilient to huge global challenges such as climate change, economic insecurity and the end of cheap fuel?

13 months later, we have six active groups, a community garden in Westow Park with weekly activities, and a string of successful large and small events under our belts, including the Local and Fair Fashion Show, the Skill Share Day, Draught-busting workshops, seven Green Screens, a Forest Gardening Course, our regular stalls outside Sainsbury’s, monthly ‘Green Drinks’ and much, much more. We have set up a steering group with acting officers and produced a constitution (<http://www.crystalpalacetransition.org.uk/our-constitution.html>) which enables us to apply for funding.

The most important thing however is how many friends we have made! There really does seem to be a growing community feeling in what we do, and this is probably the most exciting aspect of being part of Crystal Palace Transition Town. If you're interested or just curious, come along to one of our events and say hello, contact us through our website, (where you can also join up to our mailing list) or join us on Twitter or our very lively Facebook group.

On a more serious note, the continued economic downturn and the constant headlines about "Fuel Poverty" do make us realise that there is a real challenge to focus our minds, and issues that once might have been considered 'fringe' or 'just for greens' have become mainstream.

Read on to see what we've been up to so far, and all the different ways you can get involved. We will only continue our exciting growth and be able to start new projects with new people on board. Why not jump on!

We are not alone...

London, National, International

London

A very exciting development, that we have begun to appreciate more and more in the last few months, is the emergence of an informal **London Transition Network**. After some members attended **The London Gathering** in December 2011, we were very excited to realise that there are now **over 40 Transition Initiatives** in the Greater London Area. Some, like Brixton, are well established, and others are at different points in their growth. This networking has led to practical exchanges of ideas and resources: **Rakesh** from **Brixton** spoke at our Food and Growing meeting (and is now leading our Forest Gardening Course), and groups including **Streatham**, **Lewisham** and **Tooting** have supported us with advice and contacts. There is a lot of potential in further networking and collectively looking at funding, joint projects, bulk purchases. A group has been set up to seek funding for a possible "**London Hub**" that could act as a support project for all London Transition Initiatives. The Network has informal meetings in the Blue Bar of the Royal Festival Hall each month, as well as a website portal: www.london-transition.org.uk

National

Although a local initiative, we are also part of the **Transition Network**, which provides information, training and networking opportunities. By Mid-March 2012 there were over 370 initiatives in the United Kingdom and this number is growing almost daily!

International

In September 2011 there were 382 Official Transition Initiatives globally, and 458 'mulling' or beginning initiatives, spread over 34 countries. This is for a movement that only declared its first Transition Town (Totnes) in 2006.

Project group reports:

Communications Group

When Formed: May 2011

We formed this group to raise general awareness of our activities, and also to look at how we communicate, both internally and with people not yet involved. It's very much been a case of adapting and learning as we go, and we are always very open to new people with new ideas. We have always been a relatively small group, although we have welcomed a few new members recently. One important thing we have learnt is that the Transition message isn't just created by a small group in a room, but has been promoted by all our members spreading the word.

Website Our website was set up over a year ago, but really came into its own as our groups started to become active in the autumn of 2011. We have a small 'website working team' and have recently decided to delegate out the project pages to members of those groups. For example, someone in the Energy Group is now responsible for the content of their pages. Our website calendar has also proved to be a good tool for promoting and tracking events.

Newsletter We now have over 300 people on our mailing list, and we send out regular newsletters informing of upcoming events. We intend to make these newsletters more regular in the future. Let us know if you signed up for our mailing list and haven't been receiving newsletters: we can re-register you.

Facebook/Social Media Our Facebook group (Crystal Palace Transition Town) has proven to be a very popular forum for over 200 members who promote ideas, discuss and banter over a wide range of issues; some local, some global. It has also proved very useful for publicising events, attracting new members, and those last minute requests and offers. "Anyone need some worm pee?" Remember anyone can invite a friend to join the group and spread the word. We also have a Twitter account with over 500 followers (<https://twitter.com/#!/CrystalPalaceTT>) and post our events on the calendars of Virtual Norwood and Crystal Palace Local.

Local Press Over time we have gradually built up our confidence in producing press releases and cultivating media contacts. We recently ran articles in The Transmitter, South London Press, Croydon Guardian and Dulwich on View. We have also received great press support from Juno Baker of Friends of Westow Park.

Face To Face We have found that our stalls outside Sainsbury's and our screenings have been great ways to meet people face-to-face and gain new members. **Green Drinks**, although not officially a CPTT event, has proved to be another great, informal, way to get to know people with similar interests (Every Second Wednesday in the Grape and Grain).

Posters and Fliers Although we do want to minimise paper use, we also want to connect with people who do not use the internet, so we create posters and fliers to publicise our major events and distribute them to local supportive businesses, as well as public spaces like the Library and The Phoenix Centre.

Who we want:

Everyone! To keep talking about us and telling your friends! (Both in the virtual and real worlds!)

People willing to:

- Help us run our website or to share website skills
- Spend time writing press releases, cultivating contacts.
- Talk to the public at our stalls and events and spread the word.
- Suggest and try out new ways to get more people involved.

Skill sharing group

Localskillswap was started online on Facebook in January 2009 before Crystal Palace Transition Town evolved, and then launched as a website in Summer 2009. Its purpose is multi-functional, to facilitate connections between people in local communities so that....

- they can swap skills and get things done for free,
- they can get things done without leaving their local area
- they can get to know like-minded people in their local area and share skills with them or learn skills from them, thus strengthening community ties
- sole traders/people who work from home and who are interested in the Community get a chance to get known locally through skill swapping and ultimately become better known within their local area.
- locals get to know others in their neighbourhood through their skills to enable us to function more efficiently by sharing/swapping tasks and living more sustainably.

There are 66 members in the Crystal Palace group, and we appealed to members as well as the CPTT database and other friends and contacts to hold a skill sharing event on 4 September 2011 where we had the following skills on offer at a workshop style event at Antenna studios: Wormery demo, knitting & crochet, bicycle maintenance, bee keeping, jam making, cup cake decorating, window box planting, growing from seed, garden design (master gardeners), eco-gift wrapping, chair massage & bread making. We do not currently have any future events planned. After the skill share day, CPTT added "Skill sharing" to the project group list although in fact the group is really online.

Funding has not yet been secured for the website or for any events. If accessed, funding could be used to market the local Crystal Palace group, to raise awareness and get more people involved. In turn, it would be great to find ambassadors either from the online group or from CPTT to run activities on a more regular basis. There is plenty of scope for connecting the online group with the "live" CPTT activities, using Localskillswap to get more people interested in Crystal Palace Transition Town and vice versa; ultimately the objective would be to have a really comprehensive listing of skills in the Crystal Palace area, with people who are connected both online and in person, in the same way as Facebook has facilitated communication between CPTT members that eventually participate in CPTT events.

Energy group

Purpose

To make Crystal Palace sustainable from the point of view of energy

Date the project group started

7 December 2011

Events

29 January 2012 “Meet and Greet” stall outside Sainsbury’s, featuring a bicycle-powered generator running long-life and traditional light bulbs.

5 February 2012 film screening:

‘Wind of Change’ following a Scottish village as it embraces renewable energy and works towards becoming carbon-neutral

‘What are we Waiting for?’ showing how the UK could slash its carbon emissions by locating energy production close to where it is used and utilising its waste heat to heat buildings.

12 February 2012 free draught-proofing workshop at Antenna Studios, demonstrating low-cost methods and materials for preventing heat loss from our homes.

3 March 2012 Provided bicycle-powered smoothie maker at Local and Fairtrade stall.

4 March 2012 Free draught-proofing Workshop at Kalina's.

Funding secured

None. We have identified the areas we want to operate in (energy generation; energy efficiency; education; transport) and are clarifying what projects we want to run within these areas before applying for funding.

Future plans

Short term:

- More home-based draught-proofing sessions are planned.
- Energy monitor loan scheme.
- Research into the energy policies/offers of each of the local boroughs.
- Advertise free energy home assessments on offer.

Longer-term plans are still at decision making stage.

Skill gaps identified

Almost everything! Including admin, secretarial and knowledge of company law.

Edible Crystal Palace

Edible Crystal Palace, our local food and growing group, was launched with an open meeting on 7th February in Mediterranea Restaurant on Westow Street. We now meet once monthly in the upstairs room of Mediterranea.

At present, our main project is the Westow Park Edible Garden. We have now established regular work sessions in the garden each Saturday from 11am to 2pm.

To help get the garden going, we've held two bigger gardening sessions: a Bramble Bash on 18th February and a Big Dig Day registered with Capital Growth on 17th March. On the same day as the Big Dig, Edible Crystal Palace also had a (fruit/veg) seed give away to encourage locals to get gardening and to help raise money for the garden by donations.

The Bramble Bash was attended by more than 25 people. The second event happened after this report was written. Our weekly sessions have consistently achieved a minimum of 12 gardening volunteers, often more.

Thus far, we have received £400 of funding - £350 from Capital Growth for start-up costs and £50 from Capital Growth to support our Big Dig event. We are currently in the process of applying for BTCV's Chestnut Fund to help us buy tools.

As well as the community garden, Edible Crystal Palace has also secured another growing space: a private garden on Central Hill. We were approached by the resident and we have consent from the landlord to use the space for community growing. We plan to use the site as an educational space to learn about permaculture gardening and design.

To support this project, we've teamed up with a permaculture expert who's helped Transition Town Brixton. He offered to run a Forest Gardening course which started with great energy and turnout at the end of April. We're currently seeking funding for this new space and we're in the process of registering the site with Capital Growth. At time of going to press, we are also looking at a third public growing space!

In terms of skills needed for our project, the more the merrier. We have endless ideas so the more hands we have the more we can achieve.

The main aims of our group are:

- To educate and inspire more people to grow their own food
- To grow food for local businesses
- To inspire people to make sustainable food choices
- To encourage a more hands on approach to sourcing and cooking food (i.e. making your own bread, growing your own food, thrifty cooking skills, etc.)
- To make sustainable food sources more attainable (i.e. by setting up a local food co-op, creating a source for more sustainable fish, Community Supported Agriculture, etc.)
- To laugh often and not take life too seriously

Local and Fair Group

Aims

Our aim is to reduce our 'carbon footprint' as consumers by promoting the local economy, supporting local businesses, artisans, designers, dressmakers etc. and in particular to support those businesses that show concern for how the products they sell were produced. In recognition of the fact that the raw materials in much of what we consume comes from 'developing' countries, we aim also to protect the livelihoods of those producers by promoting Fairtrade and supporting their communities in the transition to a lower carbon and more environmentally-friendly form of production.

Activities

The Local and Fair group first met with three members in November 2011 but by January 2012 the group had expanded to seven members, all of whom have been active up to and including the Big Day of Events on March 3rd.

Our efforts so far have focussed on Fairtrade Fortnight (Feb 27 – Mar 11) to raise public awareness of the issues and to involve the local business community.

We showed the film 'Black Gold' on the eve of Fairtrade Fortnight and held a Big Day of Events on March 3rd including:

- A stall outside Sainsbury's with a bicycle-powered Fairtrade smoothie-maker, a melted Fairtrade chocolate fondue with Fairtrade fruit and cookie dips, promotional flyers and raffle tickets
- A children's event in the library with a Fairtrade children's story and Fairtrade goodies to eat
- A fashion show in the Gautama bar promoting local vintage and second-hand clothing and accessories as well as clothes made with Fairtrade cotton. The event began with a talk by a visiting Ghanaian cocoa producer and ended with the auction of a Stella McCartney dress from the Cancer Research shop
- A Fairtrade wine and beer tasting at the Gautama bar with guest poet JJ

Funding

We secured £50 worth of vouchers from Sainsbury's, as well as use of their kitchen to melt chocolate, and £90 worth of vouchers from the Co-op, via the Lambeth Fairtrade group. We also received a number of free samples of Fairtrade food and drink from various companies, including a crate of beer from the Grape and Grain. Local people supplied us with the design of a flyer, music for the fashion show, and poetry and a DJ for the wine-tasting. We were loaned the bicycle-powered smoothie-maker and clothing and accessories from local shops and artisans, as well as clothing from Fairtrade trading companies.

Future events

During the coming year we'll be carrying out a number of activities to promote local businesses, local produce and Fairtrade. Many of these offer opportunities for working closely with the Food and Growing group:

- 12 May - World Fairtrade Day – picnic brunch at the Community Garden
- 16 June – Overground Festival – stall and activities for children
- Summer Olympics – persuading caterers to use locally sourced and Fairtrade ingredients
- Summer term – working with schools and promoting organic and Fairtrade cotton uniforms
- 1st September – Crystal Palace Peace Concert – activity to be decided
- Harvest Festival of local produce and Fairtrade (e.g. jams made with locally grown fruit and Fairtrade sugar)

We will be putting together a Directory of local shops stocking products that are ethically and sustainably sourced (Fairtrade, organic, re-cycled etc.) with a map to show where they are.

We will also be working towards making Crystal Palace a certified Fairtrade zone.

Skill gaps

Everyone brought their own expertise to the March event, including effective press and publicity work, food and cooking expertise, audio-visual and compering etc. but several people expressed their concern about a lack of understanding about how Fairtrade works. It might be useful to hold an event/seminar/discussion about Fairtrade and how it relates to the Transition Town movement, and possibly invite other Transition Town groups to participate. It was also felt that there was too much work for a few people at the core of the group and that more enthusiastic and active people were needed to join the group, so please come and join us!

Waste Group

The Waste & Recycling group formed in February 2012, and is focused on reducing the amount of waste generated in the community, from individuals and traders, to zero. We will be looking at recycling and upcycling, and anyone with any experience or interest in these areas is welcome to join the group.

Treasurer's report (Awaiting Verification)

	Jan - Dec 2011
Ordinary Income/Expense	
<u>Income</u>	
Gifts and Donations Income Unrestricted	
	273.04
Total Gifts and Donations Income	273.04
<u>Total Income</u>	273.04
<u>Expense</u>	
<u>Programme Expense</u>	
Event Costs	24.22
Film costs	150.42
Programme Expense - Other	13.00
Total Programme Expense	187.64
<u>Total Expense</u>	187.64
Net Ordinary Income	85.40
<u>Net Income</u>	85.40

Funding

In January 2012, our Steering Group applied for funding from London Borough of Croydon's Small Grants Fund to support our project which is:

"To build social capital and capacity in the local community by engaging a wide cross section of the community to participate in activities that will make Crystal Palace more resilient to environmental and economic challenges."

The fund was to set up by Croydon "to provide opportunities for local people and communities to come together, get organised and get things done", recognising that the ability of the community to respond to new and emerging needs plays a vital role in building a stronger society.

In April, we were awarded £2000 from the fund which will allow us to enhance, promote our events and raise greater awareness of the environmental and economic challenges that face us to a wider audience in more innovative and engaging ways which will encourage more people to become actively involved.