

# **Deep Adaptation To Climate Change**

## **How Our Bridport Community Can Respond**

### **Notes from Open Meeting, Dec. 3**

This meeting was convened by Alan Heeks to help an exploration of how the Bridport community can respond to impacts of the climate emergency. These notes aim to give the gist of the meeting, including potential next steps.

#### Who was there

The meeting was attended by over 60 people, including representatives from Transition Town Bridport, Extinction Rebellion, West Dorset Friends of the Earth, Plan B, Bridport Quakers, Unitarians, Town Council and Dorset community energy. The Bridport Community Allotment and United Reform Church sent apologies and asked to be kept informed.

#### Next Steps

The actions we discussed at the end of the meeting were:

- Alan to send notes of the meeting to all the organisations represented, to ask them to consider with their members if they can get involved in follow-up actions.
- Send notes to all individuals attending, to invite their offers and suggestions on follow-up actions.
- Provisional aim for a follow-up meeting in early February.

Proposals from Alan Heeks following the meeting:

These proposals are my own ideas, helped by discussion with a few individuals and organisations since the meeting. When you read through the notes from the small group discussions below, there are a large number of good ideas and pressing concerns . We need to be realistic about the capacity any of us have to put these ideas into action. Whilst we may hope that local organisations might take on some of these, being a member of several of them, I know they generally feel they are overstretched already.

In view of all this, I believe the next steps should include choosing a handful of issues and ideas to focus on, exploring where there is capacity to take this forward, and how all this might fit within existing organisations and frameworks. I believe this is preferable to starting a whole new organisation. My proposals on this basis are:

### **ISSUES TO FOCUS ON:**

#### **1) Food Security:**

I continue to see this as a major threat, but one where action is possible. In particular:

- Support Jyoti and her colleagues to buy and set up a farm teaching hub near Bridport
- Seek additional allotment land from Bridport Town Council and other local landowners
- Lobby Dorset Council to require food growing land in any major housing development (e.g. Vearse Farm)
- Research new cultivation methods and target crops to anticipate climate-related shortages of imported foods.

#### **2) School Outreach:**

I think we all resonated with the young adults at the meeting highlighting how schools are not preparing students for the climate emergency. Working with schools could be one of the best ways to achieve another aim we discussed, expanding involvement from our local community generally.

#### **3) Public Awareness and Engagement:**

We know that many people in Bridport are still in denial about climate change. Engaging them won't be easy: if it was, it would have already happened by now! The notes from the Outreach and Advocacy group below offer some creative ways to coax people in, and doubtless we can find more, and learn from best practice elsewhere.

#### **4) Mental Wellbeing**

This issue was raised by several people in the general discussion, and there was a lively small group exploring it. There have been various reports in the media over the past couple of years that climate change is already causing increasing issues around mental wellbeing, which are likely to increase significantly. I believe there is a lot of capability to support this issue in Bridport, as well as a lot of interest in doing so. Perhaps a small working group could be established to take this further. Along with the ideas mentioned in the small groups below, I'd like to offer a couple of other ideas:

- I'd be happy to offer a one day workshop in Bridport on the basics of deep adaptation, probably around March 2020
- I have a friend in Glastonbury, Jane Sanders, who is a psychotherapist with a specialism in eco-psychology, who is interested in developing a basic training on initial responses to mental wellbeing concerns around climate change, a bit akin to St. John's Ambulance. I could ask her if she could run a pilot training session with us in Bridport.

### **CAPACITY AND FRAMEWORKS**

My ideas on how to explore this are:

#### **1) Ask existing organisations**

Besides sending these notes to organisations represented at the meeting, I will contact them to ask if they can review with their members within the next few weeks if they can offer capacity, how much, and for what issues or initiatives.

#### **2) Call for volunteers**

If any of you who attended the meeting, or your contacts, can offer some time to help take some of this forward, please contact me. I will aim to coordinate these offers and start a draft action plan if possible.

#### **3) Talk to Bridport Town Council**

Bridport Town Council's *Climate Emergency Action Plan* could be a framework that we connect to and build on: it recognises that citizen engagement is crucial. I intend to seek a meeting with David Dixon in early January. If others would like to join me for this, please let me know. Here is the link to the Action Plan: <https://www.bridport-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Climate-Emergency-Action-Plan-FINAL-v5-following-Full-Council-approval.pdf>

### Introductory talk from Alan: excerpts

I'm not a climate scientist, but I've been working in sustainability for over twenty years. What's become evident in the past year or two is a series of self-reinforcing feedback loops which mean that the crisis is accelerating, and unpredictable. Examples of this are the increase in the rate of arctic ice melt, sea level rise, forest fires and more.

I won't labour the point: I'd like to focus on specific implications for us in West Dorset, especially in the next ten years. I should explain that I'm very involved in a particular framework for responding to Climate Change called Deep Adaptation. This was created by a UK academic and activist, Jem Bendell, who's also a leading policy advisor to XR.

Jem believes that alongside doing everything we can to reduce emissions and mitigate the crisis, we need to recognise that the scale of change needed to stop the temperature rising above 1.5 are unlikely to happen, and we need to look urgently at adapting to this. He believes that food supply will be the bigger impact in the next ten years, so let me give you a couple of specifics:

- In 2018, adverse weather caused a 20% drop in grain and vegetable production across Europe, and further declines in the next ten years are likely.
- The other big issue is Multi Breadbasket Failure; 23% of cropland globally produces 70% to 85% of the key staple crops; wheat, rice and maize. There's now a significant risk of climate related failure in several major producing countries in the same year, leading to severe global shortages.

So what could this imply for us here in West Dorset? It could mean shortages and major price inflation for vegetables, fruit, grains and meat.

The forecasts for food production in Southern Europe suggest production drops of 50% or more by 2050. Compared to that, the outlook for production in West Dorset is positive: we are likely to have plenty of rain, albeit more in torrential bursts, and plenty of sun, albeit in longer drought periods.

But there are ways to adapt production locally to cope with Climate Change, and to grow crops we import currently. The limitations on this are mainly economic – consumers may need to pay a premium now for crops which currently aren't price-competitive grown in our area.

I'm highlighting food security because I believe it's the biggest threat, but there are clearly others – such as food distinction in times of shortage, power supply, food risks, and we have people here tonight who can comment on these.

#### Briefing from Jyoti Fernandes

*Jyoti is an organic local food producer and involved with the Landworker's Alliance. Here are the key points from her briefing:*

- 30% of Emissions come from the Food System, in 3 main areas-
- 10% of emissions are directly from farming. This can be reduced by Agroecology, which also increases resilience.
- The supply chain contributes to a further 10% of emissions. If re-localisation was introduced it would mean there would be less need for transport, less packaging and would lead to more fruit & veg locally.
- The final 10% of emissions comes from the change in land use and animal feeds.
- Carbon can be sequestered with trees and/or pasture.

Jyoti told us that she and others are seeking to buy land near Bridport for a multi-enterprise sustainable demonstration farm. This will need financial help from the local community, e.g. a share issue.

#### SMALL GROUPS

After general questions and comments, we split into small groups to discuss several specific topics in more detail and consider what actions could be taken locally. The following sections are notes on the feedback from the small groups.

## Mental Wellbeing

Threats:

- Not being connected
- Unemployment rates rising
- Youth mental health
- Farmers' mental wellbeing

Actions:

- Sending support workers to farmers to ensure their wellbeing is being considered and looked after.
- Increased support for the youth e.g. in schools. Teacher can receive training in mindfulness and the education curriculum can be updated to reflect this.
- Create a decentralised system.
- Shops can declare themselves as Open & listening by displaying stickers in their windows.

## Food production

- It is evident that if food production is going to maintain or increase that more land is needed to facilitate this. Currently there are 56 county farms however this number is dwindling.
- Acquiring new land is difficult but can be achieved by landowners offering their land to farmers or campaigning for current farmers to keep their land.
- Once acquired, farms need to be run efficiently, they need to be managed by expertise – regarding which crops to grow based on the land.
- There also needs to be increased engagement with the farms e.g. people coming in to grow specific crops.

## Energy

- Ensure new houses being built are being built to a better spec so that they are more efficient.
- A policy change for listed buildings.
- Looking at increasing electric car charging points.
- Revise home heating which can lead to reduced heating poverty.

- Streams – reviving navitas.

### Societal breakdown

Economic:

- More apprenticeships can be offered to help combat unemployment and further education in certain industries.
- Encourage support of artisan trades people.
- Hold more fundraising events in support of local tradesmen and farms.
- Set up a labour exchange e.g. LETS
- Increase cashpoint machines so there is more access to cash, meaning more business for local tradesmen.

Fuel:

- Green transport needs to be prioritised which can be achieved by the distribution of biofuels and renewables.
- An increase in local transport, such as bus services, can help decrease the number of cars on the road and therefore the emissions.

Politics:

- Draw on good action that is already taking place, for example the work being carried out locally and internationally by Extinction Rebellion and some government policies.
- Increase community resilience.
- Revise planning rules – is it fit for purpose?

## OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY STRATEGY

Risks:

- Institutions and individuals are unprepared for the mental and emotional shift due to inadequate planning.
- As resilience is a difficult narrative, the idea that bad things are about to get worse is hard to sell to people. Therefore, the idea that a cultural shift takes time will need to be taken into account.

- Politicisation: There is a risk of having an 'Us vs. Them' mentality. Local governments need to involve the public more e.g. citizen assemblies.

### Audit what we've got

- More land is needed for local food growing. Sustainable, organic methods can feed the UK population: for more, see reports at [www.landworkersalliance.org](http://www.landworkersalliance.org)
- Jyoti and others are working to create a community farming hub in our area, which can train farmers and growers.
- Google Earth can be used to create a map of resources and the cohousing site can be used as a model for replication across the region.
- Organisations need to take action such as Schools, with the parents support and the Youth centre.
- Town Council: Climate Emergency Action Plan (£100k earmarked funds) as a starting point which needs scaling up.
- Twin Bridport with a drought affected community overseas.
- Compel developers to create allotments via social media and other campaigning.

### Review existing plans

- 'Joined up thinking': Askers Meadow, Riverside Gardens etc will need to prioritise food production and biodiversity within the area.
- A strategy will need to be put into place to avoid burnout: build on examples of best practice rather than repeat mistakes e.g. CLS Food Links.
- Support is needed from local consumers, both a willingness to pay some premium prices for fresh local produce, and capital funding for land purchasers.

### Engage people via our green spaces

- Events to draw people in, bring people together, start conversations, for example: throw public parties to sow verges with wildflowers, pollinator friendly fruit trees and plants.
- The town need to demonstrate what's possible e.g. lavender boxes at the bus station.

- As residents we can encourage the Town Council to persuade corporate sponsors to plan and plant for biodiversity, edible gardens.
- A Garden exchange can also be introduced: invitations to help cultivate fallow gardens etc in return for a share of the produce.

### Build other resources

- A MANIFESTO can be written as the basis for funding applications and other support
- A BRAND: suggestions included Refood Bridport, Feed Bridport, Planet Bridport, Garden Bridport
- A WEBSITE: a directory of issues, events, organisations to keep the wider community up to date with what's happening