

Henley in Transition Report to Henley Town Meeting 7th April 2016

Henley in Transition (HiT) was formed in 2009 by a group of about a dozen local residents. It now has a mailing list of approximately 275. There is no membership fee.

We seek opportunities for the community to collaborate in finding ways to move to a more sustainable local economy and to build resilience against shortages of key resources. Our eventual aim is to produce an Energy Descent Action Plan to point the way to Henley becoming a sustainable community, and in particular to becoming self sufficient in its energy use.

HiT is registered as an official transition town - see www.transitionnetwork.org/initiatives

Activities over the last year include:

Henley & Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan. Several of our number have spent many hours contributing to working groups and responding to consultations to try and ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan helps the town move to a more sustainable local economy.

Transport has been a particular concern. Having consistently argued through the Neighbourhood Plan and Oxfordshire's Local Transport Plan consultations for a Henley Transport Strategy to be developed, we were very pleased that a comprehensive Transport Study has been carried out and a Transport Strategy Group set-up.

Air Quality. It is estimated that as many as 60,000 premature deaths a year in the UK are caused by air pollution resulting from traffic. It is now recognised that Henley has a serious pollution problem thanks to representations made by HiT amongst others. We thought that a first step had been taken 2 years ago when, following a presentation by HiT, Henley Town Council passed a motion supporting the implementation of a Weight Restriction Traffic Regulation Order to exclude transiting HGVs from passing through the town centre. Unfortunately this was never translated into action. We continue to argue for local action to address the problem through various forums including the Transport Advisory Committee, Henley Town Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and the Transport Strategy Group.

Henley Car Club. This could free up car parking spaces in the town as well as promoting low emission vehicles such as electric cars. We have found that this is a viable option for Henley and are in the process of writing a report for submission to Henley Town Council. More info from Dave McEwen, email davemcewen@btinternet.com

Tilebarn Wood and other tree planting. Some 400 native trees have been planted on one acre by HiT to create public woodland at 40 Acre Field. This site has been leased to HiT by the Council, as a start to our Henley New Forest, a long term community woodland project. HiT has also worked with Gainsborough Residents Association led by Cllr Dave Eggleton and The Henley Wildlife Group on an estate-wide fruit tree planting project. HiT continues to work with partners to extend tree planting throughout the town. More info from Malcolm Dodds: malcolm.dodds@tiscali.co.uk

Plaques in honour of Humphrey Gainsborough and the Makins family. Last Spring Henley in Transition contributed to the installation of a plaque celebrating the engineering and inventive achievements of Henley's Non-Conformist minister, Humphrey Gainsborough, at the entrance to the Gainsborough Estate. A new plaque, recognising the lasting heritage to the town by the Makins family, is now nearing completion. This work has also been supported by SOHA, Gainsborough Residents Assn, Henley Archaeological and Historical Group and Henley in Bloom. Contact: Viv Greenwood, email: vivgreenwood@gmail.com

Henley Schools Environmental Science Competition (HSESC). After creating and managing this successful bi-annual primary school competition for many years, John Thornley has had to limit his involvement going forward. Henley in Transition have been pleased to take over the baton and work on the 2015-17 competition is already underway. Further information from the secretary, Dick Fletcher (dick@dickfletcher.com) or the HSESC website: www.hsesc.uk

Citizen's Climate Lobby. Ed Atkinson is leading a group to explore the practicalities of a Carbon Fee and Dividend Policy and then lobbying to take this forward in the UK. More info from Ed on ex.atkinson@btinternet.com

Ideas from an (almost) Passivhaus. Ian & Fi Petrie upgraded their ex-council house to high eco standards. It is a "Superhome"
<http://www.superhomes.org.uk/superhomes/henley-thames-88-vicarage-road/>
They are planning to have open days to show people the technologies that they have incorporated.

Quackaponics Ian Petrie has developed a system, combining ducks and growing beds, which he calls "Quackaponics". This is similar to Aquaponics where plants are fed with the water from a fish pond. The plants clean the water and it is returned to the fish. In Quackaponics the fish are replaced with ducks. If you would like to see the system then please email Ian on ian@the-petries.co.uk.

HiT work with various other local groups, including

Henley Allotments Assn, encouraging residents to 'Grow Your Own'

Henley Health and Wellbeing Group who provide free complementary health treatments at The Kings Arms Barn every Monday between 12 – 2.00pm. A healing glade has been planted in Mill Meadows.

Henley in Bloom to encourage the planting of trees to absorb traffic pollution and house plants to alleviate pollution indoors.

Henley Wildlife Group. The aim is to work together more closely in future. At present this is mainly done by encouraging members to support each other's projects.

We also work with other local sustainability organisations including:

SOS South Oxfordshire Sustainability, WATNEXT A Watlington group campaigning against pollution, Sustainable Wallingford and Transition Reading

Future Plans

We are actively looking at a number of projects, including

- A local green energy buying group
- Involvement of younger members of the community perhaps through a climate change computer game
- Involvement of older members of the community and/or schools in growing plants to reduce pollution or to meet some other need
- Beat the Streets. To encourage children to walk to school/ walk more. Each child has a pedometer/fob and records how far they walk during a week say. Competitions between pupils, classes and schools
- a Transition Blog

If you would like to get involved in any of the above or have ideas of your own to contribute then please contact Patrick Fleming, email flemings5@googlemail.com