

Summary of project/activity

A key aim of the SEACS project was to encourage and support behavioural change that leads to less energy consumption, lower fuel bills and more sustainable lifestyles. The Transition Together programme (also known as Transition Streets) was originally developed and piloted in Totnes, Devon. It provides practical guidance to self-help groups of people working together and sharing experiences in using less energy, recycling, benefits of buying local food etc.

Instead of trying to re-invent the wheel, it was decided to pilot the Totnes Transition Together programme in Dorset and also in Côtes d'Armor, Brittany



Objectives of the project

- To provide Transition Together tools and free resources to support small groups of people working together to save energy and live more sustainably.
- To share information and experience between Transition Together groups in Dorset and Brittany.
- To monitor energy savings and behavioral change through a questionnaire to be completed before and after participation in the Transition Together programme.

Methodology/approach

In January 2013 six members of Transition Town Dorchester and 3 other local people attended a 1 day training course in how to facilitate Transition Together groups. The training was provided by 3 trainers from Totnes Transition Streets and was part financed through the SEACS project. An electronic information pack containing marketing materials, projects plans and budgets for project delivery, spreadsheet templates to monitor behavioural change etc were provided as part of the training package.



The Transition Together guidance manual for the people participating in groups was originally only relevant to Devon (e.g. local links etc) and was published in 2011. Therefore needed an update before it could be used in Dorset. Members of Transition Town Dorchester completed this work over several months on a voluntary basis. A hundred manuals were then printed. Promotional posters and leaflets were also prepared. Following promotional activities, the first Transition Together groups in Dorchester were planned to start in March 2014.

Tools used, including those to reach target groups

- Updated Transition Together manuals, one provided free for each person who joins the each group.
- An 'eco kit' for each Transition Together group including an electricity monitor, demonstration water saving devices, etc.

- Promotional posters and leaflets including contact details for the overall co-ordinator

How was the project managed?

In Dorset, the project was initially set up and managed by the Dorset County Council SEACS community Energy Ambassador working closely with Transition Town Dorchester volunteers. In the latter half of 2013 the management was handed over to a new project, Communities Living Sustainably in Dorset (CLS-in Dorset), in order for it to continue beyond April 2014 when the SEACS project ends.

As a pilot, the CLS-in Dorset project decided to promote Transition Streets to all villages in Dorset during 2014 as part of an annual 'Best Village Competition' through a new category 'Best Environmental Village'. The scoring would be based on the evaluation forms completed at the beginning and end of Transition Together programmes run over several months in each village.

Who were the project partners?

Dorset County Council, Transition Town Dorchester, Communities Living Sustainably in Dorset.

How was it financed and much did the project cost?

In Dorset the training day and printing of the Transition Together promotional posters and leaflets was financed by the SEACS project with match funding from Dorset County Council. The combined cost of the above was approximately £1,500.

The cost of printing the 100 Transition Together manuals and the 'eco kits' was a further £1,500 and financed by the Big Lottery Communities Living Sustainably in Dorset project.

What were the lessons learned from the project?

- Initially there was a lack of knowledge about how the Transition Together programme operates. The training was designed to enable the attendees (members of Transition Town Dorchester) to facilitate new Transition Together groups. Facilitating groups includes attending the first meeting to help the group get started and to hand out the Transition Together manuals, behavioural change questionnaire etc. However, none of the trained facilitators had had direct experience of participation in a Transition Together group. This problem was solved by members of Transition Town Dorchester meeting up and working through

the first 2 chapters of the Transition Together manual as a group.

- Promotion of Transition Together by members of Transition Town Dorchester in Feb-March 2014 resulted in only a very limited response. Two main barriers were identified- how to bring a group of strangers together and the time commitment to participate in an extended project, as many people interested in environmental issues are already active in a number of other groups, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Transition Towns etc. Some people indicated that March was not a good time of the year to start a project based on indoor evening meetings. Therefore as the promotional leaflets, eco kits and updated Transition Together manuals are now available, members of Transition Town Dorchester have decided to launch an extensive promotional campaign in August and September 2014 with the intention of setting up several Transition Together groups to run over the winter period.
- Transition Together had not been included in the original SEACS budget; therefore there was a shortage of funding to deliver the project in Dorset. This problem was resolved through working in partnership with the Communities Living Sustainably in Dorset project, which was able to cover the cost of printing the manuals and is also in a position to continue the Transition Together programme after the end of SEACS.



Contact for further information. Links to website information

Communities Living Sustainably in Dorset

http://www.clsdorset.org.uk/Greener_Choices_How_To_Get_Involved.aspx

National Transition Together website

www.transitiontogether.org.uk

Case Study:

Transition Together in Dorset

www.seacs.info