

The response of civil society to climate change

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Executive summary

Civil society has responded to the issue of climate change. We estimate that there are between 2,000 and 4,000 community-based groups across the UK working on climate change. Much of this response is recent. The number of groups is growing rapidly. A survey by Friends of the Earth South West reveals that 40% of groups in the region have been formed since 2005.

The evidence on who is involved in such groups and in workplace activity is mixed, but the overall summary is (1) middle class and (2) middle aged – and older. There are as ever exceptions to these generalizations.

There is plenty of evidence that connections are being made through the three main activities that local associations undertake:

- Raising awareness
- Providing spaces where people can discuss climate change
- Stimulating practical action

There are five features of the response to climate change that could strengthen civil society:

1. The narrative concerning civil society's response to climate change is mostly inclusive
2. There is an enormous range of motivations: potentially something to attract almost everyone.
3. The emphasis on place (including workplaces) creates the potential to include everyone connected with that place. The fact that there are many practical things that people can do in that place also encourages them to work together.
4. Tackling climate change requires people to link up. Such association has several benefits, such as giving encouragement, supporting morale in other ways, and providing informal accountability.
5. The issue encourages people from different places, sectors and levels to link up

However, most of these features contain actual or potential weaknesses that could undermine their potential to strengthen civil society:

- The narrative emphasises some groups, such as elders, more than others. It may develop in ways which at best do not excite people and which at worst emphasise aspects such as techno-fixes that reduce the role for action by civil society. (This relates to paragraph 1 above.)
- Some motivations may not be strong enough to overcome either continued evidence of runaway climate change or the challenge to deep-held beliefs that responding to climate change may involve. (Paragraph 2)

- The people who start and lead civil society responses are ill-equipped to engage the great number of people whose motivations are likely to be very different. (Paragraph 2)
- Activity by civil society increases social capital, but it also relies on and builds on what was there before. Many of the most successful examples in this report are smaller rural towns and villages with relatively settled populations. Places with more transient populations may find it much harder. Inequality might increase if support goes to the places that seem likely to produce the best results. (Paragraphs 3 and 4)

The main additional barrier is a lack of resources. Only 15% of the groups in the South West had paid staff. This can single-handedly undermine several of the positive features above. It deters organisers from seeking to be inclusive, so that groups are not diverse. There may not be the time to develop deep links with local authorities etc. And so on.

Our recommendations include some suggestions on looking at creative ways to bring in extra resources. But our main recommendations are about areas worth further study:

- What causes the narrative of climate change to place more or less emphasis on action by civil society? How can the notion of tackling climate change as a 'Big Adventure' be encouraged?
- How can policymakers be encouraged to see that local action by civil society can create a sense of agency and association that makes people's responses to climate change in other arenas, for example national policy, much more positive?
- The motivations for so-called hard to reach groups, and to how to trigger those motivations. Young people would be an obvious group to study in this respect.
- What are the best ways of increasing people's sense of agency and association – of doing community development – so that they are able to respond more vigorously to the issue of climate change? This question seems particularly pressing in urban areas with transient populations.
- What can be learned from the experience of Local Agenda 21 groups such as Vision 21? A swift trawl of the internet uncovered absolutely nothing on this.

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1. Introduction

The Commission has noted, as have many other commentators, society's fragmentation. Nor is it alone in speculating that the response of civil society to climate change might reverse that fragmentation. Several contributors to *Non-Governmental Politics*, edited by Michael Feher, expressed this hope¹. Hence it has asked **nef** to research the issue.

nef's task has been to explore the potential in the response of civil society to climate change and what it will take to achieve that potential. Specifically, we were asked to look at:

1. The response to climate change of citizens (and how this varies by age, class and ethnicity)
2. The response to climate change of civil society associations. Which types will respond most?
3. How can this response be enhanced?
4. How can civil society associations improve citizens' responses – particularly those of the middle class and rich?
5. In what circumstances could these responses strengthen civil society?
6. How can the Inquiry make it more likely that these responses strengthen civil society?

Our approach has these features:

- We have sought a balance of breadth and depth
- We have concentrated on:
 - informal citizen groups and community organisations. Within the definition of civil society as 'associational life', we have also looked at: voluntary organisations; trade unions; and faith-based organisations.
 - links and relationships as much as entities, to cover the aspects of the topic which go by the name of 'social capital'. (We recall Enoch Powell's advice to Jeremy Paxman, when he was writing his book on British politics, to look at the wiring not just the appliances.)
 - instances of success. It is easy to find groups that find the going hard. Cathy Green of the One Tonners said that only 1 person in 30 that she approached on the streets of Cheltenham showed much interest in the environment. But it is the successes that reveal potential, even if fulfilling that potential is tough.

¹ See review by David Runciman in the 29th November edition of the *London Review of Books*: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n23/contents.html>

- We have looked at the issue of peak oil as well as that of climate change. Peak oil may well affect the UK more severely than climate change in the short run. It currently attracts much less interest than climate change, but the attention paid to it may rise. In 2007, the former Secretary of State for Environment, David Miliband, stated, 'The time is right to look at what it would mean for the UK over the period of 15 to 10 years to create a post-oil economy.'²

This report has four main chapters. Chapter 2 describes the response of civil society to climate change. Chapter 3 looks at the features of that response that could serve to strengthen civil society. Chapter 4 examines the factors that might inhibit such strengthening. Chapter 5 contains recommendations, particularly for further enquiry.

² Speech by Rt Hon David Miliband MP (5 March 2007), at Dr S T Lee Lecture on Public Policy at the University of Cambridge, "The transition economy: a future beyond oil?"

2. What is civil society's response to climate change?

Community groups in the UK working on climate change

We estimate that there are between 2,000 and 4,000 community-based groups across the UK working on climate change.

This is obviously rough and ready, but we can only get this far because of an outstanding piece of work by Friends of the Earth South West³ (FoE SW), who conducted a survey of the region in September 2007. They found almost 500 groups in the region working on climate change.

We combined that figure with the map that the Climate Outreach and Information Network (COIN) have created for the I Count website⁴. This shows 60 groups from in the South West, suggesting that roughly one group in eight (60/500) has registered. If that figure applied to the UK as a whole, the 500 groups in total on the I Count site would also be an eighth of the UK total, suggesting that there are 4,000 groups across the country. COIN themselves think that the South West could be over-represented on the site, and that it would be safer to assume that one group in four has registered. This gives a lower estimate of 2,000 groups.

Impressive as this is, one of our interviewees put it in perspective. Alan Piper, secretary of the Brixton Civic Society, told us, "in Brixton I identified 800 community groups, of all shapes and sizes, when I collated a database of groups for the community empowerment network of the LSP [the Local Strategic Partnership]."

Rapid growth in groups

The number of groups is growing rapidly. The Friends of the Earth survey reveals that 40% of groups in the South West have been formed since 2005. The first Transition Town plan was only developed in Kinsale in Ireland in 2005. At the end of 2006, there were ten Transition communities. There are now 29, with another 200 thinking about going through the official registration process.

³ 'A Movement of the People. Community Climate Action in South West England,' Sara Grimes, *Friends of the Earth South West*, October 2007

⁴ This website is the participative element of the Stop Climate Chaos campaign. The address of the website is www.icount.org.uk

Pen portrait of local groups

The September 2007 survey by FoE SW, referred to above, identified 'almost 500' groups, of which 267 completed a survey: This survey gives us the best picture of the nature of local groups:

- 61% have climate change as core part of their mission
- Average core members are 17; average occasional members 106. (It is worth noting that some have many more: Transition Town Brixton has 600 members.)
- Only 15% had paid staff
- Top activities are waste (e.g. recycling) (49%) and energy use (e.g. energy efficiency) (48%)
- As to types of group, 59% are independent, 30% are a chapter of a larger organisation (for example, Friends of the Earth), 8% are faith groups, and 3% are institutional (for example, a city farm)

The organisations to which we spoke illustrate these various types:

- Independent, e.g. Sunnymead Environment Group, which covers a few streets in Oxford, and the Really Use-Less Group of Ledbury in Herefordshire, to which the author of this report belongs
- Local branches of larger organisations, e.g. Friends of the Earth Camden
- Faith groups, e.g. Christian Concern for Oneworld in Reading, Quakers in Business
- Institutional, e.g. the Eden Project Foundation

Who is involved?

We came across examples of very wide involvement. Ashton Hayes is a village in Cheshire that has reduced its carbon footprint by 20% in a year. A startling 99.4% of households are engaged in 'environmentally-friendly behaviour'⁵ – although whether they see the connection with climate change has not been studied.

Caroline Malloy of the TUC described an event they held at the British Museum: "we had all types of workers come along – from management to security and cleaning staff. The man from the Carbon Trust said this was good because when he'd done stuff with management it hasn't really caught on to the rest of the workforce." Eoin McCarthy of Quakers in Business (QiB) echoed this in describing why the participants in a QiB conference on climate change were so diverse: "climate change is in your mind whether you are a lawyer or a petrol pump attendant."

Nevertheless, our overall impression was that most civil society activity was less diverse than this. Two interviewees used a newspaper analogy. One local government employee saw the civil society movement as predominantly middle class and middle aged - Guardian readers in shorthand. Adrian Dent described the membership of the CTC, the national association for cyclists, as, "Predominantly white, middle class and 75% male – a broadsheet rather than a red-top reader."

Even in an urban area as diverse as Brixton, the membership of Transition Town Brixton is largely middle class. Andrew Shadrake of Bovey Climate Action described their profile as 80% ABC1s.

⁵ <http://www.goingcarbonneutral.co.uk/Baseline%20survey/Gedssurvey.html>

If the middle class are engaged, this has in part been a matter of conscious effort. Andrew Shadrake said that their main achievement was connecting the issue with Middle England: making people in Bovey Tracey think climate change is not an issue for people with beards and sandals. He was pleased that the chair of the group is “respectable and besuited”.

A local government employee listed as two of the groups they had failed to reach, “the indigenous working classes” and “the rich/upper class, who have the highest carbon footprint – leaky large farmhouses, 4x4’s, outdoor swimming pools etc.” Tony Kendel, of the Eden Project Foundation, also felt that they were not reaching the wealthy, who were dependent on materialism and sheltered from the effects of climate change.

On the question of age, most members of Bovey Climate Action are over 50 and many are over 60. Young people are a ‘hard to reach’ group for them. More generally, there seems to be difficulty in Devon in engaging with young people, particularly those aged 18 – 25. Groups didn’t appear to be involving students – although there are two large universities in the county.

But the picture is mixed. Philip Pearson and Caroline Malloy from the TUC said:

The PCS (Public and Commercial Services Union) reported that when they had a meeting a few weeks ago with member activists to develop a green policy for next conference in the spring, they were turning people away. The assistant general secretary said that there was a whole new layer of people coming into these meeting who you don’t normally see, not the usual suspects, a new layer of energy. They are mostly young people, who are seeing the union as a place where they can really get engaged.

On ethnicity, Duncan Law from Brixton noted that they had been “not successful at all in engaging with BME communities or the Portuguese community in South London, the biggest in the UK. We have no capacity for effective outreach.” Thalia Carr from Reading Borough Council made the point that groups are often only hard to reach because they are not approached in the right way:

I think the hard to reach groups are BME groups and faith groups in Reading. For example I have sent all the BME groups, faith groups, all the church groups and the Tenants and Resident’s Associations an invitation to get involved in the climate group and not a single one responded. I think it was because I was coming from the Council, an outsider so to speak. If I had approached the faith groups via the Oxford Church groups that Concern is affiliated to I may have had a better response, I would be viewed as a trusted source. Interestingly in my council role I managed to reach a lot of young Mums from BME communities for the Real Nappies programme. I was engaging with them as mothers and not BME Groups.

We picked up few comments about gender. Duncan Law also said that Transition Town Brixton had failed to connect with mothers, but this has to be set against Thalia Carr’s example of success.

What groups do: awareness raising

Awareness raising makes small, initial connections with lots of people. The FoE SW survey showed that the main activity for 68% of the local groups in that region was ‘awareness raising events’.

Two of our interviewees from the south west gave specific examples of awareness raising. Tony Kendel from the Eden Project Foundation described how they move from the concrete to the abstract. Because they have the largest restaurant in the south west, they can start with the specific issue of food waste and move to recycling in general. Andrew Shadrake of Bovey Climate Action said that they produce “professional looking newsletters every two months. This drip, drip approach gets the message across to people.”

Awareness raising can also be much more informal. Elaine Steane of the Sunnymead Environment Group in Oxford said, about the issue of climate change, “It diffuses over the garden fence”.

This activity can affect civil society in two ways. First, it can lead to a greater shared awareness of the issue. Adrian Dent of the CTC said:

Our one minute cinema commercial promoting awareness of climate change issues through cycling⁶ was seen by 5.5 million people this summer. We distributed 10,000 DVDs including the film and climate change messages. We had over 50,000 page hits on our Cyclehero web site and were featured on over 1,500 other cycling and environmental web sites. We attended over 20 major national events with our Cyclehero exhibition stand and c.200 local events.

Secondly, some forms of awareness raising help people to connect. In this, they lead on to the activity described in the next section. Penny Morley from the TGWU (Transport and General Workers Union) commented:

I was in Eastbourne and as part of the course they showed An Inconvenient Truth. A number of them said they want to get a copy of that to take back to work and have lunch time seminars, to reach their own members. People on the courses get very enthused.

What groups do: create spaces for discussing climate change

Civil society is in part the arenas that exist for public deliberation. In relation to climate change, it seems that these do not emerge naturally: they have to be created.

Why is this? The ‘demand side’ was illustrated by Mandy Milano from J and M Sustainable Developers, who said that there was one respect in which climate change baffled her. When someone has cancer, they usually want to find out as much as possible about the disease and about possible cures. The earth is sick, but the same instinct doesn’t appear.

In relation to the ‘supply side’, she had herself been approached by members of the Cornwall Energy Partnership to help them communicate climate change in the county. She advised going to somewhere people come together and feel safe. So they developed pub quizzes⁷. Sometimes there has been a short quiz, followed by a talk by Mandy or a scientist and a discussion. Other times, the climate change quiz has replaced the regular quiz, and has taken up the whole evening. In that case, they have arranged a follow up talk, soon after, not too far away. Several people have told

⁶ See film on www.cyclehero.com

⁷ <http://www.climatechangesowhat.org.uk/ccswhtml/quizzes.html>

her how valuable they found it to hear directly from scientists and not to be talked down to.

Mandy partly answered her own question about why people don't engage more when she remarked that her talks challenge people's underlying belief structures, such as the need for economic growth. People no longer dissent in open forum, but they tackle her one to one afterwards.

nef has shared some of Mandy's experience when using Climatetalk, the climate change version of its Democs conversation game⁸. (Like the pub quizzes, this is funded by Defra's Climate Challenge Fund.)

Taking part can have a powerful effect. Appendix 1 describes the experience of a church home group near Reading. Guy Malkerson, a member of the Really Use-Less Group in Ledbury, said of his experience in taking part:

It helped us [the participants] connect with our values and why we are so driven to do something about climate change. Before we hadn't put our finger on it. We identified justice, because there's so much injustice in the world, like the droughts in Africa that are happening because of climate change, or flooding in Asia. This is all happening to people who are poor and don't have a voice. We do have a voice, our societies are arguably democratic, so we should be able to change things. We felt we were empowered by supporting eco-housing programmes and cutting our carbon footprint. All this made the people at the table feel connected – I'd only met one out of the other five before.

Because you've identified what it is that drives you, when you feel despairing because there seems nothing you can do, you can go back to why you're doing it.

On the other hand, getting people to take part in something unfamiliar can be hard. The author of this report vividly recalls a hall in Ledbury emptying as the late-running speakers from the Christian Aid Cut the Carbon March ended and the Climatetalk session began!

What groups do: practical action

Stimulating practical action naturally brings people together, as so much of it requires collaboration. Caroline Malloy of the TUC said, "There has been overlap between what people can do in their workplaces and homes – we invited in FoE and council officials to talk to people about tips about what they could do at work, but also in their homes. It wasn't just union members that came, but people that were interested in climate change."

Similarly, Transition Glastonbury:reported in the FoE SW survey that:

We recently held a very successful first ever Harvest Show which brought together many different sections of the community: WI, country market, local food suppliers, local food NGOs, children etc. We now plan to build on this by

⁸ To have a look at it, go to www.climatespace.org, select 'climatetalk' in the left-hand margin, then select 'game' from the horizontal menu at the top. The second post is called 'Downloading climatetalk'

holding a follow up food mapping event - we would like to encourage all the local cafes and B+B's in town to serve local food

The benefits of working together are shown by the hamlet of Waterrow in Somerset. Each of the scattered households used to order its oil independently, so oil tankers made separate trips for each delivery. As a result of looking at the issue while developing a parish plan⁹, the village set up a joint ordering process, so just one tanker comes in for everyone. This has meant cheaper delivery for local residents and less traffic.

The Commission is interested in whether civil society is generating and using its own knowledge in taking such action. Glastonbury and Waterrow above illustrate this. In addition, Andrew Shadrake, of Bovey Climate Action, gave the example of knowing that the local waste tip was a possible resource, because it was venting methane

Perhaps the clearest examples of generating and using local knowledge came from the unions. Caroline Malloy of the TUC talked about clean coal:

Going back two or three years to the TUC congress of 2005 the NUM (National Union of Mineworkers), supported by other unions, put forward a motion that the TUC should get in behind the development of clean coal. That's based on our own intimate knowledge through our affiliates of the importance of coal, and coal fired power stations, the way they operate and usefulness of the technology.

⁹ www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/Parish%20Plans%20Case%20Studies.pdf

3. Could the response to climate change strengthen civil society?

There are five features of the response that could help to strengthen civil society. We review each in turn.

1. The narrative is inclusive

Climate change has the potential to provide an inclusive narrative, because we are all affected and we can all do something about it. As Al Gore put it, at the very end of his acceptance speech for his Nobel Prize, awarded for his work on climate change over many years: “Let us say together: ‘We have a purpose. We are many. For this purpose we will rise, and we will act’.”

Tony Kendel of the Eden Project Foundation, one of our interviewees, said that the Foundation could have written a speech almost identical to that of Mr Gore. He also emphasised the importance of being positive in creating a narrative that will appeal to people. Their story is that climate change is ‘the Big Adventure’. The challenge is ‘how good can we be?’. He sees hope – though not optimism – as the engine of change.

Cornwall, where the Foundation is based, illustrates the need for such a narrative. It has been described as a county that has had a 150 year nervous breakdown. This is what happens, Tony said, “when the wheels come off big time and you lose all your primary industries”. The loss of employment leads to a loss of identity, of purpose, of a reason to live among the people that surround you, of the ability to relate to the geography around you. He thought this could be a forerunner of what the world as a whole will have to go through. The Foundation seeks to reinvent the community narrative, through cultural events and other activities.

2. There is an enormous range of motivations

Quotes from our interviewees show the enormous range of motives for engaging with the issue of climate change. Adrian Dent of the CTC said, “I think different people are motivated in different ways. There are numerous different ways you can become interested and involved in the issue.” Penny Morley of the TGWU said:

What motivates [our members] is a lot of different things, like social justice and equality. Its complex, I mean a lot of our members have children and they're thinking about that too. It's a big issue in all workplaces, whether it's coming from the employer because they have to look at their emissions, or coming from their kids because they're doing it at school.

Adrian Dent also showed how climate change sceptics could be reached:

There are a number of people out there who are deniers and still refuse to believe that Climate Change exists or that humans are in any way responsible (5 to 7% of our members in a recent survey). They seem to be quite a cross section of society, though on the whole I would anecdotally profile them as being male, older, lower class and, less educated – though this is clearly a big generalisation. I have had many – sometimes heated conversations with some of these people and to be honest am at a loss as to how to change their attitudes. I work on the basis that if I can't persuade them to cycle and adapt their behaviour more for climate change, then I encourage them to cycle more anyway – it still has a positive benefit.

A more theoretical approach also suggests that there is a possible motive for almost everybody. One simple framework for understanding the variation in people's responses, based on their values and attitudes, is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. **nef** helped to develop it, but it has been popularised by Pat Dade of Cultural Dynamics¹⁰:

Group	Motivated by	How to present changes in lifestyle that reduce carbon emissions	% UK pop.
Settlers	Security, belonging and identity	Safe Living	21
Prospectors	Success, self-esteem and esteem of others	Smart Living	44
Pioneers	Inner directed, with a desire to explore the new	Ethical Living	35

Ged Edwards' research¹¹ in Ashton Hayes found a range of motivations that included 'saving money', which is mainly a Settler concern, and 'seeing environmentally friendly behaviour as a moral responsibility', which comes mainly from Pioneers.

Most of the people who start and lead civil society groups are Pioneers. A clear example is provided by Liz Lainé, co-ordinator of Camden Friends of the Earth:

My motivation is a moral belief that we are not free to consume the planet's natural resources without thought for who might suffer. To act against it [over-consumption] is an act of social justice, just as it would have been right to act against the slave trade. I would hope then I would boycott sugar and push for its abolition against the sceptics who claimed capitalism would suffer as a result of abolishing the slave trade, it didn't. In this day and age I choose not to fly as a stand for environmental justice.

Another example comes from Jonathan O'Farrell from Ibstock Does Climate Change¹². He stated that he got involved with the issue of climate change because it supported his veganism – his form of ethical living:

I have been a [member] of The Movement for Compassionate Living for I guess 15 years or so and we have been going on about trees, diet, the environment, for yonks. It's just got extra vital just now and fashionable to boot!

¹⁰ Stephen Hounsham, Painting the Town Green, How to persuade people to be environmentally friendly, Green-Engage, 2006, p9 [AVAILABLE ON-LINE AT ??]

¹¹ <http://www.goingcarbonneutral.co.uk/Baseline%20survey/Gedssurvey.html>

¹² www.e-voice.org.uk/ibstockclimatechange

Most local groups, which as we have seen are likely to have no staff, have no existence independent of their membership. But it is worth looking at the motives of national organisations. Here too we find that climate change is such an encompassing issue that there are many reasons to engage with it. The table below, drawn from work by **nef** for Oxfam, shows the variety of issues – and hence the organisations that work on them – that are affected by climate change:

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Threats and opportunities from climate change and peak oil</i>
Rural poverty	Oil price rises increase the cost of transport and heating. But decentralized energy systems can introduce new sources of income.
Food security	Oil price rises will also raise food costs because of the dependence of agriculture on fossil fuels
Health	Climate change raises the risk of flooding. Those whose homes were flooded in Lewes East Sussex in 2000 experienced a four-fold increase in psychological distress compared to those whose homes were not affected. Stress of this nature is associated with increase risk of hypertension, heart disease and diabetes.
Regeneration	Locally grown organic seasonal fruit and vegetables are most energy efficient and could provide affordable healthy food and improve community cohesion. The very name of 'Growing Communities' in Hackney illustrates the link between food and regeneration.
Job creation	The European Commission predicts that 900,000 new jobs will be created in renewable energy systems across Europe by 2020. ¹³
Transport	The Cornwall Food Programme, which brings together the Soil Association and the Royal Cornwall Hospitals Trust has reduced the Trust's food miles and their associated carbon emissions by two-thirds.

Organizations that do not see climate change as their core mission are increasingly seeing that working on climate change is important to that mission. Adrian Dent of the CTC said in our interview, "More bums on saddles helps promote cycling and helps the climate." Development NGOs joined the Climate Change and Development Working Group, co-convened by **nef**, through fear that global warming could threaten attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, and even reverse achievements in human development. Shelter is starting work on climate change in the shape of a review of how flooding could affect low income families.

3. It's about place

Most of the groups that have been set up to tackle climate change have a place as part of their name – Bovey Climate Action for example. Those involved see a *local* response as an essential part of the overall response to climate change. Duncan Law of Transition Town Brixton emphasised that the aim of the Transition Town movement is to localisation, as a counter to globalisation.

As with narrative, this factor creates the potential to be inclusive, to include everyone connected with that place. Two communities illustrate that potential. Modbury is a small town in south Devon which on 1st May 2007 became the first place in the UK to

¹³ European Commission, Directorate General for Energy, *The impact of renewables on employment and economic growth* (undated).

become plastic bag free. Rebecca Hosking, the wildlife filmmaker who led the campaign, said, "I think the reason this has worked in Modbury is because I am local and people know me"¹⁴. She once saw a builder she had been at school with in the supermarket, buying his beer and cigarettes. "Oh bugger", he said, as she spotted him pulling out his cotton bag from his trouser pocket, caught out doing the right thing.

Ashton Hayes is a village in Cheshire that has reduced its carbon footprint by 20% in a year. A startling 99.4% of households are engaged in 'environmentally-friendly behaviour'¹⁵. They may not necessarily have connected their behaviour with climate change, but, in a survey of 56 households who hadn't yet got involved in tackling climate change, 80% declared themselves interested in the topic. In addition, 35% of residents have become more actively involved in village life through the project.

An illustration of the emphasis on place and its potential for increasing community pride is provided by the number of places that, following Modbury, want to be first at something. Early in 2008, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall was televised trying to make Axminster Britain's first town to eat only free-range chicken. In addition:

- Ashton Hayes aims to be "England's first carbon neutral village"
- Bishops Castle in Shropshire wants to be the first incandescent bulb free community,
- North Leigh, in west Oxfordshire, aspires to be the first village labelled "energy efficient"¹⁶.

It is worth reiterating that this chapter is about potential. Whether it can be fulfilled everywhere is something to which we return in the next chapter.

Not only are there many opportunities to act in one's place, they also encourage people to connect. Duncan Law from Brixton that, "A lot of members now read information and make changes to their own lives such as riding bikes more etc. and telling their friends and families about peak oil and its consequences." And a man in Lancashire with a domestic wind turbine said, "I tell people all the time that I generate my own electricity. I love it. I think it's fascinating."¹⁷

There is potential in workplaces also. We asked Penny Morley of the TGWU, "Do you think that climate change will change members' bargaining position vis-à-vis management and the industry sector?" The reply was:

That's what we're trying to do, to try to get a deeper penetration into workplaces, to try to get this on the bargaining agenda. We had a seminar recently on adaptation. We've got members in the insurance industry, and the fire brigade – in the floods, so there's issues that have to be addressed about adaptation now. We do see it as a bargaining agenda issue. We had debates over the years about if an employer starts to save quite a lot of money through energy efficiency, should there be a more equitable distribution of some of the money. It could be a third, third, third (a third to a project, third to workers and third to employer). This hasn't really taken off, because management don't see it as something that they should share.

¹⁴ <http://www.plasticbagfree.com/press.php>

¹⁵ <http://www.goingcarbonneutral.co.uk/Baseline%20survey/Gedssurvey.html>

¹⁶ www.tvec.org.uk/case_studies.asp

¹⁷ Hub Research Consultants, *Seeing the light: the impact of micro-generation on the way we use energy*, Sustainable Consumption Roundtable, October 2005, p7

4. Tackling climate change requires people to link up

David Ballard, an expert both in climate change and in action research, proposes a simple model on what leads to attitude and behaviour change¹⁸ that we have taken the liberty of turning into a formula:

Association * Awareness * Agency = Attitude and behaviour change (in favour of tackling global warming)

This can be written more algebraically as $A^3 = ABC$

Note that the multiplication signs mean that if any element is zero, the left-hand side of the equation multiplies to zero and no (or a negative) attitude or behaviour change takes place.

Agency is defined as 'the felt sense of being able to do something meaningful in response to climate change'. It is shown by a survey carried out by the Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee¹⁹, in which 92% disagreed with the statement, "There is nothing much I can do to improve the environment". The value of agency was revealed when we asked Duncan Law from Transition Town Brixton what motivates people - his reply was, "The feeling of making a difference".

David Ballard explains how 'association' supports 'agency':

On huge issues such as climate change or absolute poverty, most things that are 'meaningful' are very difficult unless we do them with others. Association with other people can support wavering willpower and can bring a variety of perspectives to an issue and so lead to better decisions.

Two cards from the Climatetalk conversation game described above contain quotes that illustrate the value of acting with others. The first is about morale, the second about the informal accountability that groups provide:

- *"Now I have started changing the way I live in the company of others, I feel I am doing what I can and I feel OK when I see news reports that would have overwhelmed me before."*
- *"My commitment to the group to change the remaining light bulbs in our house to energy saving helped me do something I had been meaning to do for months."*

Adrian Dent of CTC described a third benefit, encouragement:

- *Many members have written to me to say they are actively trying to cycle more rather than drive the car and are encouraging friends to do the same in the interests of reducing carbon emissions.*

Ged Edwards' research²⁰, described above, on motives in Ashton Hayes, found three, out of his total of six, which were about association:

1. friends and family encouragement,
2. being part of a community-based programme
3. pride in Ashton Hayes

¹⁸ David Ballard, *Using learning processes to promote change for sustainable development*, Action Research (Special Issue on Change for Sustainable Development), Sage Publications Volume 3 Issue 2, June 2005 See www.alexanderballard.co.uk for more.

¹⁹ http://www.tuc.org.uk/sustainableworkplace/Prospect_Environ_lft.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.goingcarbonneutral.co.uk/Baseline%20survey/Gedssurvey.html>

5. The issue encourages people from different places, sectors and levels to link up

Two academics²¹, reflecting on social capital in the context of sustainable development, take the existing two categories suggested by Robert Putnam:

- Bonding – connections within communities
- Bridging – connections between communities

And suggest adding a third category:

- Bracing, “which is primarily concerned [with strengthening] links across and between scales and sectors, but only operates within a limited set of actors. It provides a sort of social scaffolding.”

Our evidence is that this sort of scaffolding is just starting to emerge. Philip Pearson and Caroline Malloy of the TUC said:

It's true that UK unions have not been working very closely with environmental groups. Some TUC affiliates are affiliated to Stop Climate Chaos, like PCS and Unison, and involved in iCount. The TUC itself isn't. but we have strong local links, with the greening the workplace pilots. Caroline's has gone out of her way to make contacts with local FoE groups in the boroughs where these projects are taken place. For example, the British Museum is one of our demonstration projects. When we launched the project we had FoE Camden come. There are links made, but we haven't systematically made strong links with environmental groups.

The first county-wide meeting of local groups working on climate change in Herefordshire took place only in November 2007. Adam Shadrack told us that Bovey Climate Action is a member of the Dartmoor Circle – 13 climate action groups in the Dartmoor National Park area. His group catalysed the coming together of this group. But he felt that there was a lack of county, regional and national level networks.

The most effective nation-wide network seems to be the Transition Town movement. In the FoE South West survey, this was referred to more often than any other. 11 groups had it in their name, and 22 others referred to it.

Turning to the links between civil society groups and local government, Ian Hutchcroft from Devon County Council said that the Council responded to individual groups working on climate change on an ad hoc basis. The council might provide advice, access to technical research, or grant funding. Individual County Councillors have a budget of £10k to spend on their ward and some use this to support such groups. He was also able to name a number of non-profit organisations with which the council work on various aspects of carbon reduction, including:

- Envision, to deliver advice to businesses on energy saving
- Renewable Energy for Devon and the Devon Association for renewable Energy, to support the renewable energy sector
- Groundwork
- Global Action Plan
- West Country Energy Action

²¹ Rydin, Yvonne and Nancy Holman, Re-evaluating the Contribution of Social Capital in achieving Sustainable Development, Local Environment, Volume 9, Number 2, April 2004, pp. 117-133(17)

The council sees all of these as learning organisations who are not simply contractors for delivery but real partners. But it was still looking for higher level partnerships as well.

Duncan Law reinforced the point that there is not simply a one-way flow of expertise and resources from councils to civil society. The Transition Town movement has a lot of technical information on Peak Oil. Local authorities rely on it. In Lambeth, the council's cabinet had invited Transition Town Brixton for an hour long meeting to learn about the issues.

4. What could stop the response from strengthening civil society?

Most of these features, promising though they be, contain actual or potential weaknesses that could undermine their potential to strengthen civil society. We review these before turning to other barriers.

The narrative may be exclusive

There are perhaps three dangers:

1. Inclusive as it, the narrative covers some groups more explicitly than others. For example, the Transition Town movement puts emphasis on connecting with the older generation who have experience of an economy and society less reliant on oil than ours is.
2. The narrative may develop in ways do not excite people. Tony Kendel gave the example of the widely-used footprint metaphor. Footprints are something to be minimised. People are being told that the best thing they can do is vanish. This message is a long way from the Eden Project Foundation's wish to challenge people to leave the situation better than they came to it.
3. Even more serious would be a narrative that concentrates on features such as techno-fixes that reduce or eliminate the role for action by civil society

People's motives, though wide, may not go deep enough

People's motivations may not be strong enough to overcome inertia, continued evidence of runaway climate change or the challenge to deep-held beliefs that responding to climate change may involve. This is particularly true where people do not have a sense of agency or others to collaborate with.

The following blog²², from the website of Greener Colwall, in Herefordshire, is a reminder not to be too optimistic:

I did a survey of people's attitudes to climate change during Colwall Fund Day, before having to give up because my survey sheets were getting soaked and all the text was running off! I didn't find anyone who really was a climate sceptic – I think the message really has got across and people are seeing the effects in the weather they are experiencing. However, I found very few who were prepared to do anything serious about it, and a definite feeling that they were fed up with the whole topic. Perhaps the rain didn't help! Typical answers included, 'I'm doing what I can – isn't this enough?' 'I'm too old for it to affect me' and 'This is all being over-hyped'.

²² <http://greener.colwall.info/blog/?cat=5>

Leaders may be ill-equipped to engage people with different motives

Equally serious is the problem that the people who start and lead civil society responses, who are mostly Pioneers, are ill-equipped to engage the great number of people whose motivations are likely to be very different.

This is well illustrated by the advertisements of the US Detroit Project, designed to deter Settler Americans from buying and using SUVs. One advertisement says that SUVs use lots of gas, that gas dollars go to Arabs, and that some of this is likely to go to terrorism. So America will be safer if they buy less gas and avoid SUVs. Most people reading this report will find this distasteful or besides the point. The trouble is that Settlers react similarly to the way that Pioneers put things across.

The emphasis on place and the requirement to link up

Activity by civil society increases social capital, but it also relies on and builds on what was there before. Many of the most successful examples in this report are smaller rural towns and villages with relatively settled populations. In South East London, the members of a time bank have responded with particular vigour to the issue of climate change. But this may be the exception that proves the rule. Their sense of agency and association is likely to have been increased by their membership of the time bank.

We asked Penny Morley of the TGWU about reports that trade union members are on the whole more positive than most people about the role they can play in taking environmental action. She replied:

I think they're positive about being able to do something, I think people get involved in unions because they think they can do something. They don't want to just...the manager tells you what your pay rise is and that's it, they already have a mindset of challenging. They want to have an engagement about what goes on in their workplace, so I think it's a reflection of that, how they see the role of themselves in wider society, from us, I think it varies more with white collar unions, but for us the health and safety issue as a driver was very strong. People saw things going on in the workplace that they feel they should be demanding from their employer, and they see it [climate change] in a similar way.

Hence there is a danger that support will go to the places that seem most likely to respond most actively: 'to them that hath shall be given'. This could contribute to increasing inequality of social capital.

The lack of resources

The main additional barrier is a lack of resources. Only 15% of the groups in the South West had paid staff. Carolyn Wilde of the Cheshire Federation of Womens Institutes has been promoting Climatetalk as a route to setting up the Ecoteams promoted by Global Action Plan. But she struggles to find the time: "my garden has gone to rack and ruin".

Alan Piper of the Brixton Civic Society illustrated the consequences of this lack:
A lot of groups ask the committee members for their time and advice on other issues such as social network projects/ individual and family projects/youth activities. So this is one pressure on us; the demand from other groups seeking our advice. Climate change has therefore dropped from our radar as we are so stretched for time and resources.

This factor can single-handedly undermine several of the positive features above. First, it deters organisers from seeking to be inclusive, so that groups are not diverse. Duncan Law said that he only had time to engage with people who were likely to be active. When Andrew Shadrake of Bovey Climate Action said that one of their hard to reach groups was young people, he added that the group felt that that was the young people's problem, not theirs. Another hard to reach group for them was people who don't use the internet. With resources being short, they rely heavily on the internet for their communications.

This in turn brings the danger that groups tend to link with other like-minded groups, perpetuating a static type of social capital, and not creating the 'bracing' capital described above.

Secondly, there may not be the time to develop links with other initiatives, with local authorities, and so on. This may lead to a lack of infrastructure to support new and more fragile groups.

There's a depressing precedent

There are some parallels to draw with Local Agenda 21 (LA21), the movement that began after the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992²³. There was rapid growth, both in the number of groups working on the issue and in the size of some of those groups. Take the case of Vision 21 in Gloucestershire, a local voluntary organisation to which the county council handed the responsibility for LA21. By 1999, Vision 21 was able to set a budget for £100,000 in cash, and £250,000 as the value of the time that volunteers were putting in. But, not long after, LA21 was subsumed into the government's new community planning framework, and quietly expired.

The parallels between these two movements should not be pushed too far. LA21 was primarily led by local government: the response to climate change comes more from the grassroots. Duncan Law asserted, "the Transition Town movement is the most powerful movement I have ever seen. This is because of the emphasis on non-hierarchical action and a strategic outlook." Climate change also provides a sharper focus than overall sustainability, the theme of LA21, and also a greater sense of threat. But one of our interviewees remarked sceptically that the people involved with transition towns "are the ones who talked LA21 into the ground, and now they're talking climate change into the ground".

²³ "The document enigmatically known as Agenda 21 was the 'global action plan' for sustainable development that was agreed at the 1992 Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, and Local Agenda 21 was the mechanism that emerged as a means of implementing much of this plan. Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 outlines the objectives of Local Agenda 21 (LA21) and the actions required. In particular, local authorities should enter a dialogue with their citizens, local organizations and private enterprises and adopt a LA21." B. Evans et al, *Governing Local Sustainability*, Journal of Environmental Planning and Management, Vol. 49, No. 6, 849 – 867, November 2006, p852

5. Recommendations on further enquiry and on resources

Questions worth further study

- What causes the narrative of climate change to place more or less emphasis on action by civil society? How can the notion of tackling climate change as a 'Big Adventure' be encouraged?
- How can policymakers be encouraged to see that local action by civil society can create a sense of agency and association that makes people's responses to climate change in other arenas, for example national policy, much more positive?
- The motivations for so-called hard to reach groups, and to how to trigger those motivations. Young people would be an obvious group to study in this respect.
- What are the best ways of increasing people's sense of agency and association – of doing community development – so that they are able to respond more vigorously to the issue of climate change? This question seems particularly pressing in urban areas with transient populations.
- What can be learned from the experience of Local Agenda 21 groups such as Vision 21? A swift trawl of the internet uncovered absolutely nothing on this.

Resources

Practical help that would support civil society groups would include examples of imaginative ways of bringing in money. For example:

- Vision 21's budget of £250,000 of volunteer time provided match funding for grant applications.
- Bovey Climate Action gets £15 for each person they persuade to switch to EcoTricity as their energy supplier, under the Big Switch campaign
- Local, verified, decarbonisation projects, linked to carbon offsets.

Also valuable would be ideas on how groups can avoid the need for money by trading skills and resources. This could draw on the experience of LETS (Local Exchange Trading Systems), which like Local Agenda 21 flourished and then withered in the 1990s.

Appendix 1 Climatetalk with a church home group

A reflection by Thalia Carr, Reading Borough Council

On November 16th 2006 people from one of the church home groups of St Barnabus church Emmer Green met together, as they do every month, in the home of one of their members.

On arrival tea and coffee was served and everyone chatted and exchanged news. These people have been meeting not only at church on Sundays but also during the week in the evening once a month for several years. They meet to read the bible and pray and share each other's company. Very often in these meetings they are challenged by what they read – maybe to show justice, to care more for their neighbour etc. They are used to responding to such challenges.

At this meeting I had been invited to play Climatetalk with the group. I introduced the theme of climate change with some very powerful images produced by Tear Fund of people and places suffering the effects of climate change. We then went on to play the game. As everyone knew everyone else they were happy to talk and talk they did. In fact it was really difficult to keep them to time.

The exciting part for me was when we got to the 'I, we, they' part of the evening. [This is about what 'I' and 'we' and 'they' can do to tackle climate change.] Firstly, in order to do the 'I' part married couples moved so that they were sitting together – previously they had not necessarily been sitting together. They then took the task very seriously. Every one was at different stages. One couple had really done everything they could – reducing travel, super insulating their house etc. but they decided they would suggest to the curate that he could play the game with the young people's group. Another couple had done almost nothing but were saying 'We could try some of those new type of lights out, couldn't we?'. Those who were single joined with others to complete the 'I' part; it felt more natural that way. There was a real acceptance of each other and willingness to encourage and help each other.

I think some of them had never thought of themselves in relation to climate change at all. I saw them thinking about 'I' in a way they hadn't before - some people starting the climate change awareness journey and others realising that they could go further than they had.

Appendix 2 Ashton Hayes

The website of the Going Carbon Neutral project²⁴ declares:

The Cheshire village of Ashton Hayes (pop. 1000 approx.) is aiming to become the first small community in England to achieve carbon neutral status. We want our children and future generations to know that we tried to do our bit to stem global warming and encourage other communities to follow suit.

The project is led by the parish council and was launched in January 2006, when 400 people, an astonishing proportion of the total population, attended a public meeting. The main activities have been to:

- Survey the village in June 2006, revealing that its total carbon emissions were 4,765 tonnes per year. With about 370 houses in the village this gives an average of 12 to 13 tonnes per house per year, slightly above the UK average of about 10 tonnes per house.
- Repeat the survey a year later, showing that emissions had fallen by an impressive 20%. The reduction in energy use and carbon emissions from homes was attributed to people turning lights off, not leaving appliances on standby and installing insulation
- Help the village school to instal a wind turbine. This acts as a demonstration project for the villagers.
- Encourage householders to instal solar thermal water heating systems
- Encourage Chester to set up a Carbon Reduction Programme - known as CRed Chester. This provides a 'personal pathway to reducing carbon dioxide emissions' and every citizen in Chester is to be given pesonal access to this system.
- Investigate options for producing their own renewable energy
- Encourage the local pub, the Golden Lion, to aim to become carbon neutral
- Produce a 15 minute film called "Our Footprint, our journey". The film and the project won the International Visual Communication Association (IVCA) Clarion award
- Encourage the schoolchildren to produce a carbon neutral rap. They then performed it at the premiere of the film
- Make a 'carbon neutral' twinning arrangement with the community of Castlemaine in Australia

²⁴ www.goingcarbonneutral.co.uk

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