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Stroud Communiversity

Building Vibrant Communities

1st – 6th August 2008



Vision into Action

“Learning is like muck – the more you spread it around, the more growth there is!”

A growing stream of people visit Stroud to learn from an increasing range of innovative projects such as Stroud Community Agriculture and Springhill Co-Housing. These projects have become inspiring ‘thought leaders’ provoking people to develop questions to further their own exciting projects. Visitors want to share what they are doing, their learning and their questions. This first Communiversity is our response. We want to welcome people similarly engaged from all over the country to build a community of practice. Learning will be through practical talks, discussions, workshops and visits to local projects, with the opportunity to develop personal projects and visions through action learning. Each day will start with singing or movement (optional), followed by a themed presentation and discussion. There will be further work in small groups in a more practical second session. After a buffet lunch of local wholefood provided by Star Anise Arts Cafe, there will be study visits to working projects in Stroud. The teatime slot will be facilitated action learning groups of 7-10 people using a ‘conversation cafe’ for reflecting on the day and offering space for each participant to develop their idea, vision or project. There will also be some Open Space for networking and exploring common questions.



Do you have a project idea you long to develop and clarify? Stroud Communiversity is your opportunity to meet and learn from people similarly engaged from all over the country who are working for a more sustainable and vibrant way of life.

Stroud Communiversity is for

- People with innovative ideas who want to make a difference
- Economic development enablers
- Community based organisations developing initiatives
- Community leaders, councilors, transition town activists
- Green and environmental organisations and groups
- Farmers and community groups interested in community supported agriculture and coop business development.
- People wanting to develop permanently affordable homes through community land trusts
- People wanting to share learning from their work



“We share the sense of urgency around global challenges and the developing visions of how to respond locally. Stroud Communiversity gives us the opportunity to exchange ideas and practical experience, and to then spread this far and wide”

Programme

■ Saturday 2nd August Creating a Sustainable Local Food Economy *led by Jade Bashford.*

Drawing on her extensive experience of working in the local food sector, Jade Bashford will examine what needs to change in the food system and why. Through presentation and group discussion she will explore how to change it, looking in detail at some key case studies. In the afternoon there will be a visit to Stroud Community Agriculture followed by Ebb & Flow's Reed-bed system at Hawkwood College.

■ Sunday 3rd August Land For People & Affordable Homes *led by Martin Large and Greg Pilley.*

Starting with an examination of Community Land Trusts and their role in creating affordable housing, Martin Large will then lead a discussion on Farm Land Trusts. Both sessions will be informed by experience in Stroud with Gloucestershire Land for People. In the afternoon, we will visit the only new-build cohousing project in the UK – Springhill - and see some of the homes and residents there. A mini workshop will be held on cohousing - a unique way of balancing intentional community and privacy which started in Denmark 35 years ago and has since spread over Europe and North America.

■ Monday 4th August Living Lightly in Our Environment *led by Molly Scott Cato and Helen Pitel.*

How would we meet our needs if we perceived the world as a closed-loop system? Molly Scott Cato and Helen Pitel will explore how we can create sustainable human homes and gardens by following nature's patterns. They will examine ways of

creating our own domestic solutions to local and global problems. By combining systematic thinking with localised, small scale solutions we can begin to develop an approach

to solving problems in an uncertain future. The afternoon visit will look at Ruskin Mill where real and practical solutions are being evolved. Here we can begin to grasp something of the social, spiritual and practical synergies that need to occur in our journey towards a sustainable future.

Evening Events

■ Friday 1st August Welcome and Keynote Speech

Following a sumptuous Buffet courtesy of Star Anise Arts Cafe, Stroud Communiversity will officially begin with a keynote address from a special guest speaker. Martin Large will then provide an overview of the following five days.

■ Saturday 2nd August Stroud Communiversity Celebration

Featuring a feast of local talent ranging from dub through funk to folk and blues, this evening will be an opportunity to sample some of Stroud's finest musicians accompanied by a wide variety of local drinks including award winning beer from Stroud Brewery.

■ Monday 4th August Transition Stroud Presentations

A chance to hear about the innovative work of the group of Transitioners working to promote, support and facilitate projects that actively engage with solutions for a sustainable future.

■ Tuesday 5th August Stroud Valleys Artspace Social

Following supper in local restaurants, participants will be invited back to Stroud Valleys Art Space for drinks and a unique networking event with Bar and Music and a highly participatory group painting taking centre easel.

■ Tuesday 5th August Work, Livelihood & Money

led by Max Comfort.

After a foraging expedition into the town to collect collage material, there will be a workshop on the subject of work and why we do it: what is the future of work? will office blocks disappear in 20 year's time? will we all be self-employed? This is followed by an interactive debate on thriving sustainably in a society where many of our core values are at odds with a "System" that contains and supports huge monolithic corporations. After lunch, we will visit Stroud Valleys Art Space - a centre for the thriving Stroud art scene - and the Exchange - an example of social enterprise in the making, where socially-focused organisations vital to the local Stroud economy are based in an affordable and supportive environment.

■ Wednesday 6th August Vision into Action, Drawing the Threads Together *led by Martin Large*

Martin Large will lead this final session aimed at assimilating our shared learning of the past five days into a coherent plan for a way forwards. The aim is for each of the embryonic projects offered into the mix to emerge with clarity and the skills to translate their visions into action. "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them." [Thoreau]

The Projects

Stroud Community Agriculture a new type of sustainable farming built on cooperation and mutual support. SCA has now been running for 7 years and caters for over 170 families. www.stroudcommunityagriculture.org

Ruskin Mill is a vibrant place of learning with over 80 students providing an innovative and experiential education for young people with special learning needs set within 100 acres of beautiful wooded valley, fishery and farmland. www.rmet.org.uk

Springhill Co-housing is the first new-build cohousing scheme to be completed in the UK. It has been recognised by The Deputy Prime Minister's Award for making an "outstanding contribution" to Sustainable Communities. www.cohousing.org.uk/springhill-cohousing

The Exchange, home of Stroud's Social Enterprise Centre (SEC), provides affordable community workspaces, and has helped establish co-ops like Stroud Community Agriculture, Stroud Printmakers, Capel Mill Development Company, Inishfree and Stroud FM. www.secstroud.org.uk



"A unique opportunity to actually experience and participate in some of the best of what is happening here in Stroud."

Stroud Valleys' Artspace was founded in 1997 with the aim of promoting and supporting the artists working in the area. This unique contemporary arts resource provides good quality space, facilities and support to a wide number of artists and the community. www.sva.org.uk

The Space has been developing as an Arts Centre serving the community over the last seven years. It runs a proportion of the programme, including the film club, but hirers and promoters determine most of it. Being affordable, many new acts

have been able to launch themselves here. www.the-space.org

Stroud Farmers Market was launched in July 1999, with initial grant funding support from Stroud District and Town Councils. The event now runs without any funding and is a weekly market – a rare thing outside London. Winner of FARMA Certified Farmers Market of the Year 2008, the market is run by Made in Stroud Ltd., a locally based social enterprise. Every Saturday 9 am to 2 pm. www.fresh-n-local.co.uk

Threadholders

Jade Bashford has worked on local food for 10 years with the Soil Association at the forefront of initiating strategic change. She is a founding member of several community food enterprises including Stroud Community Agriculture and is a director of Stroud Brewery.

Max Comfort is an executive/life coach, mentor, teacher and trainer, helping people create a fulfilling and sustainable lifestyle by doing what they are passionate about. He is also a painter, businessman, social entrepreneur, writer and Director of Stroud Common Wealth.

Odilia Jarman networks local food projects and promotes the importance of seasonal eating and sustainable food production via Transition Stroud Food Group. She is currently involved in setting up a land-based school for Stroud.

Martin Large is a facilitator, community land trust enabler, publisher (Hawthorn Press) and

Chair of Stroud Common Wealth. He works in organisational and individual development with government, civil society and business, and chairs the CLT National Demonstration Project.

Greg Pilley runs the award winning Stroud Brewery and is a founding member of Stroud Community Agriculture. He is also a co-leader of the community farm land trust project.

Helen Pitel works in environmental education with Stroud Valleys Project and Farms For City Children. She also teaches organic gardening and is active in Transition Stroud, devoting most of her attention to the Education, Training and Skills Group.

Molly Scott Cato is a green economist and cooperative researcher. She co-ordinates the Transition Stroud Lifestyles and Livelihoods working group and is a Director of Stroud Common Wealth. She is also a core group member of Stroud Community Agriculture.

For more information and bookings please contact: Odilia Jarman

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