



CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT

4th May 2017

Southall Transition has been in existence for just over three years. We are neither a registered charity, nor a commercial company, but a not-for-profit voluntary group with a constitution and a steering committee answerable to this Annual Meeting. In order to have a Bank Account we have had to ensure we have Office Holders in the form of a Chair (myself), Secretary (Martin Raven) and Treasurer (Wendy Ho) and a Steering Committee.

Our purpose as defined in its constitution is:

"To initiate and implement initiatives which seek to build environmental and economic resilience in Southall, leading to greater self-sufficiency and wellbeing for people and the wider environment, particularly in response to the challenges posed by peak oil, climate chaos, and economic instability."

In our constitution we speak of five ways we hope to achieve our purpose, and I propose to organise this Annual Report around these five:

- ***Raising awareness.***
- ***Articulating a vision.***
- ***Developing a framework.***
- ***Engaging and building networks.***
- ***Initiating and implementing projects, in cooperation with others wherever possible, that involve local people in food-growing, tree-planting, enjoying nature, sustainable transport and energy, addressing waste and recycling, and other areas that are in line with our aims.***

1. ***Raising awareness in the Southall area of climate change, peak oil and sustainable economics, through discussions, films and other community events, characterised by sharing healthy, local food and combining fun and serious discussion.***

Since our last annual meeting we've only had one film show – the thought-provoking 'Crash Course' looking at the intersection of economy, energy and environment. It was quite a challenging film, but led to some really good discussion, but the attendance was quite low and it was mainly a smallish group of committed Southall Transition supporters. If our aim is raising awareness we need to find ways of reaching people who don't currently attend our events.

On the encouraging side, it's been particularly good to see schools involved in the Southall Orchard Project, including pupils from Villiers and Featherstone High School, Clifton Primary School and Greenfield Children's centre. Working with schools is a clear way of raising awareness.

The other much larger event which helped raise awareness was the 'Incredible Edible' event we hosted, where the inspirational Pam Warhurst came down from Todmorden to speak to us at the Dominion Centre. We partnered with Ealing Transition for this and as a result had a decent attendance including some new people. The focus was very much on local food for local people grown in visible public places and involving more and more people. We really hope to build on this in the future with some 'incredible edible' plots here in Southall – that will visibly display that we can grow good food in the middle of our urban area.

2. ***Articulating a vision for a sustainable Southall where people and nature flourish.***

This is something where I think we can do better. I'm sure those of us gathered here have a vision of how Southall could be cleaner, greener, more just and fair, and more globally aware – with people taking responsibility for their lives, their gardens, their streets and parks. Our challenge is how we articulate and communicate that vision more widely and more effectively. Ideas could include – working with high schools, working with student to make a short film that could be shown in schools and elsewhere. After I've spoken please share your ideas!

3. ***Developing a framework for an effective response to environmental and economic threats.***

This is perhaps our most ambitious aim. To develop a framework we need to understand the environmental and economic threats we face, we need to learn from others and their experiences – which is partly where the films come in – we need to experiment and try things out, and we then need to think and work strategically – and in partnership with others. We've got a long way to go here but without a framework our vision will simply be airy-fairy. There is also the danger that we get so bogged down in too many little projects and we lose sight of the big picture and never develop the bigger framework we need.

4. ***Engaging and building networks with people and groups already active with these issues or wishing to engage with them, including schools, colleges, faith groups, businesses, the voluntary sector and statutory agencies, including working to support local authority initiatives that are in line with our own.***

This is one area where I think we have seen really good progress. During the past year we have strengthened our links with Ealing Transition, through partnering on the *Incredible Edible* event. We have worked closely with Fare Share, Ealing Council, Catalyst Housing, Greenfield Children's Centre, the Metropolitan Police, Ealing Park Rangers, Hope for Southall Street Homeless, The Hanwell and Norwood Green Orchard Trail Group and the Canal & River Trust. All of these partnerships and networks are important but they also all take a lot of time to build – and here I want to pay particular tribute to Mani Dhanda for the huge amount of work he has put into these.

Finally ...

5. ***Initiating and implementing projects, in cooperation with others wherever possible, that involve local people in food-growing, tree-planting, enjoying nature, sustainable transport and energy, addressing waste and recycling, and other areas that are in line with our aims.***

This is probably our strongest area. At last year's meeting I talked about two new projects we hoped to see progress with, and we've seen massive progress with one of those and a lot of work behind the scenes with the other. They are:

- Bixley Triangle: the small area next to the canal and near the Bixley Field allotments that had been overgrown and frequented by drug users and others. In May last year we worked with Catalyst Housing, the Metropolitan Police, Ealing Park Rangers, Greenfields Children's Centre, Hope for Southall Street Homeless, The Hanwell and Norwood Green Orchard Trail Group and the Canal & River Trust, to clear the site, level it, reseed it and plant a few fruit trees. Since then more trees and fruiting hedges have been planted and it has transformed a messy problem area into a real highlight.
- Fare Share – this is an organisation that takes food donated by supermarkets that is perfectly good but they can't sell (because it's wrongly labelled, misshapen etc). That food is then distributed to any community group that can use it, with a local organisation acting as a host to receive and distribute the food. The community groups pay a small fee to Fare Share to help cover their storage and transport costs, but they get far more back in food. We worked with FareShare to find a local hub where food can be dropped off and collected, and we spent a lot of time in meeting with Ealing Council and 5 different Ward Forums to try and raise the funds necessary to kickstart the project. It's all taken much longer and a lot more work than we hoped, and we still don't know if Ealing Ward Forums will provide funding, but FareShare are also actively looking for funding from Heathrow Community Foundation, so watch this space and we hope to have more news soon.

However, by far our biggest project has been the Southall Orchard Project. The past year has seen the completion of Phase 1 in Southall Park, with ongoing maintenance and training, and the planting of trees and hedges for Phase 2 in Southall Recreation Ground. The latter included 41 new fruit trees and 50 metres of fruiting shrubs. Varieties include apple, damson, hazel, blackthorn, greengage, plum, quince and pear. Very sadly some of the most recently planted trees have already been vandalised, which should not surprise us, but shows how far we still have to go in raising awareness.

It's always nice when good work is recognised, and The Southall Orchard Project received recognition from the My Playgreen Scheme, as one of 14 projects across Greater London that were selected to receive the 'My Playgreen' award for "Creating access to trees and green spaces for children in urban environments". The award from the King Baudouin Foundation and Timberland includes a £5000 grant to help further the project and was collected by the Project Lead Mani Dhanda and committee member Andre Rungen at a ceremony which took place at the Impact Hub in London on Tuesday 14th March 2017.

In closing, I want to thank our Funders, particularly Near Neighbours and a donation from Noon Products / Kerry Foods, and to thank my fellow steering group members: Mani Dhanda, Martin Raven, Kailean Khongsai, Wendy Ho, Andre Rungen, Amrit Patel and our newest member, Heenal Ghedia. The steering group has met regularly through the year, on 7 occasions I think, raising and looking after funds, planning events and strategies, and constantly thinking about how we can make Southall more sustainable. Heenal has produced a questionnaire to help us and I encourage all of us to fill that in and find a way of getting involved.

Dave Bookless
Chair, Southall Transition
4th May 2017