

Peak Oil Issues

Community

What will happen to our global community when the oil becomes more expensive?

As the energy - and, thus, economic - crisis develops, we can expect to see unemployment rise, wages drop, and people struggling with personal debt increase (which, in the UK, has already passed the £1 trillion mark, and in the U.S.A, \$11trillion).

We are well aware of what happens to society during times of economic hardship brought on by recession. Alcoholism, personal depression, marital break-ups, crime, house repossession, drug abuse and many more undesirable effects can be expected to increase. Social Security payments may also be delayed and, as inflation becomes more of a problem, these payments will buy less and less.

The poverty and the challenge to conventional expectations caused by the decline of oil supplies could cause dislocation of communities, but could also draw them together. Prosperity may well come from increased interdependency with family, neighbours and the local community. This way of living was prevalent before oil usage became commonplace, and still is today where oil is not such a feature of everyday life.

It will be networks of like-minded people who will fair the best. Relying on each other will give different members of the community purpose, hope and value. For instance, tradesmen like plumbers, electricians and builders will be very valuable members of the community but they may be out of work and need other means of exchange.

There will still be food on the supermarket shelves, but people will get less food for their money. Community gardens would be an excellent way to save money and interact with others; those who plant their own vegetable gardens may either sell or trade their produce for the skills of others.

Local groups may campaign or apply for planning permission to have solar or wind power installed at local centres: the library, town hall, and recreation centre. This electricity supply would ensure a level of community entertainment, perhaps showing films or providing internet access or job searches.

As an individual, it is never too soon for you to start becoming involved in your local community. Whether it is simply getting to know everyone in the nearby pub, or finding different local activity groups to join up with, there are many ways to become involved and make your community stronger as a process. A bonus is that it is also a good way to meet people, make friends and have fun!

With foresight you may be part of creating a real community able to pull together as the hard times come. Preparation is the key to success, and a community will need to be getting prepared as soon as possible.

Communities will not necessarily, and ideally should not be, held together in a top-down approach, relying on central or local government to provide them with a socially cohesive environment. The community effort is just that: it must start at the individual and grassroots level creating real, not forced bonds. The Power of Community will be vital. However, it is still important to engage with local government as it has the power to be an agent of change, just as you are.