



How to... organise a Regional Gathering





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Introduction

Organising a regional gathering can feel like a big deal. It's true that there's a fair amount of work involved, but it can be useful to think about it in its most basic form: a gathering is just a bunch of people spending the day together. Who, what, where, when and how are the details this guide is intended to help you fill in, but it's important to remember that it's really quite a simple thing you're doing here: joining up people who care about preparing for the transition to a lower energy future, and who want to take action to make their communities better places.

In my experience Transitioners are an amazing bunch of people, and in every single Transition gathering I've been to, it's the people who come along that make it: they're intelligent, inspiring, dynamic, confident and kind. To some extent the more you just let them get on with doing what they want to the better - less is definitely more.

I have tried to put down everything I've learned over the past couple of years of organising Transition events. It's been a steep learning curve for me, and if I've included things that seem blindingly obvious to you,

just thank your lucky stars that you're starting off from a position of more experience than I was! I hope at least some of this is useful, and wish you all the very best with whatever event you're planning.

Although this has now become rather a weighty tome, I hope that I've managed to keep it straightforward and easy to read. If you have any comments or feedback that could help make it better or more helpful, do get in touch.

All the best,

Eva

Before you start

Consider seriously whether your group has enough time and energy to manage a regional gathering. Have a read though this booklet before you decide – or at least have a look at the to do list on page 25.

You should have at least 3 people (around 10 at most) who have agreed to take this project on as their main responsibility. If it all falls on one person's shoulders, they're likely to feel exhausted and quite possibly resentful by the end of it. The process can be get intense at times, and it's really important that there's a team of people in the 'host' group

who are willing to share the load and put time and energy into the proceedings.

Roles and tasks

It can be helpful to divide up the work according to the different bits that need doing. Below are some of the roles and tasks you'll need to think about. Obviously these don't all have to be done by separate people – some of them don't have to be done at all – but they're all possible parts of your event. The rest of this booklet is really just expanding on the following roles (but also have a look at the list on p15 in 'On the Day).



Planning

You should aim to end up with a brief (1 paragraph) but clear piece of writing that says why you're meeting and what you've intending to do at the event, which can be used in the publicity. This group will also need to 'walk through' the event shortly before it happens, so that everyone involved knows what's happening where, when and how.



Programming

Setting out the shape of the day, deciding on the activities that will best achieve your aims, deciding on speakers and/or workshop leaders (if you're having them), inviting them, finding out what equipment or other needs they have and providing a point of contact for them, creating the programme (page 18) which will go in the info for participants.

Venue

Finding the right place; booking and paying for it; being the contact person for the owners; co-ordinating setting up the room/s and tidying away at the end.

Publicity

Writing up information for inviting people along, and for the press; making sure that information about the event is clear, engaging and that it's easy to find out details like train times as well as when and where the event is happening; thinking about networks and other channels for getting your information to the right people.

Food and refreshments

Co-ordinating food - either making it, or finding people to do that. Making sure you

have the right space and equipment at the venue. For refreshments; deciding on what you want to offer and gathering it together; either serving people, or making sure that there's enough of everything on the table; remembering about special diets (see page 14).

Registration

Checking that everyone who arrives is recorded; taking details from people who've not booked; booking kids into childcare if you've got it; giving people copies of the programme (sample on page 18) and any other materials they will need including a feedback questionnaire (sample on page 20), if you're using one; creating a contact list to circulate afterwards.

Overview

Keeping an eye on the whole process of the day; making sure that any problems are spotted and dealt with as soon as possible; being aware of what's coming up next and making sure everything's lined up ready for it to happen.

Keeping a record

Taking photos or filming the event; making sure that all bits of writing are recorded and put on line or typed up; creating a report of the event.

Kids

Organising childcare; checking childcare room and materials; possibly gathering toys and games for the kids; creating a clear booking-in process for families; getting disclosure sorted; making sure childcare workers know where to go and have what they need (see page 13).

Car sharing

If your venue is at all difficult to get to, it can really be worth flagging up car sharing to people coming along (see page 9).

Welcoming

Greeting people; showing them to registration; showing them to teas and coffees/ where ever they're waiting for the event to begin; making sure latecomers know what's happening.

Evaluation

This can really help if you ever run another event, and may be required if your event is funded. It's probably easiest to do this with a short questionnaire (sample at the back on page 20), and you're most likely to get responses in if you give people 5 minutes to fill it in at the end of the day.



Money

Another important factor to think about is how you're going to pay for your event. Your biggest expenditures are likely to be venue and food. Many of the sections later on in this booklet also have ideas about how to do things for free or very little, and you can keep it very low budget, but you're likely to have some outgoings.

Funders need to know that your group is able to manage the money that they give you, and that you will be able to show afterwards that you did good stuff with it.

Assuming you've not already got funding, here are a few thoughts on how to do it on a shoestring and how to raise small amounts of cash.

- You will hopefully already have been reaching out to your wider community and making good relationships with the other organisations there – with any luck one of them might have a venue that they could let you use for little or no cost.
- If you haven't already done so, have a chat with the owner or the venue you want to use – explain about Transition, and why you're running the event. Ask if they have a special rate (like 'for free') for good causes.
- The venue may be open to your group paying in kind, for instance you could create a vegetable bed in their garden or plant a couple of apple trees, give them an energy audit or offer another skill from your group.

Insurance

Most venues are already insured, so hopefully this won't be an issue. If it is, you may need to get Public Liability insurance. You can get this on a one off basis (it's called 'event insurance'), but if you're at all likely to want to run another event (or even have a stall at someone else's event), it can be very useful to get it for a year - it won't cost you that much more.

Getting a grant

If you're going to go down this route, you'll need a bank account with 2 signatories and a constitution – SCVO has a free phone information line which can help you sort all this out if you've not done it already.

Getting funding can be a bit of a treadmill, and it can often make more sense, if you're going to put all that energy into it, to apply for a larger sum once, than several smaller sums. Does your event fit into a grander scheme? Could it be one of several events? Could you create a range of awareness raising/network building opportunities that build on this event? No need to if it doesn't work to, but have a think, as it may save you time and effort in the long run.

Your local CVS will have a 'Funder Finder' computer programme, and a computer you can use to have a look at it, but your local authority and the lottery are probably the best places to start.

The main thing you need to know with funders is: what are their aims? If you can show them how you are going to help them meet their aims, you're half way there. Local authorities in particular, have targets that they are obliged to meet, so find out what they are, and consider how you could show how your event will help to meet them. This may not be a difficult job, as many of the targets for local authorities are social and environmental.

Other ways of getting cash

Fundraising events can be enjoyable, and also a good way of highlighting what your group is all about. Have 'locally grown' stall, selling locally grown produce (donated by allotment holders and gardeners nearby) for a donation; have a 'healing evening' where local therapists donate an hour or two of their time and people make donations for a head massage or whatever; set up a local food 'restaurant' for a night and charge people £10-20 a head people for a slap up 3 course meal (make sure the ingredients are cheap as chips, or this may not make you so much money!); do a sponsored cycle ride in fancy dress...





Planning

Setting the theme

Having decided that you do have the time and energy for the gathering, it's good to think about what you're aiming to achieve with it:

- Getting to know other local activists?
- Telling people about the Transition model?
- Exploring the idea of a regional hub?
- All of the above?
- Or something else entirely?

It's really useful to write up a short piece – aim for about 100-300 words – which says why you're meeting and what you're hoping to achieve. This can be used as the basis for most of your publicity for the event.

It can be helpful to ask: 'what do we want people to go away feeling after this gathering – what do we want them to have achieved?'

From there everything else should flow – who your speakers (if you're having any) will be, what kinds of exercises you'll plan, the kinds of questions you'll be asking people...

Who's doing what?

The next thing is to decide how you're going to go ahead. This will partly depend on how long you've got and how many people you have helping out. The short list of roles in the introduction will help you think about most of the things that need doing, and once you've divvied up the roles, each person can then have a look at the relevant headings and checklists in this booklet.

'Vibes' (man)

You should aim to make your event as engaging and enjoyable for the people coming along as possible. It's really good at the very beginning to think about other events you've been to, and what happened there that worked really well for you, from the programming, to the food, to the kind of welcome you got when you arrived. Equally, thinking about the bits which you hated or felt disappointed by, can help you avoid making the same mistakes. The sum of all these little decisions will give the overall atmosphere of your event, and will be a strong factor

in whether people leave it feeling uplifted, excited and nourished (or - hopefully not - depressed, frustrated and disappointed).

Walking it through

From bitter experience, I can tell you that this is a vital part of your planning! It should be done close to when your event happens – a few days before is best, so that if you discover you need anything you hadn't thought of, you've still got time to get it. The whole team who're going to be helping out on the day should be there. Go through each stage of your programme asking yourselves the following questions:

- Where are the participants going to be?
- So, where do the tables and chairs need to be (and who's going to get them there)?
- Are there any other materials or resources we will need in place (and who's responsible for getting them there)?
- What's happening after that?
- How are we going to move people from this stage to the next?

At each stage of the process, you need to know that there's someone taking responsibility for telling people what they're doing now, and if this involves moving the space around – or moving the whole group elsewhere, that you know how that's going to happen.



Venue

Useful questions to ask yourself while you're looking for a venue are: Who is coming? What is the purpose of your event? How big a space do you need? Will you need 'break out' spaces or extra rooms for e.g. a childcare room?

Try to pick a place that's comfortable and welcoming – if it can be an example of the kind of ethos we're aiming for with Transition, so much the better

Your venue depends a lot on how much cash you have to spend, but there are other important considerations:

- Does the venue fit the kind of people you're expecting to come along: a posh hotel can feel like an odd place to spend the day talking about community involvement for example.
- Is it easy to get to by public transport? Pick an easily accessible place, and highlight the range of ways people can get there in your publicity.
- Is it wheelchair accessible?
- Are people going to be able to hear one another? In a very big venue you may need to think about getting an amplification system, though do be careful with this, as they can cause more problems than they solve.
- Is there a hearing aid loop system?
- Are you going to need smaller 'break out' rooms for some of your activities?
- Are you going to provide childcare? If so, you'll need a dedicated room fairly close

to where the adults are going to spend most of their time. The venue may have toys you could borrow.

- Are you going to be cooking or warming up food on site? If so, you'll need access to a kitchen – and you'll need to know whether you can use the equipment, and cutlery and crockery etc.
- Do they have tables and chairs, flip chart stands, projectors etc, or will you need to rent them?

Do take time to visit the possible venues if you don't know them. Try to pick a place that's comfortable and welcoming – if it can be an example of the kind of ethos we're aiming for with Transition, so much the better – a community hall powered by wind turbine, a resource centre for local regeneration, a space near a farm which sells its produce locally...

It might sound fussy, but from experience, natural light is pretty important – specially if you're likely to be indoors all day. Try to find a place with windows – the bigger the better! If your space doesn't have much daylight – perhaps people from your group could bring in some floor lights, so that you can use those to create a more welcoming atmosphere (and less likelihood of folk going away with headaches!).

Things to ask the venue:

- What is the maximum numbers of people allowed in the different spaces?
- cost of hiring different spaces?

- Are there any additional costs: urns, tables and chairs, projector and screen, catering, flip chart pads and stands, kitchen equipment?
- Getting in and out – will there be staff around when you're there, or will you need a key etc.?
- Food: can you prepare food at the venue? Are there any spaces they don't want people to be eating in?
- If you're providing childcare – is there an existing room for kids, and are there toys and books you could use?
- Are there other things you'll need: tea towels, hand towels, toilet roll
- car parking – if you're anticipating that a lot of people will be driving to your event (hopefully car sharing!), where's the best place for them to park?

Signage

If your venue is small this is not going to be an issue. If it's big and wandering, you may want to think about where the main thoroughfares are going to be and where the best place to put signs are. If you need signs, you'll probably need a map too.



Publicity

Posters, press releases, websites, e-mails and word of mouth are all effective ways to let people know what you're doing. The kind of publicity you need will depend in part on who you've hoping with come along. A short, interesting email can be great for mass mailing round your network and asking others to put round theirs but if there are particular people you definitely want to be there, they're much more likely to come if you contact them individually.

Make sure that you highlight the different ways people can get to the venue, and make it as easy as possible for them to find out what they need to know in terms of train and bus times.

Internet

Like it or loathe it, this is your single most useful tool in getting people along to your event. Alongside the networks you and other group members may have built up, ask yourselves:

- Are there any other networks you're part of which are likely to have other members who'd be interested in your gathering?
- Are there 'natural allies' who have networks they would put info round?
- Are there local groups who

are working on aspects of the theme of your gathering who could bring in experience and add to their knowledge and contacts?

And always make sure you put a notice about your event on the Transition Scotland website!

Posters

If you have people who are willing to put up a lot of posters in local communities, they can be great at getting people along. In my experience you need to have a lot of posters up to get many people to your event through posters, so if you're not going to be able to do that, you may choose not to bother with them.

If you do go with posters, you should make sure that they are clearly designed – if there's anyone in your group with this kind of experience, it will be very helpful. If not – keep it simple! Try to get the absolute minimum of information (while still telling people what they need to know) on your poster, and make the text as big as possible, with the key information biggest. Keep everything central and use a big image.

If you only want people who've booked to come along, don't put the venue on your poster – and make sure that the booking contact is clearly marked.

Other thoughts on posters:

- You may find that someone in your group is able to photocopy small numbers of posters at work.
- The regional library service will often distribute posters to all the libraries in the region for free.
- If you know people who live in places where you'd like people to come from, they may be up for putting some posters up for you.

Using the media

You may already have contacts in your local newspaper or radio station. If not, give them a call and find out the best person to speak to.

Press releases

An effective news release should clearly cover the five w's and include quotes from someone in the group. The less editing has to be done at the media end the better. Making journalists' busy lives easier will make for good relations.

A news release is not just for the media - send it to any public figures you think might be interested; politicians, council staff, other



organisations, community councils and local groups.

E-mail it round your group and ask people to forward it on to all their own friends and contacts. Viral e-mailing has been proven to be one of the most effective ways of getting people out to events.

Be on the ball; find out the deadline of your local paper and get stories in early. And

think pictures - using strong positive images will reap great benefits for your group.

See 'Writing a Press Releases' by George Monbiot on page 36 of the resources bit at the end for (a lot) more detail on this if you want it.

Car Sharing

Currently there are no free car sharing programmes for events that I am aware of, but

local authorities are likely to have one that you might be able to use.

A more straightforward, if less streamlined possibility is to send an email round asking people to flag up if they need or can offer a lift, where they're travelling from and when and then put them in touch with each other.

Programme

There is a sample programme at the end of this guide, which will give you an idea of how much you can fit into a (very full) day. It's very easy to overfill your programme, so do try to over-estimate how long everything is going to take – especially getting people to move from one activity to another. Getting a good balance between listening and doing is important, as people's attention span tends to wane after listening for 20-30 minutes.

The main event: your participants

Most of the time at your gathering should be devoted to the people who have come along. They need space to get to know each other, think and talk about the things that are important to them, and feel that they're part of an extended community. There are lots of ways to help people get involved, establish relationships and get the most they can from the event.



Breaking the ice

Getting a bunch of people who've never met before to start working together needs proper handling. Making a start can sometimes be the most difficult part. Here are the exercises we mostly used at the regional gatherings last year, but there a zillions more out there – take your pick!

Mapping

A good way to break the ice, get people out of their seats

and moving about, and a platform from which people can introduce themselves. This needs a large clear space in the middle of the room – so if you start out with the room set out in a big circle, it's easy enough for folk to push their chairs back.

You are going to create a large 'living map' in the room. You start by establishing the centre (which should be where ever you are),

and where the points of the compass are (these do not correspond to the actual points – if you want them to, find out where they are beforehand as it can cause a lot of unnecessary faff if you try to do it at the time!). Then ask people to stand



where they live, placing themselves in relation to the centre, the points of the compass, and to one another. This can take a few minutes, as people negotiate how far or near they need to be from one another. From there, people will have a sense of where they are in relation to everyone else, and of who their neighbours are (sometimes news to them!).

It's helpful to offer a variety of different ways for people to meet each other and make their contribution to the day.

You can then (if you want to) go round the room, asking people to introduce themselves, and say why they've come. They'll need to speak up, and you should decide in advance how long

you're giving people to speak – and you need to stick to it because some people can go on for quite a while once they get started! Have a bell to ring if you're not comfortable interrupting people.

Time/opportunities for talking

As you will be aware, people have different ways that they're comfortable relating with one another. It's helpful to offer a variety of different ways for people to meet each other and make their contribution to the day. Some people contribute best one to one, and it's important in what might be a busy group day to make sure they have their say.

Setting up 1-1s

Depending on how much time you have, you may want to give people the opportunity to speak 1 to 1 with others. This can be a great way to get people talking, and can give shy people a way in they might not otherwise get.

Ways to do this are:

- Give everyone who comes in one of a pair of stickers, then ask them to find their 'other half' and introduce themselves. If this is a big gathering, you can broaden this out to creating 'home' groups of 4 or 5 people (who find each other by matching stickers – we used some kids ones at one gathering – it can be entertaining to watch a grown man looking for his fellow Disney princesses!). It can be really useful for people to have a group to go back and compare notes with

every now and then.

- Get everyone in 2 circles (of equal numbers of people), one inside the other. Ask them to introduce themselves to the person opposite. You can ask the outer or inner circle to move round one place, and ask people to tell each other different things – some possibilities are: what brought you along today? Why are you involved in Transition? What has been your best 'Transition' moment so far? ...

Some tools TSS has found useful for getting people involved in gatherings:

Open space

The basics for running an Open Space session are on page 21. This is a good way to generate a lot of thinking on different aspects of an issue in a fairly short time.

World Cafe

The basics for World Cafe are on page 22. This is a good way to think several aspects of an issue though thoroughly.

6 Hat Thinking

The basics for 6 hat thinking are on page 23. This a good way to give everyone quite a deep idea of several different sides of an issue.

Finishing the day

It's really good to have everyone sitting back in the big group at the end of the day. If you have made a feedback questionnaire, this is the time to whip it out and give time people time to fill it in. If you get people to do this while they're there, you'll get

a much higher rate of return. Another way is to flag up an on-line questionnaire (survey monkey?) when you send out the other documentation, but nothing will get you more responses than doing it there and then.

Finally, someone from the organising group should stand up to round off the day, thank everyone for coming and possibly sum up a little of what went. Remember to give special thanks to any who made a special contribution: venue staff, speakers, helpers, crèche and food workers.... Make a list in advance, as it's not good to miss anyone out at this point!

Speakers or workshop leaders

It's not essential to have speakers or workshop leaders at your day, but they can add to your programme in several ways. They can:

- Bring in new information and ideas, or bring everyone up to the same level of awareness of an issue
- Give focus to your event
- Give a sense of what's possible
- Be a way of supporting and acknowledging work going on in other groups
- Be a resource for other parts of the programme e.g. workshops, master classes...

If you're unlucky they can also:

- Bore/irritate participants
- Make your programme wildly overrun its time
- Make the day feel confusing and pointless
- Undermine the core principles of your event



So – they can be very useful, but it's important to get it right!

Speakers

If you decide to go with them, aim to get a good balance with your speakers. This depends a lot on the focus for your day. You may want to give a sense of the range of things that are happening in your region in which case you might want quite a few speakers with a wide range of experiences, or you might be looking at a particular theme, in which case you might want fewer people, who are bringing a more in-depth look at different aspects of the subject. In either case, think about how you want your day to balance, and make sure that you spread your speakers out – people will get exhausted if they have to do too much listening at one time – no more than 30 minutes at a sitting unless you're certain this is going to be riveting for everyone!

Two main ways TSS has had speakers contributing are:
1. As part of a quick fire panel with several speakers

giving very short talks

This can be exciting and energising, as you get a lot of information very quickly, and a real sense of lots happening. This is a good way to introduce several local projects which people will have time to follow up on later in the programme. It's easy for it to feel fragmented though, and can get to be too much if there are too many speakers. Four or five people for 2-5 minutes each. You need to time-keep fiercely for this or you'll get totally behind!

2. Giving longer presentations on specialist subjects.

This can be very interesting, but it's much more important that you have chosen someone who is absolutely fitted to the aims of your day and very likely to be of interest to most people who've come along.

It can also be useful to have speakers run a follow-up workshop, where people who've had their interest sparked can find out more.



Time keeping

This is an important role, and needs to go to someone who's not afraid to speak out and interrupt others – sometimes several times! It is most helpful if you discuss the timekeeping with speakers

Time-keeping is an important role and needs to go to someone who's not afraid to speak out.

first (see below for other points) – depending on who they are and why you've asked them to speak, they may have a minimum time they're happy to speak for. It's useful for speakers to know how you're going to indicate 'time up'. Many speakers will appreciate a bit of notice – e.g. 5 fingers up = 5 minutes left, 1 finger up = 1 minute left, wild slashing movements to the throat = you're over time!

Workshop leaders

Need much the same thinking through as speakers, but if people are able to select a workshop of their choice, there's less chance of encountering the more problematic aspects. It's helpful to let people know, as well as the content of a workshop, what kind of format it's going to be in: a talk with Q and A; fully participatory; creative thinking; etc...

Things to set up in advance with speakers or workshop leaders:

- Time keeping – how long they will have to speak and how you're going to let them know when time's up.
- The general issues you want them to cover – and let them know the 1 or 2 bits that are centrally important.
- What they need from you: projector and screen;

coloured markers and a flip chart; a troupe of dancing wombats...

- The programme of the event – even if this is coming together late, make sure they have times of the whole event, times they are due to speak, and clear directions on how to get to the venue.
- You may want to include biographies of your speakers in your programme – if so let them know what information you'd like from them, and roughly how many words long it should be.
- Are you going to pay them? Can you cover their travel expenses? Many speakers will happily come for free, so don't worry about asking for this – it just needs to be clear. If they're coming from any distance, it's polite to pay their travel expenses (unless they're already paid to speak at events like yours).



Kids

Take up of crèche provision can be patchy, and it can easily feel like yet another thing for you to organise and fund, so it is often something that gets left behind. However, it is likely to mean that some people who wouldn't have been able to attend will do so – so it's a real step towards making your event more accessible. If you are offering it, advertising the childcare well is essential - if they don't see it, people tend to assume it's not on offer.

The next step on from 'childcare' is seeing what the kids do as an integral strand of your event, where they can look at similar issues to those the adults are dealing with, on their own terms. TSS is currently looking at developing a project which will provide this kind of kids strand – get in touch to find out how it's going. We have also been working with Moving Sounds on a resource for Transition childcare people, so have a look on the website to see if it's finished!

Childcare options

Higher cost options:

- Get childcare from a private provider
- From the local authorities mobile crèche provision
- Get a group of local people with childcare experience and police checks, and ask them to set up something relevant for the young people – good places to try and find these are: local nurseries, Woodcraft Folk, scouts, brownies etc. youth theatres...

Free/low cost options

- Use members of the host group who are happy to offer childcare.
- Make a rota of parents to take turns looking after the children.

The main thing is to ensure that the kids will have fun and be safe. Having a dedicated room is easiest. Having the kids playing at the back of the hall is likely to mean a fair amount of noise and possible interruptions (depending on how well everyone knows one another this may not be an issue, but if there are going to be quite a few people who haven't met before, this can end up being very stressful).

Disclosure

I'm personally not a big fan of this (I prefer to work through personal relationship networks), but it's the law that anyone who's working with kids in a separate room from their parents needs to have a police check done. For a one off event you can do this on-line at the Disclosure Scotland website. It costs £23 at the time of writing.

Checklist for kids rooms:

- Have access to some toys and books
- Be hazard-free - check for: hot radiators, sharp edges on anything, anything easy to climb up, dodgy electrics. If you're going have very small kids on site, you need to be more careful, making sure that there's no cleaning liquids that could be drunk,



no small bits they could swallow, no un-protected stairs – that kind of thing!

- Be close enough to the room/s the adults will be in so that younger children feel they are in reach.
- Be clean, warm and fairly quiet
- Have enough light (preferably natural)
- Ideally have access to a safe outdoor play space

If you can find ways to engage the kids with similar kinds of themes to those the adults are looking at, it can really add to the event – specially if the kids get a chance at the end to feed in what they've been doing.

Other things to take into account

Food – if you are providing food for lunch, you may want to be sure there's something kids are likely to eat on the menu. Keeping it simple and not too highly flavoured tends to be a good rule.

Food and refreshments

If you're running an all-day event, it's great to be able to offer people food – it gives a sense of being taken care of that can make an event feel nourishing as well as interesting. If you have funding, you can pay a local caterer to make your food to order. For local food, this easily can come in at £10 a head, though you should be able to find it cheaper.

If you don't have funding, but you have a couple of handy cooks in your group, you can feed people very cheaply. Recipes for 3 course vegan, wheat free, dairy free seasonal feasts can be found on p26. Don't say I'm not good to you!

If you don't have money or cooks, you can ask people to :

- Bring food to contribute to a shared meal
- Bring a packed lunch
- Pay so that you can provide food

- If there are take away food shops nearby, you can tell people how to get to them

You will probably want to provide tea and coffee and biscuits – and having a healthy option like some fruit is good too. Again, this can be done pretty inexpensively, and is a really important part of keeping people comfortable and engaged.

Meat or veggie?

Eating local meat supports local producers, but rearing animals for meat (especially non-organically) is a big contributor to greenhouse gas production. So whatever your stance on the other moral and environmental issues, this is clearly a dilemma for groups trying to build local resilience while taking care to stay low carbon. Whichever way you decide to go on this one, some people who come to your

event will be vegetarian or vegan, and you need to make sure that there's an option for them at the very least.

Special diets

Increasing numbers of people have real problems with digesting wheat and dairy based foods, and there's an ever increasing range of other intolerances or allergies which people may need to contend with. It's not necessarily possible to cater for every 'special diet', but it can be pretty straightforward to provide alternatives to the wheat and dairy aspects of a menu.

In the end it can be a lot simpler just to offer one wheat-free, dairy-free, vegan option – which can also be locally produced, cheaply made and above all, delicious – see p26.



On the day

Setting out the main room

How the main room is set up when people arrive will to some extent set their expectations for the day: straight rows facing a desk at the front will make them expect a talk or a speech where they are expected to listen – and not talk themselves; one big circle may suggest that they will be asked to talk – which may feel intimidating for some (especially if it's a big circle), though less so if the people coming along are likely to know each other already. I tend to favour a 'bistro style' arrangement for the welcome, where tables with a few chairs set round them are scattered around the space and angled to face whichever end of the room where the day will be kicked off from.

Other spaces you're likely to need in the main room are:

- A welcome/registration desk, sited near where people will be coming in. You need to think about how much time people may spend here. If you're asking people for several pieces of information, be aware that a queue may build up, and plan the space

accordingly.

- A refreshments table (near a socket if you're using a hot water urn), with hot and cold drinks and snacks on it. Do you have a separate room for eating? If so, you may want to site this table there. If not, somewhere at the side of the main hall. Bear in mind that there can be a bit of a scrum at break times, so leave as much space as you can round this table.

Welcome and registration

You should have a volunteer (or two) to sit at the welcome desk and take people's names and contact information as they arrive.

This person can also give out programmes, direct people to the crèche or the toilets or any number of other tasks – see above for thoughts on space requirements for this.

Stuff you're likely to need on the day:

- water urns (with access to electric sockets)
- cups
- plates, knives, forks, spoons,
- tea, coffee, fruit juice, biscuits, fruit, sugar, milk (remember your special diets)
- chairs, tables
- flip charts, spare A4 paper and pens of all sizes
- blu tack
- masking tape and sellotape
- signs to help people find their way around
- projector
- screen
- speakers
- audio equipment/hearing aid loop equipment
- sign in/registration sheet
- programmes for the day (though you may like to save on paper and just have a big one on the wall, and one taped to the middle of each table)
- feedback questionnaires
- name labels
- stickers for pairs or home groups

Contact list

It's good to get people's permission to share their email addresses, though it's pretty standard practice to circulate these after a conference.

N.B. Send this out as a list on an attached document, and not as a cc in the address line, as this can make it very easy for one participant to spam the whole group, which can create a very sour taste after a lovely gathering!





Roles you may need on the day

You can obviously have one person doing more than one role!

Person	Role
Welcomer	Spot new people and say hello, introduce them to other people
Registration person	Fill in the registration sheet, give people everything they will need, tell people where the toilets are etc.
Someone to introduce the day and/or speakers	Welcome on behalf of the group, tell them where the toilets and fire exits are, outline the main aim of the day and give a brief outline of the programme, introduce the first speaker/ activity
Someone to end the day and give thanks	Sum up a bit about how the day has been. Make a list of who to thank in advance.
Photographer/video person	Looking for interesting/unusual shots, showing how many people were there, and what a great time they were having(!), recording any public notes from sessions, interviewing people etc
Refreshments person	Either serving refreshments, or making sure that the refreshments area is well stocked and clean.
Overview person	Keeping an eye on the whole event, noticing how people are responding, or if there are pockets of unhappiness, or things not running smoothly. Needs to be free to act to change what's happening.
Tables and chairs person	If you have a lot of changes to make to the layout of the room, it can be useful to have one person who takes responsibility for co-ordinating the changes. This person could also be responsible for putting up any directions that are needed.
Open Space facilitator	Putting up the bits and pieces on the wall, numbering the tables, explaining and facilitating the open space session, deciding on how to group the conversation ideas

Keeping a record

This is really important, as it will enable your event to have an effect into the future. Try to capture not only who was there and what was done, but any learning that happened, or the beginnings of any action that people are planning to take forward.

If you've got someone to take photos or even film the event, you need to make an announcement right at the beginning to make sure that anyone who doesn't want to be photographed knows who to talk to to let them know this.

Mopping up

There are still a few things

left to do after your event has finished:

- Photograph any flipcharts or other records of people's work. Put them on a website and email them to participants.
- Leave your venue as you found it
- Please do make time to celebrate (go out for a drink or a meal) with your



gathering team this evening if you possibly can – you're likely not to get round to it if you don't, and it's really important for everyone to feel that their hard work has been valued by the whole group.

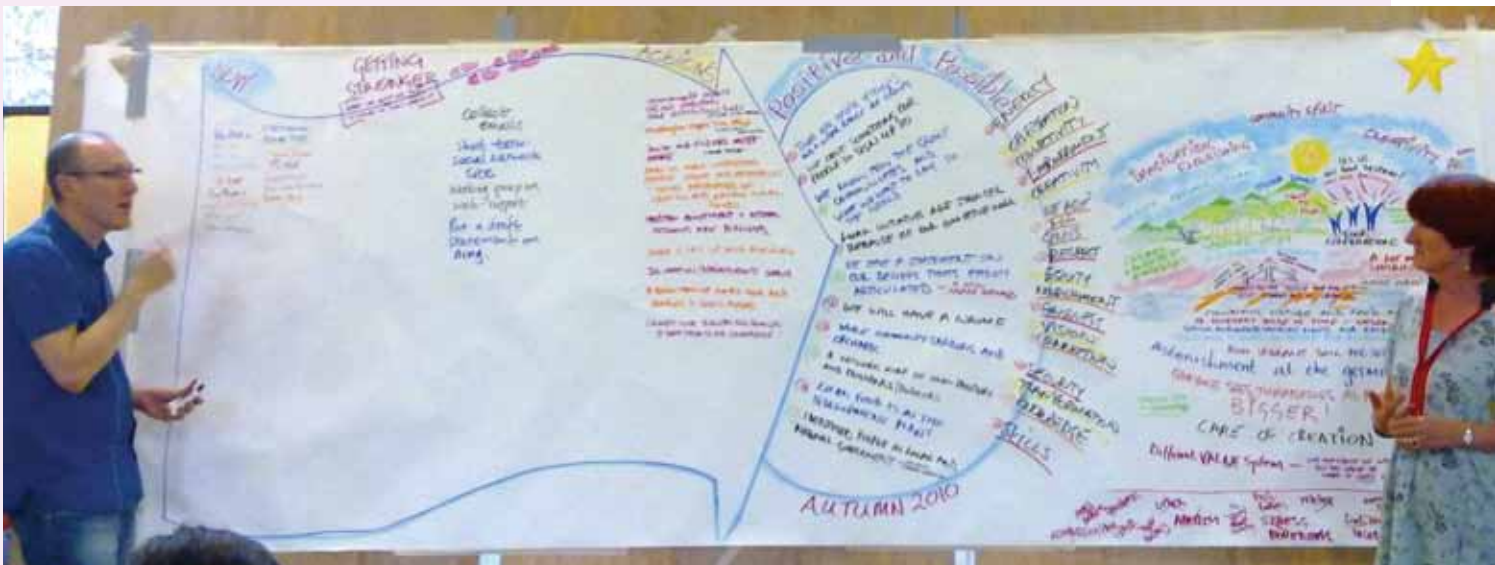
The following week (nearly done!)

- Create your contact list of everyone who booked (and who turned up) from

the registration sheet and circulate round the group (see above).

- Include general thanks to everyone for their contribution to the day – and any special thanks to those who made a particular contribution.
- Write to all your speakers and helpers individually, thanking them for their contribution.

- If you can, creating a report from the day can be really helpful to record the thinking and learning that happened – some photos of the group and/or the working sheets from any exercises you did.
- Your funders may have specific things they want you to report on, so make sure you've recorded them and send them back in good time.





Resources

Draft welcome letter and programme

area *** Regional Gathering

We're really looking forward to spending the day with you, and hope that you will leave feeling inspired and re-fuelled by spending time with some fantastic people, hearing about some great projects and of course eating beautifully prepared local food! This email should contain all you need to know about the day, but if you have any further questions, don't hesitate to contact xxxx or xxxx.

Venue

Your Community Hall
Your town
Your postcode

Here's a link to a map.

Travel arrangements

You can get here by train (*station name*) or by bus.
Here are directions from the stations to the venue.
Go to National Rail for train times and Traveline Scotland for bus times.

Programme (for a group of 20-30 people – for larger groups, extend times given for some activities and reduce or cut out others)

09.30am	Registration - tea and coffee.			
10.00am	Welcome and scene setting by a member of the local group			
10.10am	Big circle go-round/mapping: name, project, why I'm here/what I want from the day.			
10.40 – 12 noon	Workshops with:	Workshop leader 1	Subject	Format
		Workshop leader 2	Subject	Format
		Workshop leader 3	Subject	Format
12 noon	L U N C H			
1.15pm	Speakers (15 mins each):	Speaker 1	Project name	
		Speaker 2	Project name	
		Speaker 3	Project name	
2.00 -2.15pm	Questions			
2.15 - 2.45pm	Open Space preparation (generate ideas and write them down - make up the matrix in the break)			
2.45 - 3.15pm	Break - leading into...			
3.15 - 4.30pm	Open Space: What work can we do together?			
4.30 – 5.00pm	Feedback to whole group and closing			





Draft Booking Form

I have always used 'Survey Monkey', an online booking system to do this. It is 98% reliable – and is free for the first 100 bookings. Here's a sample booking form:

Booking Form for Western Central Scotland Transition Gathering, Saturday 11th of July 2009

The gathering will take place at:
The Village Hall,
Authur Street, West Kilbride
N. Ayrshire, KA23 9EN

For map see: www.westkilbridevillagehall.com
(Phone 01294 829590)

Please note that booking for this event will close on the 4th of July.

1. Contact details

Name	
Address	
Phone no.	
Email	

2. If you are part of a group, please tell us its name.

3. What are the main activities of your group?

4. Would you like childcare for kids over 3 years old (subject to availability)? Please tell us about them:

No.of children	
Names and ages	
Anything else we need to know	

5. If you're coming by train, you will need to get the 08.45 from Glasgow Central. If you would prefer to stay the night with someone from the local group please indicate here (limited places).

6. We have a small amount of funding to offer people who need help with transport. Please say here if you'd like us to contact you about this.

7. Do you have a burning question you hope this day will help to answer?

8. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Lunch will be provided and will include vegetarian, vegan and gluten free options.



Draft feedback questionnaire

Just change the questions to suit your event:

Please help us to make next year's event even better! Can you rate on a scale of 1-5 (1= not very interesting/useful and 5 = spot on!) the following aspects of the gathering:

Day 1 - The speakers

1 2 3 4 5

Any comments?

The first workshop you went to

1 2 3 4 5

Any comments?

(Please say which workshop)

The second workshop you went to:

1 2 3 4 5

Any comments?

(Please say which workshop)

Was there anything about the event you didn't expect – and how did it work?

Was there anything about the event that you hoped would happen, which didn't?

Did you make any new contacts?

Did you make a start on a new project/idea?

How did you find the venue and catering?

How did you first hear about this event?

Do you have any comments on the overall organisation of the event?

Is there anything else you'd like to comment on or suggest?

Many thanks!



Group work resources

Open Space

Descriptions for how to do Open Space can get pretty complex – this is a simplified version which seems to work fine:

Before you start

First you need to set your central question. It should relate to the core aims of your event, and be aimed at allowing people to respond with whatever they are most interested and passionate about.



Some examples might be:

- What are our opportunities for working together across the region?
- What are the central issues for Transition groups in our area?

Setting it up

You'll need:

- Lots of pieces of paper for people to write on
- Big pens
- Flip chart paper and big pens for note taking during the sessions
- Blu tack to stick your grid and bits of paper to the wall
- Enough tables so that each group can have one.
- Stickers or other markers, to write numbers on the tables with
- A big bit of paper with a grid drawn on it on the wall, numbered with however many groups you've decided you're going to have:

Group no.	1	2	3	4	5
Topics					

(The second row is where you'll put the suggestions people have made for group topics)

Introducing Open Space to a group

There are several important bits of information you need to get across to your group, so it's important to get the balance right and not end up confusing them. Open Space often makes more sense once you're actually doing it, so you can reassure them (and yourself) with that!

Here's a skeleton script for introducing it:

- Open Space was created by someone who saw that often the most valuable conversations happen during the coffee breaks at conferences. It's a way for people to have the conversations they really want to have and allows groups to split up and have several different conversations at the same time, without anyone feeling like they're missing out.
- We're going to base our open space around this question: **insert your question here!**
- This is your opportunity to bring up an issue which is really burning for you – something you feel passionately about, and find the other people here who also want to talk about it.
- So the first stage is to find out what everyone wants to talk about. In a minute, I'm going to ask you to tell the whole group what your issue is. You'll need to come over here and write it on a piece of paper. Once everyone who wants to has said what they want to speak about,



we'll have a tea break (it can be helpful to structure your day like this, to give you time to sort out the next stage, though you can do it quickly while people wait).

- You don't need to be an expert on your chosen topic, in fact, you can ask for a group on something which you know nothing about, but would like to find out.
- When you come back, I'll have put all the pieces of paper on the wall, with a number next to them – and you'll see that the tables are also numbered. So each conversation will happen on the table with the same number.

If you think folk in your group may find it difficult to come up with ideas – or to speak out in front of the whole group, it can be useful to get people into pairs at this stage, to think together about what's important to them, and frame how they might say this to the group.

- There are 2 core roles in every group:

If you've suggested a conversation, then you need to go to that table and be the 'host'. You need to stay at that table (unless either no-one else is there, or you can get someone else to be the 'host'). If you're hosting the conversation, you need to explain a bit more about why you suggested it. Then you need to 'chair' the conversation, making sure that everyone gets a chance to speak, and that no one's dominating the whole thing. Each table also needs someone to agree to take notes – the note taker also needs to stay with that conversation until it ends, or until someone else agrees to take over. The note taker

needs to record the main points that are made – it can be easiest to do this in a mind map.

- For everyone else though, you are encouraged to move groups whenever you want to. If you feel you've said and heard what you need, if you get bored, if you're itching to find out what another table is talking about – these are your cues to move on.
- It's also OK to take a break and go and have a cup of tea – even in Open Space meetings, the conversations that happen over tea can still be the most important ones!

If there are too many ideas, group two or more together where it seems like there's some overlap between them. If you do this, you need to let the people who suggested them that you're doing that, and tell them that they should choose 1 person to 'host' the group -the other(s) are off the hook!

It's useful to have a space on the wall where you can stick a row of numbers - how ever many you've decided to have (and remember you'll need a table to correspond to each number too) - and under each number you put the idea or ideas which will go with it.

All of the conversations will be summarised briefly in a feedback session to the big group – someone from each group needs to volunteer to do this. A lot of people find it really hard to do this briefly, so it can be helpful to ask people to tell the group their top 5 or top 3 most important/interesting points.

World Cafe

This is a variant of Open Space, but is best used for thinking in depth about one idea or project, rather than kicking up a wide variety of new ideas in a short space of time. Here are the basics. If you want more detail there's a free downloadable guide at www.theworldcafe.com

- Seat four or five people at small Café-style tables or in conversation clusters.
- Set up progressive (usually three) rounds of conversation of approximately 20-30 minutes each.
- Questions or issues that genuinely matter to your life, work or community are engaged while other small groups explore similar questions at nearby tables.
- Encourage both table hosts and members to write, doodle and draw key ideas on their tablecloths or to note key ideas on large index cards or placemats in the centre of the group.

- Upon completing the initial round of conversation, ask one person to remain at the table as the “host” while the others serve as travellers or “ambassadors of meaning.” The travellers carry key ideas, themes and questions into their new conversations.
- Ask the table host to welcome the new guests and briefly share the main ideas, themes and questions of the initial conversation. Encourage guests to link and connect ideas coming from their previous table conversations—listening carefully and building on each other’s contributions.
- By providing opportunities for people to move in several rounds of conversation, ideas, questions, and themes begin to link and connect. At the end of the second round, all of the tables or conversation clusters in the room will be cross-pollinated with insights from prior conversations.
- In the third round of conversation, people can return to their home (original) tables to synthesise their discoveries, or they may continue travelling to new tables, leaving the same or a new host at the table. Sometimes a new question that helps deepen the exploration is posed for the third round of conversation.
- After several rounds of conversation, initiate a period of sharing discoveries and insights in a whole group conversation. It is in these town meeting-style conversations that patterns can be identified, collective knowledge grows, and possibilities for action emerge.

We tried a version of this by combining it with 6 hat thinking (below), so that each table is thinking about the same question, but wearing a different hat – try it – it works!

6 Hat Thinking

Developed by Edward de Bono, this is a great way for a group to consider an idea from several different points of view. Each ‘thinking hat’ will enable the group to think about the issue in a particular way. This can be really helpful if the subject is likely to generate a range of views, as it means that everyone can have their say – and hopefully get a better understanding of where the others are coming from.

The hats (in the usual order in which they are used) are:

- **White Hat:**

With this thinking hat, you focus on the data available. Look at the information you have, and see what you can learn from it. Look for gaps in your knowledge, and either try to fill them or take account of them. This is where you analyse past trends, and try to extrapolate from historical data.

- **Red Hat:**

Wearing the red hat, you look at the decision using intuition, gut reaction, and emotion. Also try to think how other people will react emotionally, and try to understand the intuitive responses of people who do not fully know your reasoning.

- **Black Hat:**

When using black hat thinking, look at things pessimistically, cautiously and defensively. Try to see why ideas and approaches might not work. This is important because it highlights the weak points in a plan or course of action. It allows you to eliminate them, alter your approach, or prepare contingency plans to counter problems that arise. Black Hat thinking helps to make your plans tougher and more resilient. It can also help you to spot fatal flaws and risks before you embark on a course of action. Black Hat thinking is one of the real benefits of this technique, as many successful people get so used to thinking positively that often they cannot see problems in advance, leaving them under-prepared for difficulties.



- **Yellow Hat:**

The yellow hat helps you to think positively. It is the optimistic viewpoint that helps you to see all the benefits of the decision and the value in it, and spot the opportunities that arise from it. Yellow Hat thinking helps you to keep going when everything looks gloomy and difficult.

- **Green Hat:**

The Green Hat stands for creativity. This is where you can develop creative solutions to a problem. It is a freewheeling way of thinking, in which there is little criticism of ideas. A whole range of creativity tools can help you here (see website www.mindtools.com).

- **Blue Hat:**

The Blue Hat stands for process control. This is the hat worn by people chairing meetings. When running into difficulties because ideas are running dry, they may direct activity into Green Hat thinking. When contingency plans are needed, they will ask for Black Hat thinking, and so on. Groups will need a big sheet of paper to work on, and can record their discussions as a set of bullet points, or a mind map.



'To Do' list

12+ weeks before

- Plan the event with your local group, including setting the focus, and setting out your strategy and timetable for making it happen.
- Decide who's going to take responsibility for which aspects of your planning and action
- Set the date
- Look for funding if you need it

At least 8 weeks before

- Book venue, plus breakout and crèche room if needed (keeping hold of all receipts if you're able to claim them back).
- Finalise and send out the gathering booking form
- Identify and invite speakers (both from local Transition or other initiatives and also from 'helpful' organisations e.g CCF, Powerdown, Sustrans etc.)
- Book catering (if needed)
- Book crèche workers (if needed)

6 - 4 weeks/a month before

- Publicise the gathering wherever possible, including TSS website and email newsletter, local networking, local people leading, development trust association
- Finalise programme: structure, speakers, activities, who's doing what
- Send out welcoming letter for people who've booked a place including: programme, map and directions, timings, travel and any other arrangements
- Local press release no.1 (4 weeks before)

1 week before

- Local press release no.2 (1 week before)
- Gather as many of your team as possible (preferably on-site) and run through the programme in detail
- Give final numbers to caterers and crèche
- Cook stuff in advance (if needed)
- Call the venue and check everything's fine
- Create the feedback questionnaire and sign in/registration sheet

The day (or 2) before

- Prepare food (if needed)
- Get milk, teas coffees etc.
- Create any signage you might need
- Do any photocopying you might need
- Panic (you don't really need to do this, but you probably will – don't worry – it's perfectly normal!)

On the day

- Open up and set out room(s)
- Prepare site for lunch
- Prepare any materials/equipment needed
- Number tables if you're doing Open Space
- Welcome crèche workers (if you're having any) and help them set up
- Welcome and register participants as they arrive
- Hand out evaluation sheets at the end

After event

- Tidy up
- Go to the pub or out for a meal (essential!)
- Pat yourselves on the back

The following week

- Send out contact list
- Thank speakers and other helpers individually
- Write up and send out report and/or photos
- Pat yourselves on the back again – this is important work!



Recipes

Intro from Robin Naumann and Scoutt Winter of boe

Welcome to this wee inspirational starter for ten on cooking for your gathering. We've tried to keep to using seasonal produce, available in Scotland, and keeping the recipes vegan and gluten-free. There are of course, as with any recipes, infinite substitutions and changes that you can make as you work with your budget and the ingredients and cooking facilities you have to hand.

The main thing we find about cooking for larger quantities is to keep it simple, and not to be afraid. Just go for it and enjoy! The process of sourcing your ingredients and catering equipment is a vital and can often be a very enjoyable part of cooking for large numbers. Go meet your local growers and farms, find your local wholefood shops. They can often deliver and might well be up for discussions about discounts if you're buying larger quantities. Enjoy meeting an ever-growing number of community gardens, city farms, organic farmers, small growers, and market gardens across Scotland.

It is also important that you keep up your food hygiene standards whilst preparing and cooking at your gathering. Unless you have a proper food handling policy and system in place I would strongly recommend not charging for any food you prepare (including as part of a fee for the conference), as you could well fall foul of environmental health regulations. Cook amongst yourselves and ask for donations - it's much easier that way. At the end of this cooking section I've added our basic hygiene notes. Priorities are make sure you have a separate hand-washing sink, use clean aprons to protect the food (not to protect your clothes!), use tea towels only once, keep fresh prepared and dairy produce in the fridge as long as possible, check your temperatures (hot food above 63°C, reheated above 82°C, refrigerated below 5°C, and keep food out of the danger zone 10°C-60°C as much as possible) and just keep washing your hands (your hands pose the primary risk of food poisoning). Phew, but don't worry too much - all of this is fairly straightforward and the more you do, the easier it gets.

I hope you find the following information useful and look forward to hearing news of exciting happenings all over Scotland. Keep up the spirit, enjoy, and celebrate food!

An army marches on its stomach - go feed!

Robin Naumann & Scoutt Winter
boe - outside catering & event management
www.boe.org.uk

p.s. Robin and Scoutt have produced an even more detailed guide – with many more recipes - which is available online at transitionsotland.org



Can we help you or your organisation?

boe is a social enterprise offering event management and outside catering services across Edinburgh and beyond. We organise live music events for charities and grassroots organisations, prepare luncheons for AGMs and conferences, help you plan your ethical wedding, provide stalls at community events selling refreshments and a range of products from local social enterprises. Trading since 2003, this autumn **boe** became a community interest company, working with and supporting community organisations throughout the city and further afield.

For more information and to get in touch:

www.boe.org.uk
info@boe.org.uk
07946 226 208



The **ceilidh collective** is the voluntary arm of **boe**, bringing live music and dance to all!

www.ceilidhcollective.org.uk
robin@ceilidhcollective.org.uk
07946 226 208

Summer

Spinach & bean dip

Green summer soup

Fresh berry "crumble"

Summer is the time for leafy greens. Make the most of those vitamin-rich goodies with these green recipes!

Spinach & bean dip (serves 10)

Equipment needed – hand blender and large bowl or food processor, large saucepan to cook beans.

For a hearty starter on days that might be too hot for soup, serve this with crudité (gluten free!), oatcakes or bread. To work out quantities, imagine how much one person might want and then multiply by the number attending. eg. 1 person might eat half a carrot and one stick of celery.

- 2 x 400g tin of cooked beans, washed & drained
- or
- 3 cups dried beans, soaked & cooked (you can use any type of beans, I recommend butter beans or haricot beans)
- 2 bunches of fresh spinach, washed & drained, destemmed & coarsely chopped
- 1 bunch of fresh basil, washed & drained, destemmed
- Olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Water if necessary

Method: Place drained cooked beans, spinach, basil and garlic into a food processor and blend. Alternatively you can use a bowl with a hand blender. Add a little olive oil and water as you go to create the right consistency. The amounts you need will vary depending on the beans you use. When you have created a nice creamy dip, add salt and pepper to taste and serve with a sprinkle of toasted seeds on top, or a garnish of basil.

Green summer soup (serves 10)

Equipment needed – 1 large heavy-based saucepan

- 1 onion
- 2 leeks (trimmed & washed)
- 2 small courgettes
- 3 tbsp oil
- 6 handfuls of sorrel
- 2 large lettuces
- 2 handfuls fresh spinach
- 5 potatoes, roughly chopped
- 2L stock
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Garnish - finely chopped fresh herbs such as parsley or chervil





Method:

Peel & chop the onion and leeks, sautee in the oil for about 3 minutes then add courgettes and sautee for another 2-3 minutes.

Rinse and chop the sorrel and spinach, shred the lettuce. Add these to onions & stir through.

Add the potatoes and stock to the pan. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 30 minutes.

Mash up the potatoes or puree the soup. Add seasoning and serve garnished.

Green salad

Use a mixture of salad leaves such as lettuce, spinach, rocket, chard, sorrel. Add in some locally grown poly-tunnel tomatoes, some carrots, and some toasted seeds or nuts.

Summer berry crumble (serves 10)

Equipment needed – oven dish/tray, blender, wooden spoon, oven, mixing bowl.

Summer berries are so beautiful it's almost a crime to cook them. Here's a recipe you can choose to cook or to serve at ambient temperature, keeping the berries fresh & full of goodness... You can serve this crumble with vegan ice cream, soya or oat cream – but bear in mind that oat cream isn't gluten free.

10 cups of summer berries: any mix of raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, currants, gooseberries, loganberries, brambles... even grapes.

If using sour berries such as gooseberries or currants, it is a good idea to add some sugar – about 1 tbsp per cup of berries. This is variable depending on the your berry mix!

For the crumble:

5 cups of washed oats (washed oats are gluten-free)

1 cup of nuts or seeds

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup of sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegan margarine or vegetable oil (for baked crumble)

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp freshly ground cinnamon

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp freshly ground nutmeg (spices are stronger when fresh - if using pre-ground spices, you may choose to add more)

Method:

**If using oven, preheat to 400°F/200°C/gas mark 6

Mix the berries & sugar in a deep oven tray or casserole dish.

Use a blender or food processor to grind the oats and nuts

into smaller pieces. Don't turn it into dust, just make oatmeal!

Add your spices now.

For fresh "crumble", you can toast the oat/nut combo in a saucepan until it begins to brown. Mix in the sugar. Place berry/sugar mix into individual bowls and place a good big tablespoonful of the toasted oat/nut/sugar mix over the top. Serve!

For baked crumble: add the sugar to the dry oatmeal/nuts. Rub the margarine into the dry mix until there are no lumps left. If using oil, mix thoroughly through with a wooden spoon. Spread the fruit mix into a deep oven tray or casserole dish. Spoon the crumble mixture out evenly over the fruit, making sure it's all covered. Bake in the preheated oven for 30-40min until the top begins to brown. Serve hot!

Autumn

Leek & tattie soup

New boiled potatoes with mint, spiced tomato stew

Mixed berry & plum pudding

Leek & tattie soup: (serves 10)

Equipment needed – large pot with heavy base & lid, chopping board, knives, ladle, hand blender or food processor.

This can be prepared the day before use and then heated before serving.

2 brown onions – peeled & chopped

5 leeks – washed & trimmed

15 potatoes – washed, peeled if necessary, diced

1L stock

Water

1 small tetra pack soy/oat cream (optional)

Salt and pepper to season

Olive oil for sautee

Garnish of chopped parsley or toasted seeds

Method:

Slice the leeks in half and chop into roughly ½ cm half-moons.

Sautee the onions and leeks until they begin to become transparent.

Add the diced potatoes. Put the lid on and turn heat down slightly, allowing vegetables to “sweat” for about 10 minutes.

Stir occasionally to prevent sticking.

Add stock and top up with water until liquid is level with the top of the vegetables.

Bring to the boil, then simmer approximately 30 minutes until potatoes are soft.

Season with salt and pepper. If you like, you can puree all or part of the soup with a hand blender.

If you want to make this soup extra creamy then you can add “cream” after the soup has cooled a little. Beware – if you add the cream when the soup is too hot, it will separate and look a little funny! Alternatively you can use the soy cream as a garnish, along with some chopped parsley or toasted seeds.





Spiced tomato stew (serves 10)

Equipment needed – 1 large pot with heavy base, ladle, chopping board & knives.

150g soy chunks/TVP/veggie burger chunks (check for glutinous ingredients!) or 2 x 400g can of cooked beans, washed & drained
3 tsp yeast extract
1 stock cube/1 tsp bouillon
Oil
2 large onions
1 large parsnip
4 carrots
1 large handful of green beans/runner beans – chopped into 1 inch pieces
2 tsp caraway seeds
2 tbsp smoked paprika
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
4 medium potatoes
2 x 400g tinned tomatoes or 8 small chopped tomatoes
3 tbsp tomato puree
1L stock
Salt and pepper to season

Method:

Soak the soy mince/tvp in hot water with the yeast extract & stock cube mixed in for at least 20 minutes.
Chop the onion roughly, and the root veg into bigish bite-sized bits.
Gently sautee onion in a heavy based pan. Add the carrot & parsnip and “sweat” for about 10 minutes, on medium heat.
Add the paprika, cayenne and caraway seeds and stir through.
Add the drained soy chunks/TVP/canned beans as well as the tomatoes & tomato puree. Stir for 3-5 minutes.
Add the potatoes, green beans and stock to just cover the vegetables. Bring to the boil and simmer for about 20min until the vegetables are soft, stirring occasionally.
Add salt and pepper to taste. If your stew is a little too spicy, you can add a touch of sugar to calm the tastebuds down!

New potatoes with mint (serves 10)

Equipment needed – 1 large saucepan, large bowl and spoon for serving
2kg new potatoes, washed
1 bunch fresh mint, washed and chopped finely
2 tbsp vegan margarine or olive oil
Salt and pepper to season
1 red onion, finely chopped (optional)

Method:

Bring a large pan of water to the boil, add 2 tsp of salt.
Add the new potatoes and boil whole until soft – approximately 20 minutes. Check carefully, as you really don't want them to be mushy!
Drain the potatoes, and mix through the margarine or olive oil.
Sprinkle with mint, salt & pepper, and onion and mix gently to combine.
Serve hot.

Mixed berry and plum pudding

This is a simple recipe which can be prepared in advance, and requires about 2 hours of chill time in the fridge.

Equipment needed - blender or food processor, wooden spoon, whisk, saucepan
5 cups mixed berries & plums, washed and plums deseeded
1 cup "milk"
1 Tbsp vanilla extract
1 2/3 cups sugar
12-15 Tbsp cornstarch
Pinch of salt

Method:

In a food processor, blend together the fruit, "milk" and vanilla until smooth.

In a medium-sized saucepan, stir together the sugar, cornstarch and salt. Whisk in 1/4 cup of "milk" to make a paste.

Stir in the remaining "milk" mixture and bring to the boil, stirring constantly.

Reduce heat and simmer for 1 minute or until the pudding starts to thicken.

Portion evenly into serving bowls, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 2 hours before serving.

Winter

Creamy celeriac soup

Vegetable roast with tatties & neeps and onion gravy

Poached pears with chocolate sauce

Creamy celeriac soup (serves 10)

This is best served with fresh bread or oatcakes. For gluten free people, provide some rice cakes!

Equipment needed - large heavy-based pot, hand blender/food processor, chopping boards & knives, ladle, wooden spoon.

2 large celeriac - washed, peeled if necessary, roughly chopped.

3 medium potatoes - washed, peeled if necessary, roughly chopped

2 medium onion, chopped

6 cloves garlic, peeled, roughly chopped

Oil

3/4L liquid stock

Salt and pepper for seasoning

2 teaspoon thyme

1 cup non-dairy milk

1 tbs whole-grained mustard

Fresh chopped parsley to garnish

Method:

Sautee onion & garlic in oil until they begin to brown. Stir through the mustard.





Add the celeriac and potatoes, half of the stock and the thyme. Cover and simmer until celeriac is tender (20-30min). Use hand blender/food processor to puree half or all of the mixture.

Add more stock until it reaches the consistency you want, then add the “milk”, salt and pepper to taste and mix well with wooden spoon. Serve hot!

Vegetable Roast (serves 10)

Equipment needed: oven, deep oven tray/casserole dish or 2 loaf tins, potato masher, knives & chopping board

1 ½ cups beans, cooked washed & drained (any beans - you can also substitute tofu here)

2 cups of grains (you can use cooked brown rice, washed oats, cooked barley – just be careful of gluten with the barley!)

¾ cups chopped nuts (walnuts can come from UK, hazelnuts from Italy) or seeds

1 – 1 ½ cups liquid (“milk”, tomato sauce, veg stock, mushroom sauce)

2 cups mashed potato (4-5 potatoes)

1 onion, chopped finely

1 cup celery, chopped finely

2 carrots, chopped finely

½ tsp sage

½ tsp oregano

1 tsp dried rosemary

½ tsp salt

4 tbsp oil

Method:

Preheat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 4.

Cook and mash potatoes.

Lightly mash beans or tofu.

Combine all ingredients in a mixing bowl.

Press into greased oven tray or loaf tins.

Bake in preheated oven for approximately 45 minutes.

Tatties & Neeps (serves 10)

Equipment needed – potato masher or hand blender (for larger amounts), large pot, large colander, large spoon for serving.

6 large potatoes

2 large swedes (Scottish “neeps”)

Salt and pepper

“Milk”

Oil or vegan margarine

Method:

Place large pot of water on the stove to boil.

Wash and peel off any yucky bits from veg. Cut into small approximately ½ inch cubes.

When the water is boiling, add the veg and boil until soft, approximately 20-25 minutes.

Drain the water off.

Mash the tatties & neeps, adding oil and “milk” until you reach the creamy consistency you prefer. Add salt and pepper to taste & mix through.

Gluten-Free Onion & Mushroom Gravy (serves 10)

Equipment needed: hand blender, heavy-based saucepan, wooden spoon, ladle to serve.

1 onion (red or brown)
200g mushrooms
1 tbsp fresh thyme or 1 ½ tsp dried thyme
1 ½ tbsp oil
2 tbsp gram flour (made from Chickpeas, gluten free)
1 pint of stock
1 tbsp tamari sauce (wheat-free soy sauce)
1 tsp yeast extract
Coarsely ground black pepper to taste

Method:

Halve and slice the onions finely. Slice the mushrooms. Sauté the onion in oil for approximately 5 minutes. Add mushrooms and herbs and cook for another 5 minutes stirring occasionally. Add the flour and cook for 30 seconds stirring constantly. Pour on the stock slowly, stirring well and bring to the boil. Add the soy sauce & yeast extract, and pepper to taste. Simmer for 5-10 minutes. Use the hand blender to puree the gravy if you like, or just leave it chunky!

Poached Pears with Chocolate Sauce

Equipment needed - Deep & wide saucepan, wooden spoon
10 pears (conference pears are fine), peeled with stalks left on
700ml white wine
2 cinnamon sticks
2 vanilla pods split lengthways
150g caster sugar
5 Tbsp clear honey (NOT VEGAN) or agave syrup
2 blocks of vegan chocolate
200g vegan margarine

Method:

Place the white wine, sugar, honey, cinnamon and vanilla pod in a deep wide saucepan. Bring to a gentle simmer and then add the pears. Poach the pears over a low heat for 30-40 minutes or until translucent, turning occasionally. Meanwhile, make chocolate sauce: using a double boiler, or a heatproof bowl over steaming water, melt the chocolate. Mix in the margarine until a smooth sauce is created. Turn off the heat and leave the bowl over the water to keep it liquid. Drain the pears and retain only 1/3 of the cooking liquid. To serve - place one pear into each bowl, with a little of the cooking liquid, and drizzle the chocolate sauce over the top. Mmmm...





Spring

Roasted garlic french onion soup
Roasted vegetables with wild garlic pesto
Celeriac & carrot "coleslaw"
Apple & rhubarb crumble

Roast garlic french onion soup (serves 10)

Equipment needed - oven, roasting pan, heavy based pot, wooden spoon, ladle, knives, chopping board

4 tbsp olive oil or vegan margarine

10 medium onions, chopped

10 cloves of garlic, whole roasted then peeled (less if you'd rather not all have garlic breath!) and then mashed

5 tsp sugar

Salt and pepper to taste

1 L vegetable stock

Method:

In your heavy based pot, sautee the onions in the margarine until translucent.

Add the garlic, salt and pepper & sautee for an additional 5-7 minutes.

Add the stock, bring to the boil and then reduce the heat. Simmer 8-10 minutes. Serve with crusty bread and vegan cheese, or a nice serving of rocket salad!

Wild garlic pesto (serves 10)

Wild garlic/ramsons - a good few handfuls

2 cloves of garlic

Olive oil

Salt and pepper

50g pine nuts or roasted pumpkin seeds or roasted sunflower seeds

"Nutritional yeast" - a flaky yeast product that is vegan, gluten free and tastes a bit like cheese

1 tbsp lemon juice

Method:

Roughly chop a couple of handfuls of washed Ramsons leaves (wild garlic).

Peel and crush 2 garlic cloves and blend together with garlic in a food processor, along with 100 ml olive oil and 50g pine nuts (or roasted pumpkin seeds).

Stop, push down any leaves, add 1tsp "nutritional yeast", sea salt and milled black pepper to taste plus a tablespoon of lemon juice.

Add more oil if necessary until preferred consistency is reached.

Blend and serve! Lovely with oatcakes, or with your roasted veg!



Roasted root vegetables (serves 10)

Equipment needed - oven, oven trays, chopping boards & knives.

Root vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, beetroot, parsnip, butternut squash, pumpkin and swedes all store well over the cold winter months.

Any mixture can be used, providing you have approximately 400g per person.

Herbs such as rosemary and spices like paprika or mustard are excellent additions to roasted veg.

Salt and pepper!

Method:

Preheat the oven to 205°C/400°F

Wash and prepare the vegetables, peeling if necessary.

Cut into even bite-sized chunks: the larger they are, the longer they'll need in the oven. Aim for approximately 1 inch cubes.

Toss in olive oil, add rosemary & place into preheated oven.

Roast for approximately 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Add the paprika, salt & pepper towards the end.

Serve hot with a chutney or thick sauce.

Celeriac & carrot "coleslaw"

Equipment needed: grater, or food processor, large salad bowl, spoon or tongs for serving.

2 carrots, washed & peeled if necessary

1/2 cabbage, finely sliced

2 celeriacs, washed & trimmed

2 tbsp wholegrain mustard

Lemon juice

Salt and pepper

Vegan mayonnaise

Optional - toasted walnuts!

Method:

Grate the vegetables and place in a large bowl. Mix in the mustard and enough vegan mayonnaise to cover the vegetables. Add a little salt, pepper and lemon juice to taste. Add walnuts for an extra delicious touch...

Apple & rhubarb crumble (serves 10)

Apples keep well through the winter and rhubarb is freshly harvested in spring.

Equipment needed – oven, blender/food processor, oven tray/casserole dish, large spoon for serving, mixing bowl.

8 cups rhubarb, washed & cut into 1 inch pieces

3 apples, washed, cored and cut into thick slices

3/4 cup sugar

5 cloves

1/2 stick cinnamon, broken into pieces

For crumble topping:

5 cups of washed oats (washed oats are gluten-free)

1 cup of nuts or seeds

1 cup of sugar

1/2 cup of vegan margarine or vegetable oil (for baked crumble)

1/2 tsp freshly ground cinnamon

1/4 tsp freshly ground nutmeg



Method:

Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/gas mark 6

Lay the rhubarb and apple pieces into a lightly greased large heatproof dish. Mix in the sugar and ensure that the fruit is evenly spread.

Crumble topping:

Use a blender or food processor to grind the oats and nuts into oatmeal.

Add spices and mix through.

In the margarine/oil, add the sugar and mix gently.

Spoon the topping over the fruit, ensuring all the fruit is covered.

Bake in the preheated oven for 30-40 minutes, until the top is browning lightly and the fruit feels tender when tested with a skewer/knife. Serve hot.

How to write a press release

with many thanks to George Monbiot

Journalists speak only one language, and that's their own. If you're going to reach them you have to speak that language too. This means that your press release should mimic the format and style of a news story. It's a simple and straightforward formula and (sorry to be dictatorial) it **MUST** be applied. If it isn't, your press release won't work. Period.

Here's how to do it:

Page 1

(top of page)

Your contact details

Embargo

HEADLINE (No more than eight words)

First paragraph: one sentence which tells the whole story

Two or three short paragraphs explaining the story

Contact details (again)

(bottom of page)

(new page)

Notes for journalists

Here's how to fill it in, section by section:

Your contact details. No journalist will run a story without them. Essentials are:

The name of your organisation/disorganisation (preferably big, bold and across the top of the page)

One or more contact names

Contact number(s): where contacts are **DEFINITELY** going to be for at least the next two days (mobile phone numbers are useful).



Embargo means that you are instructing journalists not to publish or broadcast the information in the press release before a certain time.

There are several good reasons for an embargo:

- Journalists will know they aren't going to be trumped by anyone else getting in before them.
- It creates a sense of event.
- Timelines concentrate journalists' minds.
- You know when to expect publicity, so you can plan subsequent news management around it.

NB: An embargo doesn't mean that journalists won't be stupid enough to phone the police or the company due to be occupied and ask what they think. So don't stick anything on your press release which you don't want to be generally known.

This is the usual format:

EMBARGO: 00.01am, Friday 15th May

00.01 is a good time, as the papers can then keep up with the broadcasters, and it's less confusing than 00.00.

DON'T put on an embargo if you've got some immediate news, that you want on the radio or TV straight away. Generally, you'd embargo a press release giving advance warning of an action (till about 24 hours before the action's due to start), but not a press release which comes out once the action's started.

The headline

The headline must be short, pithy and to the point. Avoid mystery, elaborate puns or being too clever. The purpose of the headline is to grab the journalists' attention and give them an idea of what the press release is about. If it doesn't do both of these things, they'll read no further and dump it in the bin. It must be NO MORE than eight words long. Use a big, bold font.

Writing headlines isn't easy, and generally takes a good deal of practice. So practice. Look at how they do it in the papers, then try writing headlines for imaginary actions, or real ones which aren't going to happen for a while. Remember: in this as in all writing, a straightforward, plain style is best.

The first paragraph. This isn't easy either but, like the headline, it's essential to get it right. You've got ONE sentence in which to tell the whole story. If the journalist doesn't get the jist of it, she or he won't read on.

There is nothing so complicated that its essential point can't be summarised in a simple sentence. So work out what you're trying to say, then boil it down to its essence. As before, look at the news stories in the papers and see how they do it.

The rest of the text.

Must be no more than two or three paragraphs long, each of which should be no longer than one or two straightforward sentences. They should expand on what you say in the first paragraph. Keep it simple and avoid jargon. Assume (and you won't be far wrong) that journalists know nothing. If there is other essential information which you can't fit in, put it in the Notes for Journalists section. (see below).

Above all, make sure that the first and second paragraphs have covered all the five 'W's:

- Who
- Why
- What
- Where
- When



Your contact details again. Remember: most journalists have a three second memory, are wilfully blind and very, very stupid, so you have to keep on their case.

Notes to journalists.

This is optional. Preferably they should be on a separate page. Journalists have got very little time, and the sight of a huge block of text which is hard to digest will put them off. They want to look at the first page and know that the essentials of the story are there. If they want more, they can turn over and read on.

Generally, you'd write no more than four or five paragraphs of notes (and certainly no more than a page). They should give more details about the rationale for the action: eg facts and figures about the issues surrounding your event/action etc. In other words, this is the place for the complex information which might put journalists off if it's on the front page. Number the paragraphs in this section, as it makes it them look easier to digest.

What makes a press release effective?

News, of course, is meant to be all about novelty, so emphasise what's new about your action. This shouldn't be difficult as the DIY movement is so creative and innovative: people are always coming up with exciting new approaches, so all you have to do is make sure the press hears about them.

Take the Birmingham Northern Relief Road protest, for example. A headline like "Protesters occupy trees along route of new road" will consign a press release straight to the bin, as most journalists will imagine they've heard it all before. But "World's longest sermon threatens to stop new road" (telling the story of the vicar who has discovered that it's illegal to interrupt a priest during his sermon, and intends to preach continually in front of the threatened trees) will make them sit up and wonder what it's all about. If you want to mention the tree-sit, you can do so further on in the text.

There might also be a new political aspect of the story you can use to attract the journalists' attention to your protest: "New road could destroy region's economy, experts say" would, for most journalists, be counter-intuitive and interesting (which shows how much they've been paying attention).

If your action's outside London, and you're organizing transport to get there, say so in the press release, pointing out that journalists are welcome to join you on the coach. Many reporters are so lazy that they won't bother turning up unless everything's laid on for them.

When to send press releases

The most critical press release is the one that goes out about two days before the event. Without it, you won't get much coverage, if any at all. But it's a good idea to put one out much earlier than that as well - about ten days prior to the event - so that when the journalists get the second one they should be ready to respond to it.

It's also important to send out a third one the moment the action begins, telling them you've succeeded in stopping work on the bypass/locking Group 4 in their offices etc. If it's a one day action and your press person has still got the energy and resources, it's no bad thing to send out a fourth press release saying how it all went. A journalist's interest is pretty unpredictable, and could be stimulated at any time.



If the action lasts longer than one day, send out a new press release every day, as long as you've got something to say. Once the event's in the press already, there'll be plenty of opportunities for follow-ups. This is the time when you can sometimes get them to cover the issue you're trying to highlight, rather than simply the event.

Who to send them to

The secret of all successful press releasing is getting them to the right people - so find out who the right people are.

Make a list of:

- Media outlets you want to reach
- Individual journalists who seem to be interested in/sympathetic to the cause

The more you can reach the better, of course, but, unless you're just aiming at the local press, realistically you want to try to press release at least forty places. If it's a national action and you want national publicity, they must include the following:

- All the broadsheet newspapers
- BBC newsroom
- ITN/Channel 4 newsroom
- Newsnight
- The Today programme (on Radio 4), plus PM
- The World at One
- The World Tonight
- Radio 5 Live

NB: You should adapt the tone and contents of your press release to the media you're trying to reach. "Road protesters come to Romford" might be of interest to the Newham Recorder, but to get to the nationals you'd need something more like "New front opens in road war".

How to send press releases

Faxing is still the best way to send them, and a fax modem is invaluable. Some journalists are beginning to emerge from the Neolithic, so they might be contactable by email, but on the whole the communications industry is the last place to use up-to-date communications (except the Department of Trade and Industry, which runs the government's Technology Foresight programme, yet can't use email). Don't use snail mail: it invariably gets lost/disregarded/placed on the bottom of the pile.

To get fax numbers, simply phone the papers, TV and radio stations in question and ask for the fax number of the Newsdesk. If you also want to send your press releases to named journalists at the same organisation, it's best to get their fax numbers off them: reception will often give you the wrong fax number, or one that's been out of date for months. Keep all the fax numbers you get for future reference. Best of all, load them permanently into your computer, so, once you've decided who should get what, your fax modem can contact them automatically.

Following up

One thing of which you can be absolutely certain is that something will get lost in the newsrooms you're targetting: either your press release, the journalist's concentration or the essence of the story. This means you **MUST** follow it up with a phone call.

Just a quick one will do. Ask: Did you get it? Will you be covering the action? Do you need any more information?

They're likely to be rude, gruff and unhelpful. But don't be put off - they're paid to be like that. Make sure you're ready, if need be, to summarise the story in one or two sentences; the first question the journalist will ask is "wot's it all about then?", and her/his attention will wander if you spend more than ten seconds telling them.

However rude they are, never fail to be polite and charming: at the very least, you'll put them to shame.

Other Resources

Helpful organisations

Transition Scotland Support of course! - www.transitionscotland.org

Transition Network – www.transitionnetwork.org

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations – www.scvo.org.uk

Information help desk: 0800 169 0022

Greenpeace – www.greenpeace.org.uk

Friends of the Earth – www.foe-scotland.org.uk

Development Trusts Association of Scotland – www.dtascot.org.uk

Sustrans - [/www.sustrans.org.uk/sustrans-near-you/scotland](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sustrans-near-you/scotland)

Community Energy Scotland - www.communityenergyscotland.org.uk

Community Woodland Association - www.communitywoods.org

Permaculture Association - www.permaculture.org.uk

Community Resources Network Scotland - www.crns.org.uk

Community Transport Association - www.ctauk.org

Local People Leading - www.localpeopleleading.co.uk

In your area

Local churches, rotary clubs, history societies... ..

your local authority

your local community council

your local CVS

your local newspaper

Web based resources

www.mindtools.com – creative ideas for group work

www.theworldcafe.com - instructions on how to use World Cafe



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