



# Final project report

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Transition Town Totnes

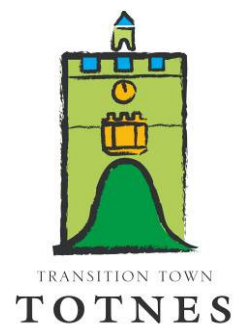
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# Transition Streets

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This document shares information about the Transition Streets project, funded by the previous government's Low Carbon Communities Challenge funded: how it worked, what it achieved, what was learnt and where we are heading next.

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### 1. SUMMARY

The Transition Streets project ran in Totnes from January 2010 – July 2011. Nearly 500 households have participated in the project, where small social groups of neighbours use a workbook full of practical low-cost and no-cost actions to help them reduce their energy use and other household bills. Most of the groups' participants were eligible to apply to for a grant towards a domestic solar PV system, providing they had already done some basic energy efficiency improvements to their home.

We aimed to ensure that those most in need were able to benefit, and 44% of the PV grants were given to low-income homes which then also has access to a low interest loan scheme, thanks to South Hams District Council. This made solar PV more affordable and ensured the feed-in-tariff benefitted not just the better off homes in town.

As a result of participating and doing actions from the workbook, on average each household saves around £570 per year, and 1.3 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. However, people taking part consistently report that the greatest benefits to them are the new social connections they have made with their neighbours. They feel more connected to, and part of, their local community. While the PV grant worked as an incentive for some, for most it was not the most important factor in deciding to participate.

- 468 households formed 56 groups
- Over 392 hours of group meetings
- 141 domestic solar PV systems installed
- 14 kWp PV system on Civic Hall
- Households save avg £570 pa
- And 1.3 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>
- 85% say changes will be sustained
- Over £1m for local economy
- Project cost £75 per household

Only 2% of those surveyed said they would not keep meeting with their group beyond the last 'official' meeting. Groups have initiated a wide range of unanticipated activity such as a community film club, a community orchard and a 'wheelbarrow market' in a drive where neighbours swap unwanted stuff.

Key learnings for similar projects include using people to recruit their own neighbours, setting up the groups to be self-managing from the start, monitoring results early and often and the use professional marketing expertise.

Now the solar PV grants stage has come to an end, the project continues to deepen and expand. Among other things we are adding more content to the workbook, providing a range of 'what next' activities for the groups beyond the final session, setting up a solar PV buying club to ensure the best prices for those that didn't get a grant, and piloting a version of the group with local residents aged 70 years and above.

Transition Town Totnes (TTT) is delighted with the success of the project, which recently won an Ashden Award for Sustainable Energy. We openly share project materials with other Transition towns, a number of whom have set up their own version of this project (without the PV grants). We are now creating a Transition Streets Project Package that will include all the project materials plus 1-on-1 training and support, to help ensure the success of this project is replicated elsewhere. TTT has many other projects and activities underway, for more information please see [www.transitiontowntotnes.org](http://www.transitiontowntotnes.org).

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### 2. ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project aims to inspire and motivate people in Totnes and District to work together, and support each other, in reducing their reliance on fossil fuels, building social cohesion and strengthening the community's resilience in the process.

It brings together small groups of neighbours and supports them in taking effective, practical, money-saving and carbon-reducing actions. A workbook helps each person to build their own action plan that improves household energy efficiency, minimises water use, reduces waste and consumption, explores local transport options and promotes local food.

It also helps everyone to understand what's behind rising energy and food prices, and climate change, and what this means for them, their family and their local community. Each group meets 7 times over a 3-4 month period. For more information about how the project works, please see the project website at [www.transitionstreets.org.uk](http://www.transitionstreets.org.uk).

Unlike most other group-based energy efficiency programmes, this is free at point of delivery, groups are self-managing and TTT provides many 'what next' options, so that groups can maintain momentum beyond the official programme.

Our content is generally wider than traditional carbon-reducing focus, bringing in peak oil and community resilience too.



There are 3 stages to the project:

- Behaviour change – this is the cornerstone of the project and is delivered through the meetings, the workbook and the peer support (and a bit of peer pressure!).
- Additional energy efficiency support – participants are encouraged to use the Energy Saving Trust's Home Energy Check and other services to get specific advice about their property. We also train one person in each group to be the 'Street Energy Assessor' who can then support their neighbours with some of the more basic actions.
- Grants towards cost of domestic solar PV system, for those with appropriate roofs. We provided information and support about PV, and discounted pricing with a chosen supplier as well as grants of £2,500 - £3,500 depending on income. Grants are only available once the basic energy efficiency work has been done.



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#### Project history

This project, originally called Transition Together, began with the help of £12,500 from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Sep 2008. We created the workbook and started 2 pilot groups and then based on the early success of the pilots, we were awarded £20,000 by NESTA's Big Green Challenge Plus in Sep 2009. Half of this grant was used to help start a Transition Together project in 10 other Transition towns.

The project continued to grow and recruit more groups, and then in Dec 2009 the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) awarded TTT a grant of £625,000 through the Low Carbon Communities Challenge programme. This money was mostly used as grants to help households in the groups to pay for a domestic solar PV system.

This money enabled the project to significantly scale up and raise our profile in the town. We released the grants in 2 rounds through a type of revolving fund. We used the grants as an incentive for people to form a Transition Together group, with greater financial support offered to low income households. We were oversubscribed for both rounds of the PV grant awards, but most groups that did not become eligible for the grants still carried on with the basic Transition Together programme.

We also used the DECC money to install a large solar PV system on the Civic Hall in the market square. This aimed to help raise-awareness of the project and the benefits of PV to the whole town, and to help reduce the high energy costs of this key community resource.

The terms of the DECC award dictated, to a large extent, the way we could spend it. If it was our choice, we would not have spent this much money on solar PV grants. Instead we would have focused more on the basic energy efficiency aspects of homes and a mix of technology. However, we still feel we made the very most of the money by ensuring people could only get PV grants once they had done the basic efficiency measures themselves.

The DECC bid was mostly written by volunteers who were part of the very first pilot group (thanks Glen Park and Carole Whitty). We certainly would not have been so successful without this group, called Copland Neighbours, started by the very dear Maggi Fielder (right) who sadly, we lost last year. The group has subsequently renamed itself Maggi's Group.



#### Transition Together or Transition Streets?

It's a bit confusing, but we called this PV-grant-giving project Transition Streets to differentiate it from the existing Transition Together (behaviour change) programme. Basically, groups that were classed as Transition Streets were eligible to apply for PV grants, and those that were not were still doing the 'regular' Transition Together programme. From now, we're just going to call it Transition Streets and drop Transition Together.



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### 3. WHAT DO THE PARTICIPANTS SAY?

*"It was number one about getting to know people around me better, with all the benefits I think that has - the feeling of belonging, more part of where you are, share things, borrow and lend."*

*"We have now set up a little group who are trying to organise a community orchard. That is a direct outcome of people getting to know each other better and thinking this is quite good doing community based things together, let's do something else."*



*"Before I felt a certain powerlessness – the Chinese power stations, the environment in general - but having done this I begin to feel empowered and think well I've done this and if more people did this we could really turn this around from a crisis to an opportunity."*

*"The other thing I liked about doing this terrace was that we are all in housing that has been built at the same time and is very similar... it meant that we were all on a level as far as what sort of house we were talking about. So implicitly there was a reasonably similar set of circumstances of wealth too."*

*"At the end of a day of running around after 4 children you think 'am I really going out?' but I'd come back re-energised about what we had talked about and from having socialised at that level."*



*"We just cried laughing a lot of the time, it was hilarious! Cos we were pretty hopeless the lot of us... you know when we were talking about thermostats, these six women didn't even know we had a thermostat."*

*There were resources in that group that were phenomenal in terms of information and experience that we shared.*

*"Materials have been balanced well, not too intimidating and not too basic, with a good balance of practical considerations and opportunity for discussion".*

*"it's not about who can be greenest, it's not about whipping yourself because you're not green enough, it's just about seeing how you can change your life."*

*Best thing that has happened to us since we moved here in 1974!*

*(...and of course, we have had a little negative feedback and some suggestions for improvements too – more on this later.)*



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### 4. OUR PROJECT PARTNERS

This project involved a range of organisations - our project partners - who were invited to meet monthly as the Project Partners Group. Although chaired by TTT, the partners felt this gave a strong sense of shared contribution from all, and which has helped build connections between everyone involved.

**South Hams District Council (SHDC)** In line with their objectives of addressing fuel poverty, energy efficiency needs and climate change, SHDC provided financial help for lower income households through its partner the Wessex Reinvestment Trust. This scheme means tested households then gave access to low interest loans to meet the remaining cost of a PV system. As a partner in the 'Cosy Devon' scheme, SHDC helped give access to free or heavily subsidised, loft and cavity wall insulation.



**Beco (now part of Kier)** This Totnes based company was successful in winning the PV installation tenders, and worked very closely with the project team in equipment procurement, household assessment and PV system installation. We coordinated referrals and other activities through a shared online database and regular meetings. Having a locally based partner proved invaluable to successfully managing the complexities and unexpected challenges of the project as they arose.



**Totnes Town Council (TTC)** is responsible for managing the Civic Hall, the main public building located in Totnes market square. TTC worked closely with TTT to install a 14Kwp solar PV system on the south roof. A large display showing energy production and CO2 savings is at the entrance. The project funded most of the costs, with TTC contributing around £6,000 plus electrical upgrade costs. TTC recently announced that they are the UK's first 'Transition' local Council.



The **Energy Savings Trust (EST)** provided on line and telephone advice resource for households to complete the Home Energy Checks and Audits. Through its Green Communities programme EST also provided specialist staff to lead training sessions for Street Home Energy Auditors, who transferred their knowledge to other members of their individual Streets groups.

**DARE/Energy Action Devon** works with individuals and organisations on energy related projects to find cost effective and practical solutions for more efficient use of energy. Staff delivered renewable energy training to Street Energy Assessors who then shared this learning with the rest of their group.

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### 5. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR HOMES?

A total of 359 households participated in 42 groups (25 in Round 1 and 17 in Round 2) with an average group size of 8 people. 35 of these groups were based in Totnes and Dartington, reaching about 5% of all households in these parishes, with an additional 7 groups running in other parishes. Additional groups formed and did the Transition Together programme, but were not part of Transition Streets i.e. were not eligible for PV grants.

We estimate that 38% of participants are 'low disposable income' households (i.e. less than £250 disposable income after essential outgoings per month), and this roughly matches the overall proportion of low income homes in the town.

Of the homes receiving PV grants, 44% were low disposable income households and as such received a grant of £3,500 rather than the standard £2,500 for able-to-pay homes.

297 households asked to have their roof assessed for PV suitability, with 141 systems ultimately installed.

One of our project aims was for participating households to reflect a cross section of the local population and property types:

1. Project household composition is broadly reflective of Devon County Council local population data compared by age, and family size. While property ages are diverse, older pre-1930s properties are slightly over represented (37%), and newer post 1980s properties under represented (23%).
2. While the project involved broadly characteristic proportions of detached (14%), semi-detached (32%), terraced (33%) and bungalow properties (6%), flats are under represented (3% compared with 25% actual).
3. In relation to tenure, 71% of participating properties are privately owned compared with 64% as the local norm. Rented properties are under represented with 7% private rented (14% local norm), and 10% social rented properties compared with 18% actual. This is broadly reflective of difficulty encountered in engaging lower income households to participate in the programme.



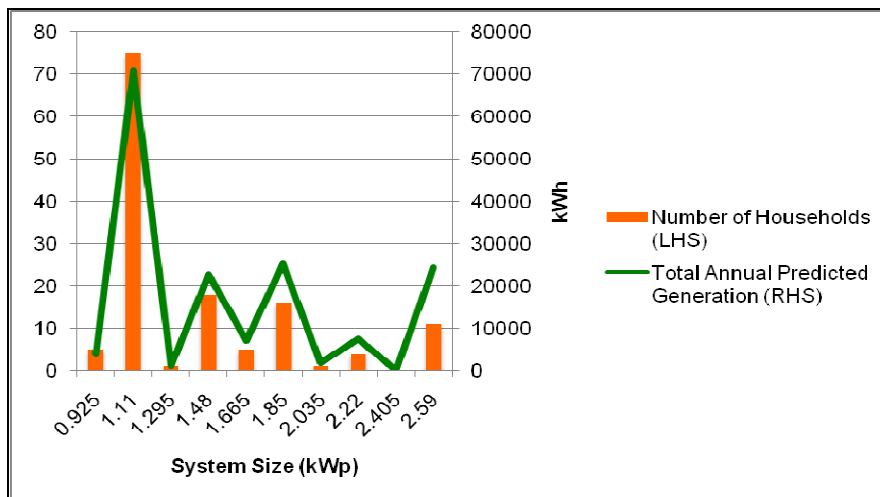




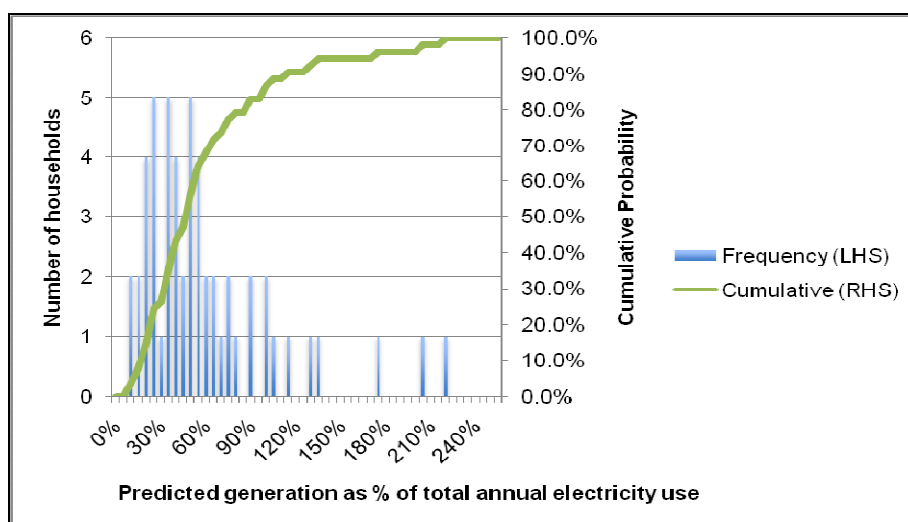
**6. HOUSEHOLD PV**

We installed Mitsubishi-185 panels with SMA inverters and Sunnybeam handheld display units. The latter showed kWh generated, carbon saved and money earned and helped the householders judge, for example, the best time to run electrical appliances during the day to benefit from the free solar electricity. The installed cost per kWh ranged from £4,785 for a 1.1 kWp system, to £4,244 for a 2.4 kWp system. The total annual predicted generation from all the domestic PV systems is 163,701 kWh, although early reports indicate this is an underestimate.

The graph below shows the spread of system sizes by number of households. The 1.11 kWp system (6 panels) was by far the most popular, reflecting both affordability and small roof sizes in our town.



A number of households returned energy assessment forms detailing their expected annual electricity use. These have been analysed for those households that have installed PV, and the graph below shows how much of current use will be met by the PV system.



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### 7. SUPPORT FOR LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

The project offered a package of assistance to households with less than £250 a month disposable income, once main bills have been paid, to help them afford a PV system. This consisted of a grant of £3,500 and access to a low interest loan (3%) for the balance of the cost which was typically around £2,000.

The typical repayment for a 1.1 kWp system over a 5 year period is £36.35 per month, and this is covered by the average feed-in-tariff (FiT) income-savings of £39 a month on 1.1kWp system, with the full FiT going to the household once the loan is re-paid. This made this income generating technology accessible to those who most need it.

South Hams District Council (SHDC) funded the administration and finance costs of the low interest loans, and they also up-fronted the loan money. The project team would refer a seemingly eligible household to SHDC, who then referred them to their partner, Wessex Home Improvement Loans (WHIL), a Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI).



WHIL then met with the householder to assess their disposal income and their suitability for a loan. WHIL responsible lender guidelines require a household to have a disposal income of three times the loan repayment amount. However, they were able to take into account the projected FiT payments/savings which in most cases then helped ensure that the home was credit worthy for the loan. Where people wanted the higher level grant, but not the low interest loan, we used Homemaker Southwest to assess the disposal income.

A small number of households were unable to qualify for the low interest loan, even when the projected FiT/savings were taken into account, as the 3x multiple rule was not met. Some of these households were able to proceed with PV by using savings or borrowing from friends or family. However, there were several low income households that were unable to proceed because of the lack of available finance despite our best attempts.

The roof condition of some low income households was not appropriate for PV and they couldn't afford to have roof renewed. Some roofs were too small, but a 0.9 kWp (5 panel) PV system introduced part way through the programme helped some.

One shared ownership household (owned by participant and by housing association) had some challenges in getting permission from the housing association for the low interest loan to be secured

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against the property, but eventually permission was given. No private landlords took up the grant offer, despite being asked by some of the tenants in the groups.

#### Housing Associations (HAs)

We had a mixed experience here. In the early stages of the project all 5 local HAs were contacted and encouraged to consider taking up the £2,500 grant for PV on suitable properties, if tenants were participating in a TS group. The HA would pay the balance and benefit from the FiT while the tenant gets some free electricity.

We were unable to get a response from one HA, while 2 others said they did not have the available resources within the financial year 2010/11, and did not feel comfortable only investing in some properties in this way. However, they both confirmed that the dialogue with Transition Streets had alerted them to the potential benefits of installing PVs.

The remaining HAs responded positively. South Devon Rural Housing Association (SDRHA), a small local association indicated that they could part fund some installations if they received the grant. They then wrote to their tenants encouraging them to form a group, and apply to Round 2 of Transition Streets. As a result, 2 groups of SDRHA tenants formed groups and 6 PV systems were installed on the most suitable homes.



Sanctuary Housing, a large national HA, owns a supported sheltered housing scheme of 14 flats in 2 blocks. The scheme's supported house manager helped form a group, resulting in 9 PV grants being awarded. Sanctuary funded the balance of costs on the 9 systems and paid the full costs for a further 6 systems, 5 for the remaining tenants and 1 for the communal lounge and laundry.

**Landmatters Co-operative:** this is an intentional off-grid, permaculture community near Totnes which formed a group with all 8 homes on the site. They run training and tours to educate about very low carbon living. All the households have very low incomes and live in self-build benders, which would not have been suitable for the secured low interest loans. The community's priority was for an off-grid PV system to generate electricity to a communal building for a washing machine, shower pump, battery charge point etc. Transition Streets granted the equivalent of 8 standard grants or £20,000 for the system including batteries. This system gives us useful learning about off-grid systems. Landmatters will pay some of the excess FiT income back to the project, and also host a number of educational visits to the site per year.

Overall, 62 (44%) low income households were assisted to purchase PV. This breaks down as 38 households receiving the higher level of grant (of these 16 also got the low interest loan) plus 16 housing association properties and 8 community homes at Landmatters.

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### 8. INSTALLING COMMUNITY SCALE PV

The Totnes Civic Hall is a well used community building with high energy costs and little insulation or other efficiency measures. The project granted £50,000 to Totnes Town Council (TTC) towards a 14Kwp - 75 panel - PV array on the Civic Hall, with the balance of £6,600 contributed by TTC.

A public Civic Hall PV 'switch-on' event took place in September 2010 which coincided with launch of Round 2 of the project and a celebration of the end of the first round. This included a very successful Totnes Energy Fair with a range of suppliers and 100's of attendees.

This followed the previous weekend's Totnes and Dartington Open Eco-homes Event, promoted jointly with Transition Streets. This show-cased 13 local demonstration homes and included over 500 individual home visits. It is expected that the Open Eco-homes weekend and Energy Fair at the Civic Hall will be an annual event in Totnes.



The Civic Hall PV now provides income from the FiT and reduces the costs of powering the Civic Hall day to day. As a direct result of receiving this grant, TTC has been able to acquire more grants e.g. matched funding towards insulation and energy saving measures on the Civic Hall. We have an agreement with TTC that the FiT is shared with the project. The split is 60% going to fund more insulation and energy saving measures on the Civic Hall, and 40% going back into the Transition Streets project, with the specific intention of it benefiting the more vulnerable households.

A public energy display board located at the entrance to the Civic Hall, and overlooking the central market square, shows the amount of energy produced and carbon saved to date. A further TV monitor in a shop window shows the total generation from the domestic installations via a web application linked to each domestic PV system.

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### 9. RESULTS – MONEY AND CARBON SAVED

Participants complete an evaluation form at the first session and then again at the final session. This records the actions they take, and any changes in attitudes. This is then returned to the office where we track results centrally.

#### Carbon and financial savings per home

- Average financial savings per household per year is £570.
- Average carbon savings per household per year is 1.3 tonnes.
- For those homes with solar PV, they get an income of around £400-800 per year and additional carbon savings of 0.4 – 0.7 tonnes. Payback is typically within 5-9 years.

#### Savings in total (excluding PV)

We estimate that the 468 households save in total, per year, £266,760 and 608 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Based on actions taken, we estimate a total reduction in heating and power demand of around 1.5m kWh per year - that's 14% of the average household's usage.



#### Important note

We estimate carbon and financial savings based on which actions the participants report having taken as a result of the project. We can only attach credible figures to 25 of the 35 workbook actions with any confidence, and for these 25 actions the carbon conversion ratings have been approved by CRed at the University of East Anglia (the people behind the government's Act on CO<sub>2</sub> carbon measures), and are generally conservative.

However, some of the actions are of course highly variable in both carbon and financial savings, and we are more confident in some measures than others. This also doesn't take into account that the household will likely take on more of the carbon saving actions in the workbook once the 'official' project participation has ended – e.g. some of the groups are going through the workbook a 2nd time and we are not tracking these additional savings.





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### Numbers and types of actions

On average each household does 10 actions from the workbook. They state they had already done, before starting the project, about 20 of the workbook actions and that they plan to do 3 more actions later.

Top 5 most popular ‘new’ actions:

- Know how much energy you are using (monitor your usage in your home)
- Be a real turn off (always turn things off at the wall when not in use)
- Buy local & seasonal foods
- Control your heat (know how to use your heating system and thermostat)
- Know how much you are using (monitor your water use at home)

Bottom 3 least popular ‘new’ actions:

- Use car clubs (a car club has only just started in Totnes)
- Get on your bike – cycle don’t drive (though this is highest ‘plan to do this’ item)
- Loft insulation (most have already done it)

Top 3 ‘already done’ actions:

- Recycle (food, glass, plastics, tins...everything!)
- Minimise food waste
- Washing clothes (full loads, low temps, wear clothes longer)

Top 3 ‘I plan to do this’ actions:

- Get on your bike – cycle don’t drive
- Draught proofing (we are now running some Draught-buster workshops)
- Grow your own

	SPEND LESS ON ENERGY	Already done/doing this before Transition Together	Did/doing this as part of Transition Together (or more than I did before)	I plan to do this in the next few months
11.	Know how much you are using (monitor your usage in your home)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	Be a real turn off (always turn things off at the wall when not in use)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	See the light (install low- energy light bulbs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	Control your heat (know how to use your heating system and thermostat)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	Lagging (pipe work and hot water tank)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	Draught proofing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	Loft insulation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## 10. RESULTS – SOCIAL IMPACTS

We commissioned some detailed research on the social impacts of the project, in order to better understand things like what motivates people to get involved in a group; what changes they make; what benefits they actually experience; the features of successful groups; the issues they face and how they address them; and attitudes to group continuation. We also asked for suggestions for improvements and changes. An online survey with follow-up interviews helped ensure we had the fullest picture possible.

We conducted the online survey in March 2011. Around 10% of all participants completed the survey, and a summary of results is here, with the full set available at [www.transitionstreets.org.uk](http://www.transitionstreets.org.uk).

The most important reasons for joining a group were, in order of importance:

- Build good relationships with my neighbours;
- Doing something positive about issues that concern me (e.g. climate change);
- Reducing my carbon footprint/energy dependency.

Interestingly, the responses 'Reducing my household costs' or 'Help with grants' or 'Chance of grant for PV' did not feature as highly as we thought they would – though more comments on this came through in follow-up interviews as per the next section.

About 82% of participants said the meetings, and the project materials were Good or Very Good.

Only 2% said they would not keep meeting in some form, and 44% of groups are already keeping on meeting. 73% said having new activities to complete together would help them continue to meet, and 46% want to be linked to other groups, and the same again want access to more grants –all great input for project development which we have taken into account.

In line with our findings from the Evaluation Forms, about 83% of participants have made improvements to their home as a result of the project and only about 10% said they'd already done as much as they could. 86% have made behavioural changes, with the rest saying they already did these things before joining the group. Over 90% said it would be Very Easy or Somewhat Easy to sustain the changes (behavioural).

The reasons for making these changes were overwhelmingly around Reducing carbon footprint/energy use, with Ongoing financial savings being 2nd most important reason. The main benefits resulting from participation are Better relationships with neighbours, then Feeling of taking positive action around issues that concern me, then Reduced household costs. Reassuringly, 85% of participants think that these benefits will go on for at least a year.



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Finally, when asked ‘If a friend asked your advice about whether or not to get involved in a Transition Together group, please tell us in a few words what you would say’ the overwhelming response was ‘yes, do it, join in’.

Survey respondents were generous with free text responses and the offer to participate in follow-up interviews. This enabled us to dig deeper into motivations and benefits, and to step away from a listing of pre-prepared responses as follows...

#### Results of interviews

Most of the people who took part in groups were already aware of, and in some ways committed to, living in a more sustainable way. Motives for participating were to learn more about living sustainably, to feel empowered through shared action, to get to know neighbours better, to qualify for PV grants, and interestingly, to take the Transition movement forward.



Wordle from survey question “Please tell us in a few words the most significant benefit(s) you have experienced from taking part”

Those who joined TS because of the possibility of PV grant funding were more divided in their opinions of the programme, with a few understandably disappointed that they had not qualified. More commonly, though, participants who began with a financial motivation found that the social benefits were more significant in the end.

All participants made practical changes to their homes and behaviours. In some cases these were large in scope, including installation of solar PV. Reduced car use, reduced consumption of energy and water, and better recycling practices (including composting) were the most common behavioural changes.

*Note: if all workbook actions for these wider categories are added together, this anecdotal prioritization matches the section above, where ‘most popular actions’ treats each individually e.g. does not add together the 3 car-reducing actions ‘Get on your bike’, ‘Walk don’t drive’ and ‘Take buses and trains’.*



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Even those who began the programme convinced that they had already done 'all they could' went on to make significant changes. Participants feel that these changes will be sustained and long-lasting. However, there is also a desire for ongoing support from their groups (and others) and from TTT.

The social benefits of participating in groups were the most widely felt: in fact they were experienced by all participants. They include better social contact with neighbours (street parties, shared meals, 'dropping in'), practical help of many kinds, and more communal action on issues that matter to the neighbourhood. Practical benefits to households included perception of significant financial savings (68%) and improved value of homes (64%).

Growth in understanding, practical knowledge and collective skills were important to a large minority. A similar number experienced greater well-being, through a lessening of fear and anxiety about global issues and a greater sense of empowerment.

There has been considerable learning about how to get on in neighbourhood groups, some of which is captured in the full report, including the confrontation of difficult issues and the management of diverse personalities and points of view.



There is no doubt that the structure provided by the workbook and the initial facilitation from TTT were critical to group meetings. There is a strong sense that with a little further input, groups could expand, diversify, and generate further positive outcomes for the neighbourhoods of Totnes. The report also documents some valuable suggestions for taking the programme forward into the future, which have been taken into account with planning future project rounds.

In addition, DECC conducted research with around 300 households in Totnes before the project began in order to establish a baseline for local attitudes and behaviours around energy and climate change. This also makes for interesting reading and appears to show early influence of local Transition activity on the town. DECC will return to conduct the same survey within a few months to see if the project had an impact on wider attitudes and behaviour in the town.

The full reports on both the survey and the follow-up interviews, as well as the DECC findings are available at [www.transitionstreets.org.uk](http://www.transitionstreets.org.uk).



## 11. RESULTS – OTHER BENEFITS

### People

We assume that everyone in a household benefits, and that the average number of people per household in Totnes and District is 2.5 (Devon County Council 2006). Given that 468 households have participated, that's an average of 1,170 people who are directly benefitting from cost savings, improved thermal comfort and greater social connection.

### Inward investment in the town

We have awarded commercial contracts to the total value of around £1,000,000 to Beco-Kier Ltd, our local installer. This has enabled them to take on an extra 2-4 employees over the project period, jobs they aim to retain once the grants-based part of the project is over. Knock on effects include work for local scaffolding companies and electricians.

### Contribution to reducing the town council's costs

Thanks to the solar PV system on the Civic Hall, the town council benefits from savings on their electricity bill (estimated to be £1,500 pa) and the £3,900 pa FiT income.

### Jobs created in TTT

This project has enabled us to employ 7 part-time people (3.5 FTEs) for at least 12 months, some for 24 months.

### Cost per household

The cost of running and delivering the underlying Transition Together project (so excluding the Transition Streets funding that related just to administering the grants) is around £75 per household. This is based on total funding divided by number of households so far.

### Ashden Award

In July 2011 we were delighted to hear that this project had won an Ashden Award for Sustainability 2011 (right).

More information, including downloads of project photos, a film and a case study, is available at the awards website [www.ashdenawards.org/winners/ttotnes11](http://www.ashdenawards.org/winners/ttotnes11). This provided a cash prize which helps keep the project going, a great set of publicity opportunities and materials and access to ongoing support from the awards team.





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#### 12. WHAT ELSE HAVE WE LEARNED?

We have learnt an enormous amount from this project – here's the top things we think might be most useful to similar projects:

1. **Use neighbours to recruit their neighbours:** people are much more likely to join a group if it's their neighbour knocking on their door and asking them to come over. We just had to attract the attention of those 'initiators', who were often but not always involved with TTT to some extent.
2. **Let groups get on with it, but do more follow-up:** enabling the groups to be self-supporting and self-managing has proved to work well. We just facilitate the first session, after this they take it in turns to run and host the meetings, and deal with any issues. We offer 'Group Skills' training to the groups, with a minority attending but finding it very valuable. However, we have now decided to also send a facilitator along to the final session, partly to ensure we get the evaluation forms back but also to help the group know what subsequent activities and actions are available. This has also been requested by the groups themselves.
3. **Evaluate and measure from the start:** this has been key to our success. The fact that we could quantify the results of the first 2 pilot groups in terms of carbon and financial savings really helped us to secure additional funding. Additional surveys and research have greatly strengthened the objective evidence that the project works, and our understanding why.
4. **Be clear on allocation of grants or freebies:** in the first round of PV grants we were very oversubscribed (much to our amazement!). This unfortunately led to some disappointment as some groups has to be informed they would not qualify for PV grants. We had not been clear enough that the grants were limited and got some negative reaction (about the only place we suffered this).
5. **Time to run the PV install process:** when planning the project, we based it on the typical sales cycle at our supplier being about 2 months for visit-quote-confirm-install-commission. However we realised that unlike 'typical' customers of Beco-Kier who had already decided they wanted to buy PV, our householders were often at a much earlier stage and needed more information and support to help make the decision, especially given this had financial implications for them. So our installation schedule ran pretty late, which had implications for our supplier who then had a rush to deal with. Having a local supplier who was very flexible made this project much easier, it's hard to imagine how it would have worked so well if a non-local supplier was used.
6. **Housing association budget cycles:** we realised that often organisations such as housing associations need a lot of notice if they will need to commit budget, e.g. to part-fund PV for their tenants. Our project deadlines thus made it untenable for some to participate.
7. **Professional marketing input really helps:** having someone on the team who really understood the kinds of people who live locally, and what might most appeal to them made a big difference, we think, to the success of our recruitment.

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#### 13. WHAT NEXT FOR THE PROJECT?

Our plans are now to **continue the project** until we have reached a (stretch) target of around 20% of our local community. This equates to around 1800 households, over a third of which are located in Totnes rather than the surrounding villages. So far, we estimate we have reached around 5% of homes based in Totnes and Dartington, with a few groups currently running in the villages.

Having reviewed the feedback from the groups so far, we will **improve the project** in a number of ways. These include:

- New workbook modules, and more advanced content for those who want to do more;
- Means to stay in touch with other groups, and share experiences, ideas and progress;
- Access to training/skill share e.g. draught-busting;
- Attend the final meeting to ensure group knows what it can do next;
- Explore ways to help renters and landlords get more benefit, especially from technology;
- Setting up a PV buying club so those that didn't get a grant can still access the very best prices;
- Offering discounted expert energy audits and a thermal imaging service;
- Exploring ways to help low-income homes access finance to fully cover the cost of PV (or other FiT generating technology) without having to resort to 'roof-grab' offers;
- Monthly report about the project and the groups in the monthly TTT e-bulletin;



We also want to **broaden the reach of the project**, to ensure those most in need can benefit from the financial savings and improved thermal comfort. For example, we have just started a pilot group with a group of elderly people (70 years and over) who still live independently, in partnership with Totnes Methodist Church (kindly supported in part by the Gibbs Foundation). They are meeting at the church and we are trialing a revised project approach with them, with more direct support and expert energy audits among other things.

We aim to **finance the project** through the income generated by selling the 'project package' to other organisations plus through some funding from various sources, including our Ashden Award prize money. Also, we set up this project to use the large DECC grant as a revolving fund. This means that some of the money has come back, and is still available for use for investment in a renewable energy asset. This asset would be owned by TTT, and the feed-in-tariff income would be used to fund this project and other similar activities for community benefit long-term, though this revenue won't start to flow for 2-3 years.

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#### 14. STARTING UP YOUR OWN PROJECT, OR GETTING ACCESS TO THE WORKBOOK

We already freely share all project resources (workbook, marketing materials, evaluation forms, project plans etc.) with other official Transition Initiatives around the world. We have provided these materials to over 30 other places so far. Unfortunately we have not had the capacity to offer any direct support to these groups, and those that respond to our requests for feedback report mixed results. Some projects are going very well, and they are experimenting with different ways of doing the project, and others have stalled, mainly due to lack of paid time for project workers. Increasingly, we are being approached by other non-Transition organisations who are interested in our project and potentially starting up something similar.

We are currently doing a full overhaul of all the project resources in order to create a more complete 'Transition Streets Project Package', This will include a generic workbook that's not so Totnes specific, all the materials like marketing logos, recruitment flyers, project plans, research reports, copies of funding bids, better evaluation tools etc. Most important, it will also include 1-2 days of training, so that we can help ensure the project gets off to the best possible start, and then we will offer some ongoing support too.



A cost will be attached to this package and it will be available to all. Basically, it provides a ready-made and proven project. This is aimed at organisations, Transition or otherwise, that want to start their own version of the project for a much lower cost than if starting from scratch, and with the benefit of all the learnings from Totnes and elsewhere.

Formal Transition Initiatives will still be able to access some of these materials for free online e.g. the workbook and a project guide possibly, but no additional support or resources can be offered. Therefore we strongly suggest that any organisation that wishes to start its own version of the project considers securing funding such as that from Awards for All, which is designed for just this type of thing. The 'Transition Streets Project Package' should be available from Oct-Nov 2011.

The other option for non-Transition Initiatives is to buy a single workbook which is £10 for an online version (you download the PDFs), or for £20 plus postage we'll send you a hardcopy in a binder. Again, in this case, no further support or resources can be offered.

If you're interested in more information please keep an eye out at [www.transitionstreets.org.uk](http://www.transitionstreets.org.uk) else contact [fiona.ward@ttandc.org.uk](mailto:fiona.ward@ttandc.org.uk) and ask to be kept informed.

We hope that you have found this report useful. If so, please let us know, and if not, then definitely let us know what you feel is missing and we will do our best to fill any gaps. Thanks.

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### 15. APPRECIATION

The success of this project is due to a wide range of talented and enthusiastic people and organisations.

These include the project team: Fiona Ward and Adrian Porter (co-managers), Mary Popham and Fraser Durham (group support), Clare Jeffery (communications), Lou Brown (Transition Together co-ordination) and Helen Ireland (fundraising support).

The (volunteer) steering group: Carole Whitty (TTT Trustee), Chris Bird (TTT Building & Housing Group), Jill Tomalin (ex trustee now a town councillor) and Frances Northrop (TTT manager). Originally also included Glen Park.

The group facilitators: Jenny Gellatly, Laurel Ellis, Hal Gilmore and Jacqi Hodgson.



Thanks also to Sally Croft for her invaluable help with extremely complicated project finances, and also to Glen Park, Carole Whitty and Rob Hopkins for creating the DECC bid in the first place. The image above shows us celebrating the news of the DECC grant at Christmas 2009.

Much appreciation and thanks to all these wonderful people who make it such a pleasure to work in Transition.

Our partners have played an essential role. Many thanks to Mark Bloomfield, Dan Bayley, Hilary White and the rest of the Beco team, to Drew Powell and Alison Adams at SHDC and Rebecca Caley at Wessex, to Tony Whitty and Ruth Robinson at Totnes Town Council, and to Celia Minoughan and Tony Merrick at the EST and Paul Baker at DARE.

We are extremely grateful to our funders who include the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Big Green Challenge Plus (NESTA), The Low Carbon Communities Challenge, the Ashden Awards and most recently the Gibbs Trust who are contributing to our 'elderly group' project.

But finally, of course, thanks to all the participants of all the groups, without you we would be nowhere!