

## **Transition Black Isle**

Convener's report - JUNE 2010

Our very first meeting was held on 21 Feb 2009 at Glachbeg croft North Kessock when about 28 people gathered to discuss the possibility of forming a transition group on the Black Isle. Shortly afterwards we were involved in promoting the film "Age of Stupid" which was showing in Eden Court and Vue Cinema. In the meantime a constitution with the status of Unincorporated Association was agreed and bank account opened, so that by June we had already run awareness raising stalls complete with display stands at one or two events and had given a talk to the Black Isle Ward forum about what we were doing and planning.

During August of 2009, as well as attending the Black Isle Show, the Dingwall Street Fair and St Boniface Fair we were establishing good relations with the Energy Saving Trust and helped them with their Home Energy Checks by distributing leaflets and packs around houses on the Black Isle. In return they helped to advertise our first major public event in Munloch in September. Entitled Greening Homes and Gardens, the event enabled over 300 people to visit Black Isle homes fitted with a variety of renewable heating or energy systems. They could also see good vegetable growing and composting practise in various gardens. Buoyed up by our success at that event the awareness group set about an ambitious programme of public events throughout the winter, applying to the Climate Challenge Fund for £12,600 to fund these events. As that funding didn't come through until November, the Highland Council kindly granted us £2000 to bridge the gap.

So in October we showed the film "Age of Stupid" in Cromarty and "A Crude Awakening" in Culbokie followed in November by "Age of Stupid" again in North Kessock and "Power of Community" in Resolis.

Meanwhile three new sub groups had been formed, Energy, Food and Heart and Soul and the energy group were in negotiations with Black Isle Councillors over the possible establishment of a community wind farm. By late October the very first of the proposed monthly North Kessock Community Markets was held and the Food Group held a most successful trip to Forres Transition Town to see their community garden.

During December we were preparing our second more ambitious bid to the Climate Challenge Fund and held a very successful Climate Question Time in the same week as the Copenhagen Climate Summit. Environmental journalist Louise Batchelor chaired a most stimulating night at Fortrose Academy where a packed house heard David Sutherland, David Alston, Donnie MacLeod, Eleanor Scott, Melanie Macrae from Community Energy Scotland and John Picken, an NFU representative, answer challenging questions from the floor. This event certainly raised our profile with many influential organisations in the area.

On 16 January we held another successful public event this time with Mandy Meikle, an energy campaigner, who gave us a very informed view of Peak Oil. Charles Kennedy was also in attendance to answer questions and he was impressed with the turnout on a snowy January Saturday saying he would take the local interest shown in the event back to the Lib Dems.

On 22 January three short films about energy were shown at Munloch and in February we showed Power of Community in Avoch.

At about this time Highland Council awarded us a small grant to help us improve our embryonic financial system and we appointed Gail Stuart Martin to provide financial support to TBI

At the end of March Alex Hill from the met office gave a very entertaining and informed talk about our changing Scottish weather at Culbokie Primary school to which over 80 people came.

By April we'd had our 5<sup>th</sup> North Kessock Community Market which was building into a very enjoyable community event with over 22 stalls selling foods and crafts a chance to have a blether over coffee and cakes. The Highland Council provided some funding support for the market which enabled us to advertise it more successfully. And in

the same month we had confirmation from the Climate Challenge Fund that we'd been successful with our bid. We were to receive the full £85,000 we had applied for. The Highland Council has also indicated that they will be supporting our programme.

During May we contracted Sheila Wickens to run the Grow North project, designed to encourage more people to grow their own vegetables, and also Richard Robinson to oversee all the projects we are running with the aid of CCF funds. We are also in the process of appointing a market manager for the North Kessock Community Market.

For your information the various projects we are running and money allocated to them are as follows:-

Grow North - training in vegetable growing, harvesting and preserving - £24,300  
Highland Food Challenge - eating local food - creating local food map - £5760  
Community Gardens - at Culbokie and Muir of Ord - sharing the growing veg experience - £17,000  
Greening Homes and Gardens - as per the first event - £962  
Smart Metre Project - helping reduce energy bills - £2600  
Awareness campaign including website - £15,800

On top of all these activities many of our members took part in various training days over the period including a very beneficial Weaving Magic course specifically designed for Transition groups and enabling them to work effectively together. We also produced 2 high quality newsletters for distribution around the Black Isle and to Councillors and libraries as well as developing a very flexible website which will be a useful resource as we continue to grow.

We are now becoming a company limited by guarantee to give our members more protection bearing in mind the funds we are now handling. By the end of the year we had a total of 51 members.

So, looking back, a tremendously successful and very busy year I think you'll all agree. And this is due to the enormous commitment by so many of our members in time and effort to make Transition Black Isle a really positive force for our future.