

TRANSITION TOWN TIME FOR BUCKIE AS UN SEMINAR SUCCESS HAILED

BUCKIE played host to a prestigious and innovative training course last weekend aimed at addressing environmental issues and further community engagement.

Held over Saturday and Sunday July 3-4, Buckie Community High School played host to seminars, run by the UN's CIFAL training centre based at Findhorn, on how to become part of the Transition Towns project.

Amongst the key goals of working towards becoming a Transition Town is seeking to help communities lower their dependence on fossil fuels and at the same time reducing CO2 emissions and energy consumption.

Gaining Transition Town status is one of the action plan aims of Buckie Area Forum's (BAF) Buckie Economic Regeneration Steering Group, which is chaired by Buckie SNP Councillor Gordon McDonald.

Buckie was secured as a venue for the Moray-wide event by Councillor McDonald, who is also a CIFAL Director.

Hailing the coup of bringing the high-profile event to Buckie, Councillor McDonald stated that he hoped it would signal the kick-starting of the area's journey down the Transition Town path.

"It is a great honour to have this UN CIFAL training session held here in Buckie and it was good to see such an excellent local response in the number of places taken up," he continued. "This is high quality training that spans not only some of the very pertinent environmental issues dealt with by Transition Towns but also provides invaluable training in community engagement.

"Attaining Transition Town status is an important objective for Buckie Economic Regeneration Steering Group and our ultimate aim is the formation of an autonomous group who will take this project forward for Buckie."

BAF Chair Barry Taylor stressed that the sessions were a double boost for the area, both in terms of attracting them to the town and also in helping advance the Transition Towns project locally.

He said: "I was delighted to not only hear that Buckie had secured the right to host this prestigious course,



Trainers May East, left and Hamid Van Koten, second left, outline the many benefits of becoming a Transition Town to the seminar group in BCHS, including BAF Regeneration Group Chair Councillor Gordon McDonald, seated second right.

thanks mainly to the good offices of our Regeneration Group Chair Councillor Gordon McDonald, but also that there are so many people from the Buckie area going.

"The majority of those have come through Buckie Area Forum and we are delighted to be able to support their attendance at these sessions.

"Buckie gaining Transition Town status is a big part of our action plan for both the short and long term, and we hope that this training course will help spark interest in the formation of a local Transition Town group."

Delivering the training sessions were CIFAL Findhorn Director May East and Hamid Van Koten from North Howe Transition based in rural Fife.

"The seminar covered the aspects of Transition Towns in a very organic way," commented Ms East. "One of the highlights for me was the exchange of knowledge and skills.

"There was lots of synergy emerging and everyone was willing to support one another.

"I am sure that a Buckie Transition Town group will emerge from this and that they will be holding an awareness raising event soon. I would encourage anyone who could not make it to the seminar but is interested in being part of Transition Towns to go along and find out more about how they can enhance their community."

Mr Van Koten also left Buckie impressed by what he had seen.

He added: "I was very impressed with the level of skills and expertise shown at the seminar and it was an excellent opportunity to share these.

"There is definitely a lot of potential here in Buckie to do great things and hopefully these seminars will help catalyse this process.

"The Transition Towns project is for anyone who is

concerned with environmental issues, climate change and a whole range of other issues, all of which aim to make a better life for everyone, including re-engaging with communities."

A busy two days awaited the trainees, with the session topics covering a huge range of aspects all connected to Transition Towns. This included the seven principles and 12 ingredients of Transition, and overview of Transition Town Forres and on a wider stage and how to take forward Transition Town projects.

On completion of the seminars, it was envisaged that the trainees would: understand the context for Transition; understand the Transition Towns model - from inspiration to working groups; gain knowledge of the main steps of transition; experience processes on how to envision positive fulfilling future scenarios, and why this is so important; explore the importance of awareness raising, networking, as well as tools for accomplishing these tasks; learn different social methodologies such as Open Space or World Cafe; understand what an Energy Descent Plan is and how to create and use one; understand the inner and outer aspects of transition.

Although a relatively new concept, Transition Towns are felt by many to be an idea whose time has come, especially given that oil production globally has passed its peak and will now descend towards eventual exhaustion of supplies.

With the emphasis very much on citizen-led solutions, Transition Towns seek to provide a model for communities and local authorities to manage their own process of using and needing less energy. The Transition Towns model is designed to be replicated anywhere but will evolve according to the unique characteristics of each individual locale.

Scotland currently boasts a total of 12 fully-fledged Transition Towns, with a further 40 who are at various stages down the path to joining them.

Totnes in Devon was to blaze the rail in 2006 for the Transition Town concept.

For further information on the Transition Town concept, visit the website www.transitiontowns.org.