

**Transition Stroud Food Group**  
developing, strengthening and promoting sustainable  
local food production, processing & distribution.

Current mainstream agricultural and food retail systems depend heavily on oil. This dependence runs right through from initial production methods (oil-based fertilisers and pesticides), through distribution (supermarkets add thousands of air, sea and road food miles to most foods) to retail outlets, which consume huge amounts of energy themselves and are often out of towns, requiring consumers to travel to buy their food.

We think that, as society is forced to reduce energy consumption and oil-dependence, there will be an increasing need for localised economies, where the basic requirements of society (such as food) are supplied as close as possible to the point of consumption. Strong local communities with experience of working together to meet their basic needs will be much better placed to thrive in an oil-poor world than societies relying on globalised production and distribution systems.

There is a high concentration of local food work here in Stroud. We all communicate freely and there is no overt competition. We have each committed to assist other projects where we can. Our projects support and complement existing local markets and businesses. We have decided to remain as separate organisations, with diverse origins and circumstances and ties to particular locations. We are each of a scale that members can have a meaningful sense of community and involvement. We are all keen to demonstrate what we are doing when we have shown that our models work. We are enthusiastic to showcase what we have done together as practical and inspirational models. We hope that in time these projects will collectively provide visitors to Stroud with an informative study trip experience, showing all that a town can do for local food.

### CURRENT PROJECTS

◆ **Developing More Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Farms**

Following the success of the 6yr old Stroud Community Agriculture (SCA) project located at Hawkwood College and which has now expanded to include more land at Brookthorpe, the CSA model was introduced to Stroud Slad Farm in March 2007. Both CSA projects are now seeking new members, with SCA looking for around 20 more and Stroud Slad Farm Community (SSFC) who currently have 60 are looking for 100 in total. A founding principle of SCA is to demonstrate and show what has been achieved and enable others to copy and learn from it. We also have a principle of transparency, including financial transparency, so that visitors are able to learn from our mistakes as well as our successes. SCA has regular press interest and a steady stream of visitors including people wanting to set up similar projects. SCA is applying to the Local Food Fund (LFF) for capital development for things such as rain water harvesting systems, poly tunnels etc, as well as to pay for a facilitated process to develop its community and funding to help deal with all the media & PR inquiries. SSFC is also making an application to LFF. FFI [nick.weir@localfood.org.uk](mailto:nick.weir@localfood.org.uk)

◆ **Stroud Food Hub**

is a new and exciting project which is being set up to provide another **alternative to supermarket shopping**. Members of this food club will be able to order food directly from local producers. The project will use the school hall at Parliament Street Primary School in Stroud as a drop-off and collection point for food and drink ordered online from local producers.

The club aims to

- make locally produced food more easily available
- strengthen food culture and community
- create a structure that can be copied easily

By

- providing support for small producers
- supplying food at better than retail prices
- building links between members and producers
- creating a new way of buying locally produced food

**Stroud Food Hub** is carrying out some trial trading with 6 producers and a selected bunch of volunteer consumers to test the system.

Rural Enterprise Gateway funding paid for the initial facilitation of the Food Hub.

Awards for All funding paid for growing the project and building the website and database. An application to LFF is in process to fund the small capital start up costs and pay the part-time project worker until the Hub is financially self-sufficient. We plan to offer the model to other communities groups to replicate.

FFI [nick.weir@localfood.org.uk](mailto:nick.weir@localfood.org.uk) OR [jadebashford@hotmail.com](mailto:jadebashford@hotmail.com)

#### ◆ the Vital Squeeze KITCHEN

is a new initiative from **Vital Squeeze** supported by the Transition Stroud Food Group. It aims to provide a resource that can inspire anyone to become creative with the abundance of food available in our locality, and in particular to respond with practical solutions to seasonal gluts of wild and cultivated foods. In the long term, **the Vital Squeeze KITCHEN** intends to become a centre for the exchange of skills and knowledge relating to the transformation of food in theory and in practice inviting people of all capabilities and backgrounds to participate in interactive, hands-on learning. This has the potential to link in directly with Transition Cafe [working title] - a vision for a public interface for Transition Stroud.

A test workshop for **the Vital Squeeze KITCHEN** project was held at the end of last year following a donation of 40kg of over-sized beetroots from a local farm. The day was well-attended and very positively received. The morning was spent examining the question '*What is our Local Food Culture?*' and sharing ideas from the diverse range of experience within the participating group. The afternoon focussed on transforming the beets by the method of Lacto-Fermentation led by Richard Swann who has spent many years working with food processing. His particular interest lies with the question of *how do we maintain the vitality of food during processing?* We then finished the day with as much Pickling as we were able to carry out with the remaining time and energy. The group will maintain contact to monitor the progress of our Lacto-Fermented beets and to continue to experiment and learn through future monthly workshops starting in February. In the longer term we hope to run them weekly.

**The Vital Squeeze KITCHEN** will be applying to the LFF for capital to buy kit eg steamers, preserving pans, kilner jars etc. Other funding goals are for a website, with recipes, how to's of preserving, etc, plus resource materials such as the mapping of wild food glut spots, via guided walks etc. Stroud Valley's Project (SVP) is keen to link up and collaborate, and could also act as a project vehicle as they are already set up and have a lot of expertise in fundraising for projects etc. Likewise the Social Enterprise Centre (SEC). Other connections with **the Vital Squeeze KITCHEN** Project could involve Richard Keating's walking the land, poetry, artistic activities etc.

Documentation will be a very important focus which will also initially require funding.

FFI [vitalsqueeze@gmail.com](mailto:vitalsqueeze@gmail.com)

#### ◆ **One Mile Herbal Apothecary**

How much medicine can we create from the herbs growing wild around us or from those that are easy to grow in our own gardens? Medical Herbalist **Nathan Hughes** believes a significant proportion of our primary health care needs can be met through deepening our knowledge of how to work with the plants growing in our area. At present, **Ruskin Apothecary** is developing ways of working with local herbs and educating people how to use them safely and effectively. This summer we aim to construct a straw bale building at **Stroud Slad Farm** dedicated to creating medicines with local herbs.

FFI Nathan 01453 835 029

#### ◆ **StroudSown Promotions / Events**

**StroudSown** is a group of food enthusiasts dedicated to the development of a local and sustainable food economy by providing support to each other and other budding local food businesses and promoting awareness of local and seasonal food. Consisting of **Angelo's Wood-fired Pizza**, **Vital Squeeze** and **StroudSown Buffet** (with **Stroud Brewery** as an honorary member!), **StroudSown** is well equipped to host a diverse range of awareness raising events. Currently in the process of commissioning a pedal-powered generator (funding required - considering co-op community grant), **StroudSown** will soon be in the position to be powered entirely on location from renewable energy. Our first event in March which launched the Transition initiative in Stroud, showcased the film 'How Cuba Survived Peak Oil, followed by a buffet of locally sourced ingredients and culminated in live music from a well loved local group. This format allowed people to observe and take in the ideas, experience and consider the breadth of potential in seasonal food, and finally to celebrate the positivity that exists, the steps that have been taken, as opposed to dwelling upon negativity and what needs to change. We feel this is essential in the Transition process - that we continuously review our work and celebrate our successes. It must always be fun!!

FFI [AngelosWoodFiredPizza@cooptel.net](mailto:AngelosWoodFiredPizza@cooptel.net) (Jessica Standing)

#### ◆ **Stroud Communal Allotment group**

Ten years ago a group of families took on an allotment in Stroud and worked it as part of the LETS scheme, paying themselves \$5 per hour for their work and making the veg available for LETS \$. Even though the LETS scheme is now dormant in Stroud the communal allotment is becoming more fertile (in all sorts of ways!) every year. It is now 4 adjacent allotments supporting 7 families who work together every Friday morning. Whoever turns up takes home a share of that week's harvest.

Even though the group has decided to spend a year or two consolidating and does not plan to take on new families for a while, its members are very keen to support other groups in taking on allotments communally.

FFI [nick.weir@localfood.org.uk](mailto:nick.weir@localfood.org.uk)

#### ◆ **Leonard Stanley Food Enterprise**

is a community enterprise sourcing products from local producers. Their ambition is to establish a community shop sourcing largely local produce working very closely with a number of farms.

FFI [david@andrewtownsend.co.uk](mailto:david@andrewtownsend.co.uk)

If you would like to become involved with *Transition Stroud Food Group* in any way and have still to work out exactly how, check out our ideas for future projects below followed by some thoughts that may just spark an idea... We would love to hear from you! Please contact Jessica

# AngelosWoodFiredPizza@cooptel.net

## FUTURE PROJECTS

### ◆ The Community Kitchen Project

Vision: A large kitchen, surrounded by a herb garden and maybe a few fruit bushes and trees etc. Equipped in such a way that it can be used in situ. However it would also have removable hobs and equipment for transportation to other venues.

In the kitchen there will be students, cooks, creating a lunch together. The purpose of this activity is to socialise, learn, cook and create a meal to share, to have a sense of purpose, to become armed with recipes, menus and nutritional information, skills and techniques and to make new friends and a supportive network. The lunch would be shared with guests.

The students would be learning about local, seasonal, organic, nutritious, delicious food catering for special diets too, with education in macrobiotics, vegetarian, cooking for children, obesity, etc, targeting parents, pregnant women, socially isolated, etc. Placements could also be offered for students.

FFI [jennipedwards1@cooptel.net](mailto:jennipedwards1@cooptel.net)

### ◆ Gardening workshops

**Transition Stroud Food Group** is looking for an Organic/Biodynamic /Permaculture gardener to run **roving gardening workshops** in the Stroud area using volunteered private gardens to demonstrate skills and techniques. Funding would need to be procured to support the workshop leader (Food For Life? Awards For All? Rural Regeneration? Local Food Fund?)

### ◆ Apple Capital Stroud!

95% of the fruit we buy is imported into the UK! A sad state of affairs when our home climate is perfectly suited to apples, pears and a wide variety of soft fruits. The food group would like to build on the **apple history in Stroud** and develop **community orchards** and **fruit growing skills expertise** to empower people to create and support our own local fruit supply.

### ◆ Stroud Food Festival

Supported by Stroud Town Council this will be a two-week festival spanning the Stroud Fringe music festival weekend in September 2008. The Food Festival will offer a series of events, walks, workshops and parties celebrating Stroud's burgeoning local food culture.

### ◆ Ruskin Mill Exhibition at Nailsworth Festival

This year's theme is 'Transition'. Food Group contribution in discussion.

### ◆ A Collective Marketing Strategy

It would perhaps benefit us all to jointly fund/ resource a local food marketing campaign aimed at regular supermarket shoppers. Utilising some sound commercial expertise about what methods and messages would work best.

Any thoughts? I don't have a clear vision of how we would do this.

At the least we could pool some existing marketing/ membership resources so that we are not competing to attract the finite number of 'usual suspects'. We might all consider this if including marketing in our lottery bids?

FFI [jadebashford@hotmail.com](mailto:jadebashford@hotmail.com)

**There are many other things we can all do to assist the transition from current**

**globalised oil-dependent food systems to a sustainable, healthy and local food economy:**

- Be curious about the country of origin of the common foods you eat - you may be surprised how far they have travelled...
- Education using tools like the Carbo counter (George Marshall's 'Carbon Detox' p212. See also [www.carbondetox.org](http://www.carbondetox.org))
- Seek out local alternatives - see our emerging directory on the **Transition Stroud** website [www.transitionstroud.org](http://www.transitionstroud.org) (currently under construction, soon going live)
- Why buy butter from New Zealand when it is available in Gloucestershire?
- Choose locally produced seasonal foods - they taste better, are much fresher, have no air miles and you appreciate them much more when you are not eating something all year round which is usually unripe and forcibly grown. See our *In Season* guide on the website.
- Use the fabulous farmers markets in Gloucestershire to buy your food locally (see [www.freshnlocal.co.uk](http://www.freshnlocal.co.uk)). Not only is local food delicious - you also get to meet the people who have grown it!
- Join a **CSA or veg box scheme** - this provides direct support to your local growers.
- Try growing your own - a little effort goes a long way! Fresh herbs are easy on a window sill, or potatoes in a pot on the patio, or sign up for an allotment and be as self sufficient as you can...
- Try our Food Audit (soon available to download from [www.transitionstroud.org](http://www.transitionstroud.org))
- **Give up using the Supermarket for a week, then another week, then a month - its only a habit and habits can easily be changed with a little will power and a splash of creativity... Stroud has a local butcher, baker and juice maker...**

We hope that the above summary has answered most of your questions. In terms of our connections with local authority policies and plans, we have a very supportive Green town council who are paying for the promotion of the Food Festival in Sept 2008. Transition Stroud has a working group that focuses entirely on local authority liaison. The **Food Group** (and other **Transition Stroud** working groups) are channelling suggestions for the Local Strategic Plan through the local authority liaison group.