

## Two project Case Studies – practical sustainability action

### Intro

I attended the Action for Market Towns Convention in October and 2 projects stood out for me as great examples of actually doing something to make towns more resilient in the face of climate change, peak oil, energy and food security. Both of these won awards in the Market Towns Awards, where most of this information comes from.

The first was 'Incredible Edible Todmorden'.

Incredible Edible Todmorden is a project which aims to make the town self-sufficient in local food in ten years by re-skilling people in growing and cooking - from school through to apprenticeships, by preserving and developing new food-related jobs, and reconnecting the town to its farmers through the regeneration of the local market.

It has transformed the way local people engage with food and their public green spaces in Todmorden, a market town in West Yorkshire.

The aim is to make Todmorden self sufficient in vegetables, orchard fruits and eggs by 2018, and ultimately to enable the town to source the majority of staple food locally including meat and dairy.

It is a whole town approach to regeneration and sustainable living, by reconnecting people with locally/self produced food. The town has 15,000 inhabitants.

They operate across 3 sections, Community, Schools and Business (including farming), in a language that all can understand, the language of food: growing, learning about, buying and selling.

They aim to create jobs, a sense of pride, wellbeing and community, by exciting people about the benefits that support for local food can bring.

In the year since their conception, they have launched two campaigns: 'Every Egg Matters' (February 2009) and 'Put Markets back into Market Towns' (March 2009) – working with the Council, local traders and farmers to revitalise the local market.

They have planted orchards, vegetable and herbs in public places, gained the agreement of our Council to release land for community growing and

partnered their local Social Housing Management in a 'Tenants Growing Scheme'.

All local schools are partners and in 2011, the High School will offer a diploma in 'Land-based Industries', creating training opportunities never before offered.

They have submitted a Lottery bid with the school and Green Business Network to build an Aquaponics unit on school land as a teaching facility, but also as a business run jointly by the community and the school to sell fruit, vegetables and fish back to the school and on the market.

They are attracting many more visitors interested in seeing and eating local food which helps grow our tourism offer.

Todmorden is surrounded by hills, but has lost its 'growing and buying local' tradition. Hundreds of past allotments have been lost, the local market was empty 2 out of the 5 days it opened, and did not promote local food to any great extent.

Local farmers and their produce were not supported by local buying power. Children have no access to local land-based training, and the majority of the public have lost the art of growing, eating and sharing the fruits of their labours.

Todmorden suffers from rural deprivation, which has a knock-on effect on health and wellbeing. Todmorden, more than most other borough towns in that area, has suffered from high unemployment and the collapse of local industry. Many of the town centre shops are empty.

They aim to change their culture from 'Victim' to 'Champion'.

They ask public bodies to remove obstacles to progress, transfer public land back to the community, help build resilience in young people through food and land-based training, schools make tarmac playgrounds into growing spaces, promote local food and farmers in their market, make all entrances to the town, parks and open spaces 'Propaganda' sites where people can see an edible future.

This is a whole town approach to seek a sustainable future in jobs, training, food and inclusion. They have used the skills of local people to put the 'market back in a market town'.

The project is an open “club”; everyone is a winner and ‘in’ if they want to be.

They have so far delivered the buy-in of the many and varied partners, they have reached out to farmers /growers and even the local prison.

They have Incredible parents growing groups in 6 primary schools and a shortlisted application for a £750k project (growing & fish farm jobs) going into the local high school. They have proper ‘gander’ gardens all over town – i.e. lots of snooping.

The many newspaper and magazine articles featuring Incredible Edible Todmorden have injected pride into the town. Their website has inspired many other towns to develop similar projects. They are already working with the SDC to look at how what they are doing can be shared.

Theirs is a bottom up whole town approach, do not ask for the impossible, make small actions become a movement for change, they ‘grow gardens and build bridges’.

### Funding & outcomes

- See slide

Their success relies on an ever-growing, large bank of skilled volunteers. Money is seldom a limiting factor in our vision for the town. However, they predict a continued success rate in their funding applications.

### Key partners

- Todmorden in Bloom
- Todmorden Business Association
- Market Traders
- Local Farmers
- Green Business Network
- All Local Schools
- Probation services
- Northern Rail
- Assure (Health Centre developers)
- Primary Care Trust
- Churches Together
- Todmorden Together
- Community Services (Payback scheme)

Website: [www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/](http://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/)

### The other project is the Faringdon EcoWeek

2,300 people enjoyed thirty three separate low-carbon events, from hi-tech plasma waste facilities to low-tech allotments, from 14-21 June 2008. They chomped our way through ecoburgers, cycled into the summer solstice, and even broke a world record along the way. ECOWEEK involved the whole community – from birdwatchers right through to bread-baking watermill lovers!

Saturday 14 June 2008 marked the beginning of a whole week of low carbon ECOEVENTS taking place in Faringdon and the surrounding villages.

It started with a Swap Shop, a big EcoFair, and EcoVeg (open allotments) . During the week there were high profile Eco-Talks with celebrity speakers; EcoTours around energy-from-waste facilities in Swindon; Eco-Open Days at 2 National Trust properties; the showing of the film 'An Inconvenient Truth'; and an EcoTrail that took visitors around dozens of premises that have interesting eco-credentials. For the budding ornithologists there was a Bird & Farm Walk around Kilmester Farm by the Thames; where according to a recent RSPB survey there are more bird species (71) than on any other farm in the UK.

To round off the week on (Mid-Summer's Day), the EcoBikes (a peloton of amateur cyclists – all abilities and ages) set off around the EcoFarms (there are fourteen organic farms within just two miles of Faringdon...) for a leisurely 20km cycle ride, stopping off for EcoButties, and ending up at EcoWind: Westmill Wind Farm Open Day, where the first "Wind Turbine Hugging World Record" was set.

Quote: We know that communities must all move to smaller and more sustainable carbon footprints, and for this to happen we as individuals in that community must take ownership and responsibility for all aspects of our lives. In this respect, they need to be given focus and direction. They need to be inspired by neighbours and friends, and they need to learn from one another. An event (or 33 events if you prefer) such as ECOWEEK gave them this focus and inspiration, and helped us to see that we can all make a difference, and we can even have some fun along the way!

they got alot of support from every corner of the community: local & district Councils, schools, churches, clubs, businesses, societies, farms, home owners, and shops.

### Innovative factors that helped make ECOWEEK a success:

- Cramming a huge number of events covering many different angles & interest levels (food, waste, environment, energy, climate) into one action-packed week. It meant that there was something for all ages and all interests & created a great “festival” buzz.
- Giving every part of the community the opportunity to get involved in their own way. The schools in particular were fantastic and excelled in putting on their own imaginative events during ECOWEEK.
- Encouraging achievable, targets and longer term outcomes that would come out of ECOWEEK (examples: all the schools aiming for their next ECOSCHOOLS awards; cycling group (FARCYCLES) set up and going strong; car sharing website; “focus-on-Faringdon” canvas carrier bags now stocked by more than thirty retailers in Faringdon; six more residential properties installed solar tubes; big increase in awareness and appreciation of SSSIs, organic farms, local countryside, box schemes, Windfarm, local eco-suppliers, relevant grants available – and so on. Many mailing list interest groups set up as a result of ECOWEEK)
- Good use of new media for awareness & publicity, including : detailed [www.EcoWeek.info](http://www.EcoWeek.info) website, use of blogs, forums, email distribution lists, viral marketing, Google Adwords campaign, and links to digital magazine

And above all – in spite of the seriousness of the overall message – making as many of the events as FUN as possible!

They believe these strategies for success would be easily transferred to another market town of similar size (approx 6,000).

### Funding and outcomes

The total budget was £6,000. Financial support was primarily through:

- individual and institutional donations (£3,500)
- Town Council (£1000)
- District Council (£500)
- corporate sponsorship (£1000)

Some of the events (eg EcoButties and EcoWind) did also bring in some income. Most of the events were free to attend.

### Key partners

- Faringdon Allotment Society
- Sixteen organic farms & farmers in the area
- Twenty four home owners for ECOTRAIL
- Coleshill Organics
- Westmill Windfarm Cooperative
- All Faringdon Churches (four)
- All Faringdon Schools (four)
- John Owens Maps
- Faringdon Community Action Group (CAG)
- Churches Together Justice & Peace Group
- Soil Association
- RSPB

Website: [www.EcoWeek.info](http://www.EcoWeek.info)