

A CITTASLOW GUIDE TO
SUSTAINABLE DISS 2030
FOOD – ENVIRONMENT – COMMUNITY

What might it be like? How could it work?

What do you think?

Table of Contents

Foreword - Cittaslow and Sustainability in Diss - by Tony Palmer	3
1. Introduction	4
2. The Good News: Sustainable Diss 2030	5
Setting the scene	6
Sustainable food	11
Environmental issues	18
The power of community	25
3. The Bad News: Why the changes are necessary	33
Human impact on the Earth	34
Peak oil and other resource issues	37
4. Overall Conclusions	42
Appendix - Annotated Reading List	43

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Foreword - Cittaslow and Sustainability in Diss

by Cllr. Tony Palmer, Chairman, Cittaslow Committee, Diss Town Council

Diss is a Cittaslow Town, and Cittaslow Diss, led by Diss Town Council, is very pleased to support this *Guide to Sustainable Diss 2030*. It is a starting point for a discussion about what the people of Diss want for their future.

We invite you to read it and join the debate. You can do this through the press, or the Diss Community Partnership website: disscommunity.net.

A strong, positive vision of the future is very important for a town, as a means to help shape its present and future activities. Cittaslow aims to preserve and enhance the traditional way of life and the unique character of market towns.

The Cittaslow principles as reflected in the vision of a sustainable future in this booklet include:

- *Environment* – the needs of the natural world are central to the activities and economy of Diss.
- *Infrastructure* – many enhancements to the built environment, including public art, increased green and open spaces in the ‘Sustainability Park’ (as discussed in the booklet), improved access and alternative mobility.
- *Quality of urban fabric* – the historic centre of Diss is regenerated, with its culture enhanced through the increased importance of the Corn Hall. There are environment-enhancing plants in gardens and the Sustainability Park and eco-friendly architecture.
- *Encouragement of local produce and products* – Diss has once again become the commercial centre for its surrounding area, with a very large increase in local food and other products.
- *Hospitality and community* – Enhanced community is probably the central point of this booklet, with social and cultural events for all.

I hope you will think about what you read here and join our public discussion on how Diss will develop in a future where natural resources will diminish.

Tony Palmer, April 2010

I Introduction

Concerned about climate change, the credit crunch and other looming problems?

Wouldn't you like to find a way of living for yourself, your family and your community that will continue successfully into a sustainable future? That respects the natural world and humankind?

What might a sustainable Diss be like in 2030?

This Guide is a starting point for community discussion of our future in Diss. We hope it will inspire and clarify your views on local environmental and economic issues, and that you will find it enjoyable and also, perhaps, provocative!



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It will present a vision of the future: both the good news and the bad news.

The good news is that even with diminished resources, the future doesn't have to be a disaster, a precarious life of struggle and material poverty.

On the contrary, it could be better in many ways than what we are experiencing now. Many people are exploring new ways of living: less consumerist but comfortable; not so much stuff, but more satisfying; more community-oriented and more stable socially.

The bad news is that we are now coming up against the Earth's limits. In the short term there is the prospect of another rapid rise in oil prices, leading to major economic difficulties. In the medium term it is climate change and other environmental problems.

The result is that our current way of living is not sustainable, and will have to change one way or another.

See if the vision presented here is what you want to happen..

2 The Good News: Sustainable Diss 2030

What might a sustainable Diss be like in 2030? If we don't envisage and design a future we want, we might be forced into one that we don't like.

*This chapter is presented as an interview that **YOU** (the reader) are conducting with a cast of Diss residents from 2030.*

There is a summary of main points at the end of each section where you can enter your votes. You can then put them online to compare with the rest of the community.

The vision builds upon many projects, organisations,

activities that are happening in and around Diss now. These are signposted as:

2010 Building Blocks: scattered throughout.

The cast:



Keith (b.1963) Retired environmental scientist. Helped guide the change to a Sustainable Diss.



Gran (b. 1945.) Had a varied career. A great cook and gardener.



Jess (b. 1995) Manager of the Diss Sustainable Supermarket. She lives in the Sustainability Park, and is a member of the Diss Town Council.



Liz (b. 1995) and **Jeremy** (b. 1993) Both have several part-time jobs and do community work. They have two small boys.



Frank (b. 1985) A farmer also involved in the Diss Energy Company.



Jemma (b. 2015) Teenager who sings in a band and loves dancing.

Setting the scene

Historic town centre

If I were walking around Diss in 2030, what would I see that was different?



Keith: You would be surprised at how lively and prosperous the old town centre seems. It is quite familiar, but there are important differences.

People are drawn from outside of town by events at the Corn Hall, which has become a major arts and cultural centre for the region.

2010 Building Blocks: Corn Hall regeneration project.¹

There are many restaurants and cafés, all very busy. Some have regular live entertainment. Several are community cafés, serving mainly their members, and all use local ingredients.

There are lots of shops selling local goods that are used and have been refurbished, recycled and repaired. There has been a revival of locally-made products including furniture and other basic goods, cloth and clothing, crafts and art. There are very few national chains and those are locally-franchised.

Local hemp and flax growing, traditional crops, have been revived. With the cloth from it, Diss has become a fashion-centre for locally-made clothing.

There is more culture: public sculpture, street entertainment, musicians, street theatre and comedy, especially in the park around the Mere.



Gemma: Another important change, which isn't visible when you are walking around, is the way we are using our phones and computers to find out what's happening, what people want and what's on offer. That helps people to connect to each other and work together.

Diss Sustainability Park



Keith: Walk through the park, cross Park Road and the park continues. You have come to Diss Sustainability Park which reaches the Waveney River, in the area long earmarked for regeneration.

In Sustainability Park, you'll discover lovely gardens with fruit and nut trees and herbs, from which you can help yourself.

¹ The regeneration of Diss Corn Hall is well underway. See www.disscornhall.co.uk.

There are landscaped walks along the river, exercise trails, areas for sport, and a leisure centre with a solar heated swimming pool.

In the centre of the Park is a large covered market: Diss Sustainable Supermarket.

You can eat here as well as buy food and other local products. Children especially love the areas with free range chickens and pigs, that they can feed.

There are workshops for food and crafts, and energy-efficient flats, catering mostly for single people, young and old, but also sheltered accommodation for the ill and infirm.

All this can be seen from the viewing platform of a graceful wind turbine: a medium-sized one that was cheap but still quite efficient, that provides electricity for Sustainability Park and some of the rest of Diss.

There are very few cars, vans or trucks and most of those are electric. Most people walk and ride bicycles, some of them battery assisted. You see people in pedal-powered taxis.

There is a new electric trolley bus that goes from Roydon to Sustainability Park and the rail station. There are plans to build a light railway all the way to Lowestoft.

*2010 Building Blocks:
Park Road South
regeneration plans,²
Diss Community
woodland project³.*



An ecocab in Dublin⁴

Diss eco-industrial estate

Take the trolley bus towards the rail station and you'll come to the enlarged and rejuvenated industrial estate where many Diss residents work. Here there are small workshops and small factories producing products sold in the town centre shops and elsewhere. They are Diss' exports, which pay for the non-local goods we consume here.

2 South Norfolk Council has been working on a regeneration plan for the area south of Park Road, and the idea of using it as a Sustainability Park has been discussed with them.

3 The Diss Community Woodland Project is located between Diss and Roydon, and works with the Green Light Trust.

4 See the Pedicab Blog at www.pedicabblog.com/2008/08/ecocabs-in-ireland.html.

It is very energy efficient, with its own power and heat supplies. Some of the businesses sell prepared foods, and so there are greenhouses, heated with the waste heat from the estate.

Hold on a minute! Yes, it sounds great. Everyone's dream market town, but how did it happen? If it was so easy, why isn't it like that now?



Keith: It wasn't easy and it almost didn't happen. It took a long time to get to the state we are now in 2030.

It was necessity, not enlightenment, that got these community solutions started, but once started, people could see that they made a lot of sense, and were actually better in lots of ways.

The big oil price rise of 2008 and the credit crunch that followed were a warning. The second big oil price rise came a few years later.

People realised they really had to change when the cost of filling up their car was well over £100. The price of everything that depended upon oil – and that was most things – shot up. Long distance transport, global food shipments, fertiliser, ...

One result was mass unemployment. Governments at all levels couldn't do much, because they too had serious difficulties with their debts. They were forced to make deep cuts that threw even more people out of work.

But the governments, at last, began to take the problems of low carbon living very seriously, and used what limited resources they had left to help.



Jess: In Diss, we were fortunate to be a Cittaslow town, so we had the right framework and principles – environment, local food and products, strengthening community, improving the local infrastructure – so of course we were right behind Sustainability Park and the eco-industrial estate and did as much as we could to get them off the ground.

We shared all the best ideas with all the other Cittaslow towns, who were in same situation, and that gave us a flying start.



Keith: There were huge numbers of people out of work, with very little money and very limited government support.

People were desperate. There were two kinds of responses: There were some very angry people and even some

disturbances. But there were other, more practical people, with time on their hands and all sorts of practical and organisational skills, who got together with others in their communities to provide for themselves.

There was already a growing interest in local food, with experiments and projects by groups like the Transition Towns, Slow Food and Permaculture as starting points, but the desperation made people inventive.

2010 Building Blocks: Diss Allotments Society, Transition Diss, Transition East, Slow Food Waveney Valley.⁵

People started sharing vegetables from their gardens. Home cooking had become very expensive because of the high fuel prices. People realised that cooking for a group used less fuel and wasted less food than cooking for one or two people, and this saved money. And also, they ate better and had more social life. This led to food clubs and community cafés.

There were many examples like that: collaborations out of necessity (sharing cars, exchanging clothes) that ended up as small businesses or community projects.

2010 Building Blocks: Diss Cittaslow, the Diss Co-ops (Westgate, Co-op Pharmacy, Somerfield), Diss Community Bank.⁶

We were very lucky it was the community projects and not the disturbances that took over.

People realised that these local, community-based ways were actually better. They were more efficient, more stable and made people happier.

Some people were part of several of these new community organisations, which became complicated and time consuming. Later, the Diss Community Partnership began to act as an umbrella group. Then membership of that one alone gave the benefits of all of them.

2010 Building Blocks: Diss Community Partnership.⁷

5 Diss is a Cittaslow Town (www.cittaslow.org.uk), which developed from the Slow Food movement (www.slowfood.org.uk). Transition Diss is part of the national Transition Town movement working for community level sustainability and resilience (www.transitionnetwork.org) and Transition East is a regional network of Transition Towns in East Anglia.

6 The Diss Community Bank is part of the Norfolk Credit Union.

7 The Diss Community Partnership, (disscommunity.net) a sponsor of this Guide is "a social enterprise promoting community and sustainable living". It started in 2002.



Gran: It was a return to sensible values. I was born just after the Second World War, when everyone scrimped and saved and reused every scrap.

I always thought those few decades when we had a complete throwaway society were scandalous and immoral. It took two parents working long hours to pay for stuff that didn't make them happy.

We nearly lost our communities and there were so many broken families. What were we thinking of?

Summary of main points: Which of these do you support?

Enter your votes here, from 1 - 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. You can then put your votes online at the Diss Community Partnership website: disscommunity.net.

Help shape the future you want. Influence the Councils!

Recommendation	Your view (1 - 5)
1 Corn Hall as a major cultural centre	
2 Revived historic centre	
3 No more throwaway society. Lots of re-use and recycling	
4 Mostly locally made goods	
5 Street art and entertainment	
6 Sustainability Park and Eco-industrial estate	
7 Lots of walking and pedal power	

Sustainable food

If I were living in Sustainable Diss in 2030, where would I get my food? Wouldn't we have a very limited meagre diet?



Liz: Actually, food is one of the best parts of living now. My children eat much better than I did when I was a child. The food is so much fresher and tastier than it was. No junk food.

Most of the vegetables we eat are seasonal, but we look forward to them coming.

More people are vegetarians now than in your time, but most aren't. We don't eat as much meat, but the meat we do eat is healthier and tastes better, and we know that the animals have led much more natural and comfortable lives.

There are some imported foods, but most is local.

One important change, that may surprise you, is that we eat out or get takeaways for dinner most days from the food club, and save money by



doing so! That is because home cooking uses fuel that is very expensive and inefficient compared to commercial catering.

Those meals out and takeaways are prepared by local people who love cooking from fresh local produce. They outclass even the best of the prepared foods from the supermarkets of my childhood.

Although the cost of eating out is cheaper than cooking for ourselves, we do also have to put in our share of volunteer time to the food club.

We get most of our food from the Sustainable Supermarket. I walk or cycle there and then either take it home or have it delivered. I have a regular order, and get great fresh bread, eggs and milk delivered daily.

2010 Building Blocks: free delivery from Somerfield, organic box schemes⁸

But you are still buying from a supermarket. My green friends see the supermarkets as the enemy!



Jess: The Diss Sustainable Supermarket is very different from those 20 years ago. It is a co-op and a partnership of small businesses and consumers.

Our suppliers are about 70% very local, but that extra 30% can be anything from regional to global (always clearly marked, and distant food tends to be expensive).

2010 Building Blocks: Sheringham's Greenhouse Community Project⁹

All the imports are Fair Trade, so we know the producers are getting a good deal, and we apply the same ethical principles to local and UK suppliers. We believe in giving people a fair living.

The bulk of what we offer is made by medium-sized businesses: farms from 50 to a few hundred acres, bakeries, cheese makers, etc. They are local but their scale is large enough to be very efficient and professional.

⁸ There are existing local food delivery schemes, including the Somerfield supermarket and some organic boxes.

⁹ Sheringham in North Norfolk's proposed Greenhouse Community Project is a starting point towards the Sustainable Supermarket. It will include a supermarket run by Waitrose (a partnership). They say "Supported by 21 acres of specially prepared, adjacent arable land for over 200 new allotments... served by free electric bus services and home delivery vans ... a supermarket that sets out to complement rather than compete with our existing Town Centre shops... two state-of-the-art, commercial teaching kitchens, each with space for 25 'students', with its own organic kitchen garden and polytunnel" See <http://www.greenhousecommunityproject.com/>.

But also, some is very small scale, including some carefully vetted amateurs, which offers useful part-time income to people who need it.



Gran: I love going to the Sustainable Supermarket. It's arranged in small stalls with attendants. They all know me and what I like, and if I don't like something I tell them. They deliver everything to my house a few hours later so I don't have to carry anything home.

One of the nicest changes is that there is very little packaging, and what there is is re-usable. We have standardised containers made in our local Diss Plastics factory. The delivery people take the used containers back with them.

I often eat in the café area, where some of the food is made by my friends, and I occasionally send in my parsnip soup if I am short of pocket money. The supermarket supplies me with containers and my own labels!

You call it a 'supermarket', but it sounds more like a farmers market to me. What do you do as its Manager?



Jess: It is like a farmers' market in that you get the personal touch, and it stocks local produce, but that's all. We provide a lot of organisation so that the farmers and producers

can concentrate on what they are good at.

The online social networks make all the difference. We use them to collect feedback from the customers for the producers and make sure any problems are handled. We help the farmers to organise what they produce so it best suits their land and what people want. They are partners, not competitors.

**2010 Building Blocks:
Diss Farmers Market¹⁰**

We also keep in close contact with lots of other Sustainable Supermarkets, and help each other with surpluses, shortages and bulk orders.

We support research so that our farmers and producers keep up to date with the best ideas and methods. So although they are small and independent, we give them the advantages of scale of a large organisation.

¹⁰ Diss Farmers Market is on the second Saturday of each month in the Market Place.

What about all those trucks we are used to seeing delivering food?



Jess: The Diss Community Transport network does all the delivering from farmers and producers and to customers.

Some of the most local deliveries are done with bicycles with trailers. Larger deliveries are done by electric vehicles.

We arrange our collections and deliveries very carefully so vehicles are as full as possible.

We collect all the containers used for our products to be re-used over and over again. We also collect food wastes. Some are then fed to chickens and pigs while the rest is used to create fuels and fertiliser.

Again, it is the local online social network that helps, as people can put in their orders very flexibly.



Keith: Just to clarify some of those points, the Sustainable Supermarket is a major support to the whole Diss and District community. It gives full-time and part-time work to very many people, directly and indirectly.

Many of the providers, food or entertainment, are independent but are partner-members of the supermarket.

As a partnership, the well-being of its members is its primary focus as opposed to profit. It is controlled by its members locally, not from some distant office.

Customers are members and have a say in policies, voting often in polls. In that way the social networks are used to make the food system really democratic.

Everyone feels they have a stake in it, which is very different from the supermarkets in your day.

What are the farms like? If they have no fuel and no fertilisers it must be like the Middle Ages!



Frank: My family has been farming for generations, and in some ways it is a return to traditional farming practices. My grandfather would have been proud of the way we look after the soil and our animals.

He would marvel at the sophistication of our crop rotations to maintain soil fertility. We grow food (wheat, oats, barley), fodder, fibre (hemp and flax) and fuel (energy crops) in our rotation. We also include grazing (sheep and cattle) in the rotation.

The result is that we don't need either fertilisers or pesticides. That saves us a fortune and is very good for the environment.

But actually, we are ultra-modern. We practice 'agro-forestry', and are lucky that we had one of its pioneers, Prof. Martin Wolfe of

*2010 Building Blocks:
Wakelyn's Farm¹¹*



Agro-forestry at Wakelyn's Farm, Fressingfield, Suffolk

Wakelyn's Farm in Fressingfield who helped us learn to do it. We have rows of trees, oriented north-south between strips of crops. They produce fruit and nuts, willow for coppicing and large standard trees for beauty and wind protection. The trees reduce the crop yields only slightly, but more than make up for that from their own produce and because their roots pull up nutrients from deep underground.

We have our own energy sources, from the energy crops in the rotation and the coppiced trees, crop wastes and other wastes that are collected from the community and delivered to us. We also have quite a few clusters of solar-electric panels.

We burn some fuel to generate electricity, and use the waste heat from

¹¹ Wakelyn's Farm in Fressingfield is part of the Elm Farm Research Centre. "Turning away from the consensus that monoculture systems give the best yields, Martin brings as many species together as possible. The broad objective of all the projects is to investigate various forms of mixed cropping at all scales, hoping that the crops will benefit from interactions - expected and unforeseen - between the different plants in the agricultural system."

the generator in our farm buildings and then release it into our greenhouses. (They are never heated with fuel burned just for that purpose.)

We have also been using some hydroponics, where we drip water and nutrients directly onto the plants in the greenhouses, so very little of either is needed.

We don't have any land on our farm that is permanently dedicated to grazing, but other farmers do. Permanent pasture is on land that couldn't be used for anything else, mostly around the river.

Our sheep and cattle are part of the rotation and are needed for the soil's fertility. And they are happy animals, who have a good life and are then slaughtered locally. We certainly don't intensively raise our animals or feed them on imported feeds made of genetically-modified soya as many farmers did in your time.

But by far the biggest change is in our connection with the community. We largely supply the Sustainable Supermarket, who always pay us a fair price and pass information to us from their customers so we know what they like and what to grow.

Unlike in your day, we know we will always have a market for our crops and feel we are appreciated by our customers.

Beyond that, we rely on the community to help us at peak times. I have a few professional farm workers, who work with me all the time. There are other times when we need a large group to help, so we don't have to use the huge machinery of the past.

We mostly attract young people, who come back year after year (so they know what to do) and work for us on a voluntary basis.

We entice them to do this with good meals and a festival-like atmosphere in the evenings. They work hard during the day and they keep coming back.



Jemma: I love going to Frank's farm. It is just so beautiful, with all the trees and the woodlands.

All my friends go to his work weekends. They're fantastic fun and even

the work isn't bad when you're having a laugh.

You haven't said anything about vegetables. Do you grow them too?



Frank: I do grow some but that's not my speciality. I supply the bakery and the brewery. (We've developed some great strains of wheat and rye for bread.) There are intensive vegetable farms located where the soil is more suitable for that.



Gran I've always done a lot of gardening and now lots more people have taken it up too. We all share our produce with our neighbours and sell some in the Sustainable Supermarket. We have amazing yields because we put so much time in, and produce perhaps one third of the total vegetables for the community.

Some people now keep chickens and goats and there are pig clubs, all of which eat leftovers that would otherwise have been wasted.



Jess: And a final point about land use: Because both Diss Town Council and South Norfolk Council supported Cittaslow principles, they were very supportive of land use changes that helped to promote production of local food.

Summary of main points: Which of these do you support?

Enter your votes here, from 1 - 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. You can then put your votes online at the Diss Community Partnership website: disscommunity.net.

Recommendation	Your view (1-5)
1 Sustainable Supermarket	
2 Food much more local, from mixed organic farms	
3 Less junk food	
4 Less meat	
5 Lots of eating out	
6 Far fewer big trucks	
7 Collecting food wastes	
8 Connection with community	

Environmental issues

Industry and commerce

I have a general idea about food now, and I can see how the community pulling together makes it possible to have better food with less fuel and money. But what about work? How has the local economy in Diss revived?



Keith: The economic difficulties

made people ingenious, looking for new and local ways of earning money that didn't use a lot of fuel.

One starting point was re-use and recycling, largely to save money, but it also saved fuel. All sorts of things that still had life in them that once ended up in landfill were re-furbished and re-used. It was part of a new 'make and mend' culture.

People who were handy at repairing things started little businesses. The online social networks helped them find stuff that people didn't want, and sell or give it away afterwards.

A new attitude grew: one business' waste is another's raw materials!

Later, with the help of the Council, a Community Warehouse and Workshop was built on the new eco-industrial estate. People could bring stuff there instead of throwing it out, either to be sorted for parts or refurbished.

The community workshop supported little businesses in re-use and refurbishing and also furniture making, jewellery, and all kinds of crafts. Soon all these goods found outlets in the shops in the town centre, helping its revival.

As local farmers started to farm more sustainably, and people looked for local products, some farmers began to grow the traditional crops of this region, flax and hemp.

*2010 Building Blocks:
Freegle¹²*

¹² Freegle (formerly called Freecycle) "exists to reduce the amount of waste we as individuals create - it provides a way for people with unwanted items to get in touch with others who can make use of them". See <http://www.norfolk-freegle.org.uk/>

Flax is used for linen. Hemp is used for a wide range of purposes, including cloth, rope, oils, cosmetics and insulation and the seeds are very nutritious. People were looking for new ways of earning money, so they started new cloth and clothing businesses, and Diss became a local fashion centre.

Cooked food was another growth area as local food became more popular. As the costs of home cooking were high, there were openings for small commercial kitchens, making everything from prepared meals to pickles

*2010 Building Blocks:
Hemcore¹³*



and chutneys.

This led to the growth of restaurants and community cafés. Those were for members of the food clubs or were associated with the Sustainable Supermarket. They provided meals for

people who were contributing transport, working in the Supermarket, on the farms, or in other ways. It was a way of pooling labour in exchange for food, instead of using scarce money.

As the local economy began to revive, and money for investment became available, it was put into energy-efficient schemes. The

Sustainability Park was built with a mixture of public and private money, as was the enhanced eco-industrial estate.

A new little plastics factory on the industrial estate was built. It has automated facilities that can make

almost

anything.

*Plastics!
I thought they were an
environmentalists' pet hate?*



Keith: We once thought like that. But then plastics were just used and thrown away. Now they are used to make things we want to last a long time, like our re-usable containers for food. And the best part is that they are bio-plastics, made from vegetable oils and corn starch, not oil.

¹³ Hemp Technology Ltd, based in Halesworth uses hemp for fibre, paper, insulation, building, and other products.

Transport

How about travel? Don't people miss having cars?



Keith: Yes and no. Cars always were a mixed blessing, expensive and

damaging to the environment. Travel in Diss is now more like it is in cities where public transport is so good you can do without a car. And there is a car club that has cars strategically parked that members can use if they need them.

It is true that we all liked being able to jump in our cars whenever we wanted. We liked flying to warm places for holidays, and there is very little of that now. During those wasteful decades families and friends moved apart, and got used to travelling long distances to visit each other frequently. That is a problem now.

People have learned that it isn't a disaster either. They just have to plan their travelling a lot more carefully.

At first there were lots of car sharing groups, and then little delivery groups grew up, making best use of what was available. Later this became more organised and efficient, with flexible public transport developing out of early community buses like the Borderhoppa. It was easier once cheap battery-powered vehicles became widely available, using renewable electricity for charging.

2010 Building Blocks:
Commonwheels car club¹⁴

2010 Building Blocks:
Borderhoppa¹⁵



Jeremy: I like cars and vans, so I began to organise transport clubs. Some people had vehicles we could use, others were willing to drive, while some could do servicing and repairs.

We developed an interesting mixture where some people worked in exchange for services and some people were paid for work and paid for services. Thus we had enough money to use where we really needed it, but our costs were very low.

¹⁴ The Commonwheels car club now runs in Norwich. Members have access to a pool of cars parked in designated parking bays.

¹⁵ The Diss & District Community Transport Association runs four minibuses around the market towns of Diss, Harleston, Eye and Stradbroke.

After a few years, this led to Diss Community Transport. As the local economy began to revive, we were able to offer a little more in the way of part-time jobs, but we still rely heavily on people who work in exchange for services. It is simpler. There is much less accounting to do and fewer arguments over wages and prices. We don't have much money, but this way we don't need much.



Jemma: I don't see what all the fuss was about. I can get to most places on my bike, and the trains and buses are fine when I want to go further. When my parents were my age, they were always using my grandparents as taxi drivers.

And it's so much better for the planet.



Keith: Pedal power is a great technology. It keeps the able-bodied fit, and there are battery-enhanced bikes for those who aren't so fit.

For those who don't want to cycle, there are group-owned cars, efficient taxis, and mini-buses. When the weather is bad, more of them come out. People have become used to changing their habits to suit the weather and the season.

Household energy

How do you heat your houses? Do people still have electricity?



Keith: As with transport, home energy seemed a major problem at first, but got better over time.

As fuel bills began to go through the roof, people finally got serious about insulating their houses.

This was an area where the government really focused its limited resources into grants and subsidies. All new houses were built to such high specifications that they needed very little heating.

The floors and walls of existing houses were insulated to a very high standard. There were new businesses and jobs created doing this. In Norfolk and Suffolk, the hemp industry revived and one of its uses was for locally-made insulation.

Many people changed their heating systems to electric heat pumps, running on local renewable electricity.

Woodburning stoves have become more popular with people in older houses. The newest houses often have them too. Some people with houses without chimneys found they could instal a wood stove with a flue.

Several new woodlands have been planted for firewood and recreation, in addition to the coppiced wood from many of the farms. Supplies of wood are still quite limited, but add to the mix of fuels people use.

Modern wood fires are beautiful and very efficient. They have extra air streams that keep the glass clean and burn the smoke.¹⁶



Gran: My house is cooler than it used to be in the winter, but not nearly as cold as the house I lived in when I was a child, before we had central heating.

I use my central heating as background heat, and have a wood stove in the living room that keeps it

nice and warm even when the rest of the house is cool.

I'm happy to wear more clothes indoors in the winter. I never liked the idea of keeping a whole big house hot when it is cold outside.

Energy

What about electricity? Does everyone have their own solar panels?



Frank: Solar panels are quite popular now, partly as a symbol that you care about the environment, and because they provide a lot of independence from the grid. But they are still expensive, and many prefer to spend that money on home insulation.

Electricity got more expensive when oil became scarce and expensive, but we've adapted now. There is a wind farm in Eye that provides a lot of the electricity for the area.

A local wind farm? I'll bet they had a lot of trouble getting that approved!

¹⁶ Most woodstoves sold now (2010) are of this newer, more efficient type.



Frank: Yes, I do remember how unpopular they were in your time. People couldn't see how they would personally benefit, but community-owned wind farms are now very common.

I helped set up Diss Community Energy because I was producing some energy on my farm. It is owned by its customers, not some distant big company. Transmission costs are lower, it is under local control, and provides much cheaper electricity than they would get otherwise. The cost of its electricity isn't linked to the cost of oil as it was in your time.

Those few people who live very near a wind farm and who can show that it is intrusive are given free electricity for the lifetime of the wind farm.

Diss Community Energy has raised money to set up many different energy sources for the community, and makes sure the prices are kept low. It helped fund my biofuel digesters and generator.



*Wind turbines
at Swaffham¹⁷*

*2010 Building Blocks: Eye
wind power company,
Ecotricity in Swaffham¹⁸*

We are still connected to the electricity grid, and get some electricity from large offshore wind farms and tidal energy. The tides, of course are very predictable, unlike wind. But averaged across the whole country, as the grid does, wind is much more predictable than you might think.

Renewable electricity has taken over in many ways, like the electric cars and vans. The batteries for parked vehicles also double as storage for the renewable electricity, for example, storing more when the wind is blowing and releasing it when it is still.

The biofuels from my farm are used to generate electricity when it is needed. The combination of batteries for storage and biofuels allows us to match variable demand for electricity.

¹⁷ Swaffham wind farm, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/40919519@N00/2327570600>.

¹⁸ Eye Wind Power Ltd is proposing a three wind turbine project on the Eye airfield.. The plans include a community fund. See <http://www.windpowerrenewables.com/projects/info.php?refnum=6>. Swaffham now has two wind turbines, which are said to be very popular.



Keith: There were lots of clever things people did to make the limited amount of energy available go further.

The biggest change was to do with reducing our use of it. There is much less transport, less energy needed in homes. People were re-using things and extending the life of appliances so we need less energy to make all the stuff we use. But actually, even the energy could be 're-used'! Wherever electricity is generated by burning a fuel, the waste heat released is put to some useful purpose, like heating, cooking, and even keeping greenhouses warm. Because wind is such a big part of the supply, we actually turn on and off energy-hungry machines according to its availability.

2010 Building Blocks: Eye and Thetford waste power station¹⁹

Summary of main points: Which of these do you support?

Enter your votes here, from 1 - 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. You can then put your votes online at the Diss Community Partnership website: disscommunity.net.

Recommendation	Your view (1-5)
1 Community warehouse and workshop	
2 Good public transport	
3 Less personal car use, car clubs	
4 Electric cars and vans	
5 Community transport and delivery	
6 Lots of pedal power	
7 Highly insulated houses	
8 Houses kept cooler	
9 Wind, biomass and other renewable energy sources	
10 Community Energy Company	

¹⁹ Energy Power Resources Ltd. runs poultry litter-fueled power stations in Eye and Thetford. See <http://www.eprl.co.uk/>

The power of community

How has community changed?



Keith: A greater sense of community is actually what has made the biggest difference to

people's lives and to the way we live.

We are happier so don't mind having fewer new gadgets or having to plan our travel more carefully.

It started with people coming together in small groups to pool their limited resources, doing each other favours as they had no money to pay each other.

There were all sorts of groups, some based on groups of friends, some based around food, car sharing, childcare, and so on.

A spirit of community began to grow.



Gran: It was like when I was a child, after the War. Everyone pulled together. Social differences seemed to fade away. We started to make our own entertainment, with lots of street parties and little festivals. People got to know each other and to have fun together in ways that didn't cost much or use much energy.



Jemma: My band plays somewhere once or twice every week now. We don't get paid, but that's ok, because we can always get free meals, and rides and other stuff.

Social co-ordination



Keith: At first there were informal groups, food clubs, car sharing groups, childcare groups, informal swapping and trading groups.

Some worked well, some didn't.

Many people were members of lots of them, and that became confusing and difficult.

I can see why you said that there was so much entertainment and street art around the town. But it all sounds very confusing, with all those different groups.

The next big change came when the Diss Community Partnership started to act as an umbrella group for them all. It set up a community trading system, and the Diss online social networks to help people co-ordinate them all.

This made a huge difference to the sense of community in Diss. Now you could contribute to those groups that you wanted to, and benefit from them all.

The Partnership was able to create synergy between all the groups, helping them to work out how best they could pool resources and support each other.

They also used the online networks to make contacts and keep in touch with other similar organisations that were growing in other towns in the region and then even abroad. They began to learn from each other and share best practice.



Jemma: I keep in touch with friends all over the world now. I feel like I'm part of a world-wide family. We all look after each other and the Earth.

Online social networks

What difference has the internet made?



Keith: A lot. None of this could have happened in the 20th century. Community is about people being in touch

with each other, and the computers, internet, social networking, mobile phones and texting all made a huge difference.



Jess: Most of the supermarket's customers make some use of our website. There are a few that never come in. They order online and have everything delivered. Most do a mixture of online ordering and visiting us.

We keep very public records of what people offer in goods or services and ask for feedback on everything from our customers. We take all complaints seriously, whether it is about some of our produce, or how one of our paid employees or volunteers is behaving.

That way there is always public pressure on people to work and behave with integrity.



Keith: The online networks, with feedback and reputation, helped to keep people honest. The new skills of communication that people were learning made the kind of collaborative society we have now work.

Conflict and competition

Are you suggesting that people are behaving a lot better? That seems hard to believe.

People are extremely competitive, and there are some who will exploit others at the drop of a hat. How did you get beyond that? It seems to violate human nature.



Keith: Learning how to co-operate effectively was actually the hardest part of the transition. At first people falling out with each other was a major problem. I remember well all the fights on the food group I was part of, where two strong-minded men both wanted

to be in control.

But people found that there were resources available to help them. There were systems of conflict resolution. There was support for voluntary groups to make them effective, efficient and professional.

So quite rapidly, out of the need to survive and work well, the skills of effective co-operation began to spread, and to change society.



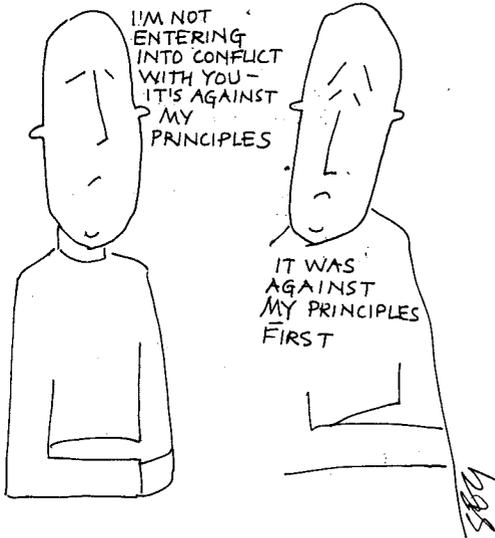
Jemma: My friends are amazed when we hear what people were like in the old days. What can you expect when everyone was brought up so competitively?

A few years before I started, the schools started building up the communication skills lessons we all take for granted now.

We have grown up seeing how important working together is, so schools now give that top priority.

2010 Building Blocks: Non-Violent Communication, Voluntary Norfolk²⁰

²⁰ There are lots of techniques for improving communications and reducing conflict, with 'non-violent communication' being one of the more popular. See <http://www.cnvc.org/>. Voluntary Norfolk is one of various organisations that help community groups work more effectively.



We now know from experience that people are naturally co-operative if they find themselves in situations where that works best.

And of course, now we have all the Diss online social networks and they help a lot. We all care about our reputations, so people who try to get a free-ride get known fast.

Education

How important were the schools to all of this?



Liz: I have two boys in school, so I can see how different it is from when I was a child.

The schools have taken a lead in much

of the changes.

Of course the children are taught good environmental principles as they were in your times. There is also the new emphasis on communication skills. Now they also learn practical skills like gardening, cooking, and repairing things. Most school meals use vegetables from the school's gardens and they have chickens and pigs that the children look after.



Jemma: At Diss High School, we learn about citizenship. Our part is to take the lead in the online social networks. We do most of the legwork and we also help the older people when they need it. We all have part-time jobs and contribute to the community now.

Work and money

I'm still not clear about work. What about part-time jobs and voluntary work. Do people have jobs? Where do they get money from?



Jeremy: I suppose I'm quite typical now. I don't have a full-

time job, and very few people do. I work part-time for Diss Community Transport, organising transport and also doing some driving and the odd bit of servicing.

I put in quite a lot of time with Frank, helping with the organisational side of the farm. I don't get paid for that, but it gets me all my food.

It isn't really volunteering, as I get things in return, and the standards are fully professional.

Wouldn't you rather have just one job?



Jeremy: No, I wouldn't. My life is much more flexible this way. I can

choose to do what I want and when to a large extent.

I remember how boring it was to have one full-time job that took up all my time. Now I can spend time with Liz and the boys and share responsibility for the house.

I have so many strings to my bow that I don't feel dependent on any one employer. I never worry about losing my job. Best of all, I feel that I am serving my community, not just trying to get money.





Keith: Obviously not having money was a big problem at first, but we began to find ways around it. The groups that started working together because we had no money became very popular. Then people who did have a little money joined, so there was some that could be used and spread around.

There had always been small community banks, like the building societies, and these began to grow, so what little money was around got invested back into the community.

Other exchange systems grew up too. Some communities created their own currencies. Here in Diss, we concentrated on doing each other favours in organised ways.

2010 Building Blocks: Diss Community Bank, Diss LETS, Norwich LETS.²¹

Once people could see that it was more important to buy locally when they did pay for things, the money stayed in the community. Sometimes we pay for things and are paid for work. Sometimes we trade informally. Sometimes we just do things for the community, knowing that we will get services back. That has become the most popular, because it is simpler and reduces arguments over wages and prices.

Government and taxes

*Doing a lot without money?
It sounds like a tax dodge to me. Didn't the government object?*

Liz:



We started by getting together to look after our children and our elderly parents. The government provision for that had got a lot smaller.

Once we had that reasonably organised, we arranged a deal with the Council where we took on caring services for other people too, so they didn't feel we should pay taxes on the services we were offering each other.



Frank: I've always hated paying taxes and have done all I could to avoid them. Now it seems much better. There is much less tax to pay, and a lot of what the government used

21 LETS (local exchange trading systems) are local currencies. There was one in Diss some years ago, and they are still active in Norwich and Cambridge. Lewes in East Sussex now has its own currency, which features a picture of Diss' own Tom Paine on it. See <http://www.thelewespond.org/what.html>.



to do, now gets done by the community. I suppose it comes out the same in the end, but we are now in control.

I'm confused. What kind of government is there now?



Keith: It actually draws upon the best ideas of all the parties in your time.

The government is very much smaller, and taxes are

much lower. At the same time, people are looked after when they need it, but now that comes out of the community (and in a well-organised way) so it doesn't seem intrusive the way the old welfare systems did.

Also, there are lots of polls on every possible local issue on the Diss social networks, so the councils know what people want. The smaller governments we have now seem very much more "of the people and by the people". It feels like we have reached a more advanced form of democracy.

Health and happiness

Let's get down to basics. Are people healthier and happier now?



Gran: I've seen it all happen, from the end of World War II through globalisation, computers and all that, and now this sustainable

society. I definitely think this is the best.

Of course people are healthier. They are eating better and getting more exercise.

They have learned to get on better with each other, and everyone feels like they are part of a community. They have better social lives and are more secure.

The result is that people get ill a lot less, and there is much less crime. There is much less for the NHS and the police to do which saves government money and keeps taxes low.



Jemma: The best part of it is that all the changes mean we may have avoided some of the worst environmental problems.

Our community here in Diss is much more resilient and is able to handle any environmental problems.

The local bee population is thriving!

I see myself as much a global citizen as one of Diss.

Summary of main points: Which of these do you support?

Enter your votes here, from 1 - 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. You can then put your votes online at the Diss Community Partnership website: disscommunity.net.

Recommendation	Your view (1-5)
1 Greater sense of community	
2 Community trading system	
3 Social control by feedback and reputation	
4 Learning skills of co-operation and resolving conflicts	
5 Mix of part-time jobs and voluntary work	
6 Community banks	
7 Local currencies, doing favours	
8 Smaller government with lower taxes and services from the community	
9 Sense of global citizenship	

3 The Bad News: Why the changes are necessary

Perhaps by now you may agree that a future based on community collaboration but little resource use is desirable, or at the very least, not a disaster.

In this chapter, we have the ‘bad news’ (or is it so bad?), that major change must come, so this kind of future is necessary.

I’ll present some strong views, again meant as the start of a community discussion. I’ll begin with a summary:

- 1 Human impact on the Earth (of which climate change is only one part) is so serious that whatever we do next must put the environment at its heart.
- 2 The immediate problems are limited availability of resources, and oil in particular. ‘Peak oil’ has occurred and led to the oil price spike of 2008. That in turn was a key trigger of the recession that we are still in. A full economic recovery is no longer possible (but there might be limited, temporary improvements).
- 3 Therefore, the kind of economy we have experienced for the past few decades — wasteful, globalised, driven by economic growth instead of growth in wellbeing — has actually ended. It cannot be revived. Change is necessary, not optional.

Yes, that is rather strong!

Yes, it is. The argument is certainly not mainstream thinking. Point 1 is undoubtedly true, and I think 2 and 3 are the best explanation of what is happening. A growing number of people have come to these conclusions.



Human impact on the Earth

An article in *New Scientist*, summarises the situation very clearly:

Up to now, the Earth has been very kind to us. Most of our achievements in the past 10,000 years – farming, culture, cities, industrialisation and the raising of our numbers from a million or so to almost 7 billion – happened during an unusually benign period when the Earth’s natural regulatory systems kept everything from the climate to the supply of fresh water inside narrow, comfortable boundaries.

This balmy springtime for humanity is known as the Holocene. But we are now in a new era, the Anthropocene, defined by human domination of the key systems that maintain the conditions of the planet. We have grabbed the controls of spaceship Earth, but in our reckless desire to “boldly go”, we may have forgotten the importance of maintaining its life-support systems.

The demands of nearly 7 billion humans are stretching Earth to breaking point. We know about climate change, but what about other threats? To what extent do pollution, acidifying oceans, mass extinctions, dead zones in the sea and other environmental problems really matter? We can’t keep stressing these systems indefinitely, but at what point will they bite back?²²

Our impact on the Earth in the recent past is observable, measurable and unmistakable. There is controversy over the future, not the past. For example, it is observable that glaciers and ice shelves are melting all around the world.

There is no doubt that we have created major changes to the Earth’s atmosphere. Remember that fuss about holes in the ozone layer? Ozone in the upper atmosphere protects life from the most destructive ultraviolet light. The chemicals used in aerosols destroy that ozone. Their use increased to the extent that great holes began to appear around the polar regions. These were noticed in the 1980s.

Since then, the use of alternative chemicals instead has pulled us back from the brink. This is one of our few great environmental success stories.

There is no doubt that carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere have increased by 40% (yes!) since the 19th century due mostly to the burning of fossil fuels.

The graph shows carbon dioxide levels for the past half million years.

²² Earth’s nine lives, *New Scientist*, 27 Feb. 2010, p. 31.

The low areas are ice ages, the high areas the warmer times between ice ages. The line at the right shows what has happened recently: way out of that whole range.

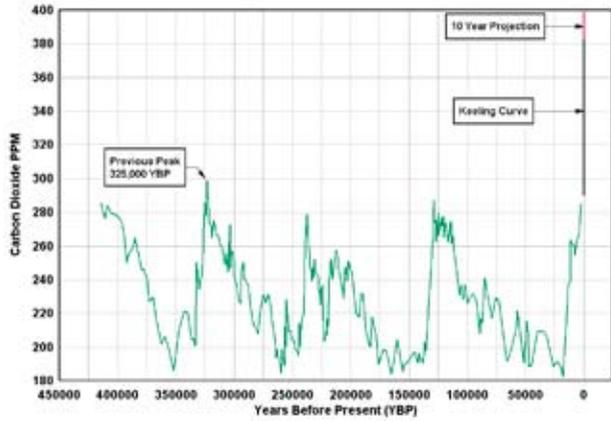
(You can see why climate scientists think that this will lead to warmer climates.)

Most of that recent change has been since the 1960s, as this graph shows.

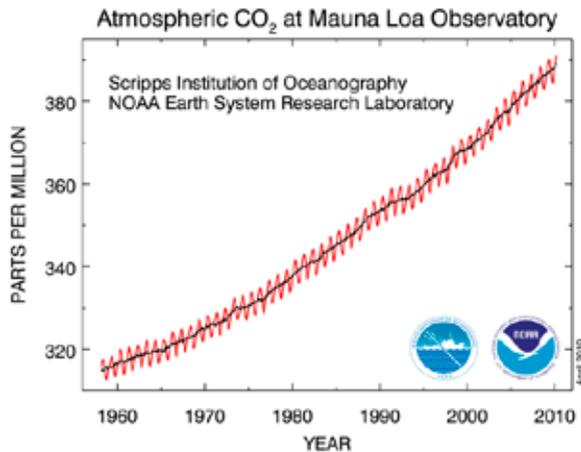
The arguments are not about whether this has happened, but about whether this has and will in the future be changing the Earth's temperature.

That's some of what we are doing to the Earth. There's a lot more. Richard Heinberg is a highly respected observer of this and his list of the largest impacts is:

Climate change is just one of several enormous interrelated dilemmas that will sink civilization unless all are somehow addressed. These include at least five long-range problems:



From <http://planetforlife.com/co2history/index.html>



- *topsoil loss (25 billion tons per year),*
- *worsening fresh water scarcity,*
- *the death of the oceans (currently forecast for around 2050 based on current trends),*
- *overpopulation and continued population growth, and*
- *the accelerating, catastrophic loss of biodiversity.*

As events are unfolding now, these problems, together with climate change, will combine over the next few years or decades to trigger a food crisis of a scale and intensity that will dwarf to insignificance any famine in human history.²³

To clarify that ‘biodiversity’ point: The number of plants and animals going extinct now is comparable to the great extinctions of the past, such as the time when the dinosaurs were wiped out 65 million years ago. This is because by draining wetlands, ploughing prairies, logging forests, paving, and building, we are removing their habitats on an unprecedented scale.

As for scarcity of fresh water, experts believe it is a more serious and immediate problem than future shortages of energy. Watch out for increasing international conflicts based around water.

Death of the oceans? Industrial fishing has already lead to the collapse of about one third of sea fisheries. We may be the last generation that freely eats wild fish.

How do you explain why the media are so full of doubts about climate change these days. I thought the message was “not proven”.

Firstly, let’s be clear that the focus of doubt has been about climate change, and specifically about its predictions for the future. There has been no similar fuss about the overall scale of human impact on the world up to now or all the other problems.

Here’s my best understanding of what has been happening:

Firstly, there are many people for whom it would simply be too uncomfortable to believe that the way they are living or that their businesses are damaging the Earth. They don’t see that change could be for the better.

²³ The Meaning of Copenhagen, an entry on Richard Heinberg’s blog, (an article well worth reading). <http://heinberg.wordpress.com/2010/01/04/212-the-meaning-of-copenhagen/>

But, for the climate change issue especially, it goes a lot further. Some of the big energy companies and other organisations are worried that measures to combat climate change will harm their income.

The result has been a well-funded and orchestrated campaign to discredit global warming and climate change using the same tactics as the tobacco industry's campaign to undermine the science that said that cigarette smoking caused cancer²⁴.

The principal target of this campaign is global warming, not all the other problems. Predicting the future temperatures requires complex computer models and they don't always agree. It is easy to pick small holes in global warming research and then claim that the whole science is flawed.

This has turned into a major public battle. And of course, the scientists working on climate change are just scientists, not public relations campaigners, and are not equipped to reply skilfully.

The Copenhagen Summit in 2009 was billed as our last chance, but the final agreement was very weak. The success of the anti-climate change lobby is making the needed changes much less likely.

'Peak oil' and other resource issues

What is this 'peak oil' issue?

In a nutshell, it is that the world's overall supply of oil has or is about to reach its maximum and will then decline, while demand for oil is still rising.

This is probably the reason for the huge spike in oil prices in 2008 and the likelihood that it will be repeated.

It starts from the observation that every oil field has a limited lifetime. Its oil output rises at first, then peaks and declines. The same is true for all the oil fields in any country put together.

In the USA, oil production peaked in 1970. Before that the USA was an oil exporter. Since then, it has imported larger and larger amounts of oil. The same is true for the UK. We had our bonanza of North Sea oil, but that peaked in 1999, and our oil output has declined ever since. China's consumption of oil has been growing rapidly. It became a net importer of oil in 2006.

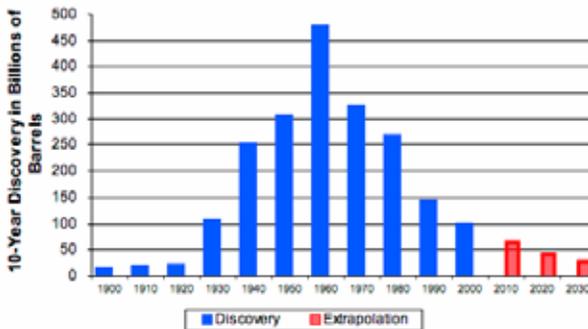
Out of the world's 98 oil producing countries, oil output has peaked and started to decline in 64.

²⁴ See for example, this article from *the Guardian*, 30 March, 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/mar/30/us-oil-donated-millions-climate-sceptics>

But there are always stories in the news about new oil fields, and other sources of oil, like tar sands in Canada.

Of course, new oil fields are discovered all the time. But the world has been very thoroughly explored by now, so new fields being found don't nearly make up for what is running out. The peak in oil discoveries was 1964(!) for the world as a whole.

Oil discoveries have been declining since 1964



Note: World oil discovery over 10-year periods, by Association for the Study of Peak Oil and Gas.

What's worse is that all the places where it is easy to get the oil out have long since been found. The new discoveries are in more difficult places, like deep under the sea bed and so are expensive and dangerous.

So it looks like the total world output has peaked, probably in 2008, leading to that rapid rise in oil prices.

That date is very controversial, though. People who study it give a range of dates, mostly in the next decade, but many think it has already happened. Many oil producing countries and companies keep their information hidden or distorted for commercial or political reasons, so no objective date is possible.

So we really are about to run out of oil?

No, there is plenty of oil still left. We are running out of *cheap* oil. And it is cheap oil that the global economy relies upon: for transport, industry, heating, agriculture. Everything we do really.

And that is the problem ...

Is it just oil that is about to peak? What about other fuels and other resources?

Peak oil is the most talked about, but some experts make similar arguments about gas, coal and uranium for nuclear reactors.

And also about phosphorus used for fertilisers, and various minerals, where as the grade of ore becomes lower, more and more energy is required for extraction. So it isn't just oil that will get more expensive.

Economic effects

Isn't the price of oil a matter of supply and demand?

Yes, very largely. What seems to have happened in the past few years was that demand was rising as the world economy grew, especially once China became a net importer.

At the same time, production of oil was stagnant and could barely keep up. That caused a huge rise in prices that peaked in July 2008 at \$147 a barrel.

Then – and many people think it is no coincidence – came the mortgage crisis in the U.S., which rapidly turned into a full-scale financial meltdown around the world. As the recession hit, demand for oil dropped, and the price went sharply down again to \$33 by December.

Are you saying that it was the high price of oil that caused the recession?

No, it didn't cause it. The cause was the instability of the world's financial markets: that growing bubble of bad debt. The high price of oil pricked the bubble by putting huge pressure on lots of businesses whose finances were already marginal.

As the world economy has been recovering, the price of oil has been going up again. It has reached \$87 a barrel as I write this. (April 2010). If the recovery gets stronger, so that demand for oil picks up, the oil price will shoot up again, because the supply cannot follow it.

The world economy is still very unstable, especially because of government debts incurred by bailing out the banks. Another oil price spike is likely to lead to another, possibly deeper recession.

Any time the world starts to come out of recession the process will repeat, but with less and less oil available each time, as supplies continue to get lower. That is why it looks like the era of economic growth has ended!

Wow. Some story! What do you conclude from that?

Firstly, that we have to learn to live differently, with much less oil for a start.

Secondly, and getting back to Diss, we need to develop an economy that isn't so unstable, that is resilient and can withstand shocks in the wider world. The

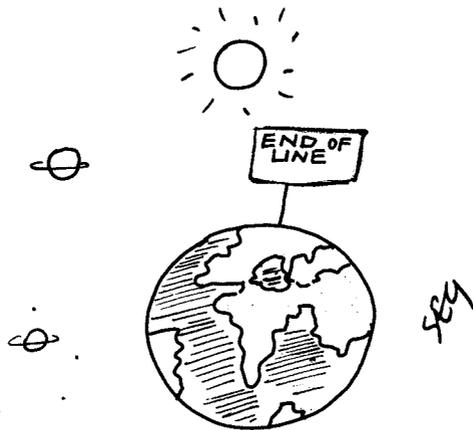
community-based economy described in the Good News chapter is just that. In it, Diss and vicinity is much more self-reliant, with much of its own food, energy supplies and other local products.

With local control, using the social networking, it is also much more stable and self-correcting. For example, farmers know they will have a stable market and that their customers are satisfied, because the system is set up that way.

There are lots of part-time jobs for people and ways of getting some of what people need without money.

And of course, it is very much more environmentally-friendly and uses very much less oil.

That is why we think that a future somewhat along those lines, is not only desirable, but also necessary, if we are to have a happy and sustainable future.



Summary of main points: Do you agree?

Enter your votes here, from 1 - 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. You can then put your votes online at the Diss Community Partnership website: disscommunity.net.

Major points	Your view (1-5)
1 Human impact on the Earth is extremely serious	
2 Need to put environment at heart of what we do	
3 'Peak Oil' has occurred	
4 The 2008 oil price spike was a trigger of the recession	
5 World economic growth is no longer possible	

4 Overall Conclusions

I hope you have put your votes into the tables at the end of each of the previous sections. We are hoping to begin to get the people of Diss to start to form a coherent vision for their future.

Enter your votes here, from 1 - 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. You can then put your votes online at the Diss Community Partnership website: disscommunity.net.

Issue	Your view (1-5)
The Bad News: We cannot continue with our current lifestyles in Diss and will have to change.	
The Good News: The overall vision in the Good News chapter points roughly to a future that I would like to see in Diss.	

Starting the conversation: your recommendations

Jot down some notes for the online discussion at disscommunity.net, the website of the Diss Community Partnership:

- What parts of the vision presented do you most strongly like?
- What parts do you dislike?
- What would you like to see as starting points towards a Sustainable Diss 2030?

Appendix - Annotated Reading List

The vision outlined in the Good News chapter of this booklet is one person's view of a possible future, but it is based upon the work of many, including government documents, respected charities, business leaders and academic institutions. It is informed by real constraints and real opportunities.

Some of those documents are described here. None are published by fringe organisations, yet all paint a picture of radical change over the next 20 years.

It's up to us to face these challenges head-on and see them as an opportunity for positive change rather than impending disaster.

Readings on the Good News

The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan, DECC (2009) available at:
www.decc.gov.uk

In the *UK Low Carbon Transition Plan* the Department for Energy and Climate Change plots how the UK will meet its commitment to a 34 percent cut in emissions on 1990 levels by 2020. The UK government believes this will transform the country “*into a cleaner, greener and more prosperous place to live*”.

By 2020 it suggests that:

- More than 1.2 million people will be in green jobs.
- 7 million homes will have benefited from whole house makeovers, and more than 1.5 million households will be supported to produce their own clean energy.
- Around 40 percent of electricity will be from low-carbon sources, from renewables, nuclear and clean coal.
- We will be importing half the amount of gas that we otherwise would.

The average new car will emit 40 percent less carbon than now.

Food 2030, Defra (2010) available at:
www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/food/strategy

Food 2030, the Government's food strategy, sets out a vision of what the food system might look like in 2030, and how we can get there. It suggests that by 2030:

"The UK has a low carbon food system which is efficient in using resources – any waste is reused, recycled or used for energy generation."

Norfolk Ambition: The community strategy for Norfolk 2003-2023, Norfolk County Council, available at: www.norfolkambition.gov.uk

Far from radical in its thinking the Norfolk County Strategic Partnership has nevertheless brought together representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors who have agreed a long term vision for Norfolk, set out in a sustainable community strategy, called *Norfolk Ambition*. They hope that, by 2023, Norfolk will be: *"On England's frontline in tackling climate change and environmental sustainability"*.

Zero Carbon Britain 2030, A new energy strategy, executive editor, Martin Kemp, Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth, 2010. available at www.zerocarbonbritain.org

The Centre for Alternative Technology is *"Europe's leading eco-centre"*, and is based near Machynlleth, Wales. It specialises in *"showing practical solutions to environmental problems to carry us into the twenty-first century."*

Zero Carbon Britain 2030:

"details how Britain can eliminate emissions from fossil fuels in 20 years and break our dependence on imported energy. It demonstrates how we can achieve this by halving energy demand and installing massive renewable energy generation.

We can maintain high levels of well-being while staying within a strict carbon budget, eliminating our reliance on fossil fuels and providing access to energy for everyone."

CAT Development Director Paul Allen said: *"Instead of forecasting from within existing attitudes, trends and approaches, we 'backcasted,' looking at*

where we need to be, then seeing what policies and technologies we need to get there.

We are confident that if Britain treated this as the serious emergency the climate science is saying it is, we could eliminate the need for fossil fuels within 20 years.”

The Great Transition, New Economics Foundation,
<http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/great-transition>

nef (the new economics foundation) *“is an independent think-and-do tank that inspires and demonstrates real economic well-being.*

We aim to improve quality of life by promoting innovative solutions that challenge mainstream thinking on economic, environment and social issues.”

The Great Transition:

“provides the first comprehensive blueprint for building an economy based on stability, sustainability and equality.

By sharing our resources more equally, by building better communities and a better society and by safeguarding the natural environment, we can focus on the things that really matter and achieve genuine and lasting progress with higher levels of well being. Taken together this would amount to what we have termed the Great Transition.

Creating a new kind of economy is crucial if we want to tackle climate change and avoid the mounting social problems associated with the rise of economic inequality”

The Transition Handbook, from oil dependency to local resilience, Rob Hopkins, Green Books, 2008

The Transition Timeline, for a local resilient future, Shaun Chamberlin, Green Books, 2009

Local Food, how to make it happen in your community, Tamzin Pinkerton and Rob Hopkins, Green Books, 2009

The Transition Network (see www.transitionnetwork.org) is a community-led response to answer the question:

“for all those aspects of life that this community needs in order to sustain itself and thrive, how do we significantly rebuild resilience (to mitigate the effects of Peak Oil and economic contraction) and drastically reduce carbon emissions (to mitigate the effects of Climate Change)?”

The Transition Network produced the three books listed above to give detailed plans of how communities can start to do that. They include much of the vision in *The Good News* chapter of this booklet.

eGaia, Growing a peaceful, sustainable Earth through communications,
Gary Alexander, Lighthouse Press, 2002.

This book is by the author of this booklet. See earthconnected.net for more information about him.

eGaia “sets out a Utopian yet practical agenda for change that harnesses the exciting potential of electronic communication to launch a new era of community regeneration.

- *It proposes a system of relationships - with the Earth as a living organism, and among the people living in it - that embody principles of collaboration and sustainability.*
- *It offers a path to a future with a co-operative free-market economy.*
- *It shows how electronic communications can be used so that the driving force of the economy is the health of the environment and the well-being of all of humanity rather than money flows.”*

[Cittaslow and Slow Food UK and International](#), see
www.cittaslow.org.uk, www.cittaslow.net, www.slowfood.org.uk.

The Cittaslow movement grew out of the Slow Food movement, with a philosophy that is central to the visions in this booklet.

Slow Food works “to ensure good, clean and fair food is a right for everyone. By good, clean and fair we mean that our food should taste good, that it should be produced in a clean way which fully respects the environment, human health and animal welfare, and that food producers are paid a fair wage.”

Cittaslow towns “aim to be great places to live, work and visit. They aim to support local businesses, foster local traditions, protect the environment, welcome visitors, and encourage active participation in community life.

... *It is a way of thinking. It is about caring for your town and the people who live and work in it or visit it. It is about celebrating and promoting diversity and avoiding the ‘sameness’ that afflicts too many towns in the modern world.”*

Readings on the Bad News

Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change R.K Pachauri and A. Reisinger, (eds.). IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, available at: www.ipcc.ch

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is the leading body for the assessment of climate change, established by the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic consequences.

Climate Change 2007 is the most complete survey of climate science, including current observed impacts and possible future scenarios. Much pored over and derided by the media and climate change deniers the report still stands up to its critics.

In over 3000 pages of work, so far only one significant factual error and one mistake in referencing have come to light. Both occurred in the chapter written by social scientists examining the impact of climate change and not in the chapter written by climate scientists about the realities of climate change.

The next version is in progress and many smaller and more recent reports from working groups are available on the IPCC website.

The Global Oil Depletion Report, UKERC (2009) available at: www.ukerc.ac.uk

The UK Energy Research Centre was established by the British government “to be the UK’s pre-eminent centre of research, and source of authoritative information and leadership, on sustainable energy systems.”

The paper reviews over 500 studies, analysis of industry databases and comparisons of global supply forecasts and finds:

“A peak in conventional oil production before 2030 appears likely and there is a significant risk of a peak before 2020. Given the lead times required to both develop substitute fuels and improve energy efficiency, this risk needs to be given serious consideration.”

The rate of decline of production is accelerating. More than two thirds of existing capacity may need to be replaced by 2030 solely to prevent production from falling.

While large resources of conventional oil may be available, these are unlikely to be accessed quickly and may make little difference to the timing of the global peak.”

The Oil Crunch - a wake-up call for the UK economy, Industry Taskforce on Peak Oil and Energy Security (2010) available at: peakoiltaskforce.net

The UK Industry Taskforce on Peak Oil and Energy Security (ITPOES) formed in 2008 as a coalition of British companies sharing concerns about the state of the UK's energy security.

This second report of ITPOES finds that oil shortages, insecurity of supply and price volatility will destabilise economic, political and social activity within five years.

[The Oil Drum](http://theoil Drum.com), (theoil Drum.com)

[Energy Bulletin](http://www.energybulletin.net), (www.energybulletin.net)

[Environmental News Network](http://www.enn.com), (www.enn.com)

These three blogs are well respected by serious environmentalists as sources of ongoing news and information about environmental issues and peak oil. However, they make no claim to be representative of official or governmental views.