

2010



Community Conference Report



Mearns Moving Forward



Transition Mearns

Mearns Academy
Laurencekirk
13th March 2010

Mearns Moving Forward Community Conference

10am – 3.30pm Saturday, 13th March 2010

Mearns Area Partnership and Transition Mearns came together to present a conference entitled Mearns Moving Forward. The purpose of the day was to consider the future of a sustainable Mearns in the widest sense. Many organisations and over 100 individuals assembled at the Mearns Academy for a day of workshops, stalls, talks and talking. The day started with keynote speakers and progressed with three workshop sessions.

Acknowledgements

The ladies of Laurencekirk Parish Church who prepared and served a splendid lunch.
Willie Munro, Area Manager for Aberdeenshire Council who acted as MC.
Cllr Tom Fleming for his vote of thanks.
Mearns Academy Janitors for all their help planning, setting up and clearing away.
Aberdeenshire Council for the cloth bags and other practical help.
Kincardine and Mearns Area Partnership for providing some funding for the event.



The speakers

Tom Black from the Development Trusts Association Scotland spoke first about the power of local people to come together and create community development trusts. He presented an inspiring short film demonstrating examples of communities who have purchased assets from wind farms to petrol stations. In his workshop he explained how the Mearns could benefit from such a trust.

Donald Barrie, farm manager at the Macaulay Institute research station at Glensaugh, gave a thought provoking insight into the energy usage of different farming enterprises, demonstrating that there is far more energy involved in food production than many realise.

About MAP (Mearns Area Partnership)

The Mearns Area Partnership is a collaborative, community based organisation which operates as a Local Rural Partnership. It brings together key organisations and community groups to identify and tackle issues in the Howe o` the Mearns. The MAP office base is at 44 High Street, Laurencekirk.

Some of MAP's achievements to date have been purchasing and running a community minibus, setting up an Out of School Club, establishing the Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network, researching the benefits of volunteering and coordinating the opening celebrations for Laurencekirk Station.

The workshops

Community Transport Association (CTA)- innovative and flexible transport solutions

Eric Wells, the renewable energy development co-ordinator from Aberdeenshire Council.
eric.wells@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Transition Mearns (TraM) – addressing climate change and peak oil at a local level (see box). www.tram.btik.com

North East Scotland Credit Union (NESCU)- savings and loans facilities

Annette Johnston from the Fairer Scotland Fund (FSF)- Community Regeneration

Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) - highlighted Scottish Government funding designed to help rural communities.

Walter Taylor from Aberdeenshire Council provided information on community grants available

Caspar Lampkin gave some practical energy savings tips.

The stalls and activities

SCARF (Save Cash and Reduce Fuel) – gives advice to households and small businesses on reducing or changing fuel use www.scarf.org.uk

Energy Saving Trust (EST)- gives advice on saving energy, grants etc tel 0800 512012

Community Foods Initiative North East (CFINE) – making fresh healthy food available in communities without shops

Council for Voluntary Service Aberdeenshire Central and South (CVS) -
linda.babbs@cvsa.co.uk 01569 668055.

Mearns Area Partnership (MAP) (see box)

Sustainable Communities Initiative Fife

Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network- a local voluntary organisation developing as a social enterprise

Zeitgeist Movement - www.thezeitgeistmovementuk.com
see also www.chrismartenson.com

Aberdeen Forward Community Composting
www.aberdeenforward.org

Eco Drive Simulator – lower energy driving

Eco club from Mearns Academy lead a practical workshop on bird box construction and had a badge making stall

Mearns FM radio

Films were showing including 'The Power of Community' – the story of how Cuba adapted when supplies of oil were cut off

Satrosphere hands on renewable energy workshop

Children's crafts – home made paper etc.



The Evaluation Tree and the Mearns Moving Forward



Thanks to everyone who hung a leaf on the evaluation tree. There was a huge amount of positive feedback and lots of ideas for the future. Some of these are summarised below:

'There are many more people than I thought interested in issues such as sustainable development and peak oil in the Mearns.'

Youth Transport – Suggestions that MAP could set up a youth transport service with Fairer Scotland Funds – Norfolk as a model?

Mearns Development Trust – Considerable interest in setting up a development trust locally, possibly to generate wind energy, but also to drive other community projects.

Recycling – Feeling that we still need to do much more recycling and that we could be producing recycled products locally.

'The best part of the conference was meeting people and being able to share visions/ideas in a supportive environment.'

Local expertise – recognised need for more sharing of information locally on sustainability issues, possibly by web site.

More events – Clearly many people who attended the conference felt quite inspired, and that the chance to come together as a community had been of great benefit. The soup was good too!

About TraM (Transition Mearns)

TraM is a small but growing group of individuals who are very concerned about the twin challenges faced by society from the effects of climate change and peak oil. TraM wants to improve the resilience of the Mearns community to the changes doubtlessly faced by coming up with local, community-based projects which have the potential to make a positive difference to the way people live their lives. As well as general awareness-raising about the issues involved, the group is also in the process of establishing a 'freegle' service for exchange of unwanted goods and a community composting scheme. TraM hopes to become part of the growing Transition Towns initiative.

Many thanks to all who attended