



MAKING COMMUNITY WORK

Simon Mitchell Dipl.HE, BA(Hons), Cert.Ed.FE

Because we have each other

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DEDICATION



It was in 1983 that I first became interested in Community. I had completed a degree in Creative Arts, a large component of which was at Dartington College of Arts in Devon, UK and was concerned with finding a social context for arts based activity. It has been a long journey to find answers to the questions I formed then and I wish to take this opportunity to thank some of the people who helped me along the way.

Guy Dauncey

My fictions led me to value people who seemed both heroic and caring, so role models were infrequent. It was mainly Guy who started me off as a social innovator. His book 'After the Crash' and my involvement with CADURN were practical applications of Dr. Schumacher's philosophy of 'Small is Beautiful'. 'After the Crash' describes several of the social and economic tools used in my maverick social innovation in a small town in Cornwall. You can find Guy now at: <http://www.earthfuture.com>. He is still heroic and caring!

Nigel Melville

'Adult Options', a collection of stories about education and human potential was edited by Nigel and published by the Educational Association in 1985. The inclusion of my voluntary activities in this book has motivated many actions concerning publishing since then.

Rachel John

Authoress of the Penguin Dictionary of Saints, Rachel was literally a Godsend to me. She has given me sanctuary. A quiet place to live and work, surrounded by the stunning beauty and nature of East Cornwall.

Meg Breckon

Meg is a retired County Counsellor for Restormel Borough and a local resident in Lostwithiel. I do appreciate that she does get things done. No one has been more active in setting up and developing the Town Forum and it has been interesting for me to see how local development works in the 'real world'.

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INTRODUCTION

This is an ebook for social pioneers and for those interested in local community regeneration. It is for people who are looking for new ways to live on the earth beyond the heavy exploitation of 'corporate consumer capitalism' that dominates our culture. It represents the story of a series of prescriptive interventions in the normal processes of local government and social interaction at a grass-roots level. It records what happened as a result of these interventions.

The elements of this story take place over twenty-five years, representing more than five thousand hours of voluntary time given by an individual to community issues, working mostly at a local level - in a town in Cornwall UK, called Lostwithiel.

Here you will find the stories of an individual who took it upon himself to explore, research and build new ways of exchange, of learning and relating to the social environment we inhabit. It is a practical guide to some of the things that you can do to enhance and rebuild your own communities. It is also a guide to some of the pitfalls that may lurk along the way.

The underlying philosophy of the approaches shown in 'Making Community Work' are found in the work of Dr. Schumacher, the author of 'Small is Beautiful'. Most of the practical interventions applied here are also described in Guy Dauncey's book 'After the Crash' which was an early influence for me.

You might ask why someone would give up so much of their time to explore issues and techniques surrounding community regeneration. The motivation for this came from a realisation that our present economy is basically unsustainable. How then do we invest in a future? Pensions are there for the present retiring generations, but they have been earned at a serious cost to the planet we all share. Can we really rely on 'collecting' even as much as presently retiring people? It doesn't seem feasible to me.

At present we in the West are using up the earth's resources as if we had five planets to spend, and polluting the one we have in the process, even to the extent of changing our climate. There has never been so much slavery as there presently is on the earth and we are forced into a system that overexploits planet and people in the drive for profit as soon as we touch money. Our present systems of generating profit and investment for the future in effect are stealing quality of life from the generations to come - storing up our problems for the future.

If money itself is the problem - how then do we actually invest our energy for a future that doesn't literally 'cost the earth'? How can we 'tread lightly on the earth' when the whole system we are part of is bent on its destruction in order to make money?

It seemed to me (as somewhat of an idealist) that if people could work together and reconstruct more self-reliance into communities that this mutual self-support would be a stronger 'investment for the future' than the continued destruction of our fragile environments in the name of progress.



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WHAT IS COMMUNITY ?

A community is a group of people who hold values or interests in common. They have a network or hierarchy of communication between themselves. They exist for some purpose defined to or by the group.

A community does not have to be a localised affair. Many communities are developing online as the technology of global communication improves. This allows us the unique opportunity of 'finding other people like us' - out there in the world.

A community also represents some kind of shared interest. This might be as simple as the community of a small town like 'Lostwithiel' - who share the sole attribute of 'living in the same place'. But in reality this breaks down to number of groups in the town with shared interests, such as: the people who use the Community Centre, the Church Rooms, the Town Twinners, the Rotarians, the Masons, the Art Group - and so on. At last count in Lostwithiel - a town of about 3000 people - there were about 80 small groups and organisations active. In larger towns and cities this 'cliquing' is harder to perceive because it is spread out over a wider area between far more people. Your own community might be defined by your email address book or mobile phone number list.

We all belong to communities. They can appear anywhere at any time - for example the young mothers who take their children paddling in the river when the weather is warm may not have any other interaction with each other at all. Likewise the 'community' of people who appear when increased traffic near their homes threatens a downturn in their quality of life. More usual these days is a 'remote community' where we find groups of people sharing our interests and values outside of our local environment using communications technology.

Cornwall has always been well-known for its close knit local communities and the more self-reliant 'Celtic' trait of mutual self-support is still in evidence here, at least amongst the Cornish who are left. But mostly a sense of local community has declined in our towns, cities and villages, mainly to serve the interests of consumer capitalism - where we all have to buy and own as much as possible.

Principles of individual ownership and status persuade us that we all need cars, fridges, consumer durables and so on - with 'shared ownership' seen as a negative nuisance. Places where people meet, such as shops, surgeries or local post offices are disappearing in preference of larger alternatives - often away from small towns and villages.

Television and other media have replaced our local involvement in local affairs - the characters on Eastenders, Coronation St. or even Big Brother are often more 'real' than our neighbours. In our comfy homes the weather outside may be less real than the advertising images of Landrovers driving across the Masai Mara on our TV's.

Twenty years of Thatcherism took its toll on communities. This was the price of the 'me first' economy built on competition and conspicuous consumerism. In order to value independence and wealth we had to devalue the qualities of mutuality involved in sharing. So we lost the 'covenant' of mutual self-support and started to act just for ourselves, losing respect for the environment and often for each other in the process. Now, our neighbours are sometimes more of a nuisance than part of our 'clan'.

Community occurs when groups of people start acting for themselves in mutual self-support. It cannot be taken for granted that community applies itself to any particular location. Even in a small town of 3000 people there are many little 'communities' who often hold values ideas and attitudes in conflict with each other, resulting in fragmentation - a truly 'postmodern' condition. The 'community' of Lostwithiel town is a fiction because it is really a lot of small groups - some of whose values are in opposition.

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WHY DO WE NEED COMMUNITY ?

“ Well “, you might say. “Community has had its day and is no longer useful or important because I can get everything I need without any help from anyone else.”

And this is certainly true. The UK and US are amongst the richest nations on earth. We generally have a high standard of living and those in real poverty are still mostly hidden from us.

In fact the whole concept of community is rather overworked, especially in UK. First we had the ‘Community Police’, the velvet glove on the iron fist. Shortly followed by the ‘Community Charge’ - ‘if we’ve policed it we now have to charge for it’. The old notions of a ‘close knit community’, working in mutual support and respect for each other, now have rather negative, almost incestuous connotations - “This is a local shop!” (League of Gentlemen). People who might ‘meddle in community’ are often stereotyped as ‘busy-bodies’.

But what if the support networks we have set up in the form of government, local government, financial transactions and institutions, transport and household amenities suddenly stopped functioning. What if our whole system and way of living on this earth has a serious flaw? What if our attention on ‘economy’ and GDP has come to ignore nature itself. What might happen then if things went awry?

To mix metaphors - we have built our house on sand and we are living on borrowed time. Our whole process of investing for a future is based on one of the worst mistakes anyone ‘in business’ can make; using our capital assets as income. As citizens of this earth we are using its non-renewable resources at an alarming rate to generate money. In this process we waste untold amounts of energy and fill our own environment with toxins in numerous forms, provoking all kinds of unhealthy results. All of these resources are finite.

Here’s a prophecy from the Cree Indians:

Only when the last tree has been cut down,
Only when the last river has been poisoned,
Only when the last fish has been caught,
Only then will you find
That you cannot eat money

And that is where we are right now. Cutting down our rainforests, poisoning our rivers and oceans, catching our last fishes.

For people under 45 or so, this is a particularly serious situation. In effect our present process of investing for the future is based on stealing that very future from our children. Clean air, drinkable water, quiet environments, human potential and quality of life are all elements that do not enter the equation of GDP.

Our whole investment for a comfortable future in later years is at risk when this house of cards tumbles down. And since the death of local communities and the disappearance of the ‘covenant’ of mutual self-support - there is no safety net.

“OK” I hear you saying, “You’re just being paranoid”.

“OK” I reply, “And you are just in denial”.

You should think about this though. When the time comes - the ‘system’ may not be there for you, it can’t be because it is built on the serious flaw that we have infinite resources. If you want a future for yourself, for your children and for their children then it is time to start building now. Its time to take your energy out of the failing system we have and build a new one that works. Part of that involves creating self-reliant groups of people, communities, even ‘tribes’ that are based on mutual goals, respect and co-operation.

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THE START OF MY COMMUNITY WORK



Cornwall and Devon Unemployment Resource Network (CADURN)

Extracted from '*Working with Local Government*' from the ECA book '*Adult Options, Three Million Opportunities*', 1985

Cornwall and Devon Unemployment Resource Network (CADURN) was formed in February 1983. A mixture of volunteers and employment workers who met anywhere between Bideford and Truro, to discuss issues and action related to unemployment.

You might expect that co-operation between agencies went without saying. The County Council, the LEA's, the Social Services, employment agencies, voluntary sector - we're all in the same camp aren't we? It seems that some are further in than others, and when there is a stranger at the gates, what happens then?

The Bodmin Centre for Unemployed People was grant aided by the social services and others and founder of the Attic Workshop, a community resource base above a shop in the town. We did our bit to campaign for alternative lifestyles and combat the negative aspects of unemployment.

My role there was to engage in dialogue with others concerned about work and the lack of work in Cornwall. I was active in CADURN and joint editor for Changing Times, a two county paper for the unemployed.

It was during this time that I wrote a paper for the WEA (Workers Education Association) titled '*Unemployment in a Cornish Town: Bodmin*'. I was (even back then) concerned that education was failing to develop the potential of people to create their own opportunities. This is still especially important in Cornwall where there are three times the national average of small industries and 'one-man-bands'. New technology seemed to offer many opportunities for 'peripheral' Cornwall but access to it at that time was limited for many people.

County Advisory Committee for Employment

Members of CADURN committee in Cornwall were in touch with County Council officers and with some interested councilors. The target was simple - membership of, or discussion with what was then called the '*County Advisory Committee for Employment*'. The rationale was equally simple - who knows more about the state of the job market than the people who want to get jobs there?

After an approach by CADURN The County Planning Officer replied to one of the interested parties in the campaign, commenting that he believed that:

"The purpose of CADURN was to ameliorate the situation of the unemployed, rather than promote new employment in the county through industrial initiatives of the sort that...will be discussed by the committee".

He added that he couldn't tell if the difference was significant until it had been studied further, but asked for a statement of its aims from CADURN, which we provided and which is worth repeating:



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Statement from CADURN to the County Advisory Committee on Employment - 1984

“CADURN, the Cornwall and Devon Unemployment Resource Network, believes that we are at a cross-roads in social history, and that the premises on which we base our understanding of work, leisure, jobs and employment must be carefully examined in the light of changing times.

We do not believe that ‘full employment’ can be seen again in the old terms, and seek to develop and communicate attitudes to deal with the changes we all face.

By providing and seeking to extend a network of communication throughout the two counties we are able to strengthen specific ventures which members of our community may seek to undertake, and provide a forum for communication on the future of work and employment in Cornwall.

In addition CADURN aims to promote an awareness of the problems of unemployment and the unemployed, and provide local information networks that will assist this process and promote unemployment initiatives.

There is a larger concern here than just ‘*coping with unemployment*’, that of human potential, growth and development. Cumulative conditions in society, brought about by an Industrial Work Ethic in jobs and education, frustrate human potential and prevent individuals from developing self-reliant attitudes.

In seeking to catalyze potential in individuals we seek more than ‘economic recovery’. The main factor in stimulating self-employment opportunities lies in empowering individuals to be more confident, self directed, self-reliant, able and flexible - all desirable traits for a 21st century economy. In this work we are laying the foundations of ‘new economy’ which needs these qualities above the unquestioning factory fodder of industrialised workers.

Looking to the future we see a continuing decline in the number of people involved in large manufacturing industries, due to the advance of technology and changes in export markets.

This will be replaced by growth in the areas of micro technology and information, service and leisure industries, and small businesses tailored to the needs of those industries and individualised bespoke products.

Hence we would make several recommendations to the County Advisory Committee on Employment:

1. Cornwall would be wise to look towards the provision of education and training in the areas of micro technology and information. In an ‘information age’, where peripherality is not as crucial as in typical industry, Cornwall has a great deal to offer potential employers.
2. Since the nature of what we regard as work is changing, so too is the structure. We recommend the promotion of worker co-operatives, which are shifting from craft based to technology based industries.
3. We would like to see the development of Local Enterprise Centres which could channel people into self-employment. At the moment the unemployed are a wasted resource. They have a great deal to offer in skills, ideas or even just time.

CADURN is the only organisation which represents the unemployed people of Cornwall, and as such has an evolving role in responding to the needs it encounters and supporting the growth and development of ideas which lead towards economic recovery.”

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Response from the County Advisory Committee on Employment

21 years later this statement from CADURN is still a valid response to the employment conditions in Cornwall although there are now organisations investigating options mentioned in the letter.

But at that time quite what happened to the '*County Advisory Committee on Employment*' after this was never made clear, but it was promptly replaced by the '*Industrial Working Party*', who replied that it would:

'be unwise and possibly unproductive to dilute this concentration by widening the membership to embrace all economic interests in the County.'

Unemployment may not seem such an important issue as it was 20 years ago, when the figures were over 3 million in the UK.

But the stimulation of meaningful, useful and new employment opportunities is more important than ever, as many jobs now offer little security and in Cornwall certainly remain poorly paid, part-time and often only seasonal. The average age of a local first-time house buyer here is now in their late 30's. Many families are finding that both partners have to work just to make ends meet let alone save for the future.

Changing Times - a newsletter by the unemployed

Extracted from '*Unemployment and the Media*' from the ECA book Adult Options, Three Million Opportunities, 1985.



Changing Times was a two-county newspaper written for, and by unemployed people in the South West and published by a co-operative based in Bodmin and Truro, years before 'The Big Issue' made a go of it.

In Issue two I commented on the work of the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), then in charge of marshalling the unemployed to work. I described the Community Programme, set up to give people work experience as "*a short term tactical reaction to the long term structural problems in our society*" and reminded readers that many Community Programme workers would be once more out of work when their placements ended. A ban of some sort was imposed on Changing Times by area staff of the MSC.

The MSC ban led to a front-page article in the Cornish Guardian and a counterblast from a sympathetic County Councillor. It was never clear whether the ban applied only to the Community Programme funded projects in Bodmin, or all MSC funded centres in the South West.

Where the ban originated was never clarified: as the Cornish Guardian reported at the time, the Area Manager of the MSC's training division was '*looking into it, although it hasn't been resolved yet*'. It is hard to believe that it originated from the Community Programme officers in the region with whom CADURN and Changing Times have always had friendly relationships.

As a local counselor told the Cornish Guardian, the ban amounted to Government-sponsored censorship of the public press, but it was perhaps more than that.

Changing Times received no funding from the MSC, and at the time of the article was virtually self-supporting. In that respect it was an independent journal in the same moral and legal position as any other magazine. When 'Practical Boat Owner' complains about DTI regulations or proposal to rate moorings or some such thing, does it risk being banned from local authority funded sailing centres or naval bases?

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The story picked up impetus. The Sunday Independent re-ran the complete article, which its John Blunt column described as '*plain common sense*', describing the area manager of the MSC as a '*pipsqueak who should know better*'.

Unabashed by the ban, and with morale boosted by the press support, Changing Times hit back.

The next edition, under the banner headline '*MSC gag on Cornish Unemployed*' claimed that '*perhaps what the MSC really object to is that we are being successful without their help or support, and are gaining a credibility in the unemployment field which they have long-since lost*'.

Rubbing salt in the wound, Changing Times then concluded: '*After the closing of all those job centres, Mr. xxxxxx and his minions must be starting to think about their own futures. Don't worry, though chaps - if the MSC make you redundant, we'll still be here to help you.*'

Inevitably, that stung MSC staff. Changing Times no.6 carried a letter from the CPSA branch condemning the leader in the previous issue as '*a masterpiece of blinkered naiveté*, and attacking the paper for imagining that government officials could ignore the paper's views. Central to the letter though, was a survey of the job-centre closures for Cornwall - staff reductions, office downgradings, reduced specialist services for the unemployed, and harder access to MSC schemes and open market jobs alike. The letter closed with an appeal to the unemployed to support the CPSA campaign against the MSC plans.

And so my role as 'an outsider' was born. I believed at that time that little change could be made from within the system. It is frustrating that people who ask difficult questions, rock the boat and promote positive change are marginalised at every turn - even when that change becomes essential. 'Better the Devil you know than the Devil you don't' keeps many people and organisations trapped in the past and unable to adapt.

This is a time when we need new alternatives to old questions, the old system is breaking down and the new is still being stifled.

HOW CAN A MINORITY INFLUENCE A MAJORITY ?

Many people are afraid to become involved in change at a social level - after all we pay a lot of taxes to take care of that sort of thing and sometimes 'life is just too complicated already'. But change is happening, however slowly because a new breed of leader is emerging. Even Prince Charles combines an informed social conscience with an ability to ask difficult questions and accept difficult responsibilities.

My lecturing work in communications theory has been most useful along my journey. It has provided me with some excellent models on which to 'hang my hat'. This one from a communications theorist called Moscovici is particularly useful in understanding how a minority - with a new idea, a new way - can influence a larger group who may not have come to question things.

European researchers are sometimes critical of American social psychology because of its emphasis on conformity and the influence of the majority. The results of American research suggest that individuals who do not conform to the dominant norms are simply 'deviant' and by definition can have no influence.

But history tells us different. Often it is a small group of individuals, or even a single person that can bring paradigmatic shifts. It is the 'have-not's', the outsiders, the oppressed who change things - not the ruling elites who have every interest in maintaining the status quo.

Moscovici argues that the drive to reduce disharmony from amongst our attitudes, beliefs and values is less important than the drive to reduce social conflict. It is social conflict and disagreement with others that creates discomfort and we try to avoid that by normalising and conforming, in other words by reaching agreements through influencing each other. In these days this process has reached extreme proportions.

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The minority can create social conflict, they can create doubt and uncertainty, they can refuse to compromise with others. They can produce a situation where the only way to reduce the social conflict is for the majority to move their point of view. Moscovici's social experiments showed that the minority can influence the majority within the following parameters.

- the minority disrupts the established norm and produces doubt and uncertainty in the mind of the majority
- the minority makes itself visible, focuses attention on itself
- the minority shows that there is an alternative, coherent point of view
- the minority demonstrates certainty, confidence and commitment to this point of view
- the minority signals that it will not move or compromise
- the minority implies that the only solution to restore social stability and cognitive coherence is for the majority to shift towards the minority

(Social Influence, Turner, 1991)

Unfortunately we have just entered a global era where such important activity is likely to be seen as a form of terrorism, even to the extent of new legislation against 'extremists'. This makes essential changes for a sustainable earth even more difficult at this time.

Our new innovators need to move very carefully and build wide-ranging support for their community innovations. They need to find friends in high places who have a social conscience and responsibility beyond merely applying the sometimes poorly thought-out laws of successive governments.

In an age where 'extremists' (someone who thinks differently from you?) have to be marginalised, how then can we develop a real 'participatory democracy'? In our present system up to 60% of people exercise their right to vote and a government may be formed on a 40% majority of these votes. That means our governments often represent less than a quarter of the population. And like our town councils - they are mainly just responding to immediate conditions - sometimes making new laws 'on the fly' in response to the increasing chaos that is happening.

But who is really responsible for making the future?

Well, it's you.

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AN HOLISTIC INTERVENTION

The original proposal

With these thoughts in mind I approached the town council where I live. A discussion document was handed to members of the Lostwithiel Town Council and was a reaction to the problems clearly described in the [Cornish Rural Development Plan](#) (link to p.39) which formed the basis of my subsequent activity in local regeneration projects.

This 'prescriptive' intervention combined several already tried and tested remedies applied to the local economy in an holistic manner. These will be explained later:

1. A Local Exchange Trading System
2. A Credit Union
3. Adult Education
4. New Technology
5. Collective Approaches

There was no response from any town counselor to this document, in truth it was way over their heads. Their responsibility is the day-to-day management of the town affairs. As the town didn't have a Chamber of Commerce I wondered who then was responsible for the future at a local level. There didn't seem to be anyone and so I set out as an individual to develop and use some techniques for community regeneration. I started by setting up a LETS.

What is a Local Exchange Trading System

The LETS system was founded over 40 years ago in Vancouver by Michael Linton. It is designed to allow people to work and trade goods and services without the use of money.

There are many such systems now in this country and many members of LETS schemes in Cornwall. LETS works well in conjunction with factors such as close communities where networks of contact already exist, small business, part-time work and high unemployment is a norm.

In this self-supporting local currency network the members enter with a balance of zero and register their name, LETS and phone number together with a description of the goods or services they wish to provide or obtain. This is published in a quarterly newsletter. A value is placed on these services in some currency equivalent determined by the exchangers. In Lostwithiel the currency was called Leaves, because 'money doesn't grow on trees'.

Transactions are made by phone, email, fax, answering machine, word of mouth and local publications and entered on a central accounting program where they become part of a member's file. Monthly listings (combined in the local newsletter) are sent to all active members describing what is available and needed in terms of work and services. After initial development the costs of operating the system are included in each member's account. Members conduct some transactions in real cash and some in leaves. For instance time on a shelf-making job might be charged in leaves and in cash for materials.

There is never any obligation to trade and no interest is charged on balances. Those quick to buy goods and services but slow to provide them lose face, and willing trading partners, as balances and feedback are open to all.

The LETS system puts local people in touch with their developing, existing and transferable skills and creates sustainable local wealth generation in an ecological sense. People start to value themselves differently and local economies come alive. The system's ability to materialise employment when there are few local jobs and provide goods and services to people who can't afford them in a cash only economy makes the LETS system a central one in economic regeneration.

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LETS members are encouraged to use their skills outside of the system in involvement with the cash economy. This in effect creates the missing link between getting an idea and finding its financial expression in 'the real world' economy. LETS also help people realise their skills and to explore their potential in finding and meeting the needs of others.

In league with a local investment programme and combined with a Credit Union much can be achieved in the generation of work and employment. In all sorts of communities the resources of people can be activated by using networks of communication which already exist. Links with a local business education unit help to facilitate business skills so that activity within the LETS system can be turned into economic activity outside of its membership.

LETS is a tried and tested voluntary community enterprise that is supported by Members of Parliament, Local Authorities, Training and Enterprise Councils, and private businesses. Many people are familiar with Local Exchange Trading Systems, but it takes a slight shift in perception to understand why they are so useful.

Essentially they provide a freedom from poverty that keeps many people in Cornwall trapped in unproductive activity. They also allow access to a whole range of skills and services. Local LETS currency offers a new route out of poverty and unemployment, building new communities, supporting local trade, and acting like a lifeboat in the stormy waters of globalised trade and finance.

A fable based on Dante's Inferno simply illustrates the philosophy behind LETS.

Dante (or somebody like him) visits Hell. He finds a long table full of food, with the inmates seated around it. Instead of hands and arms they have ten foot chopsticks attached to their shoulders.

They spend all their time carefully picking up bits of food from the feast and lifting the sticks in an attempt to drop it into their gaping, hungry mouths - a form of eternal torture made famous by Dante's trilogy.

Later Dante visits heaven and finds exactly the same scenario, except for one small difference.

The people are feeding each other across the table.

In a similar way, LETS emphasise co-operation above competition, everyone has something to offer and something to gain - so how does it work?

A local Exchange Trading System is a positive way to obtain goods and services locally without the need for money. At your local LETS group you may find people who offer, and need things such as:

lifts	computer skills	music tuition	loan of goods
video services	carpentry	mobile disco	pet care
gardening	housework	ironing	firewood
complementary therapies	shopping service	car maintenance	and many other skills and services

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The LETS newsletter also publishes a list of people's 'wants'. If you want a product or service that is offered in the newsletter, you simply ring them up and write a LETS cheque for the exchange once it is complete.

If someone wants what you offer, you receive a LETS cheque from them, for the amount you negotiate. LETS cheques are then recorded to be published in the next newsletter.

"So simple, yet so revolutionary, it's bound to sweep the country" (Mail on Sunday).

"Who needs money?" (The Independent).

"People who are used to feeling underpaid start to feel they are rich" (LETS member).

LETS systems are:

non profit making - non party political - growing rapidly worldwide and in Britain - independent.

How do they work?

- LETS work by promoting 'exchanges' with other local people using a Community Information System, unlike one-to-one barter, you can trade with anyone in the group
- LETS currency is created solely by trading with other members
- Details are not secret and LETS accounts are interest free
- LETS is an excellent way of meeting people and making new friends
- LETS groups run local socials and newsletters to keep everyone in touch
- LETS bring back community spirit
- LETS is open to all in the community - individuals, households, charities and businesses
- LETS stimulate your local economy
- LETS keep real wealth - skills, goods and services - circulating locally
- Unlike ordinary money, value cannot seep away from where you live to other areas or abroad
- LETS give you scope to start new ventures at your own pace

With LETS you can:

- try different things part time
- keep your skills or pass them on
- develop new talents
- use skills the market doesn't always value
- test out markets for your products or services

What about Tax and benefits?

The vast majority of trading through LETS is of the 'social favour' type, which is not usually liable to tax. The time commitment and amount of goods, services and trading on UK LETS systems usually fall well below levels at which benefits should be affected. Full details available from LETSlink UK, or when you contact your local LETS group.

MAKING COMMUNITY WORK

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Lostwithiel LETS

With the help of a small group of friends I started a LETS in Lostwithiel.

Lostwithiel LETS had its own directory, published every three months or so in which all members listed their 'wants' and 'offers'. There were a diverse range of skills offered. If any member wanted to employ another, they simply wrote out a cheque for the agreed amount.



Lostwithiel LETS reached a total of sixty members at its peak and there was a lot of exchanging going on. In total over 1800 leaves were exchanged in the 18 months in which trading occurred. The final directory contained over 100 wants and offers in twenty categories.

Although the system worked well it only lasted 18 months and then petered out. Few people attended monthly meetings at the Social Club and the system stopped growing and people stopped exchanging leaves. The process of recording exchanges, compiling the newsletter and delivering it was very time consuming and unpaid, unfortunately it was a bit too early to publish it electronically. There was simply not enough activity to maintain it. Feedback from several of the people involved was that they had to spend so much time earning the small amount of real money they got, that it was impractical to work any more. It would have worked a lot better online but it was still quite early.

Overall, the exchange system was thought to work better for people on established part-time incomes than people without jobs or with poorly-paid, part-time work. The LETS scheme was also victim to the particular cliquey nature of the town. A comment I heard was "*Well I'm not joining because so-and-so is in it.*"

There was also government talk of finding a way to tax these work exchanges that put several people off becoming involved. It is certainly true under current legislation (if you earn more than your 'limit') that if you exchange your home-grown carrots for something that you want, in theory you are liable for a cash tax on the value of your gain. This legislation shows quite clearly that governments value taxation above community exchange.



One interesting comment from a local was "*Why would I want to join that? A lot of us already do this on an informal basis, but we don't tell anyone about it.*"

This does reveal a problem with LETS, which is that as soon as the process of bartering or exchange becomes formalised - it may also become subject to the law of the land and a target for taxation.

Locally 'Bartercard' now presents a similar exchange service for businesses and LETS has transferred to the Internet successfully, where larger online communities make it more viable as a means of exchange. It also works better in larger towns where there is a better diversity of needs and wants - and more people willing to put themselves forward for exchanges.

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CREDIT UNIONS

In Ireland, Canada and New Zealand credit unions are growing fast and more than half the population belong. World-wide there about 86 million people involved in Credit Unions but so far in Britain they are still an underdeveloped force for improving local self-reliance.

So far there are at least 475 credit unions with about 150,000 members in this country. Recently with high street banks closing branches by the hundred the idea has caught on in earnest, credit unions total assets have doubled over the past two years to more than £50 million. The government is considering de-regulation which will render credit unions even more user-friendly in local investment.

Linked with an ethical, sustainable and local investment programme through such institutions as a chamber of commerce, town forum, shareholders or 'people planning' they can allow local people to invest in a way which supports their local economy, by investing in the activities of their own town - where they can see the benefits of their hard-earned investments for themselves.

Credit Unions allow people to take more responsibility for their wealth. Linked to Community Development Loan Funds and socially responsible investment, members can avoid the pitfalls of becoming an 'investor by default' in dubious or unknown bank or building society investments which often over-exploit planet and people in the drive for profit.

A responsibly run credit union also allows local people to invest in their own local security and the well-being of their own community and this has increasing value.

Certainly a local consultation and communication drive is of prime importance to develop, communicate and overcome prejudices in changing the way we relate to wealth and benefiting from Credit Unions are a part of this.

Those on the left field of politics tend to think LETS schemes and Credit Unions are some kind of right wing conspiracy, Conservatives tend to think it is a Communist take-over and business people think it is some kind of scam as they are not used to win-win situations. But these community based investment systems will play a large part in the development of more self-reliant communities.



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ADULT EDUCATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

Formal adult education in UK presently comes under the umbrella of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In this context learning is now more about creating outputs in terms of qualifications gained than anything to do with education, which comes from the root word 'educare' - 'to draw out' (eg education is something that happens from the inside - out, rather than the outside - in - which is clearly a form of conditioning). In a recent exchange with the LSC I asked whether 'the development of human potential' was part of their educational remit and received a negative reply. From my own experiences at a top FE college, formal adult education has become mostly a factory that turns out recognised qualifications and often uses anti-educational practices to achieve this.

In fact much education is now more in the domain of the private sector than of interest to Further Education institutions and this gives several advantages in that courses can be geared more towards the needs of individuals than those of educational institutions, but only if they are viable. Thousands of courses and learning experiences are now available on and offline.

Individual action planning is an outcome-based learning process based on the learners preferred outcomes. It is a model for much future learning where information is freely available and no longer just the domain of educational institutions. So far our educational institutions are failing to meet this need for 'human potential development' and our institutions are more concerned with training and social conditioning than real education.

So with this in mind I set out to build a learning centre in my local Community Centre. I got a grant for £500 to build a three point computer workstation and joined a Plymouth University scheme called RATIO to equip it with the latest in technology. A thousand hours later I had created a learning centre linked to the world.

The Plymouth University RATIO project

The Rural Area Training and Information Opportunities Project (RATIO) was a part European funded project to equip 40 centres throughout Cornwall, Devon and West Somerset with modern communications technology.



The computer centres were intended to provide affordable access to training and information to small businesses and their employees. This was because they may normally be too remote from such facilities to benefit from Internet access, adult education courses and career development opportunities. The RATIO project aimed to train 5,000 people in the South West over two years using community based distance learning, by which time each centre would have a business plan in operation.

The funding for this project was originally 'unit dependant' in that qualifications must be obtained - and the centres were originally to be run by volunteers. Notions of student support in learning and ideas based around community regeneration were non-existent.

The project finally settled on European Regional Development Funding (ERDF), rather than ESF (European Social Fund) so this meant that outputs generated took the form of business people visiting the centre and using the equipment, rather than gaining qualifications of some kind.

The RATIO system which includes telematics - computers, e-mail, satellite connection and video conferencing - offered access to training and information by linking to all providers with an online presence. It enabled Simon Mitchell to start and run Lostwithiel Learning Centre in the Community Centre.

Extracted from '*Adult Learning in Community - Indoctrination or Education?*'
Simon Mitchell. M.A. unit 'Working with Adult Learners'. August 1996

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Lostwithiel Learning Centre

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lostwithiel Learning Centre has three main aims, which it seeks to undertake at a profit, after an introductory time period:

- To provide a base for local education, training and information services
- To facilitate local enterprise and business through informed access to electronic commerce
- To provide a base for local economic and social regeneration projects through the Community Association

2. THE CATCHMENT AREA

For the first phase of targeting, the groups, organisations and businesses within the town have been contacted and invited to the official launch. There has also been exposure in newsletters and local papers for some time.

The second stage targets more widely, through direct mail and includes specific material for farms, businesses and tourism within a five mile area. To the north-west, the catchment overlaps with Bodmin RATIO centre. The third stage involves an internet presence, offering specialist products of various types, to carefully selected markets on-line.

3. THE MARKET

This is an expanding market, but it is early days in Lostwithiel. People recognise that it is a huge investment of time to use computers, and they often have systems that already work for them - 'If it ain't broke - why fix it?'

Although the RATIO centres effectively solve many of the problems of peripherality described in the [5b Development Plan](#) (link to p.39), the populace is still dubious about getting involved with computers, making it quite a PR job.

This situation is helped by mainstream media, which are running programmes such as 'Computers Don't Bite' or 'IT for All'. They are catching on and e-commerce is already a working reality.

The new centre offers local people a diversity of services. Young people starting up are regular customers, as are the retired seeking technical know how and wanting a guide. Even the embroiderers' club members have shown interest in the 'paint' systems. The potential market is large, and about to hit an exponential curve.

The key to accessing local markets is in very specifically targeting parts of the community with offers of what they need in Information Technology (IT). The marketing strategy is based around formalising and using existing community networks. Databases are underway categorising possible customers according to their needs.

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4. THE BUSINESS AND THE SERVICES

This business has emerged from a conviction about the essential nature of education and communication in today's world. The originator of this business is a qualified adult educator. He worked as an 'A' level lecturer and examiner in Communication Studies, also teaching desktop publishing (DTP) to small businesses. He left teaching for a while in 1997 to write a book on DTP, which was published by Macmillan in May 1999, called 'Mastering Desktop Publishing'.

The centre started up in November 1998 and comprises of three networked computers, running Windows '95. They have a variety of software and two of them access the Internet. There is also a printer and a satellite TV receiving system, tuned for programmes from Plymouth University.

The workstation was built with a grant from Countrywork, run through the Cornwall Rural Community Council. RATIO, the provider of the equipment is based at Plymouth University. The RATIO project has also provided some funds for a centre manager, based on recognised business outputs to be collected by the college. This is renewed once on a three monthly basis until April so far. Discussion is underway to prolong payments in order to keep the centres manned and functional.

The equipment was owned, insured and maintained by Plymouth University until June 1999, when it became the responsibility of its host, the Community Centre. This centre is managed by the Lostwithiel Community Association which is run by a mixture of poorly-paid staff and volunteers. At the moment the Lostwithiel Community Association are exploring lottery grants for development.

The overheads have been few as the project has developed as the Community Centre recognises a need for new ideas. Obviously the Community Centre need income from this business they host. They receive the income from computer hire time from the public and a percentage of tutorial time fees. Other streams of income have yet to become established.

It is a strength of the Learning Centre that it is open for access most of the time, but a weakness that it can only be manned part-time. Time is needed to establish contact with local networks so that specific services can be offered to specific people at the right time and price.

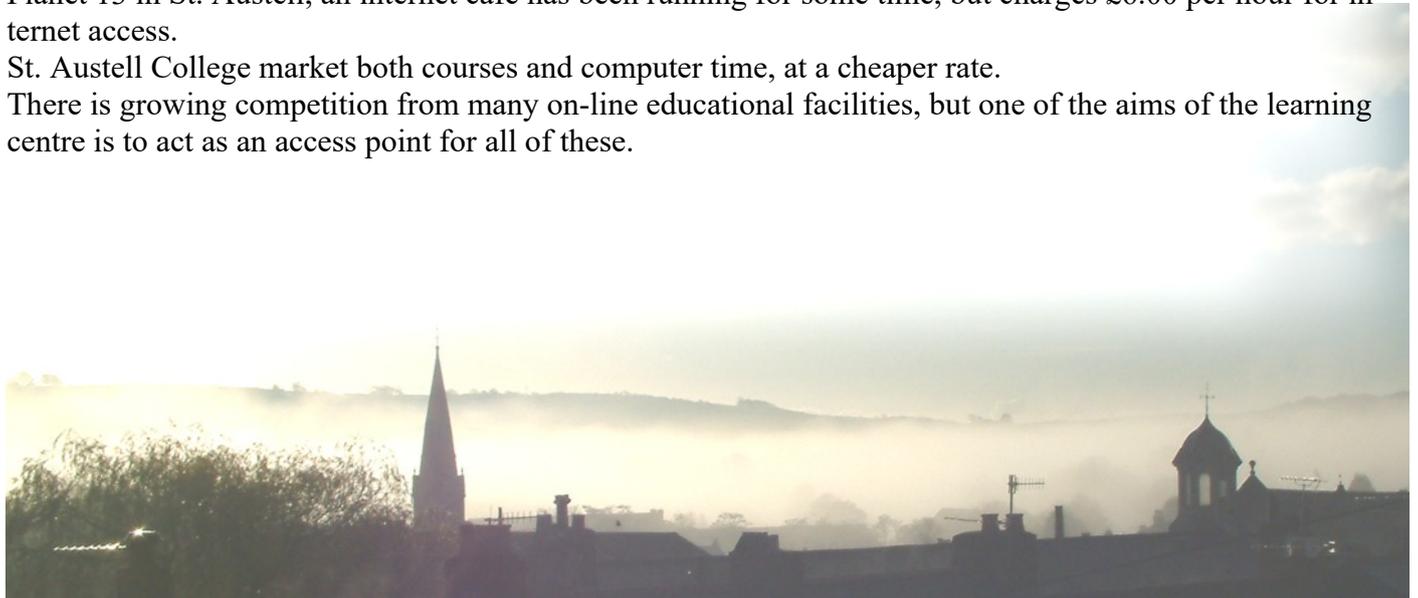
5. COMPETITION

There are other RATIO centres, at Liskeard, Bodmin and Mevagissey.

Planet 13 in St. Austell, an internet cafe has been running for some time, but charges £6.00 per hour for internet access.

St. Austell College market both courses and computer time, at a cheaper rate.

There is growing competition from many on-line educational facilities, but one of the aims of the learning centre is to act as an access point for all of these.



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6. LOSTWITHIEL LEARNING CENTRE The product

Lostwithiel Learning Centre offers a wide range of services. This is because modern computers are extremely versatile. The Learning Centre gives access to not only the technology but also the ability to use it, through offering guided learning experiences. It offers skilled time for hire, offering multiple income streams. The range of services so far include:

- Business boost service*
- Business information service*
- Business start-up service*
- Careers advice and CVs*
- Computer based presentation service*
- Copywriting services*
- Desktop publishing service and DTP software*
- Digital imaging service*
- Education & training*
- E-mail and e-mail greeting card services*
- Electronic commerce services*
- Graphic design and consultation service*
- Internet access and training*
- Introduction to computers*
- Mailmerge services*
- Organising and planning software*
- Plymouth University satellite TV programmes*
- Research & report writing services*
- Scanning services*
- Spreadsheet and database software*
- Video conferencing*
- Web site authoring*
- Word processing and printing service*

7. SALES AND MARKETING

In a small town of 2,500 people there are established networks of connection. Lostwithiel hosts many voluntary and statutory groups and a database is being made of these. Local businesses have been targeted with a written invitation to the official launch, also to gather the necessary outputs for RATIO.

In addition to those listed above, sales include courses, for which the centre gets a cut from the hosting college. Passing e-mail trade will be explored in the summer as the centre is situated next to the main road through the town.

Many people already know the Community Centre and it hosts well-attended events, so local point of sale presence is also required. The Learning Centre has been in the Cornish Guardian several times, and occasional exposure across other media such as radio needs to be focused on events.

8. MANAGEMENT

All decisions concerning the Learning Centre need to be ratified through the Community Association, who manage the Community Centre.

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9. OPERATIONS

The Learning Centre also provides a firm basis for seeking grants for the Community Centre. It is intended that the RATIO centre is also a basis for other projects at the centre, such as lottery grant application to start a natural health centre and possibly a radio station. The community centre staff are applying themselves to learning about new technology.

10. FINANCIAL FORECASTS

This business builds through a wide base. Because the initial market place is small, local people need to be very specifically targeted with a range of relevant offers. The centre aims to supply a wide product base to a geographically condensed area.

Income will increase in relation to how many people are shown the use of the Learning Centre. There is not yet accurate enough information for financial forecasting.

11. ASSESSING THE RISKS

The main risk is in failing to find the market, meaning that the centre cannot become established locally and has to rely on on-line income too early. Siting it within the Community Centre gives some advantages, but also ties its fate to that of the centre.

Final Report on Lostwithiel RATIO Centre, November 1999

Thanks to financial assistance and equipment from RATIO at Plymouth University, a local learning centre exists in a Cornish town. Lostwithiel is a growing town of 2,500 inhabitants, over two hundred of whom have had introduction to, or use of IT at this small centre.

The centre has met its quota of ERDF outputs. This is the tip of the iceberg in terms of centre use. Employed and unemployed people, retired people, students and visitors to the town have used the centre in various ways. Many tourists, collecting their e-mail, have been impressed at the vision that brought this equipment to our Community.

There have been no European Social Fund outputs through this centre. It takes an already self-educating learner to fully use distance learning facilities such as the courses offered through other colleges. The lack of long-term funding for staff and expensive business phone lines, also limited customers for these courses, so far prevents this opportunity from happening.

For the level of user at this centre, a staff member is needed to hand-hold them. With a three computer workstation, this is not viable unless focused into sessions.

From customer feedback gained during free afternoon sessions, this centre manager discovered that what people want mostly is quick 'dip-in' courses on a 'how to' basis. Adult students generally have very specific needs, such as 'I want to learn how to mail merge' or 'I need to DTP a leaflet' or 'make a poster' and so on.

Government funded adult education and its need to generate 'outputs' from courses often prevents this educational need from being fulfilled. Adult education institutions are slow to act on this need because of the funding requirements imposed on them.

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The Educational Reform Act bought us qualifications made principally to enhance our competitive stand as a nation. This has resulted in a training system that sees individual learners as 'outputs'. It bears little relation to the actual needs of adult learners. Education in its true sense takes an individual where they want to go, rather than insists that they perform a series of pre-appointed tasks which are then assessed to qualify - which is 'training'.

In terms of training courses, this centre has given over 40 students two-hour intensives in aspects of Windows, Word, DTP, Web site layout, publishing and image processing. As St. Austell College already runs database and spreadsheet classes (with laptops) at this community centre, it was thought better not to offer these. Many local people have used the centre, the local Brownie group, students, business people, retired people, the whole range including visitors to the town accessing their e-mail. Lostwithiel RATIO centre has been an exciting and contemporary experiment in education.

Lostwithiel RATIO centre has used WebWise and other modern learning software to introduce new learners to computing. The centre has helped existing and pre-businesses develop their marketing, It has provided a communication nexus for the Community Centre, helping to develop other resources and set up local networks.

We have raised additional funds for centre equipment, such as the three point workstation, a scanner and inkjet printer, a CD writer, fast modem, office chairs and security equipment. A great deal of voluntary work has also gone into developing and running Lostwithiel RATIO Centre. Very little of this important activity shows up on the output forms.

The Community Centre is at present applying for a Lottery Grant for a Healthy Living Centre. This is to include an information and learning centre dedicated to people's health. We hope to find funds for software licences through this.

We are confident in this learning centre's ability to be viable in promoting education and community self-help. It is our intention offer regular courses based on individual needs. We also intend to offer educational self-development aids through software interfaces as part of a healthy mental approach. These are new tools in education in the hands of a highly qualified, experienced and motivated specialist in human learning. Surely there is slack in the funding system to promote this valuable activity?

This computer centre also has an important role in helping the local economy. One project developing at the Community Centre in response to the equipment is 'community business'. There are many opportunities for marketing products locally and on the internet. The Community Centre even runs its own very popular local produce markets.

There have been problems with the centre though. Lostwithiel as a town is socially fragmented. The small town has eight pubs and six public rooms. There are many groups who do not use the community centre, and even some who oppose its existence.

Day use of the community centre has dwindled and it is in need of an upgrade in resources to attract new people in the town. The learning centre also has an important role to play in this process. We already have a part-time worker researching ways to extend use and market our amenities. The centre has made much use of the computers in this process. We do wish to keep them as an important resource.

The committee wishes to thank RATIO and Plymouth University for the use of their computers. We also hope that you will allow us to retain them for the developments outlined above.

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Addendum:

Plymouth University allowed the Community Centre to keep the computers and courses ran for several months in a variety of IT skills under the name of Lostwithiel Learning Centre, until the Centre Manager became Chairman of the LCA and was told to stop running the learning centre as it was a conflict of interest.

Since then Cornwall College has taken over using the centre as 'The Learning Shop', since there is little slack in the funding for them to promote it locally or, it seems, awareness of how to market locally, the use of this community resource has dwindled to nothing. The computers are now out of date and most people who want them have their own.

Some of the other promotional activities that took place at Lostwithiel Learning Centre were:

Loyal to Lostwithiel? Approaches made to Local Traders in Lostwithiel

1. Shops' Scheme Spreads Help for Ailing Town by Peter Blench (extracted from 'Positive News')

Graham Hurleys' successful bid to stop the decline of a Herefordshire market town has had a ripple effect around the country, with 1000 inquiries for his Loyal to Leominster scheme.

Earlier this year the once fire engineer single-handedly launched 'Loyal to Leominster' as his contribution to "a town I have become very fond of."

He printed 10,000 bright red and yellow loyalty cards which entitled the holder to take advantage of special offers and discounts at 63 town centre businesses ranging from bakers to pet shops, hairdressers and garages. A leaflet listed the special deals.

Leominster grew up around a monastic priory founded in 660AD, and saw its prosperous heyday in medieval times. Recently, like all communities the town has seen a period of decline with many town centre businesses struggling to survive. The opening of an out of town Safeway supermarket with a 400 space car park, filling station and post office, proving the death blow for many.

Leominster's town centre's narrow, ancient streets had become blighted by boarded up shops, resulting in a air of stagnation and loss of hope.

From the start Graham Hurley felt that the attitude problem was the biggest problem. If you appear to be giving up everyone will assume that you have given up.

More membership cards have had to be printed and there are now 99 businesses in the scheme. Many have had an upturn in trade and some report 'substantial' improvements. The success of the scheme is being independently monitored by the University of Staffordshire. Several new businesses have, or are due to open, in once vacant shops - though there is still some way to go.

The local council paid for the launch of an add-on to the scheme, a 'Visitor to Leominster' card which will enable tourists to benefit.

"Now" says Graham Hurley: "The attitude in the town has changed - we're positive. The support from the public has been overwhelming. And the traders are learning to come up with imaginative offers, that you have to sow a little bit to reap a little bit".



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It seemed to me that local shopkeepers in Lostwithiel might like the opportunity to see this scheme, even start one themselves - so I wrote to them including a copy of the above article:

“Dear Lostwithiel Shopkeeper

I am writing to you enclosing information on a scheme running in Leominster in Herefordshire that seems to be increasing trade for shopkeepers there.

It could be that this idea might work for Lostwithiel and at this stage I am looking for your support for a ‘Loyal to Lostwithiel’ scheme. Please get in touch if you are interested in joining or especially helping to start such a scheme locally.”

A good, positive idea that should have hit a nerve with local traders - but what happened? One local trader used it as an opportunity to attack local shoppers for their disloyalty in the Cornish Guardian.

“If anyone is killing trade in Lostwithiel its the people who live here. If they want to shop at superstores, no-one can stop them, but I hope they realise by doing so they are doing their best to put local shops out of business.

Traders are only surviving because of the loyalty of a few people who happen to appreciate the personal service local shops can offer”.



The chairman of the local Chamber of Commerce, since defunct, said the scheme was briefly discussed but that it was difficult to see how traders could offer discounts.

And the local traders - 25 of whom were given details of the scheme? Only one expressed any interest and they have now ceased to trade.

Antique traders in Lost Gwdeyel - ‘the tail end of the woods’.

One might think that a small town the size of Lostwithiel, with 12 antique shops, could get its act together to promote such a specialist trade. Imagine if all of the antique dealers co-operated to promote Lostwithiel as a specialist ‘antique’ centre. They recently produced a rough leaflet doing just this and the popular sales at Jeffrey’s (an auctioneers) already brings many people into the town.

The Internet is proving to be a boon to specialist traders in peripheral locations, in this context e-bay particularly, so it seemed to me that a high quality web site could be made to promote this particular aspect of Lostwithiel. I wrote and delivered the letter below to all 12 antique traders:

Dear Lostwithiel Antiques Trader

Recently, local antique traders have marketed themselves with a group leaflet, advertising antique shops in the town. This collective response is a sound basis for a web site promoting Lostwithiel as a specialist antiques centre.

However, a web site strategy is essential to attract people into the town to buy your goods. There is little point in having a site otherwise. Attracting customers to your shop is unlikely to be fulfilled by what claims to be a ‘community site’. This is because internet sites are often found by people using a ‘search engine’, looking for specific information.

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In the case of Lostwithiel's specialist antique theme, potential visitors would be searching for words such as 'antiques, fine art, curios', and so on. Please take advantage of the courses offered at the learning centre in early May if you wish to learn more about this (leaflet enclosed).

Also enclosed is a leaflet from 'Adapt through Ratio'. This follow on project to RATIO is delivering free information, consultation and even free web sites, which are designed professionally to meet your needs. Please take advantage of this opportunity as it is in Lostwithiel's interest in addition to your own.

*Yours faithfully
Learning Centre Manager*

Did this idea ring any bells?
Not one single antique trader responded.

Farmers Day day at the Learning Centre

It seemed to me, even before foot and mouth disease closed down the UK countryside for a while that the Internet and RATIO project had a lot to offer farmers considering 'diversification'. The farmers' market in Lostwithiel Community Centre every fortnight is a success beyond expectation because it connects local producers directly with local shoppers.

'Food miles' is also an important environmental issue especially in the context of 'lorries through Lostwithiel'. I wrote to 135 local farmers, offering a day in the centre that they could come and explore what other producers of food were doing on the internet, below is an extract from that mail shot:

Dear Farmer - Greetings from Lostwithiel Learning Centre. Our Community Centre recognises the importance of farmers to rural life, and we wish to make contact with you. On 23rd June, between 12am until 9pm we are hosting a special 'Farmers' Day'. One aim of this is to demonstrate what is available for farmers in IT. There are many opportunities to diversify in farming which are worth viewing on the Internet (we will take you there if you don't know how).

There are numerous issues and problems in the farming industry today such as: the British cattle movement service, trace-ability, farm assurance, integrated crop management, self assessment and maximising profit from falling prices, just to mention a few. During Farmer's Day we will also be running demonstrations of 'Farm Plan', an IT solution to the complexities of running a farm.

There is no charge for attending Farmer's Day, although donations to our community centre are always gratefully received.

*Yours faithfully,
Learning Centre Manager*

Only one farmer booked in but never arrived, although several others phoned in their support. I was later told they were probably all busy with second silage.

But these experiences of 'failure' taught me a very important lesson in approaching perceived 'groups'. If you are offering something to such groups it is important to work through recognised authorities which in these cases would have been the Farmer's Union or Young Farmer's group, or the Chamber of Commerce (if such existed) or some body that already represented the town traders or antique dealers in the town.

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COLLECTIVE APPROACHES

As the Rural Development Plan recognised “*Co-operation and competition are both very important concepts for achieving economic and environmental goals*”.

Collective approaches to resourcing in an area of little disposable money need to be encouraged. One aim of local regeneration is to increase community resources and tools through an already existing Community Centre.

Co-operative cash purchasing and bulk buying already exist in the town but formalisation of this process (e.g. food co-operatives) and storage of goods could be introduced. A policy within local media which encouraged people to shop locally rather than through large supermarkets would also increase local wealth by allowing money to be spent locally twice in addition to protecting local sales jobs.

Massive consultation needs to take place within the town, which is in a rather unique position. It has a strong local membership but also a cosmopolitan feel. Unlike many Cornish towns it is not swamped with tourists in the summer or bare of people in the winter.

Developments in tourism would be useful locally, but not to the extent of destroying a community, which has happened in some places in Cornwall through second home purchases driving out local people.

All of the above provisions serve to open up communications in the town to allow this process of people planning or ‘participatory democracy’. Collecting and communicating local ideas encourages a positive attitude to creativity. Combined with informed investment procedure local economic innovation will be able to thrive.

Well, that at least is the theory.

Over the years I had quite a lot of experience with collective resourcing projects, starting below with a proposal to develop an existing centre in Bodmin as follows:

The Attic Workshop -Proposal:

The centre would aim to provide services for the general community, and groups within that community. Youth, leisure and skill development schemes, experimental small business activity, hospital rehabilitation and probation services would all find a use for such a centre, in addition to local people wishing to develop their ideas, interests and skills. The general aims of the resource centre are:

- a) To use resources for the promotion of voluntary education and self-development in Bodmin and the surrounding rural areas
- b) To promote local economic stimulus through enabling and encouraging people to develop ideas and skills to a saleable level
- c) To encourage self-help schemes within areas of the community, through the resource centre, and to act as a nexus for community activity

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The centre would provide:

1. **Information:** Details on local events and activities, accommodation, finding and getting work, small business and leisure activity and act as a nexus for local voluntary work opportunities.
2. **Material resources:** The space to develop ideas and interests and the resources for skill development are particularly relevant to both personal growth and economic stimulus. The centre would aim to provide a bank of community tools (and guidance) in skills such as: gardening, mechanics, mending things, publishing, IT and whatever emerged as a local need.
3. **Human resources:** A back-up of positive guidance, enhancing and encouraging the activating sense of curiosity in individual interests should be encouraged beyond the extremely limited 'training' offered today. Access to skilled practical advice could be made available through local networking.
4. **Workshops:** Evening and daytime educational workshops may help with some funding. Depending on what needs arise, non-vocational courses in nutrition and health, music, vehicle maintenance, relaxation, personal development and so on are possible.
5. **Volunteer Bureau:** The stimulation of voluntary work in areas of need could be helped by centralising information.
6. **A Local work directory:** Although the local job centre does this it is not always representative of the actual jobs and work opportunities available locally.

Although at this stage I touched on some ideas of 'community resourcing' it was not until much later in Lostwithiel I had the opportunity to try some of these out.

Lostwithiel Community Association

My involvement with the Lostwithiel Learning Centre had led me to join the small group of people who ran the local community centre in Lostwithiel, called the 'Lostwithiel Community Association'. I accepted the position of vice-chairman after the first year when it arose.

My main reasons for joining the Lostwithiel Community Association committee were:

- to start a learning centre using modern technology and communications
- to introduce LETS, a local exchange trading system, into the Community
- to promote community self-help initiatives in the light of Agenda 21 and Objective 1

Both my masters degree research and my previous activity in community initiatives helped me to realise that education is at the heart of transforming local communities into 'self direction'. My job as a college lecturer at was not fulfilling, I challenged the curriculum too much and I wanted to be at the sharp end experimenting with a local learning centre, taking learning to people possibly disenchanted with their own mainstream educational experiences and giving them new ones.

To start with I listened at LCA meetings. It seemed impolite to engage my prejudices about why the community centre ran at what seemed such a low level of operational capacity.

The problems were complex and layered and I learnt much on the way to finding my answers. The committee asked me to put a development report for the centre together, which was presented as follows:

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Upgrading the centre

Report prepared for the Lostwithiel Community Association 1999



If Lostwithiel Community Centre is to remain relevant to the people of Lostwithiel, and financially viable, it needs to offer new things to the people of the town (and outside). The centre has many good qualities and is particularly strong on hosting events and clubs. The staff show great dedication to running the centre, but neither they or the LCA committee have been doing any 'development work'. The day to day use of the centre has dwindled.

In the face of changing times this has left the centre with little to offer the town in its day to day use. The concept of Community has shifted since the centre opened. The town has grown larger with many newcomers. People are less inclined to get involved at a joint 'community' level as they now have their own communities of associates and activities, including TV communities such as Eastender's or other addictive soaps.

The centre has few volunteers and a small committee. It has little attention left over for development work, particularly since Oasis (the new youth club) has been dropped in its lap. This report recommends immediate fundraising for feasibility studies, costing the projects listed below and initial application work. There are several Lottery grants available at the moment. This report includes a proposal to access these to upgrade Lostwithiel Community Centre. The grant sources include:

- a) National Lotteries Charity Board
- b) New Opportunities Fund - a Lottery body hosting 'After school clubs' and 'Healthy Living Centres'. Other grants include 'poverty', and there are more coming out
- c) A small business enterprise development agency, such as English Estates or China clay leader project - has 'Grantfinder' software.
- d) Cornwall Rural Community Council
- e) Private sources to be explored
- f) Voluntary contributions of Lostwithiel citizens

There are many possibilities for developing the use of the Community Centre as a resource for more people in the town - what follows are some suggestions that are fund-able through the above grant sources. Any developments though need to be based on sound research into local need.

Possible Community Centre upgrades:

1. **Special project rooms.** There is a lot of unused space at the top of this building. This report recommends the installation of four enterprise units or special project rooms. This will allow the centre to foster small project work and enterprise development - in line with its RATIO centre. The grant source for this is English Estates or its current version. This move will have the added advantage of preparing the centre for Objective 1 activity.

2. **Radio Lostwithiel.** Local town radio is common in Scotland and has the advantage of pulling a disparate community together. A radio station installed into the roof above the upstairs fire exit would give the centre and town many advantages for community development and extend involvement to outlying areas such as farms. New Opportunities Fund for this, two people already interested in forming a group.

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3. **Back room.** Refurbish back room for multi-function education, consultation and group projects (as now). To include new level in roof, also WC and facilities. Part 'enterprise' part NOF and as much voluntary work as possible to build it.

4. **Bar area.** Move bar area forward & include stairs to loft spaces. Refurbish education centre to include multi-information sources. Need to allow for new windows.

Include DTP centre for enterprise groups and local businesses. Specialise in health awareness and diagnosis and extend local health amenities. Link with local 'healing space' and complementary therapies through Healthy Living project. Possible 'health bar' serviced by kitchen.

5. **Top of stairs.** Viewing area for TV, video, satellite broadcasts & digital media outside bar door. Link with health awareness and enterprise groups. NOF and enterprise group.

6. **Disabled access** to upstairs via chair-lift or new entrance on fire door wall, through NOF 'Healthy Living'

7. **Main hall.** Re-furbishment of lighting and sound system. False ceiling to second joists for improved acoustics. Completion of decoration in main hall. New floor for main hall. To include ambient and sports lighting. Also flexible lighting rig for theatre, music & dance events. Fill in 1.5 open arches to gallery. Install sound & lighting controls. Possible exit point for theatre events.

Initially the Arts council needs to be approached with a proposal, then NCLB. As this hall is already used by so many groups, the centre already has a basis for application on their behalf.

8. **Gallery area.** Move the TIC (Tourist Information Centre) to here, fill in back wall with door to rest of gallery. Equip with reception desks, shelves & use the space. Grant from enterprise source such as Leader, also link with main hall refurbishment for building alterations.

9. **Day room.** Extend this into the vacated TIC area. Research grants to upgrade/extend further.

10. **Kitchen.** Involve kitchen more in enterprise activity and link to refurbishment. eg Local produce sold locally - we have our own market in the next room every fortnight.

11. **Squash courts.** Put a new floor half way up the walls and install dance/movement therapy room downstairs and equipped gymnasium upstairs.

13. **Oasis.** Link with Fowey school plans & use as learning outcentre. Possible link with St. Austell college as outcentre. Access NOF 'After schools project' fund using specific serialised youth projects to fund a worker.

14. **Transport.** Part fund an existing scheme for a town bus through NOF 'Healthy Living'. Link with healing centre locally.

15. **Special projects.** LETS has already been working in Lostwithiel but has faded out because it didn't offer enough - this system allows people to experiment with their skills. With improved resources on offer in the Community Centre, a local currency might work. It would also bring voluntary time for matched funding purposes.

Credit Unions are still relatively unexplored in Cornwall and there is room for this in the 21st century. The NOF 'Poverty' fund could provide feasibility studies on these systems locally.

There is no enterprise centre in Lostwithiel. The Chamber of Commerce has folded, the Town Council fails to represent and promote the town for a viable future. Our Community Centre could be not just an asset to the town, but provide a model for other working centres, even more than it already does.

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As a result of this a sub-committee was formed to explore development grants for the centre. At that time the New Opportunities Fund, a subdivision of the Lottery fund were offering development grants for a variety of projects. The committee decided to pursue a grant to refurbish upstairs at the community centre and turn it into a holistic health and education centre.

Proposal for a Healthy Living Centre situated upstairs in the Community Centre

'In Search of Something'

In today's busy world it is not often we take time for ourselves.

Consumerism tells us that we are incomplete without this or that product. The modern work ethic makes us seek our self worth in money. These myths act only in the interest of the few people who desire to own everything.

They drive us into situations which have damaged not only the planet we live on, but our very being. As a result the values we hold and the way we relate to life are often opposed, sometimes resulting in unhealthy attitudes to 'others'.

Many people are now reaching for greater meaning in everyday existence. They recognise a need for something they cannot yet define. The millennium has brought many of us face-to-face with big questions about our lives and personal meaning.

Our project intends to provide the means for people to answer these questions for themselves and to take responsibility to evolve as healthy individuals, groups and communities, in wholesome ways.

'Making Community Work'

A unique project in Lostwithiel, the ancient capital in the heart of East Cornwall seeks to redress the balance.

We are creating a centre which aims to promote a healthy approach to modern life. It aims to provide healing, health, growth and stimulation for the whole human being, in physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual ways.

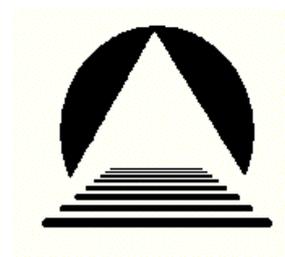
The project group is based at Lostwithiel Community Centre and is applying for Lottery funding under the New Opportunities Fund. As Lostwithiel is an area of outstanding natural beauty, the group also wish to attract people from outside the town to use the resources in structured 'breaks'.

At present the Community Centre is underused. It has survived for fifteen years on little more than the dedication and perseverance of its staff. It needs an upgrade which puts it firmly at the centre of community need.

'The Healthy Living Centre Project'

The centre will negotiate individual 'healthy living contracts' through client consultation, in full partnership with local and regional statutory and voluntary bodies. The centre will provide guided access to:

- a range of complementary therapies
- education, training and information
- individual health and fitness courses
- targeted health awareness programmes
- nutritional and other lifestyle advice



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The NOF funding is to pay for the following:

- create a modern health and complementary therapy centre at the Community Centre
- upgrade the existing learning and information centre, also to include a reception area and healthy bar
- install a fully equipped gymnasium and dance studio/workshop area by converting the squash courts
- purchase (and run) a community bus to bring people to the centre
- develop a marketing strategy and business plan, including an exit strategy
- develop new methods for research into holistic health
- employ a centre manager/receptionist/coordinator until the project is established
- establish a bursary fund to help pay for complementary health for the disadvantaged

This project and the associated 140 hours work in research (not shown) and application was voted off the LCA committee when only two members had viewed it for themselves and when the chairman was absent! Don't think I had quite the committee I needed for that one!

Other ideas on collective resourcing:

FOOD COOPERATIVES:

I once started an organic gardening cooperative in a field near Bodmin - called 'Turfdown Tillers.' A group of eight people grew and exchanged food. Home grown food exchanges go on a lot in Lostwithiel with many (mostly elderly) gardeners swapping their excess crops for something more interesting or something that someone else can grow better.

The Riverford Organic Vegetable box scheme has a lot of customers locally and Guy Watson has now grown this scheme to a base of 80,000 customers in the South of UK. Even in a simple window box it is possible to grow an entire culinary and medical kit! Also at least in rural areas there is 'food for free' around for at least half the year. Get organised to make the most of these resources!

COLLECTIVE COMPOSTING:

Are you a 'steward of the land'. How much of the useful organic components of good soil do you just throw away in your rubbish? Is there somewhere in your local environment that would support a composting unit, dedicated to making your local soil lush and fertile? Talk with your neighbours and see if they can support such an idea.

COLLECTIVE LOCAL WATER POLICY:

Check your water bill to see how much you are paying to have water taken away from where you live. The water in your bath, on your roof - you pay for it to go when it is hardly used at all. What would you do if 'the taps went off'? Do you have rain butts? How big is your water storage tank? What other local sources of water might there be? Talk to your neighbours to see what you might do collectively if 'the taps went off'.

COMMUNITY POWER POLICY:

We waste just masses of energy at the moment, a lot of which is still altering our climate to something more unpredictable. What can you save, or even make to conserve energy or make your environment more energy efficient? What do you do if the lights go out? Do you have a backup system beyond candles? Talk to people who share your supply or even look into generating more of your own power and saving money. Some people even do this and sell power back to the grid!

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A personal history of my membership of Lostwithiel Community Association

When I joined the committee the Community Centre finances were running towards the overdraft limit. Oasis Youth Club was being built and was run under a separate committee with a full-time youth worker. There were initially some members of the Oasis Committee on the L.C.A., but they started dropping out quite quickly as the project neared completion.

This left the chairman at that time with a burden of responsibility and many of the meetings that year centred on Oasis alone rather than the community centre. I quietly put the RATIO centre together and attended the monthly LCA meetings to report updates, learn what I could about Lostwithiel's Community Centre and develop ideas.

There were few people on the committee, so I took the post of vice-chairman when it was offered. I believed that my experiences in social activity and education would be useful to this committee.

Long-term possibilities for the centre were eventually discussed at meetings and I was most concerned that the Chairman's first option was that of handing the centre over to an amenity leisure management company to run.

It seemed to me that one great quality the centre had was being run by local people for local people and that a takeover was the last option we should be discussing. It was my belief that this sort of management would be fiscally rather than community motivated, thus removing any hope of a centre where people could come together and help themselves.

I wrote a letter to the chairman to this effect, and he resigned at the next meeting, leaving me as acting chairman.

This was my first experience as a chairman and I found it an interesting challenge. The group was small and there was no secretary to handle day-to-day affairs of the committee. It created a lot of unpaid work.

By committee decision we contacted Cornwall Rural Community Council, the heroes of Cornish Community development. Their Economic Development Officer visited to help us develop plans for the centre. We had two business reports prepared, experienced minds gave us the benefit of their wisdom.

A finance sub-committee was formed and we decided to explore the option of National Lottery Grants to develop centre activities.

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A report on grant aid possibilities was prepared and shown to the committee. This is how the Healthy Living Centre application came about.

It was not long before I found I had taken on too much. The RATIO project ended and I marketed Lostwithiel Learning Centre, and taught there for a while before it was deemed unsuitable for the chairman to be earning any money at the community centre because this was vested interest.

I was asked to resign from my interest in Lostwithiel Learning Centre (including 1000 voluntary hours) to hold the chair of the Lostwithiel Community Association.

LCA Meetings took time to plan and resource, even small things like writing 'From the Centre' for the Lostwithiel Newsletter took surprising amounts of time.

There was no secretary to handle day-to-day affairs and problems concerning Oasis, the new youth centre were frequent. The situation was not helped by the youth worker resigning and leaving a pile of work that threatened to cost the community centre two thousand pounds. Of the original Oasis committee there was no sign, just a skateboard ramp that took hundreds of hours in administration. It is no coincidence that I lost my business that year.

We needed help to consolidate the community centre and Oasis, so I turned to the Community Projects Trust in Bodmin for help and the centre's chief steward and I went for an interview.

We told the Director the problems the centre faced and they quickly sent a worker to investigate. She became absorbed into the Skateboard issues and a later letter claimed she spent 150 hours doing this.

There was still no help with handling the 'Art's for All' crisis left by the youth worker, although the County Youth Service did eventually take this on.

Another member of the Community Projects Trust attended meetings. After the second meeting she attended, a letter was delivered to all 14 members of the L.C.A.

This letter was a libelous personal assassination and leveled quite personal accusations at me that were not accurate. The letter was quite intimidating and was later described as 'bullying' by a solicitor. He suggested that the Community Projects Trust, who had sent the letter were just after the money left over from the Oasis grant.

At the next LCA meeting, evidence was presented to the committee that refuted accusations made in the letter. The new secretary was asked to respond with a straightforward 'Thankyou' to the inappropriately named 'trust'.

It was also discussed that the chairman (myself) might take on the Centre Development Worker position we had been negotiating with the Community Projects Trust - partly in order to resume running the learning centre. Needless to say this looked like suspicious activity from outside and we suddenly found people were being 'sent on' to the committee.

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The next meeting I was away so it was chaired by the vice-chair. At this meeting the Community Projects Trust letter was brought up by a new member in an effort to undermine me, it was rather unpleasant by all accounts, I'm glad I missed it.

The Healthy Living Centre proposal was voted off at that meeting, after 140 hours work. It later transpired that only two of the committee members had taken the trouble to view this application before voting it off the agenda.

I felt quite offended as it seemed to me that the new members of the LCA brought little with them apart from quite considerable prejudice. I simply felt unwilling to work with people who would rather stab someone in the back than actually look at what they were doing.

It was then that I decided that the Community Centre was probably better left to its own devices. It had a healthy bank balance and the committee had enough members. I resigned at the end of the July 00 meeting after three years on the committee and a year as chairman.

My attempts at bringing new ideas to the centre as a core to 'community regeneration' were essentially frustrated, even deliberately undermined. The proposal that the centre's constitution be upgraded to include a clause promoting 'sustainable and ethical economic development' for people in Lostwithiel was rejected.

It was not until later when the Town Forum was formed, by the very same people who undermined my work as chairman of the community centre, that I understood that this was just underhand town politics at work, all quite normal for Lostwithiel apparently, but not something with which I want to be involved.

My feelings about the misinformative 'Community Projects Trust' in Bodmin still remain. Organisations who claim such a title, yet use their salaried power for personal assassination of voluntary workers are essentially unprofessional, especially when it is to promote their own interests.

Conclusions:

I learned a lot during my time with the community centre. I saw real community in action, people working together to learn, to play, to be entertained or entertain. For many of the town's people (and visitors) the centre is a valuable resource and we are lucky to have such an amenity in such a small town.

The centre workers are on minimal wages and many of the activities run on voluntary help. Their endless enthusiasm and hard work is a credit to the concept of community. However it seems to be the nature of Lostwithiel to be cliquey and this is not helped by the diversity of community assets here:

The Drill Hall, the Duchy Palace, the Church Rooms, the Church, the Social Club, the St. John's Ambulance building, the Conservative Club, the Golf Club, Taprell House, The Guildhall, also five public houses: The Royal Oak, The Talbot, The Globe, The Earl of Chatham and the King's Arms. There is much community activity in these 'public' spaces but the diversity of groups seems to generate 'oppositional' energy rather than any sense of people working together for the greater good - to Lostwithiel's perpetual loss.

Other meeting points such as the river bank, surgery, the schools, shops or library provoke spontaneous community. Information and ideas are exchanged here in addition to the many places and groups in the town.

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Events such as the Pageant or Carnival, the Giant's Parade or Second Island Park sculptures bring people together in community activity. The idea of the community 'centre' operating as a nexus for all community activity in the town has little scope in such a diverse social environment.

Many 'little communities' exist in this town, but are fragmented. As such Lostwithiel offers us an accurate 'microcosm' of the post-modern nature of our culture.

But, I decided, my activity with local town affairs in a small rural community was over. I resolved to no longer be involved with small town politics unless I was offered financial payment for the privilege. In brief - I got slaughtered - but we all live and learn! Once again in the 'small town mind' chances for the betterment of all were overlooked in preference to local backbiting and status politics.

But a while later the Town Forum had raised funds for some part-time workers to research local need in the town and I applied for one of the positions. Part of the job description expected the workers to donate a certain amount of time in voluntary activity. I told the interview panel that if they wanted my work they would have to pay me for it and the positions went to someone else to the town.

But, partly on the basis of my experience with the Community Association I was later asked if I was willing to provide a report on the economic potential of the town of Lostwithiel, for a small fee. I couldn't refuse - here maybe was an opportunity to present a sustainable basis for development and regeneration.

LOSTWITHIEL TOWN FORUM

Lostwithiel Area Forum - The Early Years 2001 to 2004 [From Lostwithiel's web site]

In February 2001 about a dozen people in business in Lostwithiel gathered in the Restormel Lodge Hotel to consider how advantage might be taken of the several sources of funding apparently available then with a view to achieving the regeneration of the Town. About that time, the economy of the Town was depressed with many retail premises standing empty. The result of that first meeting was two-fold. First, the Lostwithiel Business Group was set up. It now has over 60 members and is actively supporting and generating business in the Town.

Then in May 2001 the Lostwithiel Town Forum (later Area Forum) was constituted. Its aim was then, and remains today, the economic and social regeneration of Lostwithiel.

In the autumn of 2001 the Forum became aware of a new move by the government – the introduction of the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative. This was designed to provide funds for local communities to determine what it was that the communities wanted to bring about, with ideas coming from the grass roots rather than being imposed by statutory bodies higher up the chain of government. An application for MCTi status was made in the autumn of 2001 and it was granted, eventually, in the spring of 2003.

In anticipation of funding, a Town Survey was carried out in early 2003 which sought opinions and ideas from every household in the Town, and from our adjacent parishes of St. Veep, St Winnow, Lanlivery, Luxulyan and St Sampson.

When funds became available an office was established in the Town on Quay Street and two Community Agents were appointed, one for administration and one for development.

To prepare the background for a strategic plan a so-called 'Health Check' – an assessment of current County, Borough and Town plans and of the current situation in the town – was completed. Meanwhile, at different stages of development, plans were being devised by the adjacent parishes for their own regeneration.

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During the winter months of 2003 and early in 2004, focus groups involving a large number of business people and residents of Lostwithiel and its surrounding area examined ideas thrown up by the survey. In the context of the health check the groups worked under the headings of Environment, the Economy, Social Issues and Road Usage.

At the same time, funded separately and outside the MCTi programme, a study of the River Fowey within the boundaries of the Town was completed by Hyder Consulting Ltd of Plymouth.

The outcome of all this work and of discussions held widely in and around the town is that the Lostwithiel Area Action Plan 2004-2024 has been put together. With this plan, in which a great number of local residents have been involved, we are now in a position to begin to identify, define and cost specific projects with a view to bidding for funds from statutory and other bodies. By doing so we hope to improve the economic and social prospects of the town and of those adjacent parishes which look to Lostwithiel for some of the services they need.

(With thanks to Lostwithiel Business Group and the Lostwithiel web site at www.lostwithiel.org.uk)

Report for Lostwithiel Forum on Employment and Housing Prospects in Lostwithiel - October 2003 by Simon Mitchell

I include the contents list from this report below for info. along with the first three sections and the start of the fourth to show a global, national and regional context for sustainable local regeneration. You can download the entire report (for free) from the following web page:

<http://www.simonthescribe.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/REPORT1.pdf>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report puts Lostwithiel in a global, national, regional and context in 'sustainable economics'. It presents existing plans and information about the economic life of the town. It indicates areas for development in local economic affairs. It identifies grant, loan, education and information services for stimulating small enterprise locally.

The report compiles existing information and opinion on housing in the town. It identifies potential 'infill sites for local development. It presents options to ameliorate the problem of shortage of affordable housing for local people.

1. A global context

In the best tradition of 'think global - act local' this report starts with a global context. One effect of a global economy is that industry shifts to the places where workers are cheapest because it is driven by multinational industries acting for profit. As a result in 'first world' countries, manufacturing industry has been on the decline for a while. Industry is leaving the first world for the third world where workers are cheap.

'Offshoring' is this decade's recession buster and it no longer applies to just manufacturing: finance sector jobs, call centres, legal work and research, education services, they are all cheaper in Bangalore. The real effect of this outsourcing, especially in the industries mentioned above, is only just beginning to bite.

Cornwall's past has been based mainly on fishing, farming and mining and what remains of these is just an echo of former glories. Cornwall has never had the manufacturing industries found elsewhere. On a 'first in first out' (of the Industrial Revolution) Cornwall is not going to have to de-industrialise to the extent of other regions, which does offer some advantages, not least our stunning and unsullied natural environment and the quality of life this offers. Cornwall's past peripherality as an industrial zone is now a positive factor, as people want to live here.

Western culture is realising that the drive towards GDP (Gross Domestic Product) increase does not improve our well being, but other countries are gagging for the want of our externally attractive consumer culture. For example Chinese President Jiang Zemin recently exhorted China to *quadruple* its GDP by 2020, mainly through consumer spending.

The G7 [now 8] countries (America, Britain, France, Japan, Germany, Italy and Canada) have recently developed an 'agenda for growth'. Specific policy actions were set out for each country, including measures to raise skill levels and productivity in Britain. All mainstream political parties continue to make economic growth the central tenet of their electoral manifesto. Our prosperity is linked to GDP and material possessions. Prosperity in real terms also includes things like clean air and water, good health, or a thriving natural environment. People are flocking to Cornwall where these things are abundant.

Despite astonishing technological advancement and a far higher standard of living in the first world we are much more likely to be depressive, compulsive and violent when compared with the 1950's (see appendix 1). The economic system we have had since then requires that our needs keep multiplying. Economic growth has accelerated on an almost unbelievable scale, but is based on keeping us in a permanent state of wanting things we have not got.

Economy values what is scarce and what makes money. It devalues what is universal - what every human being has - the ability to care, love, share, rear children, take care of loved ones, be a good neighbour, be a citizen striving for a better world. In other words the core characteristics of our humanity are worthless in market terms. Yet these are the characteristics that have enabled us to survive as a species, that evolution determined were the characteristics that enabled us to avoid extinction in a hostile world.

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The contradictions implicit in a conspicuous consumer culture are evident to increasing numbers of people. The shortcomings of an economic system that uses its assets (the Earth's resources) as income, are plainly visible and utterly unsustainable. To maintain our economic system we have stored up damage in the environment, in effect pushing our problems onto our grand children and their grandchildren for several generations.

Despite increased economic activity, on average each household in this country presently owes £45,000. Our macro-economic system hides a black hole at its heart in the form of derivative trading. This is essentially when you make a deal and pay for it later. The most recent value put on outstanding derivatives is \$130 trillion, which is four and a half times the annual income of the world.

Our governments are recognising that legislation is needed to control the breakdown associated with rampant consumer capitalism and are developing strategies. At the Earth Summit conference at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, 170 nations signed a worldwide action plan called 'Agenda 21'. The effects of this agreement are increasingly visible at national, regional and local levels.

'Sustainability' (as first used in the 1987 Brundtland Report) originally meant '*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*'. Another definition is: "*improving the quality of human life while living quietly within the carrying capacity of supporting eco-systems*". Its use has corrupted to '*something we can keep going*' in general business terms. Sustainability, in its original sense, is an issue that is central to any modern day development, and particularly important for Cornwall.

2. A Government context

The Government's central economic objective is to provide a stable economic environment by:

- maintaining economic stability
- increasing employability (and decreasing unemployment)
- improving productivity
- ensuring responsibility in wage bargaining
- achieving regionally balanced growth

To implement these policies the government has produced a series of Acts and White Papers that have a significant impact on economic development in Cornwall (see appendix 2). In his forward to the 1999 'Sustainable Development Strategy' the Prime Minister wrote:

"Real progress cannot be measured by money alone. We must ensure that economic growth contributes to our quality of life rather than degrading it."

More recently the Treasury has decided to expand its current aim:

"...to raise the rate of sustainable growth and achieve rising prosperity..." by *"...reflecting the Government's overall commitment to sustainable development, incorporating a reference to achieving a better quality of life."*

This creates problems for anyone trying to work out whether genuinely sustainable development can ever be delivered alongside a 'business as usual' promotion of economic growth, or whether it needs a complete rethink.

The problem is neatly encapsulated in the British Government's four sustainable development objectives, on which the whole of its sustainability strategy depends:

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- social progress which meets the needs of everyone
- effective protection of the environment
- prudent use of natural resources
- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment

In broad policy terms the Government's strategy for maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth is to improve resource productivity. This means getting more economic value from each 'unit of production' and decoupling economic growth from increased resource use. Whilst promoting 'doing more with less' or 'voluntary simplicity' are positive aims, the fuel tax protests of 2000 demonstrate the reality of employing an 'eco-instrument' punitively. The practicalities of how we can grow an economy sustainably are in the process of being discovered.

It took the best of 20 years to show that economic growth and increased energy consumption were not inexorably linked, and that it is possible to produce more economic growth without using more energy. What is likely is that it will take another 20 years to persuade politicians that one can decouple improved societal wellbeing and individual happiness from high levels of consumption.

In the mean time Cornwall is under increasing pressure to 'develop'.

3. Regional plans - The 5b Rural Development Plan

The economic problems experienced by Cornwall were clearly described in the Rural Development Plan 5(b) from the 1990's. Following are some excerpts from the development plan which describe:

“problems associated with declining economic activities, peripherality and inadequate economic structure together with related social and cultural activities”. (1.3)

The main issues to be addressed may be summarised as follows:

- decline in major employment sectors
- low presence of modern industries and R&D
- low levels of motivation and awareness of skills and enterprise needs for SMEs and individuals
- problems of remoteness and accessibility, low wages, poor child care facilities, limited public transport facilities
- need to balance development and the quality of environment
- changing population structure and work patterns
- high unemployment rates and low economic activity rates
- increase in the level of inward investment. (3.8)

The Plan sought:

“to bring hope and a sense of vision for the inhabitants of Cornwall, the Isles of Scilly, a more competitive economy, based on dynamic and thriving small and medium sized enterprises, in a region which remains environmentally attractive as a place to live and work”. (1.7)

It also stated that:

“Co-operation and competition are both very important concepts for achieving economic and environmental goals”.

The plan identified social and economic trends, problems, strengths and possible strategies. Trends indicate an increase in part-time work above full-time.

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“Much of the increase has been in part time employment, up by 67% compared to an increase in full-time employment of 13%”.

Barriers to taking on additional workers to meet growth or development needs include:

- the lack of required skills or qualifications
- the lack of basic employment skills or working experience
- transport and access to work location problems
- the lack of suitable accommodation for expansion (3.3)

Section 3.6 concluded a major asset of the region:

“...it must make full use of the potential of its most valuable resource, its people, and create a more highly skilled and capable employment base”.

Emerging trends reflect the same picture with additional shortages in the areas of diagnostic, entrepreneurial, IT and communication skills...increasing emphasis on customisation of products and services for specialist markets and increasing emphasis on strategic alliances between business units to respond to market opportunities.

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Economic Forum

More recently the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Economic Forum have launched a ‘Strategy and Action’ document. This sets out the top ten priorities the forum sees as critical to the regeneration of Cornwall during the next decade:

1. Strategic transport infrastructure - with emphasis on the A30 at Goss Moor, key railway line improvements, scheduled air services and improved sea links to the Isles of Scilly
2. Employment space - such as business and science parks
3. ICT infrastructure - including affordable access to broadband for 80% of Cornwall
4. Emerging clusters of firms - develop creative, environmental, technology, chemistry, medical and food clusters
5. Combined University in Cornwall (CUC) - completion of phase 2
6. Business support - targeted support programmes for high-growth business and enhance quality of business support
7. Appropriate quality and flexible workforce development
8. Strengthen local partnerships in town and rural areas
9. Co-ordination of local supply chain development
10. Enhance distinctiveness and marketing of Cornwall

The Economic Forum’s report tells us that Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly have approximately 18,500 businesses, employing some 158,000 people. There are 21% more businesses per head of population than the UK average. The businesses are typically very small with 35% having a turnover of less than £500,000 and 90% with less than 10 employees. A high proportion (16% compared to 10% UK - 2001) of the population are self-employed which owes itself to special, historical and cultural aspects of Cornwall.

Cornwall has the lowest GDP per capita in England at 67% of the EU average (65% of UK av.). This manifests itself in low wages and low household income (av. weekly wages in 2002 were £387). This is 28% below UK average. Low wages are associated with low skilled, part-time jobs. Cornwall has comparatively high employment in various low wage professions. Jobs in some service industries account for a high proportion of all employment and seasonal variations in employment can be marked.

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Cornwall's population has seen significant and sustained growth since 1981, with an expansion of 20% in total numbers. This expansion is mostly through inward migration, two thirds of which has been people of working age. This expansion masks an outward migration of younger 'local' people 18-30 years, who move away for educational or work opportunities, and rarely come back.

'Sound bites' from the Forum:

"Cornwall was a very different place in 1999. There was a lack of confidence, marked by failure in the marketplace and an inclination to look on the bad side. Four years later there is a real 'can do' attitude. Business now has a seat at the table."

Carleen Kleeman, director of Objective One Partnership.

"Economic regeneration has visibly begun. Such icons as the Eden Project, Combined Universities in Cornwall and the Peninsula Medical School have raised our profile both nationally and internationally. We must now forge ahead...Cornwall is already on the runway. It must now progress towards take-off."

Thelma Sorenson - Chair of Forum

"Smart counties invest in their people. Cornwall has a lot of ground to make up. To catch up, education and business must work together."

Alan Livingstone - Learning and Skills steering group

"In Cornwall we have something really interesting...If we celebrate what is truly distinctive about Cornwall, we will add value to all sectors of the community."

Richard Glover - chief executive Truro Cathedral

Objective One

The Objective One programme for Cornwall and Scilly is providing around £314 million in European grant aid between 2000 and 2006, via 4 European funds:

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF - £189 million)
- European Social Fund (ESF - £62.6 million)
- European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (£51.3 million)
- Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance

The Euro-funds are expected to attract £314 million matched funding from the public sector, plus an additional £126 million from the private sector to create a total investment package of £754 million.

The flow of investment is expected to provide:

- 14,800 new or safeguarded jobs;
- 31 people trained
- £420 million of sales created or safeguarded
- 26,900 sq metres of workshop space created
- 32,000 businesses assisted, many through more than one project application

The Objective One programme has invested in over 350 projects in the first three years. Objective One is of particular relevance to the private sector. It has helped to modernise fisheries and agricultural sectors and provided help and advice to small businesses through umbrella funds and initiatives such as the South West Investment Group (SWIG).

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4. The local plan - The Restormel Vision:

“A sustainable Restormel valued for the beauty of its coast and countryside, where people enjoy good quality of life in vibrant towns, villages and rural areas”

The Borough of Restormel, situated in mid Cornwall, is one of six Districts in the County. It covers an area of some 45,160 hectares (174 square miles), stretching from the Atlantic coast in the north to the Channel coast in the south. Scenically, Restormel is immensely varied, ranging from the rugged north coast with its spectacular sandy beaches, through the central Restormel area, which is dominated by the industrial landscape of the china clay industry with its spoil tips, to the soft undulating landscape of the south coast, with its picturesque coastal towns and villages.

Restormel is well served by east and west transportation routes, providing good communications with the rest of Britain. Both the A30 trunk road and A390 road pass through the Borough and provide good access to Exeter (1.5 hours driving time) and Plymouth (45 minutes). From Plymouth the A38 dual carriageway links with the M5 and the national motorway network at Exeter. London and the Midlands can be reached in 4/5 hours. Intercity rail services link St Austell with Plymouth and London etc, this route also includes Exeter and Bristol. The only civil air terminal in the County is located in the northern part of the Borough at St Mawgan, nr Newquay and operates a daily service to Heathrow (1 hour 15 min).

Restormel has a wealth of industrial businesses and are entirely devoted to increasing the output and commerce throughout the Borough with any ideas for business they receive. Restormel also has a thriving tourism industry, which can only be strengthened by ventures such as the Eden Project. St. Austell town centre is the latest area to be receiving interest due to the exciting redevelopment plans that are currently circulating. Newquay is fast becoming a large Tourist area with the attraction of many prestigious events including World Surfing Competitions, national car rallies and many other events.

Restormel Borough Council has developed the Restormel Local Plan. This more fully incorporates issues of sustainability and the results of Local Agenda 21 influences. The Local Plan is the key document for setting out policies and proposals for new housing, employment and other land use proposals. It provides the framework for determining planning applications.

It is intended to 'roll forward' the timescale of the current plan (started 2001) from an end date of 2011 to 2016. In response to the governments modernising planning proposals it is anticipated that the current plan will be replaced with a 'Local Development Document' which will be a new streamlined type of plan.



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References:

Extracts from the Restormel Local Plan with kind permission of Restormel Borough Council Legal Department.

Source material from: Edgar Cahn, Jonathon Porrit (Resurgence), Hannah Reynolds Associates, Andrew Shadrake, The County Structure Plan, Ian Bignall (Jefferys), John Barley, Michael Fitzgerald (Restormel Industrial Estate), The Lostwithiel Forum Survey, Restormel Housing Trust, Wombwell Homes, 5b Economic Regeneration plan, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Economic Forum report, Cornwall Agricultural Council report '*Cornish Woodlands Economic, Environmental and Social Study*', Business Link service, Enterprise Edge, Cornwall Rural Community Council, South West Investment group, Cornish Guardian, Western Morning News, The Cornwall census, Truro College, The Learning and Skills Council, The Sunday Times.

Appendix 1: Health in the Western World

Analysis by leading American psychiatrist Gerald Klerman examined the minds of people from eight nations. It concluded that today's 25 year olds are three times more likely to suffer serious depression than their 1950's predecessors. In America the rate is ten times higher. In Britain depression had risen from 22% to 31% in nine years from 1977 to 1986.

A 1992 study by psychiatrist Lee Robins shows that 20% of the general population suffered from full-scale mental illness in any given year, and many more with minor ailments.

In 1950, 6,000 cases of violence against the person were recorded. By 1997, 253,000 cases were recorded - 42 times more. Three quarters of convicted violent men were found to suffer from depression.

Appendix 2: Government Policy documents since 1999

'A Better Quality Of Life - The U.K. sustainable development strategy ': (1999)

'Our Towns and Cities: The Future' (2000):- Urban White Paper

'Our Countryside: The Future' (2000):- Rural White Paper

'Food and Farming: A Sustainable Future' (2002); The Curry Report

'The Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food - Facing the Future'

'Learning and Skills Act' (2000)

'Opportunity for all in a World of Change' (2001)

'Planning: Delivering a Fundamental Change' (2002)

'Manufacturing Strategy' (2002)

'The Future of Aviation' (2000)

The Lostwithiel Town Forum Plan

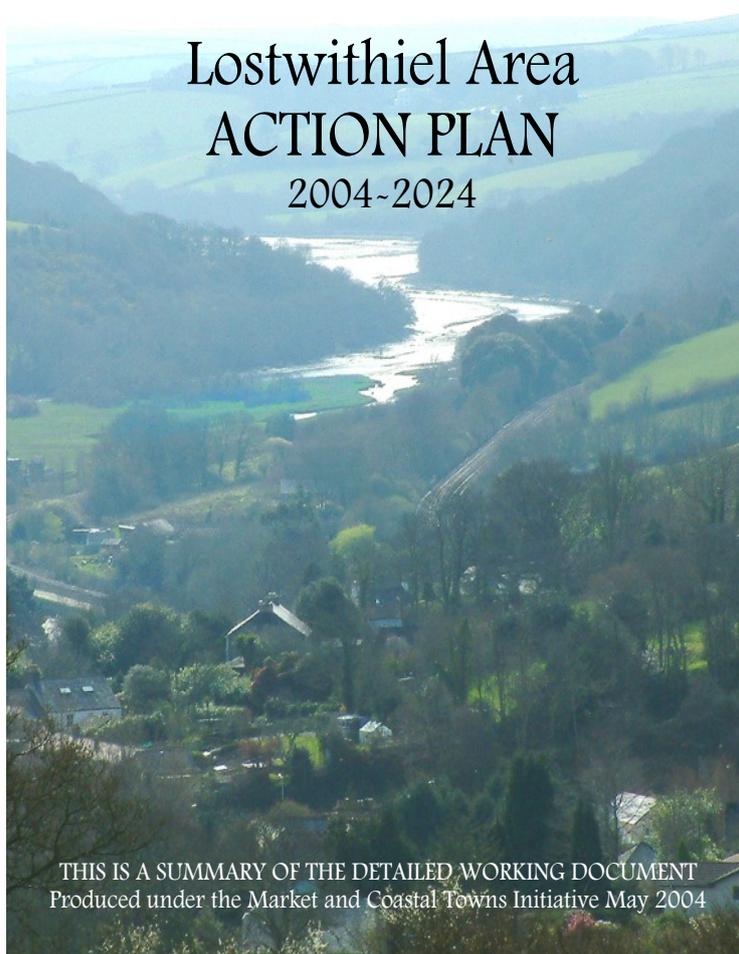
The previous employment report was quietly received, but with little feedback or publicity in the local press - after all, it was quite a complex document. The Town Forum were also hard at work developing a plan based on the feedback from their house-to-house survey and other reports and feedback they had commissioned.

The forum asked me to design and layout a brochure to summarise this plan, in full colour with a monthly diary to show local events (excluded in following copy). This included 'bleed-off' pictures with wrap around text and was generally well-received. I was later told this was regarded as the best 'summary plan' document of its type in the South-West UK.

I have made a 'lightened' version of the summary plan brochure (because the pictures are too big for a practical PDF download) that follows, you may wish to zoom in a bit on your computer:

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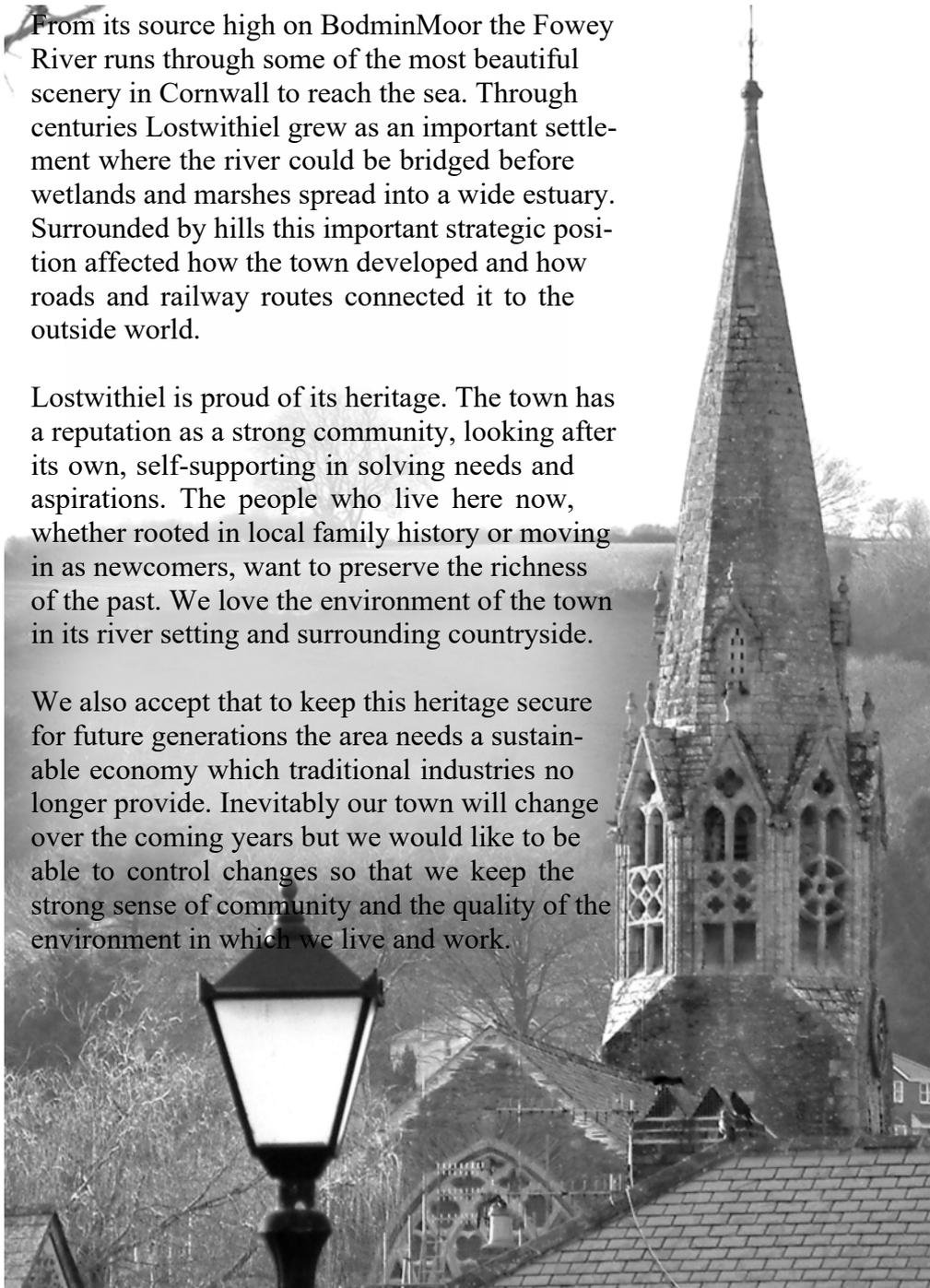
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LOSTWITHIEL

From its source high on Bodmin Moor the Fowey River runs through some of the most beautiful scenery in Cornwall to reach the sea. Through centuries Lostwithiel grew as an important settlement where the river could be bridged before wetlands and marshes spread into a wide estuary. Surrounded by hills this important strategic position affected how the town developed and how roads and railway routes connected it to the outside world.

Lostwithiel is proud of its heritage. The town has a reputation as a strong community, looking after its own, self-supporting in solving needs and aspirations. The people who live here now, whether rooted in local family history or moving in as newcomers, want to preserve the richness of the past. We love the environment of the town in its river setting and surrounding countryside.

We also accept that to keep this heritage secure for future generations the area needs a sustainable economy which traditional industries no longer provide. Inevitably our town will change over the coming years but we would like to be able to control changes so that we keep the strong sense of community and the quality of the environment in which we live and work.



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LOSTWITHIEL AREA PLAN

This plan is based on the Town Forum's local survey, extensive research, conversation and consultation. We invite you to help make the best future for our town.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Three years ago in 2001 some of the traders in town realised that without positive action the commercial life of the community would drain away. A once thriving Chamber of Commerce had gradually lost members over the years and shop premises were standing empty. Initially approaches were made to individuals who might help to revive an active business group. Then at a subsequent public meeting it was proposed to establish a Town Forum open to all the community. With the support of the Town Council a steering group was set up comprising of representatives of all local Councils, the newly formed business group and residents. The activities of the Forum would not only concentrate on commercial interests but also on issues affecting all residents, the purpose being:

- to promote the rejuvenation and regeneration of Lostwithiel for the benefit of its community and those of adjacent parishes
- to pursue the economic and social development of Lostwithiel
- to seek every way of enhancing the attractiveness of Lostwithiel as a centre for all

By working with the Town Council the Town Forum would be able to take advantage of any financial help and grant aid available to improve the prosperity and well-being of our community.

From the beginning the Town Forum was advised by the Restormel Regeneration Partnership and given a grant to help us begin work. Subsequently we were fortunate to be accepted into the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative with a remit to extend our area of work to include neighbouring villages. Lanlivery Luxulyan and Golant (St Sampson parish) lie within Restormel Borough Council and Lerryn (St Winnow and St Veep parishes) is in Caradon District Council.



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HOW DOES THE LOSTWITHIEL AREA ACTION PLAN FIT WITHIN OTHER FRAMEWORKS?

Detailed plans work best if they relate to the wider picture. The Cornwall Community Strategy in its 'Vision for Cornwall' identifies three main themes:

- 1 Individual well being
- 2 Strong communities
- 3 A Quality living environment

The Restormel and Caradon Community Strategies work within the framework of these same three themes. Restormel identifies eleven issues to help deliver a Vision for Restormel as:

“a place where people enjoy a good quality life in vibrant towns, villages and rural areas”.

Caradon has a vision for South East Cornwall with:

“vibrant and successful communities that provide all residents with the opportunity to enjoy a good quality of life in a clean, safe and healthy environment, supported by a strong local economy”.

MARKET AND COASTAL TOWNS INITIATIVE

The MCTi aims to help communities to be able to plan their future development. Financial help is available for the preparation of surveys or reports and for events that encourage people within the community to meet and work together. Lostwithiel decided to start the planning process with a full survey of every house. We thought it was important to find out what people valued most about their town and what they might choose to change.

We held a public meeting to decide what questions to ask all residents. A questionnaire was delivered to all houses including a separate sheet for young people. The answers were discussed by various working groups and developed into projects and actions.

A planning day identified priorities that were taken forward as the basis for an overall action plan for the area, a summary of which you are now reading.

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WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

When we analysed the results of the residents' survey it was clear that the town's values and priorities fitted into the broad picture. Using the same themes and issues our plan identifies projects and actions particular to our communities. Some can be done easily with little cost, other projects are ambitious, long term and costly and we accept that some may never be achieved for various reasons.

All are the result of extensive consultation and research. Accepting that change is inevitable this plan is the beginning of a programme which will manage change so that it works for the benefit of the people who live and work in this area. It will be reviewed regularly by the community to take account of changing influences, to monitor progress and to add or delete actions as appropriate.

The parishes of St Sampson, Lanlivery and Luxulyan, St Winnow and St Veep have been developing plans for their own villages and where these link or mutual projects are identified we will work together for the benefit of all.

It is emerging that the focus of linked actions will be on connecting our communities, improving transport especially for young people and affecting policy change to allow the building of affordable housing.



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THEME – INDIVIDUAL WELL BEING

ISSUE - support for young people. To ensure the future strength of our communities we would like to include young people much more in decision making. This means listening, sharing ideas and working together to achieve objectives.

ACTIONS - we are currently planning improvements to:

- skate board area including landscaping
- recreation facilities and their management

WHAT NEXT?

- establish a Forum including all existing youth organisations
- discuss with Lerryn Area Minibus Association developing a service between parishes for young people to make greater use of local facilities and reduce rural isolation
- discuss with LAMA introducing a ‘wheels to work’ scheme to include access to Further Education
- improve travel to school arrangements - including ‘walking bus’
- arrange after-school clubs
- encourage holiday play schemes

ISSUE - improving the quality of life for older people. Many retired people choose to move into this area and older people have particular needs especially in getting to shops and services.

ACTIONS - we are currently working on:

- a timetable to publicise all available transport
- investigating more provision of NHS dental services

WHAT NEXT?

- find out if there is support for setting up a branch of “Help the Aged” or “Age Concern”
- improve access to and range of adult education classes including University of Third Age
- discuss with N & E Cornwall Transport Executive the introduction of a SHOPMOBILITY scheme
- publicise use of a hospital car scheme

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ISSUE - a healthier lifestyle for all. The survey showed clearly that people of all ages value our recreational facilities and regret the current state of many of our public spaces. We like walking especially in the countryside and would welcome more routes for cycling. More people would take part in active recreation if there were more choice and accessibility.

ACTIONS - work is currently progressing to:

- develop and publicise new cycle routes
- maintain all footpaths particularly across parish boundaries
- and the Town Council is currently working to restore and replan the King George V field

WHAT NEXT?

- develop a strategy for delivery and management of sports and recreation
- improve access to and quality of recreation facilities both indoor and out
- try to develop a transport network through the area to make more use of facilities elsewhere
- introduce a walking bus for school children
- investigate ways to reduce heavy transport within conservation area



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THEME - STRONG COMMUNITIES

ISSUE -Lifelong Learning.

We would welcome more structured learning opportunities available locally for all ages and at all levels. We would like more local classes especially day-time, in better equipped venues and at a higher level.

ACTIONS - we have already extended the range of times and venues for continuing education classes but need to do more.

WHAT NEXT?

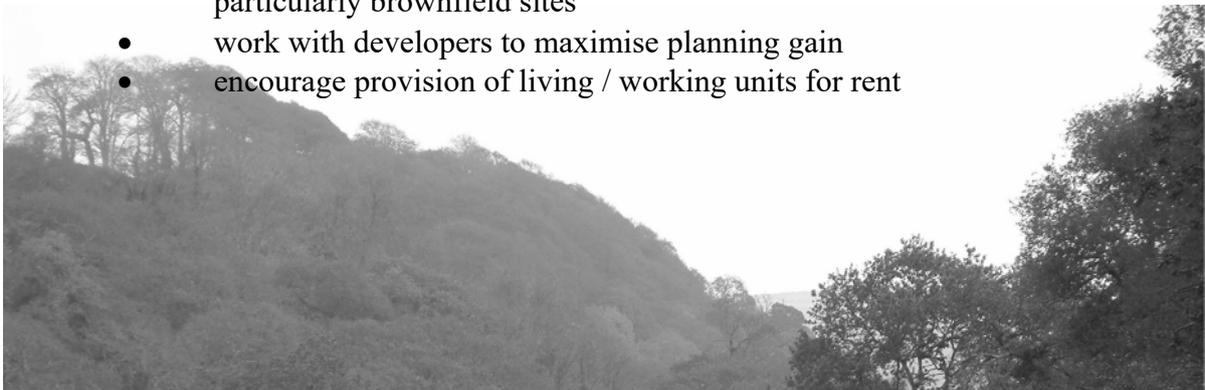
- provide higher level IT classes locally
- establish quality, local work-experience exchange between local businesses and students
- arrange Broadband demonstrations
- organise after-school homework clubs
- strengthen links between our schools, colleges and communities

ISSUE - suitable housing for all. An ideal community will have a range of housing both to buy and to rent within a full range of prices. With recent new building of many higher priced properties we would welcome more 'affordable' house-building particularly to benefit local young people.

ACTIONS - we have already carried out a special survey to report on the extent of affordable housing need in our area.

WHAT NEXT?

- review local plans and policies
- encourage use of appropriate land for building low cost housing, particularly brownfield sites
- work with developers to maximise planning gain
- encourage provision of living / working units for rent



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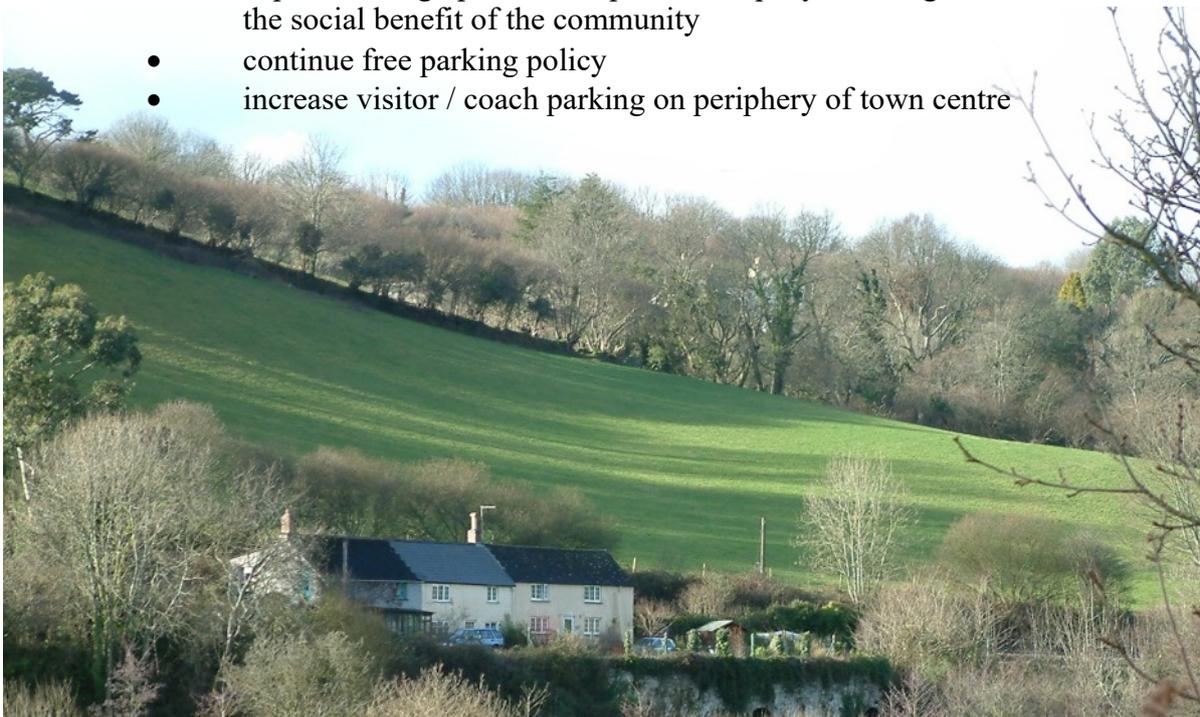
ISSUE - sustainable economic growth. Given the nature of private enterprise we cannot create new businesses in the private sector but we can provide a framework within which existing businesses thrive and new ones find a dynamic place in which to develop. Actions elsewhere in this plan will all contribute to an attractive area in terms of a place in which to live, work or to visit and significant benefit will accrue to the economy.

ACTIONS - we have already commissioned a study on economic prospects for Lostwithiel and begun:

- coordinating marketing for all businesses concerned with Food & Drink
- developing an Area Web Site with links to those existing
- arranging a business event to publicise available support /advice for all businesses
- encouraging Broadband connections

WHAT NEXT?

- continue themed leaflets to promote local concerns such as antiques
- support cultural activity as an economic driver
- look at the feasibility of starting up an Arts / Crafts centre with work spaces to encourage creative industries
- explore setting up a 'not for profit' company covering schemes for the social benefit of the community
- continue free parking policy
- increase visitor / coach parking on periphery of town centre



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THEME - QUALITY LIVING ENVIRONMENT

ISSUE - effective management of the natural environment.

We appreciate living in beautiful surroundings. All age groups in our survey identify the river environs as a special and favourite place and are concerned to protect this heritage for future generations.

ACTIONS - we have already:

- commissioned a report from the West Country Rivers Trust on future plans
- started up an environment group
- begun to walk and clear all footpaths to check on maintenance and signage
- made plans to increase recycling / compost collection and redistribution

WHAT NEXT?

- work to establish a nature reserve on Shirehall and Madderly moors
- appoint a town steward and / or countryside warden
- stabilise river banks to protect from erosion
- contact Community Services to help deliver programme
- investigate under-grounding of power cables
- produce up-dated walks leaflet including links with other parishes

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ISSUE - recognising our culture. We are proud of the history of our town and surrounding villages and are reminded constantly of our heritage by the buildings and structures that remain from the past. We are committed to preserving and celebrating this built environment for ourselves and for visitors to enjoy.

ACTIONS - we have already:

- commissioned a study (the Hyder report) to suggest options for improving Lostwithiel's centre and river frontage
- produced a Heritage leaflet and distributed extensively
- trained town guides and organised regular town tours

WHAT NEXT?

- develop options for improvements identified in the Hyder "Town and River" study
- site information panels where appropriate
- try to investigate the site of the Drill Hall and preserve any archaeological evidence
- work to restore the Duchy Palace for public access
- establish links with Restormel Castle to help



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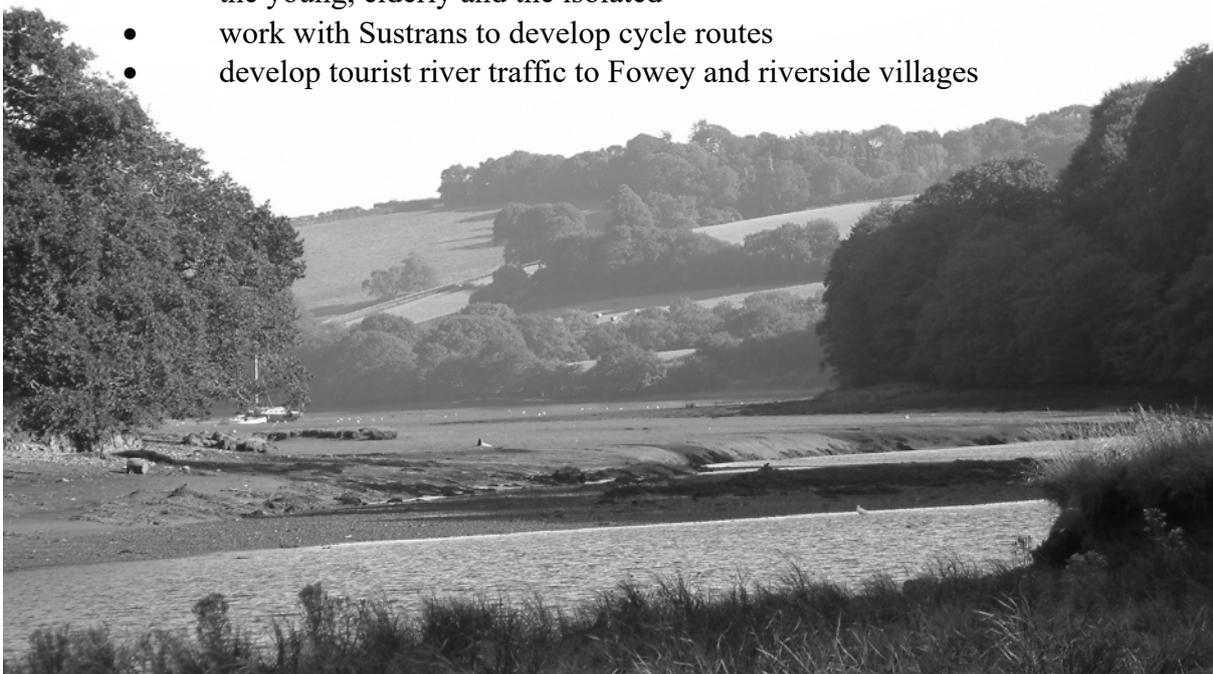
ISSUE - effective transport. People living in rural locations need either to use cars or to have good public transport available. Our towns and villages were not planned to include heavy traffic flows nor were streets designed for parking. We would like to make the best use of existing parking areas, the best use of existing public transport and to control traffic flows so that people and properties are not harmed.

ACTIONS - we have already:

- commissioned a study to include an audit of existing residents' parking in town
- started producing an all-service public transport timetable for the whole area

WHAT NEXT?

- investigate new spaces for off-road resident and visitor parking
- improve road signage
- improve the railway station
- re-examine traffic flow including possibility of pedestrianisation of medieval bridge
- re-examine rail link to Golant / Fowey
- support LAMA in extending community bus routes particularly for the young, elderly and the isolated
- work with Sustrans to develop cycle routes
- develop tourist river traffic to Fowey and riverside villages



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THE NEXT STAGE

This leaflet is the summary of a much more detailed document - a report which will be the basis for an annual operating plan. The ideas behind the ACTIONS were those supported in the Lostwithiel Survey that took place last summer. Since then different groups of local people have spent time working out how to prioritise the various issues that emerged.

The aim was to achieve a strategic plan which will affect the way things develop over the next twenty years. The plan needs to be flexible and re-examined constantly so that even though the 'vision' is constant the detail reflects changing needs.

Some of the proposed actions will not only need funding to be successful but also considerable forward planning to sustain that success. The Market and Coastal Towns Initiative has been of invaluable help so far for us to reach this planning stage. Now with MCTI support and help from the Restormel Regeneration Partnership a 'brokering table' will be arranged so that all outside agencies with suitable funds to correspond with the priorities in this plan can meet together and decide what contribution, if any, they can make to the funding package.

By the end of this summer we hope to have begun this process.

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A COMMUNITY COMPANY?

Some priorities are the responsibility of local Councils and may require no additional funding but only a change in the service delivery. Large-scale projects need constant managing and there are many options as to how development is successfully achieved.

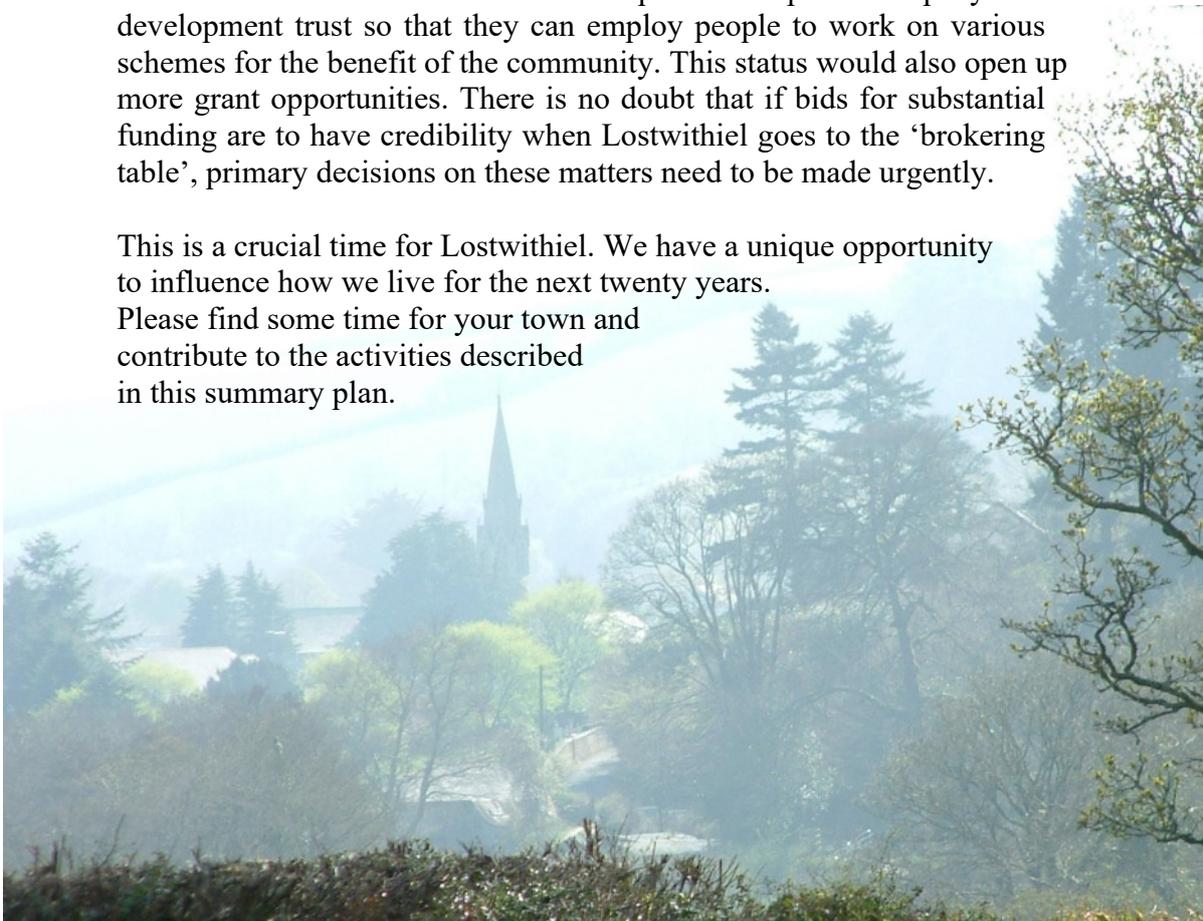
In order to drive this plan forward and keep it fresh it will need considerable time and commitment beyond the capacity of volunteers. Large projects need to be managed professionally.

Whilst the Town Forum has fulfilled its purpose to date it is not necessarily the right type of organisation to supervise costed development and regeneration projects. Active consideration is now being given to decide the best way forward.

Some communities have chosen to set up a not-for-profit company or a development trust so that they can employ people to work on various schemes for the benefit of the community. This status would also open up more grant opportunities. There is no doubt that if bids for substantial funding are to have credibility when Lostwithiel goes to the 'brokering table', primary decisions on these matters need to be made urgently.

This is a crucial time for Lostwithiel. We have a unique opportunity to influence how we live for the next twenty years.

Please find some time for your town and contribute to the activities described in this summary plan.



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CHANGES FOR THE BETTER ?

What interests you? Do you have strong opinions about what changes are acceptable? Imagine how Lostwithiel and the surrounding villages might be in your grandchildren's lifetime. What do you value most about the way we live now? Do you want to be able to influence the way change affects us all?

There has been a huge response from local people wanting to get involved in this planning process so far. You are now reading the result of their time and effort. But for this plan to succeed it will need on-going interest for years to come. It will need constantly changing numbers of people who want to have their say and make an impact on the way they live. The plan will be amended regularly as circumstances alter but always after due consideration by the community.

You may see something in the plan which you know you could help with either because of your past experience or because you have a special interest in that subject. You may already belong to an association that you know could take on and develop a particular issue within the plan. You may have new ideas for projects that you think should have been included. Undoubtedly there is more chance of success and less duplication of effort if everyone works together within one strategic plan for the good of all. This is an opportunity for us all to preserve the things we value most.

If you have a lot of spare time or very little please get in touch - any contribution is important.



Contact any Forum member or the Forum office at 3 Quay St Lostwithiel
Tel: 01208 871467

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LOSTWITHIEL TOWN COUNCIL

The administration of the town has always been in the hands of the Town Council. However, funding requirements dictate that ideas leading to re-generation must come from community grass roots.

Any action proposed by the community through the Forum must have the approval of the Town Council which is the elected local authority representing the people of Lostwithiel and working on their behalf.

The following councilors will hold office until May 2007:

The Worshipful the Mayor: Councillor M. Jones

The Deputy Mayor: Councillor C.L.Jewels

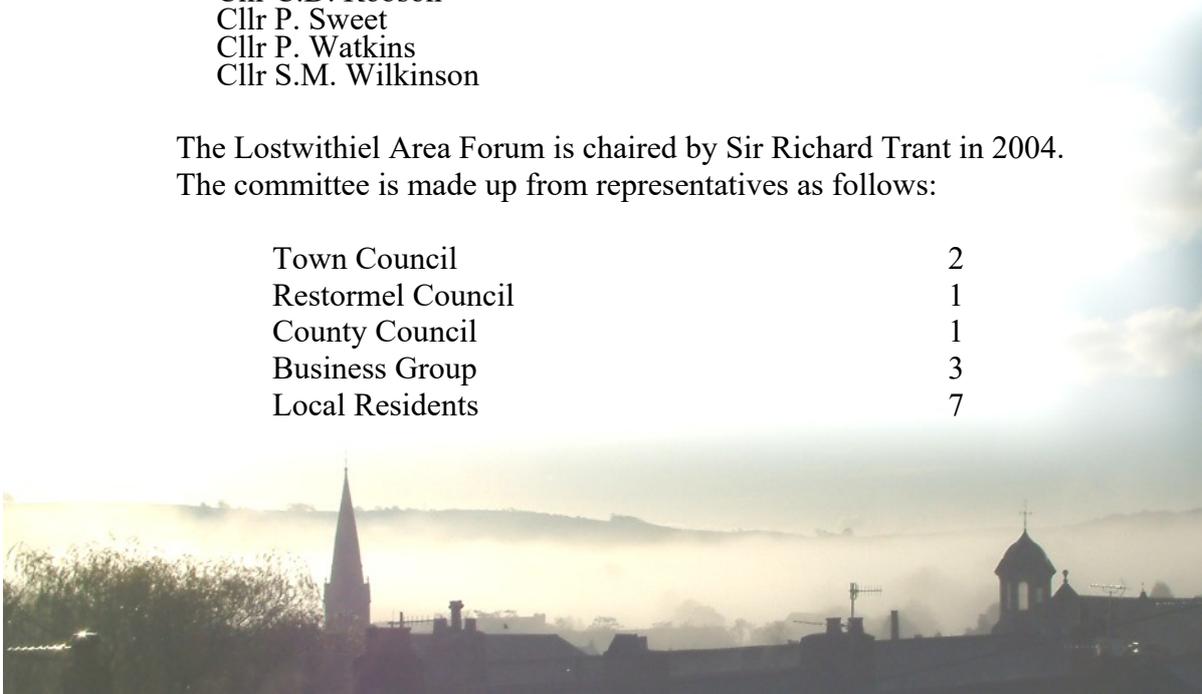
The Town Clerk: Mrs. Linda Austen

Cllr D.A. Abbiss
Cllr A.J. Daniell
Cllr R.C. Facey
Cllr R.W. Keam
Cllr V.A. May
Cllr A.W. Nicholls (Honoured Burgess)
Cllr D.L. Parsons
Cllr R.H.T. Peareth (Honoured Burgess)
Cllr J.H. Pegg
Cllr J.A.K. Riche
Cllr C.D. Robson
Cllr P. Sweet
Cllr P. Watkins
Cllr S.M. Wilkinson

The Lostwithiel Area Forum is chaired by Sir Richard Trant in 2004.

The committee is made up from representatives as follows:

Town Council	2
Restormel Council	1
County Council	1
Business Group	3
Local Residents	7



MAKING COMMUNITY WORK

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In preparing this plan Lostwithiel Area Forum has welcomed support from many sources.

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CONCLUSION

'May you live in interesting times' is a Chinese curse! We are certainly experiencing the fragmentation of our societies and communities at just the time when we should be pulling them together.

It has been most interesting to put this e-book together as a definite pattern has emerged. I have been showing considerable personal initiative in my responses to modern conditions by innovating, trying new things to see if they work. Certainly in the light of 'new economics' and Agenda 21, as if the earth mattered, this is an important role. The 'Old Guard' often see this initiative as a threat - "There's a stranger at the gates doing things - quick get 'im he's making us look incompetent!" Quickly they close ranks and do their best to marginalise the influence of the 'stranger' doing something new. Then they steal the ideas and pronounce them as their own. Unfortunately, the good bits of these often ideas go missing in the translation, because they are deemed too radical or unsafe in some way.

Hence the 'Old Guard' gain face by innovating safely within their clique - and I go away glad that another bird has left the nest, albeit feeling robbed. It is certainly interesting to see quite how far the Old Guard will go in their marginalisations - a secretary who turns up with empty agendas, important mail that arrives 2 months after the post-date, whispering campaigns, direct insult, deliberate sabotage and prejudice and the whole panoply of human put-downs, maybe I should just stay in and watch Eastenders!

There is one story I haven't told on this web site - about the questionnaires I made and had placed in the Cornish Guardian way before the Town Forum was even being considered. These questionnaires asked readers of the Lostwithiel edition paper what they would like to see in the town, promoting the idea of 'people planning'. There was even a free bottle of champagne involved, delivered chilled to one respondents door.

Nearly the whole lot were chucked down the main street during a rainy Wednesday night and there were only a few papers sold locally that week, resulting in just two replies. Was this just the act of a random yob, or a pre-meditated act of sabotage? I guess I will never know, but sometimes I feel 'Its not that I'm paranoid - they are plotting against me!' You may know what I mean if you have ever been involved in local politics.

So how does necessary change come about, like the shift to a sustainable way of living if the 'old guard' are playing safe with their heads in the sand? The Innovator's Handbook, by Vincent Nolan states:

"...the business or individual who never experiments and continues to do things 'the way we have always done them' feels safe and comfortable but is in fact taking a big risk of being caught out by changing circumstances. They are liable to wake up one day and find that the established methods are no longer working".

The drive to 'be safe' is a dead weight to innovation, often mistaken for apathy, but visionary projects concerning our future are starting to break through. The energy is there in many people to move forward, but the old ways entrap and strangle innovators like the tentacles of an octopus. Many people apply their energy to a nostalgic return to 1950's values, where everyone knew their place and it was relatively 'safe'.

The projects that getting through now involve charismatic leaders, often surrounded by like-minded people who support the values of that leader and protect them. As Rudolf Bahro wrote, "*When the forms of the old cultures are dying, the new culture is created by a few people who are not afraid to be insecure*". But you can't do it without support!

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My lessons from my voluntary experiences start with that well known cliché in reference to the Lostwithiel Community Association:

You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink.

Followed by a poem from 'The Little Book of Buddhism'

When you meet a master swordsman,
Show them your sword.
When you meet a person who is not a poet,
Do not show them your poem.

I have come full circle in my discoveries as a self-pronounced 'animateur'. I feel people are reluctant to face change and most would sooner stay safe with what they know than face the uncertainty of the future. This blocks energy for positive change at all levels, those of 'community', local government, local groups and people. Individuals such as myself who take the trouble to inform themselves and donate many hours to local initiative are often deliberately ignored, stonewalled, backstabbed, misunderstood and marginalised.

But even given that I have still been able to achieve some successes and even work with the 'community' who seemed happy to undermining my voluntary actions. Especially in these days of extremists it is important we find ways to work together - after all, there is no 'us and them'. There is only 'us'.

At the moment, in Lostwithiel at least, the community innovation and regeneration underway is described by some as 'like trying to push water up a hill', an almost reference to the tortures of Tantalus, or was it Sisyphus?.

What seems more important in local prestige 'cliques' is where the initiative comes from, rather than its quality or intent. As a result any involvement I have with local regeneration will now be from within a group of people who have similar values and aims to my own, and I have been told that these people do not exist in the town where I live.

Satish Kumar (and Lorna Howarth) close the circle for me and return me to my roots in one of my favourite issues of Resurgence:

"The industrialised mode of mass production has created an ugly civilisation. We are ruled by numbers, obsessed by economy and possessed by speed - all enemies of beauty. A monster is haunting the Western world, the monster of ugly materialism. The goddess of beauty is vanished from the house of humanity. When we are bereft of beauty, we are also bereft of truth: as Keats said, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." The absence of beauty and truth is at the root of our illness.

Art alone can cure this illness. Art can wash away the ugliness of our civilisation. It is art that can defeat the sources of materialism and restore the rule of beauty. It is art that can reveal the secrets of imagination and free us from the bondage of greed, speed and power."

"Only through reconnecting with nature, culture, spirituality, beauty, art and craft can we stride towards freedom from the tyranny of money, materialism and mass production, which have separated us from ourselves and alienated us from the Earth. While art is a liberating force it is also a force for transformation and self-realisation. It gives us a sense of belonging and unlocks the power of the imagination".

“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”

Arundhati Roy, World Social Forum, 2003

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If you enjoyed this free ebook from simonthescribe, please find out more by visiting his website here:

<https://www.simonthescribe.com/>



Hi, I'm simonthescribe – a creator and 'free scribe'. I love making things and writing about them. I live a joyous life in tune with our beautiful planet, in tune with nature, as much as I can in these days. I enjoy gardening, writing, music and creativity, especially making things from found, recycled or upcycled materials.

I have written all about it here. There are hundreds of tips and hacks to help you detach yourself from the matrix and live a simple and creative life in tune with nature. This site is deeply creative and very political.

Here – just for you – are all of my 'Beautiful Things' BOOKS – COURSES – ART – MUSIC made especially to bring more love, joy, truth, fun and beauty into the world.

