

FREE ENTRY

TOTNES DECLARES A CLIMATE EMERGENCY WHAT NEXT?

A Community Conversation

**Saturday 13th July
10am-5pm, Totnes Civic Hall**

Our local councils as well as the UK Parliament have declared a climate and ecological emergency. Come and be a part of conversation to explore what this means for you and your community.

Delicious and affordable lunch will be available.
Relax and reflect over evening drinks... bar opens from 5-7pm.



Bridgetown Alive!



Introduction

What follows is a description of the event *'Totnes Declares a Climate Emergency: What Next?'* held in Totnes Civic Hall on Saturday 13th July 2019 attended by approximately 150 people. The following is intended to give a sense of how we created, prepared for and ran the day.

Many of the following exercises are universally applicable, and they are being offered here should you feel inspired to hold your own *'Climate Emergency: What next?'* event. Please contact us should you intend to hold such an event. Contact Encounters Arts at admin@encounters-arts.org.uk. Do share with us what you did and how it goes for you. The event held in Totnes had a facilitator's team with many years of experience in holding large group events like this, Encounters are available to work with your group to help both with design and facilitation should that be required.

Preparation. You will need:

To create the book: 40 large sheets of cardboard with 4 holes drilled on the left-hand margin • 4 lengths of different coloured ribbons • A large selection of random objects • A4 paper • Felt tip pens • Masking tape • Scissors

Also: Seats arranged in a circle • Two radio microphones • Tea and coffee available throughout the day • Ideally: lunch served in the venue

Welcome- 10 minutes



Welcoming and Setting the intention of the day and naming the people and organisations who have brought the day together e.g.

“Today is a coming together of our community in response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency we face. Totnes Town Council has declared an Emergency, as well as other local councils too. This a gathering to discuss “what next?” What can we do together so that we are stronger? How might we create a *People’s Climate and Ecological Emergency Plan* to guide us all and to inspire other plans being created”

A reading and moment of silence.

(In Totnes a young person read out the following opening that has come from Extinction Rebellion resources):

“Let us take a moment, this moment, to consider why we are here.
Let’s recall our love for the whole of humanity, in all corners of the world.
Let’s remember our love for our beautiful planet that feeds, nourishes and sustains all life.
Let’s recollect our sincere desire to protect and restore all this, for now and for generations to come.
As we meet today, may we find the courage to bring this sense of peace and appreciation to everyone we encounter, to every word we speak and to every action we make
In this emergency. Together. Rooted in love. We are all we need and we act as if we are needed
Let us take a moment of Moment of Silence...”

Outlining the Map of the day

Explain what is going to happen so people know what’s happening:

E.g. “Today is for reflection, exploration, exchange of experiences, and generation of knowledge to promote and focus our efforts in responding to climate and ecological emergency.

This morning we have invited a number of people to make a short provocation on a range of different themes about the climate emergency we are in and also visions of what we could create together in response.

This afternoon we hand over to you to explore ideas and visions for a ‘*People’s Climate and Ecological Emergency Plan for Totnes*’ and we are going to create a huge book together with these ideas and visions in it”.

Check in, milling and mapping - 12 minutes

[Introduce the technology of looking out for when the facilitator puts her/his hand up, when you see that, put your hand up too and stop speaking. This is a good way to bring a room to silence].



Milling

People mill around the room noticing each other and when instructed come face to face with whoever they are closest to. Once paired, they are invited to share answers to questions given by the facilitator. Questions are designed to allow people to connect to each other, to the natural world, to the climate and ecological emergency e.g.

- 1) Introduce yourself and a particular place that you feel connected to and what has brought you here today
- 2) What's moving you most right now about the climate/ecological emergency?
- 3) What's inspiring you most about the times we are living in?

Then, returning to sitting in a circle we do '**Anyone Who's**' mapping activity to explore who is in the room and commonalities and differences. The idea is to give a list of 'Anyone Who's', and when one is relevant to you, you stand up. Ours were:

- **Geographical:** where are you from? The top of town, Bridgetown, the bottom of town, Follaton, Dartington, Ashburton, Buckfastleigh, Devon, further afield...
- **Personal:** Are you an elected representative, have you been on a Youth Climate Strike, are you involved in local projects and organisations, have you taken part in any XR actions, are you part of Transition Town
- **Do you:** volunteer, grow food, run a local business?
- **Do you** feel Sure/ Unsure about your role in this time?

The Provocateurs - 35 minutes

Ensure provocateurs are well-briefed, and encouraged to be bold in their provocations, and it is fundamental to the success of this part of the day that they are from a wide range of backgrounds

and cover a wide diversity and range of topics so as to make visible the complexity of the situation and solutions)

Round One: 'We are in an emergency'

Our 'provocateurs' were asked to speak, to the question "From your perspective/experience/sector/viewpoint, what is the emergency we are in? Why has it happened, and what would it look like if it gets worse / business continues as usual?"

In the first round our provocateurs covered the following:

- The climate science
- The voice of a Fridays for Future youth striker
- Perspective of the global south and climate justice
- A voice from the inner, how is this crisis impacting us all
- The voice of uprooted people arriving in our communities, how does this look to them?
- Food, farming and biodiversity
- Water catchment, rivers and water management.



Provocateurs from the Totnes event: Top row, left to right: Robin Webster, Senior Climate Change Engagement Strategist at Climate Outreach, Ashish Ghadiali Co-editor of Red Pepper magazine and Wretched of the Earth, Harriet Bell of Dartington Hall Trust. Middle row, left to right: Saif Ali of Integr8, Anna Lopez of Fridays for Future, Alice Moseley of the University of Plymouth. Bottom row, left to right: Nick Paling of Westcountry Rivers Trust, Toni Spencer, facilitator and activist, Johnny Gowdy of Regen.

Sound piece: *Recording by Tony Whitehead of soon to be extinct bird species.*

Group Reflection. 20 minutes.

Question: What does it feel like to be living at a time of climate and ecological emergency
In your own time...

- Go to the table of objects. This was set up before the event and features a big collection of random objects: toys, things from nature, household objects, postcards and so on, which each somehow reflect our world, loss, extinction, and which are playful and poignant.
- Sit down or stand somewhere in the room and wait for somebody to join you and use objects to speak for 3 minutes in response to the question that framed this first Provocateurs round. Facilitator times the 3 minute exchange



Break: 15 minutes

Provocateurs Round Two – 30 minutes

‘Provocateurs’ were asked to speak, to the question:

“If we do everything we can possibly do to respond to the climate and ecological emergency, working together locally and thinking globally, if we draw on all the resources, imagination, courage and political will what could we create?”

For this round, the topics were (again speakers had a tightly-held 4 minutes):

- Democracy, and how our democratic system could look in 2030
- Climate science, and what we could achieve if we did everything we could possibly do
- Inner: deep adaptation and what would our culture like if it truly supported us all?
- Energy and Transport: where could we get to?
- Water and rivers: what is possible in the future?
- Uprooted people: what could it look like if this place was truly welcoming and deeply integrative?

Group Reflection – 8 minutes

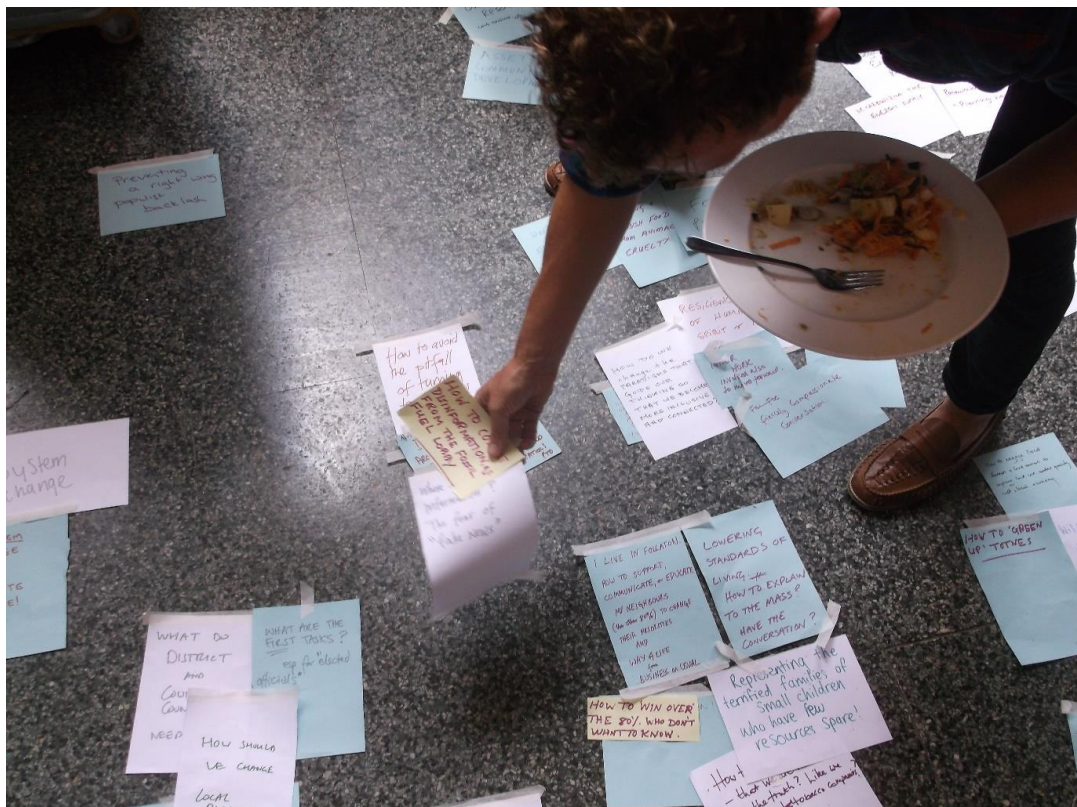
People in front turn to a few people behind you so you are in groups of 3 or 4. For 8 minutes reflect on the presentations they have heard.

Gathering themes. – 20 minutes

People Invited to write down on pieces of paper subject areas and themes that they want to talk about in response to the question: **If we do everything we can possibly do to respond to the climate and ecological emergency, working together locally and thinking globally, if we draw on all the resources, imagination, courage and political will what could we create?** Think about what we can create and how we can work together to create a response to the climate and ecological emergency we are in. Once you have written them on a piece of paper, bring them to the wall and stick them up.

Lunch. 45 minutes. People are invited to rearrange the room café-style, with chairs around tables.

During lunchtime, the facilitation team lay the suggestions on the floor and cluster them into topics/ themes (see photo below). Then 15 voluntary facilitators (ideally with experience) are briefed on facilitation of the afternoon session (as described below, such as hand signals, go-rounds, appointing roles etc) and each selects a topic.



1.30pm: Introduction and Group Meeting Skills – 15 minutes

Introduction:

A reading to ground and inspire people.

In Totnes we started by reading a passage from a speech Martin Luther King gave in 1955 4 days after Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus. He said:

"Right here in Montgomery, when the history books are written in the future somebody will have to say, "There lived a race of people a black people ... a people who had the moral courage to stand up for their rights. And thereby they injected a new meaning into the veins of history and of civilization." And we're gonna do that. God grant that we will do it before it is too late. As we proceed with our program let us think of these things".

The aim of this afternoon is to act as though you are working to "inject... a new meaning into the veins of history and of civilisation". Now we hand over to you.

Together we going to co-create the contents of a book called a *People's Climate and Ecological Emergency Plan for Totnes*. Our overall question is:

If we do everything we possibly can do to respond to the climate and ecological emergency, working together locally and thinking globally, if we draw on all the resources, imagination courage and political will what could create?

Group Meeting Skills

Everybody learns a few key sociocracy inspired hand signals to be used to help ensure that the flow of conversation is effective and inclusive, such as 'jazz hands' (I agree, I resonate with this) I want to make a point, I have a direct response to something that is being said, I'd like clarification, speak up, round up your point, and I have a technical point. Here are a few examples (artwork from **Occupy Together**):



'Jazz Hands': when we agree/like an idea or suggestion.



'I have a point to make': noted by the facilitator and addressed in order.



Clarification: requesting further clarification (jumps the queue)



Specific point: A direct response to point someone is making (jumps the queue).

Each facilitator moves to a table holding their topic in the air. Participants are then invited to move to the table with the topic they'd like to discuss. When there are more than 8 people wanting to have the same conversation, then a new table with that same topic is set up. More than 8 people in a group limits the effectiveness of the group conversation.



Facilitators with their conversation topics.

Once each group is seated the facilitator invites the group to appoint one person to scribe and one person to act as the spokesperson.

Introductory round - 8 minutes

In relationship to your theme/question (e.g. democracy), if we do everything we can possibly do to respond to the climate and ecological emergency, working together locally and thinking globally, if we draw on all the resources, imagination, courage and political will what could we create?

Each person in the group introduces themselves and has 1 minute to respond to the question through the lens of their theme.



Group discussions at tables.

Round One - 30 minutes

In relation to your theme. What's already here in Totnes and Area that we value and want to keep? (projects, relationships, connections, objects, ways of being or doing)

1. Open conversation. 20 minutes. Encourage all voices to be heard
2. Feedback –work together to agree one or two key points that reflect your conversation. Try to make sure everybody feels this is 'good enough' and write this on a piece of paper (5 minutes).

Some of the groups feed back to large group (5 minutes). Facilitator 1 roams tables with a radio mike.

Round Two - 30 minutes

In relation to your theme. What doesn't serve us anymore? What do we need to let go of? (ways of doing, being, thinking, working, consuming, projects and initiatives, resources and materials)

1. Open conversation. **20 minutes**. Encourage all voices to be heard.
2. Feedback – work together to agree one or two key points that reflect your conversation. Try to make sure everybody feels this is 'good enough' and write this on a piece of paper (5 minutes)

Some of the groups feed back to large group (5 minutes). Facilitator 1 roams tables with a radio mike.



Round Three - 38 minutes

In relation to your theme, what else do we need or what's missing? What do we need to repair, restore or create? (think about connections, relationships, understanding, ways of being and doing, for now and the future)

- 1) Go Round: everybody gives a personal response to the question 1 minute each
- 2) Open conversation for 20 minutes, encourage all voices to be heard.
- 3) Feedback –work together to agree one or two key points that reflect your conversation. Try to make sure everybody feels this is 'good enough' and write this on a piece A5 paper (5 minutes)

Some of the groups feed back to large group (5 minutes). Facilitator 1 roams tables with a radio mike.

BREAK/ quick stretch for 10 minutes

Round Four – 44 minutes

In relation to your theme, what are the NEXT steps in responding to the climate and ecological emergency? Open conversation for each sphere of influence below:

- For decision makers: parish/town/district council - **6 minutes**

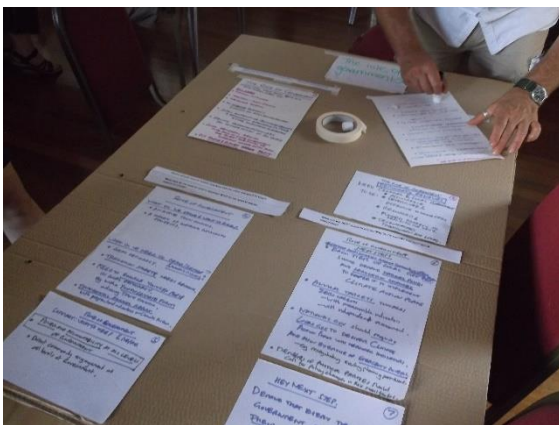
- As citizens collectively with other towns cities and places in our region - **6 minutes**
- In our community groups/communities of interest and Totnes as a whole? - **6 minutes**
- With our neighbours, friends, family, personally - **6 minutes**

Feedback –work together to agree 4 key next steps to share with the wider group that reflect your conversation. Try to make sure everybody feels this is ‘good enough’ and write this on a piece of paper (5 minutes).

Some of the groups feed back to large group (5 minutes). Facilitator roams tables with a radio mike.

Assembling the Book and Close – 30 minutes

All information gathered is compiled into a chapter of the book by attaching and sticking information to sheets of cardboard. Sheets are then bound together to create the book.



Everybody gathers in a circle and the finished book is then brought in to a fanfare and cheering and placed in the centre of the room.



Final Reflection:

In pairs, share what you feel grateful for today and then everybody looks around at everybody else.

Thank everyone who made the day possible.

Group Photo with the book.



We then opened the bar and had music for two hours with some of our talented local young people. This felt like a really good way to end the day.

Credits, Thanks and Further Information

This Totnes event was only possible because of the many people who came together to make it a reality. The content group who planned and designed the day was Jacqi Hodgson, Thea Platt, Emma Hopkins, Ruth Ben-Tovim, Jenny Gellatly, Mary Coughlan-Clarke, Sylvia Dell, Claire Alford, Anna Lopez, Rob Hopkins.

Thanks to all our amazing provocateurs, to the music team Will Benzies, Beth Bee-Love and Rowland O'Connor, Sarah Parker and all our wonderful musicians Kuki and the Bard, Lily and Che and Booshka. To the facilitators, Ruth Ben Tovim and Rob Hopkins and their co-facilitators, Jenny Gellatly and Rob Shorter. Thank you also to all our amazing provocateurs. Thanks to everyone who helped on the day, those who set up and cleared up (for some hours!), to all the food angels, co-ordinated by Emma Hopkins, who cooked and prepared food for the day and those that sustained us keeping us fed and watered.

Thanks finally to Riverford, Ben's Wine and Tapas, Greenlife, The Kitchen Table, Food in Community, Almond Thief Bakery, New Lion Brewery, Ben's Farm Shops and Schumacher College for their generous donations to the food and the bar.

The day also included materials designed for the Culture Declares Assembly on 8th July at the Roundhouse, London, facilitated by Kay Michael, Ruth Ben-Tovim, Lucy Neal and from Extinction Conversations with Extinction and Religion Network facilitated by Anne-Marie Culhane and Ruth Ben Tovim. Giant book was first developed by Tooting's Lucy Neal as part of Transition Town Anywhere (LIFT'08 and 2012 Transition Conference BAC) and more recently at Culture Declares Emergency Assembly, Roundhouse July 2019.

For further information about the groups and organisations involved in designing and delivering the day please see their websites:

Transition Town Totnes www.transitiontowntotnes.org

Extinction Rebellion Totnes & Local Area www.facebook.com/groups/xrtotnes

Encounters Arts www.encounters-arts.org.uk

Totnes Town Council www.totnestowncouncil.gov.uk

Bridgetown Alive! www.facebook.com/BridgetownAliveUK

Fridays for Future www.fridaysforfuture.org