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Date: June 15th, 2006

Powerdown Community Bulletin

Communication and resources for managing the transition to a low energy Ireland

Vol 1 No 1 June 2006

Welcome to the Powerdown Community Bulletin in which we bring together news, events and other initiatives from around Ireland of community-based responses to Peak Oil and the Energy Crises. Richard Heinberg popularised the term "Powerdown" with his book of that title, a follow-up to the seminal "The Party's Over". Richard continues to inspire and educate the growing global Powerdown Community with his books and monthly museletter

We would also like to draw your attention to a community learning resource being developed by the Cultivate Centre in Dublin, the Powerdown Community Toolkit. This will provide a wealth of material including readings, DVDs and multi-media, as well as suggested practical steps a community can take to reduce its dependency on fossil fuels.

Interactive web pages dedicated to supporting all your 'Powerdown' efforts are now available on sustainable.ie

Many thanks to all the contributors. Please send us items for the next bulletin by the end of June. [powerdown \(at\) sustainable.ie](mailto:powerdown@powerdown.ie)

In this Bulletin:

- 1) **What is Powerdown Community?**
- 2) **Powerdown Community Toolkit**
- 3) **Skilling Up for Powerdown**
- 4) **Energy Descent Action Plans**
- 5) **Zero Carbon Cities Conference in Dublin**
- 6) **Permaculture and Powerdown Camp Out**
- 7) **Vital Viewing: "A Crude Awakening - The Oil Crash" Premier at Galway**
- 8) **Peak Oil and Representing Ireland at the UN**
- 9) **Transition Towns - Willits and Kinsale**
- 10) **FEASTA – Nuclear Briefing by David Fleming**
- 11) **ASPO conference in Cork City**
- 12) **Powerdown Community Network**
News from Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Mayo, Meath, and Kerry

1) What is Powerdown Community?

Inspired by the book "Powerdown" by Richard Heinberg, Powerdown Community is a network of community groups around Ireland who aim to find creative, pro-active responses to the immanent peak in world oil and gas supplies. The current globalised economic system will not be able to continue without abundant liquid transport fuels and we will instead have to relocalise our lives, meeting much of our basic needs from within our region once again.

Each community will have to develop strategic plans for reducing dependency on imported energy in all its forms, and give their members the tools they need for self-reliance. Rather than painting a "gloom and doom" scenario, we feel that now is also an opportunity to reduce our environmental impact, especially in terms of carbon emissions, and work together to create more balanced and healthy communities.

The building of the 'Powerdown Community' will be facilitated through this bulletin and the dedicated web-pages on sustainable.ie, and will feed into the the 'Energy Descent Action Planning' process that is emerging here in Ireland and worldwide. Over the next year it is hoped that subscribers will feed into the development of a new Cultivate Learning Resource, the 'Powerdown Toolkit' and then use this resource to help their communities to plan their energy descent.

2) Powerdown Community Toolkit

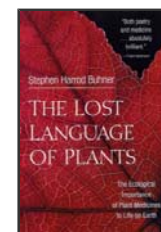
As mentioned this bulletin and web pages will help to develop a learning resource to

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Book Review Page



empower communities to 'powerdown.' This project is being initiated by the Cultivate Centre in Dublin and is called the Powerdown Community Toolkit. Using the energy and climate crisis as an opportunity and catalyst the project will encourage active citizenship, build community and strengthen the local economy through the delivery of a learning resource. This resource will be developed in partnership with national and international organisations and partners. Activities of this project include the building of an online community which will encourage collaboration in the development of the learning resource. This community will also help in the initial dissemination of the resource.

The 'toolkit' will contain a course, which will be delivered through a CD ROM and an accompanying handbook and programme will be developed to train trainers to deliver this course into their communities. Feedback and further resource development will be facilitated through a website where updates for the resource and new information for trainers can be posted. This resource will provide a wealth of material including readings, DVDs and multi-media, as well as suggested practical steps a community can take to reduce its dependency on fossil fuels. More on this next month.

3) What is Community Energy Descent Action Planning?

Rob Hopkins describes 'Energy Descent as - "the continual decline in net energy supporting humanity, a decline which mirrors the ascent in net energy that has taken place since the Industrial Revolution. It also refers to a future scenario in which humanity has successfully adapted to the declining net energy availability and has become more localised and self-reliant. It is a term favoured by people looking towards energy peak as an opportunity for positive change rather than an inevitable disaster". The term Energy Descent Action Planning therefore is the process where communities plan how they manage their resources to ensure a smooth transition to an energy constrained world. For an overview of the term see Rob's Transition Culture Blog or Adam Fenderson's 'Eat The Suburbs'

4) Skilling Up for Powerdown

This event was the first event of the Powerdown Community project and one of the events at the eleventh Convergence Sustainable Living Festival which took place from April 19 to 23 at the Cultivate Centre in Dublin. The festival focused on the topic of 'Learning To Live With Less Fossil Fuel'

'Skilling Up for Powerdown' was designed for people working in sustainable education, activism, energy and community development and explored how we can prepare and re-skill our communities for the huge shocks ahead. Using the 'World Café' approach, thirty participants from Ireland and the UK worked collaboratively to identify how we might facilitate the 'Great Reskilling', and empower our communities with visions of what kind of a future we could create. Facilitated by Second Nature and Cultivate the day set out with the question, 'How can we empower our communities with a vision for life without oil?'. Rob Hopkins got the conversation going asking the question, 'Is Peak Oil a crisis or an opportunity for communities?'. After discussion at and between tables Rob asked a second question, 'How can communities plan for life with less oil?'. In the afternoon conversations were started by Graham Strouts and Davie Philip who asked, 'How do we communicate this issue to our communities and beyond?' and 'What are the skills we need to learn and the training and education we need to put in place to respond to oil peak?'. For a more detailed report from Rob Hopkins see Transition Culture

5) Zero Carbon Cities Conference in Dublin

The convergence of challenges, most particularly global warming and peak oil, have brought us to a point where we now need to act decisively and to 'rethink how we use energy. This could mean a healthier, more fulfilled and ethical way of life that values efficiency, community and sustainability. Many designers, planners, architects, engineers, and citizens are rethinking energy use in the urban environment, and this full day conference hosted by Cultivate Centre and the British Council will examine some of these ideas in the context of reducing the carbon footprint of our communities.

Featured Presentations will examine the issues from the global and city scale to individual

buildings, transport, and the integration of systems to create healthy, low carbon communities. For a PDF schedule click [here](#)

June 22, 2006 | Dublin | 9:00-17:30
 Corporate €175.00 / Concession € 135.00 / Individual €150.00 /
 Cultivate Sustainable Living and Learning Centre
 15-19 Essex Street West, Temple Bar, Dublin 8, Ireland
 Phone: +353 1 674 5773 or email: bookings@cultivate.ie

NOTE- If any subscriber wants to attend this event and has a problem with the cost call Davie on 01 6746396 to discuss.

6) Permaculture and Powerdown Workshop Camp Out

Come and join us at Cloughjordan, the site for one of Europe's most innovative sustainability projects- "The Village"- for a weekend introduction to Permaculture and community responses to the energy crises. Course Leaders: Davie Philip works at the Cultivate Centre in Dublin and has been organising events at the cutting edge of solutions-based environmentalism for over 10 years and is a founding member of The Village. Graham Strouts co-ordinates the Practical Sustainability course in Kinsale. He holds the Diploma in Applied Permaculture Design and for the past 2 years has been involved with raising awareness about responses to Peak Oil.

At the Village Project, Cloughjordan, North Tipperary
 Organised as part of the Powerdown Community Project by the Cultivate Centre
 Begins Thursday evening July the 27th to Sunday July 30th
 Cost: Camping €150 / €100 for village and cultivate members and students / dormitory €175
 (Includes course materials and three nights accommodation in Cloughjordan)

Permaculture is a practical design method which uses natural systems as a model for sustainable human settlements. Through a combination of instruction and hands on application, the course immerses participants in the theoretical, physical and social aspects of eco-villages, community living, and Permaculture.

Topics will include: - permaculture design principles; - the home food-garden; - woodland management; - integrated permaculture design for The Village; - community responses to Peak Oil

This event will be of benefit to people with no experience in permaculture and people who have taken a full permaculture design course. It is being run as part of Cultivate's Powerdown Project and will be of interest to any one with an interest in Peak Oil, community and energy descent planning .

For more information and directions call Davie on 01 674 6396

7) Vital Viewing: 'CRUDE AWAKENING – The Oil Crash' Premier

A major new Peak Oil film, 'CRUDE AWAKENING – The Oil Crash' will be screened at this year's Galway Film Fladh at 17:00 on Saturday the 15th in the Town Hall Theatre. Graham Strouts and Davie Philip from the 'Powerdown Project' will facilitate a discussion on the subject of 'Peak Oil' after the film in the Town Hall.

This new 90 minute documentary, which is produced and directed by award-winning European journalists and filmmakers Basil Gelpke and Ray McCormack, tells the story of how our civilization's addiction to oil puts it on a collision course with geology. Compelling, intelligent, and highly entertaining, the film visits with the world's top experts and comes to a startling, but logical conclusion – our industrial society, built on cheap and readily available oil, must be completely re-imagined and overhauled. The Galway Film Fleadh, now in its 18th year of promoting and showcasing the very best in new and classic Irish and World cinema. Click for Full Report

8) Peak Oil and Representing Ireland at the UN

A couple of months ago Davie Philip took up an opportunity to attend a UN conference in New York and managed to squeeze in three Peak Oil events in the same trip, here is his report.g

In May 2006 the UN Commission on Sustainable Development held a conference in New York which focused on climate change and energy for sustainable development. As the theme of our current programme at the Cultivate Centre in Dublin is how we respond the twin issues of Peak Oil and Climate Change, I jumped at the opportunity to go as part of the Irish delegation.

Prior to the UN Conference, there was another NYC conference billed as the 'woodstock' of all Peak Oil events. They had chosen 'Local Solutions to the Energy Dilemma,' as the theme. So I arrived armed with a microphone and my cameraman Eoin Campbell, from the Village Communication Group ready for action. We interviewed the majority of the speakers and recorded their presentations for the Powerdown Community Project. It was also an opportunity for informal discussion and networking and the 'Peak Oil' movement was there in force. We talked at length with many of the thinkers in the field including Megan, Pat and Faith from Community Solution, Greg Green from the End of Suburbia and Julian Darley from the Post Carbon Institute. Highlights for us were James Howard Kunstler and Michael Rupert 's talks and the final presentation of the event, which was given by Geoff Lawton one of the world's experts in "permaculture."

[Click here for a full report](#)

9) Transition Towns - Willits and Kinsale

The process of economic localization was the focus of a visit to Kinsale on May 5th-6th by Brian Weller of Willits Economic Localization (W.E.L.L.) in northern California. The event, organised by Louise Rooney of Transition Design, attracted about 50 people to the Trident Hotel in Kinsale on the Friday night to hear Brian speak, and 30 people from communities around Kinsale, Cork County and beyond who attended the seminar the following day.

Brian Weller was a co-founder with Jason Bradford, of W.E.L.L. in 2004. They began by giving film screenings of "The End of Suburbia" and holding regular meetings to formulate the community's response. Since then, and in a very short period of time, a process which Brian calls an "adhocracy" has emerged by which nearly the entire community of the town of 6,000 people surrounds of 15,000 have been engaged. [Click here for a full report by Graham Strouts](#)

10) FEASTA – Nuclear Briefing by David Fleming

FEASTA: The foundation for the Economics of Sustainability aims to identify the characteristics (economic, cultural and environmental) of a truly sustainable society, articulate how the necessary transition can be effected and promote the implementation of the measures required for this purpose. On April 19th at the last Convergence festival FEASTA launched a new briefing on the subject of nuclear power.

Nuclear power promises much. It is based on a process which does not produce carbon dioxide. It is produced in a relatively small number of very large plants, so that it fits easily onto the national grid. And there is even the theoretical prospect of it being able to breed its own fuel. So, what's the problem? This document titled, 'Why Nuclear Power Cannot Be A Major Energy Source' was written by David Fleming and was published in collaboration with the New Economics Foundation. It can be read in html format [here](#) and downloaded in pdf format at (400 K) [here](#). The presentation by Dr David Fleming together with responses by John McGuirk of the Freedom Institute and Nuala Ahern of the Green Party at the 11th Convergence Festival, can now be downloaded from the FEASTA site in mp3 format [here](#)

FEASTA The Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability www.feasta.org

11) ASPO Conference Held in Cork City

Some 70 delegates from business, farming and community groups attended "Peak Oil: Business Threats and Opportunities" was the title of the first ASPO Ireland conference, held at the Maryborough Hotel and Spa Douglas, Cork City on the May 31st 2006.

ASPO is the Association for the Study of Peak Oil and Gas, founded by oil geologist and Grandfather of Peak Oil, Dr. Colin Campbell 1997. This event was organised by Katie Buckley of ASPO- Ireland, and chaired by RTE journalist Philip Boucher-Hayes, whose recent radio series on Peak Oil has done much to bring the concept into the average household. Click here for a full report by Graham Strouts

12) Powerdown Community Network

News from Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Mayo, Meath, and Kerry

Community Garden Project in Kinsale

The process to develop Kinsale as an Urban Sustainability Model, co-ordinated by Louise Rooney of Transition Design, moved forward at the council meeting of May 3rd with presentations by Permaculture students from the Kinsale Further Education College of designs they had done for a proposed community garden. Some of the designs for the garden- an area of scrubland along the Glen next to the old waterworks- were put on the walls for the councillors to take a closer look at, after presentations by Louise and Robbie Foley. Click for full report by Graham Strouts

Newbridge Group Pioneer Local Energy Forum

An Energy Forum, organised by the Newbridge Integral Philosophy Group, was held in Newbridge, Co Kildare on 10th April last. Graham Strouts, Coordinator of the Practical Sustainability Course at Kinsale Further Education College, was the main speaker, addressing the topic of peak oil. Also addressing the Forum was Imelda Carew of the R.A.C.E. Mountmellick project in Co Laois. The Forum was attend by 90 people, 30 of whom expressed a wish to gather again for the viewing of the DVD "The End of Suburbia". Click for full report by Eamonn Parker

Kerry News - The Looming Energy Crisis and How We Can Deal With It

Síol Chiarraí / Friends of the Earth South Kerry organised a series of talks in Killarney by internationally renowned speakers analysing the looming energy crisis and offering practical suggestions of how we as individuals, communities and nations can address these crucial issues. This series was titled, "The Heresy of 'Business as Usual' - The Looming Energy Crisis and How We Can Deal With It". Click here for full report

Dingle Peninsula to host Colin Campbell presentation

Susie Miller is involved in increasing the awareness for the Dingle Peninsula (a bioregion) in matters of Sustainability, the advantages of Organic Agriculture, Peak-Oil, Spiritual tie-in of Peak Oil - Spiritual Evolution - Grassroots coming to Power. She is doing this through talks, a newsletter, and film screenings. Susie has arranged for Dr. Colin Campbell to give his presentation on the Oil Crisis at The Skellig Hotel, Dingle on 8th July at 8.00 p.m. ALL WELCOME No Fee - Donation Box for further information contact Susie

Mayo Energy Descent Action Plan

This will take the form of a study into current energy usage in Mayo and into the various options for reducing energy use and developing renewables. At present 96% of the energy used in Mayo is imported from outside the county, almost all of it derived from fossil fuels. One scenario for the year 2036 suggests that the county could be more or less self sufficient in energy if energy consumption per capita were reduced by 50% over the next 30 years. This is an achievable target. Click here for a full report by Andy Wilson

News from the North West

Energy has been producing an unusually fine and luxuriant crop of the usual mixed signals from officialdom up here in the last few weeks. This has been on foot of two recent events in Letterkenny. At the launch of Wood Energy Week, Forestry Minister Mary Wallace TD, revealed that "wood fuels could meet an additional 5% of Ireland's energy needs and Donegal could play a major role in this". Well I suppose almost anything could happen, but an additional 5% to what exactly you might well ask? Click here for a full report by Roger Adair

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**<< Previous: Powerdown
Community**

| Archive Index |

**Next: Powerdown Community
Bulletin - July 06 >>**

(archive rss, atom)

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It is expected that the world's economy will falter and significantly slow down as global oil production peaks, we therefore need to rethink how we are doing things and prepare ourselves to go further by weaning ourselves from our addiction to oil. This could mean a healthier, more fulfilled and ecologically sustainable way of life that values community and the local economy. The Powerdown Community Bulletin has been set up through www.sustainable.ie to keep people informed on the many initiatives around Ireland and beyond on the opportunities of Peak Oil.

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