Minutes of the meeting of the Transition Cambridge Food Group
The Geldart, Ainsworth Street
15.7.2009

Present: Jerry Carr-Brion, Dave Fox, Phillipa Grimstone, Ivan Ivanovic, Anne Murray, Jason Palmer, Martin Roach, Nicola Terry, Pippa Vine, Kim Warren

Apologies: Jacky Sutton-Adam, Rowan Wylie

1. Minutes
The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

2. Matters arising
   i) The question of who would contact Marlene Taylor about giving a talk arose. Ceri had brought up the matter initially, but Martin agreed to take it forward.
   Actions: Martin
   ii) It was noted that the maximum sum for Co-op grants was now £2,000, not £5,000.
   iii) Rowan reported that she had now made contact with Hilary about the design of publicity material, and hoped to meet her next week. Pippa agreed to attend the meeting if available.
   iv) It was reported that the webpages had been updated with a link to the SDC report, the list of ideas from Environment Week, and a link to Real Seeds (the owners of which company had been local).
   v) Ivan reported that he had looked at the application form for the Lush grants, and it appeared straightforward. Anna McIvor had been contacted about the grant, but had not yet replied. Pippa agreed to try to establish whether the Steering Group was intending to apply for a grant from the company. It was noted that printing costs could be added to the list of things to ask for, and that the Grow Your Own course was not certain to happen.
   Actions: Pippa
   vi) It was reported that the Council could supply wheelie bins as recycled water containers. A link could be found on the Council website.
   vii) Kim drew attention to the competition and radio interview that had formed part of the Big Weekend event. The competition had been a good way to draw people in. It was suggested that the winner’s name be put on the group’s webpages (subject to her agreement).
   viii) Dave gave Alistair Wilson as the Council contact regarding the possibility of utilising unused land (possibly plots that were too small to be considered for allotments) for growing food, and said that it would need to be incorporated into planning policy. Ivan agreed to contact him.
   Actions: Ivan.
   ix) Phillipa reported that she had contacted the Hackney Growing Communities project about a possible visit, but had not yet had a response. The website suggested that informal weekday visits were possible at certain times, but something more structured would be preferable.
   x) There was some discussion about the possible Wimpole CSA, which Nicola had tried to get information about (without success). The use of National Trust land for growing food was also discussed.
   xi) Jerry reported that manure, vegetable sharing, more allotments, and growing schemes in schools had all been discussed at the Open Space meeting. Nicola agreed to link the discussion pages on the main Transition Cambridge webpages to the Food Group ones.
   Actions: Nicola.

3. Garden Share scheme
Neither Jacky nor Rowan were present to report on progress. It was noted that another request for help with the scheme had not yet been put into the Transition Cambridge bulletin. Nicola agreed to do this.
Actions: Nicola.
4. Grow Your Own
The final session of the first course had taken place. Anne, a participant, gave her views on the course. She had learned about it via the Transition Cambridge bulletin and her allotment (Stourbridge Grove). She felt that it had been very useful for someone who had got an allotment, but had no knowledge of growing vegetables. She appreciated the theory sessions as a way of getting the group to gel from the start, and liked the fact that they started from scratch. She learned a lot from the practical sessions, and found working with experienced growers very useful, as they showed real situations often not seen from books, showed that things could be done in more than one way, and inspired confidence because they experimented, and also did not always succeed with every crop, even with years of experience. The number of tutors involved was a definite advantage. She felt that there could perhaps have been a little more about planning crops, and that the course was almost embarrassingly cheap. More could easily be charged.

Discussion about future courses followed. Land for the practical sessions was an issue. It had only been by chance that a member of the Trumpington allotment site had been prepared to let her plot be used for the course while away. Several people said that they would be prepared to let parts of their plots be used. School grounds, or allotments belonging to community groups were also suggested. The group for the initial course had been large (ca. 25 people), and this had meant that it had to be split up into smaller groups, and so more tutors were needed. There had also been logistical problems with managing so many people on the allotment site. It was suggested that 8-10 would be the ideal group size. Ideally the course needed a wet weather option. A single rainy day at a weekend was catered for under the first course's arrangements, but would not deal with a particularly wet season. It was agreed that tutors should be paid, but this raised a potential issue of paying tutors who were using allotment land to teach, as making profit from allotments was not allowed. However, it was thought that this could be circumvented if necessary. The possibility of further education colleges taking on the running of a similar course was raised. These would probably not embody the Transition ideal, or be able to provide the same range of tutors. It would probably also not be possible to set them up before September 2010 at the earliest. It was felt that a Transition-run course was the ideal, if it could be organised, as it was good publicity for the Food Group, and one of its major successes to date. It was thought that at least some of the tutors would be involved again, though Kim and Dave would not be available. Volunteers would be needed for the administration side. It was suggested that a course might be jointly run with Cambridge Carbon Footprint, to share the workload.

A social event for those on the first course was planned for October, and further feedback would be sought then.

5. Events
The scheduling of events, and how to present the work of the group were both discussed. It was felt that the group should target a certain number of events per year, rather than simply responding to invitations ad hoc. One per month was thought to be sufficient (although events were more likely to occur in the summer than in the winter, so this would not necessarily work). The Cambridge Food, Garden and Produce Festival (19-20 September), Mill Road Winter fair, and possibly an apple day were suggested for the remainder of the year. Martin agreed to liaise with Maggie Craig about the latter. A "kit" which could be taken to all events was discussed. Some felt that it should be transportable by bicycle if at all possible. Others thought that it would not be possible to create something small enough to be transported this way, especially if a big display was needed, e.g., lots of seedlings. Bike trailers were discussed. The Council had one which could be borrowed by community groups. It was suggested that design students might be used to address the design of a display. Pippa agreed to contact Anglia Ruskin University to ask if any would be interested (although most students would
not be there at the moment). It was agreed that the matter should be discussed again at a further meeting.
Actions: Martin, Pippa

6. Possible grant opportunity
See Matters arising. Ivan agreed to draft a proposal.
Actions: Ivan.

7. Publicity
It was agreed that a PR strategy and mission statement were needed. The group's aims were on the website, but perhaps needed re-wording.

Martin asked those who had incurred costs for publicity material to notify him.

8. Permaculture
Ivan had sent Hannah Thoroughgood's details to Ceri. As Ceri was not present, there was no further discussion of the matter.

9. CSAs / food co-operatives
Ivan reported that he had drafted a piece about CSAs. It was agreed that it should be put on the group's wiki so that it could be commented on. It was noted that there was a Soil Association course on CSAs in September. Nicola agreed to put an item about them into the Transition Cambridge bulletin, to try to gauge interest in them.
Actions: Nicola.

10. EERA
It was suggested that members should read the SDC report, and perhaps relay comments from it to EERA. A link to the report was on the group's website.

Next meeting
The Geldart room would be booked for 7.30pm on 12 August. Dave agreed to chair.

14. AOB
(i) The West Kirby national survey of council allotments was brought to the group's attention.
(ii) It was agreed that a piece on seed-saving should be put into the Transition Cambridge bulletin.