

## **Transition Chepstow** **Update** **October 2011**

Transition Chepstow was involved in a couple of "outreach" events this summer. The Green Gathering 2011, which was held at Chepstow Racecourse this year, and Chepstow Agricultural Show. Transition Chepstow working groups and others in the community have been busy progressing a number of projects, as detailed below.

### **Food Group**

The Landshare is growing amazing amounts – and sizes - of fruit and vegetables. 2012 planning has started for the 500m<sup>2</sup> Transition Chepstow plot and a Seed Swap event is planned for November.

Apple Day is also growing because of its success!

This year it is being held over 2 days:

- Juicing Day on 29<sup>th</sup> October focusing on hands-on pressing of apples and pears.
- Apple Day on 30<sup>th</sup> October with the information and activities centred on apples. . More details [here](#) - <http://www.transitionchepstow.org.uk/event/?event=74>

### **Wildlife Group**

In July the group had an enjoyable evening walk in the Forest of Dean led by a Forestry Commission ranger. They saw/heard nightjar, glow worms, and tawny owl. Their walk on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August included a plant survey of medicinal and edible plants.

### **Health & Consciousness Discussion Group**

This group continues to meet monthly to discuss topics such as "promoting health – failures and successes" and "growing your own fruit and veg".

### **Litter Picking Group**

The monthly litter pick for September focused on the route of the new Wales Coastal Path which starts in Chepstow. The first section of the path (from Chepstow to Blackrock) was opened on the 19<sup>th</sup> September by the Welsh Government Minister for the Environment, John Griffiths, with Paul Gowen, head of the litter picking group, invited to attend.

### **Reuse and Recycling**

Our 'Plastic Bag Free Chepstow' campaign was wrapped up with a stall at the Co-op supermarket on the 26<sup>th</sup> August. The Carrier Bag Levy which came in to force at the beginning of this month should complete what was started by initiatives like ours, Monmouth's and Abergavenny's.

Looking forward, the next 'Give it Away – Take it Away' reuse event will be held at Chepstow Comprehensive School on the 16<sup>th</sup> October from 10 to 4.

### **Transport**

Lots happening in the school yard...

#### ***Pembroke Primary School Bike Club, Chepstow***

As our 6 week pilot after-school Bike Club was so successful, we decided to

apply for a grant from 'Bike Club' to develop our project further. (Official sponsors of 'Bike Club' are CTC, UK YOUTH, ContinYou and Youth Scotland).

Our application was successful and we have been awarded a grant of £2468.94. With this money we have planned training for the volunteer supporters of the Bike Club (Ride leader and Ride Manager courses, Youth Achievement Awards, Bike Maintenance and National Standards Cycle Training). We are also buying a tool kit and work stand to repair and maintain the club members' bikes and also teach young people how to do this themselves.

Bike Club will run all year. We started in September with over 60 enthusiastic children and some very supportive parent volunteers. We have a fun-packed activity schedule some of which will include fund raising rides to buy new bike stands as the current ones are constantly overflowing and to learn about cycling as a sustainable method of transport.

We are accepting donations of children's and adult bikes that are in repairable condition. These will be for our newly qualified mechanics to practice on and then to loan to club members who may not have a bike themselves.

But once they finish their training...

### **Wye Valley Cycle Path**

Sadly, despite Sustrans' reassurances that they're still keen to pursue planning permission from MCC, the process has stalled as Sustrans are now evidently prioritising their efforts on Connect2 schemes elsewhere which can be completed within the lottery funding window. MCC and Sustrans seem to blame each other for delays. Either way, the current obstacle is a parking agreement in Tintern. Given that support for the path amongst residents and businesses in Tintern is overwhelmingly favourable, the lack of coordinated effort to set up a forum to discuss/resolve these issues is lamentable, especially when one considers the MCC UDP and Planning Policy Wales which give full backing for this sort of scheme. It would be nice to see MCC make a positive commitment to progressing the matter by convening a Tintern parking meeting for all interested bodies at the earliest possible opportunity.

And finally trains ..

### **Better Trains for Chepstow**

**1. CrossCountry Trains.** Since May CrossCountry trains have been stopping 14 additional trains at Chepstow as part of a year's trial. The service has been advertised and promoted by businesses in Chepstow and brochures - "*Chepstow & the Lower Wye by public transport*" - have been widely distributed especially in Birmingham.

These extra services are well patronised and it is our aim to have them made a regular feature. We will continue to press for all these trains to stop a step towards providing the town with a much needed regular and predictable train service. These trains provide a faster service to Cardiff.

**2. Arriva Trains Wales.** Since 2008 the aim for Sewta/MonCC, outlined in their Regional Transport Plan, has been for an hourly service on the Chepstow line by 2010 increasing to half hourly in 2014.

There is no sign that these aspirations have made any tangible progress. The Welsh Assembly Government who would have to authorise

the change and include it in their National Transport Plan appear to remain unaware of these intentions by Monmouthshire CC.

Last year Sewta/Mon CC commissioned consultants to write two reports: A Strategy Review and a Chepstow Line Study. We hoped that these documents would examine the options and costs for implementing the required changes on the Chepstow Line and provide the necessary data to enable authorisation and implementation to proceed.

**3. The Sewta Rail Strategy Review.** Completed in June 2011.

Much of this 44 page report was taken up with summarising previous reports describing the railway and little detail of relevance to this area or the options considered. It contained no reference to the critical Benefit/Cost ratios that determine whether a scheme is viable.

All the detail we were interested in was apparently contained in a 276 page Technical Appendix. This Appendix has been deemed to be commercially secret and we have been denied access by Sewta. We are continuing to seek access despite the refusal.

**4. The Chepstow Line Study.** Also completed in June 2011.

This report has not been released for us to see but we understand it contains plans for a car park at Chepstow station and a new bridge with lifts.

We have journeyed to three presentations relating to these reports. On both of those by Mark Youngman, Chairman of the Sewta Rail Group and Transport Prevention Officer with Monmouthshire CC, his computer failed and we were unable to see his presentation slides. We learnt very little.

We have no reason to doubt that Jacobs have done their work thoroughly, but we are at a loss to understand the reluctance to reveal what the proposals are or the options that have been considered. Holding on to this report for 4 or 5 months is inexcusable.

**5. Extension of 69 Bus service to Chepstow Station.**

Earlier this year I was pleased to report that it had been agreed to extend the Monmouth – Chepstow service down to the station commencing in May (coinciding with the extra trains!).

I regret to say that problems in the Transport Section at Monmouthshire CC prevented this happening. If I get news I'll let you know.