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Thinking Globally and Acting Locally

Jean Ball and Jane Reynolds, Transition Buxton

‘Make do and mend’ was the mantra my Second World War-surviving parents lived by throughout their lives. Like so many of that hard-working and resourceful generation, they were masters at mending, recycling and what would today be described as ‘re-purposing’ or ‘upcycling’. They very seldom threw anything away.

So it was both refreshing and encouraging to see what volunteers Jean Ball and Jane Reynolds had to say about what Transition Buxton – a not-for-profit Community Interest Company founded in 2008 – does to promote environmental issues, community resilience and sustainability in the 21st century.

‘Thinking Globally, Acting Locally’ – doing what they can, with what they have, where they are – is their message, and encouraging as many people as possible to join them to make Buxton and the wider world a better place is their mission. A tall order, perhaps – but they have a selection of hands-on, locally-focused projects that anyone is welcome to get involved in if they want to make a practical difference in the community.

Jean and Jane explained that Buxton is just one of a network of 1200 ‘transition towns’ across the globe, of which a third are based in the UK. Like their volunteer counterparts across the world, their emphasis is very much on ‘doing’ and taking action in areas they can influence at a ‘grass roots’ level, while maintaining globally-focused principles.

Here are the key projects in their portfolio:

Buxton Community Orchard – Launched in 2009, this was one of the first initiatives that Transition Buxton undertook – based on an innovative project that took root in Sheffield during the Second World War. Since then, more than 120 trees (apples, plums and blackcurrant bushes) have been planted at 14 different locations and three schools in Buxton, on both private and publicly-owned sites with public access. The aim is to create community resilience by having fruit available free of charge to anyone who would like to pick it and use it. A location map can be viewed on the Transition Buxton website.

The Repair Café . Held on the 4th Saturday of every month at Buxton Methodist Church in the Market Place from 9.30am to 1pm (except July and December), this has been running for seven years and is very popular with anyone who has an item that can be mended instead of being thrown away. Items successfully mended range from hoovers and CD players to ceramics and textiles. “We find that people come back time and time again, sometimes even when they have nothing to fix!” said Jean. “Mending stuff you already have and continuing to use it, rather than throwing it away, is the most environmentally-friendly thing you can do. And the café also

brings people together to show each other how to mend things, so it's also a kind of 'community glue'."

The Library of Things - A collection of around 200 items ranging from carpet cleaners to gardening and decorating equipment that can be borrowed instead of bought, stored at Buxton Library, Kents Bank Road. Items can be ordered online and picked up between specified times on Mondays and Saturdays, for a maximum fee of £5-00. The intention is that people can borrow, rather than buy, expensive equipment that they don't use regularly, thus reducing potential waste. An electric Cargo Bike service is available to deliver large items.

Plastic-free Community Status – Transition Buxton has achieved this by persuading 20 businesses and five schools to commit to stopping the use of single-use plastic. Local businesses Day Zero Refill and the Herb Garden Café are at the forefront of his initiative, and the aim is to encourage even more local enterprises to pledge their support. Inspired by the huge amount of waste plastic discarded in Buxton town centre one Carnival Day, Transition Buxton also sells re-usable Buxton Cups at just £1 each, and these can also be loaned for large events. TerraCycle bins have also been installed in Buxton Methodist Church and the town's supermarkets to collect items such as rubber gloves and plastic chocolate packaging that can be recycled by the companies that manufacture them.

Textiles and Sustainable Fashion – These include Clothes Swaps so that people can exchange pre-loved clothes instead of buying new ones and 'Stitch, not Ditch' sessions to teach people how to modify and repair usable clothes that otherwise might be thrown away. Textile workshops in schools, teaching children basic skills such as taking up hems and sewing on buttons help to share basic skills with future generations and are very popular. A forthcoming event with a Hallowe'en theme, 'Upcycling with a Spooky Twist' in The Crescent's Assembly Rooms on Friday October 23 will aim to show families how to be creative and use existing materials to make masks and outfits, instead of buying them. The event is free to all and will run from 10am to 3pm. Donations of suitable materials can now be made at Buxton Library, The Pump Room and Buxton Station, and afterwards the bins will be left there to accept donations of wool in the future.

Transition Buxton is also involved in the **Re-use Shop** that opened at Derbyshire County Council's Waterswallows Recycling Centre near Buxton in September. Re-usable items ranging from children's bicycles to surfboards and garden ornaments are cleaned and resold to cut down on unnecessary waste. Electrical items are not currently accepted, though the intention is that they will be in the future.

Community Workshop – Focusing on carpentry, metalworking and gardening, this project is currently being planned, and, pending planning permission, the venue will be Buxton Workingmen's Club, off Fairfield Road. It is based on the 'men's sheds' principle of fostering good mental health by learning and sharing practical skills, but women will be welcome to get involved too. If the proposal comes to fruition, mini allotments in an L-shaped outdoor space will help participants learn to grow and use their own produce ."There is a generation of people who are good at making,

mending and building, but they are getting older, and we need to make sure those key skills are passed on to younger generations," said Jean.

Another scheme in its infancy is **Community Renewable Energy**, with the aim of generating solar and wind power for the benefit of the local community, providing cheaper renewable energy and making people's home more energy efficient.

Finally, Transition Buxton is one of 15 organisations known as the We are Buxton Community Forum involved in the Big Buxton Conversation 3, which will be held at Buxton Methodist Church on Saturday November 14 from 1.30pm to 5pm. Jean explained: "This will be a visioning exercise, bringing people together to create a shared vision of what they want Buxton to be in the future. We will be trying to arrive at a joint idea of what we want to be done. This is particularly important in the light of pending local government reorganisation and proposed 'locality plans'. We're trying to establish what future we want for the town, not what local government wants to impose upon us." There are 100 places, and 60 have already been taken. Free places can be reserved at https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/big-buxton-conversation-3-tickets-2001168560033

- **More information about Transition Buxton, including contact details, can be found at https://www.transitionbuxton.co.uk/ . The group is particularly keen to hear from prospective volunteers, as it continues and extends its portfolio of projects to ensure an environmentally-sustainable future for generations to come. As they so rightly point out: 'There is no Planet B!'**