



RS2010

**Regional Strategy for
England's Northwest**

February 2010

**A response
from Northwest
Transition Initiatives**

**Transition Chester
Transition Town Clitheroe
Transition Village Eastham
Transition Kendal
Transition Kingsley
Transition City Lancaster
Transition Liverpool South
Transition Initiative South Ribble
Transition Southport
Transition Town West Kirby
Transition Town Wigan**



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1 Introduction

The Transition movement¹ started in the UK in 2007 as a local response to the twin and linked prospects of the end of the oil era and climate change. Transition initiatives are community-led, coordinated programmes of action that enable local communities to avoid the worst impacts of these global challenges while building stronger, happier, healthier more inclusive, more self-sufficient communities. The work of Transition initiatives is diverse and generally involves strengthening local self-reliance in basic areas such as food production, energy saving and generation, maximising the use of land and water resources, waste minimisation and management, transport and freight reduction, skill-building and community empowerment and others related to local circumstances.

Building resilience into all the systems that we need to support community life is the key Transition principle. We believe that action at a local, community level using principles that reflect naturally resilient ecosystems, is critical to building low carbon, energy efficient human settlements. Alongside energy and food the inter-connected social, economic, cultural and technical components of healthy, functional communities also need to be made more resilient. Systems that are able to resist sudden shock show: diversity within and between themselves; have a modular structure that absorbs damage to the extent that the whole is not compromised and have feedback mechanisms so that we hear about developing problems before they become too big.

These principles have informed the development of this response to RS2010. We have deliberately focused our attention on what we consider to be the key aspects of the document. As a result we have provided a Transition perspective on the RS2010 Vision and Values, on each of the four policy strands, Climate, Economy, People and Infrastructure, and finally upon the Spatial Implications of the strategy. We hope you find these comments helpful in revising the document.

We welcome this opportunity to have an input to the development of the strategy. We believe that through the work of its current and future members, the NW Transition Network can play a positive role in strengthening the RS2010 and contributing to its delivery. During the development of Part 2 we would like to explore how we can best work with other regional partners to this end.

We feel well placed to contribute to the overall delivery of the strategy against the indicators within the Climate, People and Infrastructure strands and to make a measurable contribution to the Economy strand. For example, we can envisage working in a similar way to the recent Market Towns Initiative helping develop, serve and network Transition initiatives across the region. The existing Transition Network is the natural basis for the development of further local action to support many aspects of RS2010 and the Transition agenda. This would have significant benefits for both the delivery of the strategy and the people of the Northwest. The shape of such an initiative is open to discussion and design. It is not hard to imagine a myriad of Transition initiatives that grow and network to cover a sizeable part of the Northwest and combine local diversity with some common elements which support key objectives of RS2010.

¹ More information about the Transition movement and a list of NW Transition initiatives is provided in Annexe A.



2 RS2010 Vision and Values

The proposed Vision for the Northwest in RS2010 has some strong points and a number of areas where it can be strengthened. The current version is set out below followed by an extended version which incorporates Transition thinking.

2.1 Current RS2010 Vision

'The quality of life for the people of the Northwest will be excellent and the region will become more prosperous, more equitable and produce less carbon: by 2030 it will be a better place to live, learn, work, visit and invest, and where:

- we are well on the way to a low-carbon economy and lifestyle, using our nuclear and other assets to contribute to energy security and with low-carbon and resource efficient solutions embedded throughout our activities;*
- there are jobs for all in a highly productive, well-skilled, knowledge-based economy, attractive to private investment and internationally competitive;*
- deprivation, especially child poverty, has been eradicated and with high levels of health and social well being;*
- people have a good choice of high-quality, affordable and low-carbon homes, well connected to sustainable transport and with high-quality digital access for businesses and individuals; and*
- we are living within environmental limits and have enhanced our natural and built environments.'*

2.2 Transition Vision

The quality of life for the people of the Northwest will be excellent and fulfilling. The region will produce far less carbon and its people will live within limits presented by responsible environmental stewardship, global peak oil output and decline and climate change: by 2030 the Northwest will be a better place to live, learn, work, visit and invest, and where:

- our CO2 emissions are low in all sectors and areas of economic, social and domestic activity: business and industry, the public sector, domestic and housing, leisure and road transport;
- we have robust energy security facilitated by an extensive regional network of local micro-generated renewable energy producers. The average community-owned renewable energy company produces at least half of local energy requirements to meet locally devised plans for community energy security;
- the transport infrastructure has been radically transformed to reflect CO2 commitments and declining oil availability with public transport, bicycles and walking primary modes of transport.
- there are jobs for all in a highly productive, well-skilled economy which comprises a resilient blend of international, national, regional and local companies, businesses and social enterprises and where the environmentally sustainable economic superstructure is knowledge based and there are well-established networks of locally resilient food, goods and services providers in the private, community and public sectors;
- Northwest people of every age and from every community and minority are happy, with a strong sense of well-being, a positive view of the future and a sense of security in their own and their families' lives. This is engendered by high levels of physical and mental health, community cohesion, achievement of intellectual and skills potential, participation in civic life and enjoyment of arts, creative, cultural activities and sports.



- a thriving, well-resourced voluntary and community sector is involved in services and activities that contribute to community security in all its dimensions and provides volunteering and paid opportunities for local people;
- people have a good choice of high-quality, affordable and low-carbon homes in attractive green neighbourhoods in established communities with gardens or allotments in the immediate neighbourhood to grow food;
- businesses and homes will be connected to high-quality digital communications to facilitate home-working and provide access to leisure, on-line learning/ training, social networking and participation in local civic life, including democratic processes;
- all homes will be within a short walk or bike ride of well integrated, sustainable public transport and schools/ local multi-use centres providing quality school education, life skills and training, arts, culture, healthy living and sports venues for people of all ages;
- public facilities are set within, and are linked by, greenspace, including areas managed for wildlife. They are safely and readily accessible and a short distance from homes by foot and bicycle. Networked green and wildlife greenspace and water bodies/ wet areas reduce local temperatures in the warmest months of the year.
- local distinctiveness is valued and expressed through food, produce, cultural activities and celebrations. It is sustained physically through careful attention to locally relevant built form, massing, detailing and materials that contribute to energy efficiency. Local ecological character is expressed through greenspace and water bodies where biodiversity has increased and is increasing.
- we carefully look after our natural and built environments and heritage artefacts in a rolling management programme of enhancement and maintenance. The natural and built environments are integrated to provide rich and rewarding environmental experiences and contact with nature and its rhythms and cycles.
- The Northwest coastline, the sea, coastal settlements and the maritime hinterland are managed and developed with new recognition of their particular local, regional and international roles. New marine spatial plans are integrated with RS2010 to provide a more robust framework for the development of renewable energy generation programmes in or projected for these areas.

2.3 RS2010 Values

The RS2010 records that:

"a set of key values were identified through the Principles and Issues consultation, to underpin and shape the Regional Strategy to achieve the Vision. These highlight the importance of social inclusion, diversity and social mobility and the need to develop an increased sense of community and belonging. They argue the need for the region to work together, learn from the recession and to maximise the contribution of the private, public and third sectors to future sustainable growth".

These values are generally complementary to Transition values. Transition initiatives use and value:

- community action;
- stakeholder involvement;
- partnership working;
- networking and making links;
- well informed communities (fostering support and engagement);
- the resourcefulness and creativity of ordinary people;
- positive outlooks and optimism linked to:



- a capacity to define a shared vision of the future;
- planned steps to achieve realistic goals;
- diversity (in every domain);
- distinctiveness (in every domain);
- local knowledge (in every domain);
- community responsibility;
- cohesion and collective responsiveness;
- enrichment through engagement;
- respect for nature and natural systems;
- the natural goodwill in everyone;
- and the shared celebration of success.

While acknowledging the RS2010 values statement, reproduced above, we feel it could be usefully extended to incorporate more elements of the Transition approach framed by the values expressed here.

3 RS2010 Policy Strands

3.1 General assessment

Although we are generally supportive of the statement of values set out in RS2010, we are concerned that it has not been fully translated into the current version of the document. It seems that the strategy's main concern is to make the Northwest economically competitive on a global stage. It contains an unquestioned assumption of economic growth that might not be compatible with the new commercial operational requirements to deal with climate change. While we recognise that global and economic interests are properly considered in a document of this type, we consider that an integrated strategy needs to be much more rounded and should address more robustly and explicitly climate change, environmental and social concerns.

Having said that, the strategy does not explicitly promote economic development, with attendant carbon performance improvements, across the other sectors that are the bedrock of the Northwest's economy. We argue that to meet the Northwest's climate change and carbon reduction obligations we need to shift the whole economy onto a different level of environmental responsibility and performance.

We envisage the need for strategic, sector-specific and general initiatives that provide business support and guidance to ensure that economic development is linked, win-win fashion, to improved environmental performance across the sectors. We need targeted carbon-reducing development support for, amongst others, firms in: utilities and telecoms; transport, travel and motors; manufacturing and industrial; professional, business and financial services; textile and clothing; retail and mail order; leisure and tourism; food and drink; media, creative and digital. A similarly structured approach is needed to develop public and third sector activity in the region.

RS2010 is a key opportunity to put in place a regional strategy which promotes a step change in the North West's response to climate change. It needs to support the twin aspects of business culture and personal lifestyles and the adjustments that need to be made to them as oil reserves diminish.



We believe that the strategy is an important opportunity to develop policies promoting thorough responses in the private, public and community spheres. We would like to see strategic recognition given to the key role of community level action in meeting these challenges. On both counts we feel that the current document is weaker than it should be.

We are concerned that this strategy development needs to be ever mindful of the ultimate stakeholders - the communities and people of the Northwest. It is not solely a mechanism to strengthen the performance of global companies. While we need environmentally sound economic development, including global companies alongside and served by businesses at every scale, we need it primarily to support fulfilling lives for residents whose stake is the biggest of all: the sustainable future of the Northwest. Global companies can, and do, come and go.

We note that the north of England led the world into the industrial revolution, of which, arguably, climate change is the most unfortunate consequence. It seems wholly appropriate, if not a plain duty, for the north of England to lead the world in dealing with the problem. RS2010 identifies new business potential in the energy and technology sectors in the development of low-carbon goods and services. These opportunities come with an imperative in their exploitation. The NW must provide global, showcase models of sector-leading, best practice and performance in responding to the climate change challenge. RS2010 needs to recognise the value and scale of the potential impact of local community action as beneficial in itself and as a powerful agency of change when aggregated².

Our comments on the four policy strands set out below reflect our concerns. We believe the incorporation of Transition principles and values, already spreading across the globe, will add depth, quality and increased deliverability to the RS2010.

3.2 Strand 1 Climate

We fully support the emphasis placed upon climate change in RS2010. The document quite rightly identifies this as the biggest single challenge facing the world and the region over the next 20 years. It is therefore appropriate that the climate change strand is put forward as setting the overall context in which the other strands of the strategy will operate. We would like to see this much more robustly carried through. Indeed, we feel that this strand lacks the detail and depth that some of the other strands have.

Crucially, this strand does not mention the related issue of peak oil. To do so would strengthen the case for a speedy readjustment of current lifestyles and business culture in light of the prospect of rapidly rising energy prices and the decline of oil and natural gas supplies. This concern has been given added credence by a recently published report from

² Mass Localism: a way to help small communities solve big social challenges [including climate change]: NESTA; (Feb 2010) www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/MassLocalism_Feb2010.pdf (last accessed 23 February 2010).



the UK Industry Task Force³. The absence of a strategic response to peak oil is a major gap in the current version of the strategy. We hope that it will be properly addressed in the final version.

In broad terms we agree with the proposed shift to low carbon energy and technologies, though many in the movement have grave reservations about the proposed new reliance on nuclear technology. It is felt that a full life cycle analysis of this as a low carbon energy option needs further investigation. We fully support the strand's promotion of opportunities for small scale, distributed renewable energy generation and increasing the resilience of North West businesses, communities, infrastructure and natural systems to cope with the effects of unavoidable climate change. These are key areas of action for the Transition movement. However, in this context the movement would also emphasise the need to reduce energy demand through, among other things, localisation of lifestyles and supply chains. This dimension should be brought out more strongly in the strategy.

In addition we feel that the final version of RS2010 needs to reach down to grass-roots level here. Local communities and the third sector (often at its most active at this level) have a key role in responding to the challenges and opportunities of climate change and peak oil. They deserve recognition alongside housing, transport, and industry, in this strand. The adoption of National Indicator 186, *per capita reduction of CO2 emissions*, as a core RS2010 indicator would reflect the holistic response to these issues that is needed, which extends beyond a concern for the relationship between CO2 emissions and Gross Value Added (GVA).

3.3 Strand 2 Economy

Given the overarching concern for climate change, there is little in the four priorities in the Economy strand to suggest that the North West is intent on delivering a step change towards a low-carbon economy, beyond the search for new sources of economic growth associated with renewable, nuclear and low carbon technologies. While these technologies (with the caveats about the nuclear industry mentioned above) are certainly worthy of promotion in RS2010, as a whole this strand is disappointing from a Transition perspective. For example, the automotive sector is identified as a key economic strength in the region to be built upon, while more qualified support related to growth of low carbon vehicle production would seem to be more consistent with the proposed strategic importance being given to climate change concerns. Similarly, priority is being given to global connectivity through Liverpool Superport, John Lennon and Manchester Airports with potential negative climate consequences, through increased air traffic and tonnage and associated oil dependency. In contrast key rail investments, both within the region and in fast rail links to other parts of the UK and Europe do not feature here. The importance of digital connectivity is definitely worth emphasising and we note it is included in the Infrastructure strand.

As it stands, therefore, the economic strategy seems out of step with the need to mitigate and adapt to peak oil concerns as well as being limited in its delivery on climate change issues.

³ The Oil Crunch: a wake-up call for the UK economy. Second report of the UK Industry Task Force on Peak Oil and Energy Security (ITPOES); February 2010: www.peakoiltaskforce.net (last accessed 15 February 2010)



Equally significant, from a Transition perspective, is the failure to recognise the value of promoting economic resilience by actions to develop the local and regional domestic economy. Promoting diversity of activity across economic sectors, growing new, locally orientated businesses (including new forms of social enterprise) and developing regional /local connectivity and supply chains does not compromise a focus on global competitiveness.

A Transition perspective suggests that issues of regional/local economic resilience and self-sufficiency will be increasingly important measures of global responsibility in the face of climate change and of regional security in the future. These should run alongside GVA measures in assessing regional economic performance. At present there is little evidence of this thinking within the RS2010 document. The strategy should recognise the scope for a 'Green New Deal' and social enterprises delivering goods or services and multi-level benefits to communities, such as community cohesion and health through collective activities such as healthy living initiatives.

Finally, it is felt that the emphasis on international competitiveness and regional distinctiveness rather ignores the part that communities play in shaping the North West and all that it has to offer. The communities represented on Liverpool FC's Kop, the farming communities of the Lake District, the working class communities of the mill towns, the Moslem communities of the Pennine towns, and many others, all shape and animate the attractions of the Northwest. The communities of interest, along with minorities, also add to the diverse cultural mix that make the Northwest cosmopolitan and vibrant. These communities need recognition and sensitive strategic support. Just as much as physical facilities and environmental assets, the North West people and communities deserve recognition as a key part in making the region distinct and a good place to visit, invest in and live.

3.4 Strand 3 People

There is little in the four priorities identified in this strand that conflict with the Transition approach and there is much that is commendable. For example, from a Transition perspective, the emphasis on enterprise and skills development, and tackling issues of social exclusion, deprivation, ill health and inequality are all supportive of stronger more resilient communities. However, again, links to the overarching concern for climate change are ill-developed and implications of peak oil on people and communities are not acknowledged. This is a shame because many of the changes in lifestyle that will be required may be beneficial to individual and community wellbeing and there is reason for RS2010 to include them from a number of perspectives. For example, the quality of local neighbourhoods and the range of services and opportunities they offer will be brought to the fore as people try to minimise travel patterns. Even more attention to the quality of place and strength of community capital will therefore be needed.

We would like to see strategic mechanisms that empower local people to engage in mitigation and adaptation to the new realities of peak oil and climate change, whether this is through a Transition initiative or another form of action. Such a response is likely to highlight the need for new skills and approaches to personal and community development and regeneration. For example, those communities that have been subject to successive regeneration programmes and still suffer major deprivation might respond to a Transition approach that places the (capacity building) initiative within the communities themselves. Similar initiatives around housing coops have been successful across the UK over several decades.



3.5 Strand 4 Infrastructure

The RS2010's opening recognition of climate change as its overall context again does not carry through into the identified infrastructure priorities as strongly as it might do. We agree that it is a priority to devise an overall infrastructure that: is a balance between the need for economic development, local communities and visitors; minimises the environmental burdens placed on the planet through emissions and environmental degradation. However, there is no sign of the sort of strategic priority and policy making that will see step-changes in the move from private and commercial road use to public transport of the scale that will be needed to make sufficient contributions to carbon cuts. The strategy lacks specific commitments here, in contrast to the strategy's support for the development of Liverpool Superport, John Lennon and Manchester Airports . Again, the issue of peak oil is not addressed here.

Another important gap relates to development of a strong civic infrastructure at the neighbourhood level. In addition to accessible green infrastructure, high quality health, education, cultural and sporting provision and local shops and services are needed to support more localised lifestyles. We would like to see localism given specific attention at a regional strategy level in recognition of its importance in people's lives and the scope it offers to tackle big issues as we noted above in relation to the People strand (see footnote 2).

The green infrastructure is addressed by the strategy. We welcome this strategic view and hope that it is further developed and given enhanced priority to reflect the Northwest Green Infrastructure Prospectus' central concern that it is treated as a critical infrastructure. Further, we would like to see an integrated approach that links the RS2010's green infrastructure agenda with the strategic vision of the NW Green Infrastructure Prospectus and the use of locally customised Sustainability Checklists for Developments.

We note that green infrastructure is likely to have an increasing importance: in ameliorating some of the more extreme impacts of climate change such as reducing temperatures in summer; providing the land for local food production; binding the soil to reduce flash flood run-off damage on slopes; as international, national and regionally significant wildlife habitats and, very importantly, providing the spaces for leisure, recreation and mental and spiritual refreshment. It's worth repeating that green infrastructure is very important to Northwest people and directly affects our quality of life, our physical and mental health and wellbeing.

4 Spatial Implications

It is difficult to comment in a meaningful way about the spatial implications section of the document. The absence of a regional overview map is a significant omission making it very difficult to grasp regional priorities and areas of focus. The sub-regional maps seem to be merely representations of the areas of coverage with some current designations and initiatives shown. The inclusion of place names seems arbitrary and a hierarchy of centres and priority locations for investment is not clear. It is notable that the maps do not include reference to the region's rail infrastructure, while the motorway network is fully detailed. It is felt that this section of the report would benefit from significant additional detail and clarification if it is to be helpful.



Annexe A

The Transition movement

The Transition movement started in the UK in 2007 as a local response to the twin and linked prospects of the end of the oil era and climate change. Transition initiatives are community-led coordinated programmes of action that enable local communities to avoid the worst impacts of the coming global changes while building stronger, happier, healthier more inclusive, more self-sufficient communities.

Oil and gas reserves will pass their peak global yields in the near future then decline. The reduced availability and eventual loss of oil will be felt sharply both as a fuel for transport and heating, in oil-dependent food production and as the raw material of many other developed-world consumer products. The climate change associated with global and growing fossil fuel use will have serious, negative impacts on most communities across the globe.

Transition initiatives centre on communities in different types of settlement, from a small community, a village or city district to whole towns and cities. The work that different initiatives do relates directly to types of areas and communities they work within. The development of local responses and locally relevant programmes is both a defining characteristic and an important strength of the movement. However, all Transition initiatives are united in their core activities and the principles and values that underpin them.

The Transition approach emulates the efficiency of ecological systems. Biosystems such as forests, river systems and food chains operate with a waste-free internal use of energy and materials. In combination with each other they form complex networks that are resilient and mutually supportive. Transition initiatives mirror these characteristics at a local level.

There are now approximately 500 Transition initiatives around the world with some 200 Transition initiatives in the UK and around 25 in the Northwest, some in the early stages of formation. The Transition Network provides operational standards to ensure that initiatives with official "Transition" designation are sufficiently developed to work effectively in their community settings. The network provides significant support, training and information for members between whom there is much exchange and mutual support.

In the Northwest Transition initiatives are found across the geographical spread - north, south, east and west. The movement is growing in a bottom-up, sustainable way. A list of Northwest Transition initiatives is given on the next page. There are others in initiation and development stages.



NW Transition initiatives

Altringham, Hale & Bowden

Bolton

Cheadle Hulme

Chester

Clitheroe

Crewe

Eastham

Kendal

Kingsley

Lancaster

Leyland

Liverpool South

Macclesfield

Manchester

South Ribble

Southport

Stockport

Warrington

West Kirby

Wigan

Wilmslow

