

Transition BUXTON



Buxton Economic Resilience Study 2014

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Buxton, as anyone familiar with the town knows, has a lot to recommend it: at the heart of the Peak District, with a healthy tourist trade, exceptional architecture, and great community spirit.

We do, though, live in fast-changing and uncertain times: Buxton is feeling the effects of economic and environmental change, along with the rest of the world. The World's population continues to grow by over 75 million people (1.14%) a year, and has grown from 1 billion in 1800 to 7 billion in just over 200 years.

In England, population growth is predicted to continue at around 300,000 – 400,000 per annum¹. In 2011, population in the High Peak was forecast to increase by 10,000 people or 7,000 households by 2031², with more recent predictions³ forecasting High Peak resident numbers will increase by a more modest 7.5%, or just under 7,000 people (from 91,000 to 98,000) by the same date. Whatever figures prove to be accurate, we know we need to plan for more people.

Natural resources like oil, gas, land, and water cannot increase to keep up with consumption, and inevitably the price will increase (despite short term peaks and troughs), so how will we deal with increasing demand for decreasing or finite resources? The Transition movement is based on the principle that, as communities large and small, we need to prepare for and make the transition to a more sustainable economy, including reducing our consumption of finite resources such as fossil fuels. This report aims to pull together a clear picture of Buxton's existing economic resilience and potential future opportunities.

This approach is now moving from the margins to the mainstream, as evidenced by:

- the Government's recently published Community Energy Strategy, one of the main aims of which is to *Increase the proportion of home-grown low-carbon generation, while using less through an energy efficiency revolution*.⁴
- the emerging D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership low carbon strategy, which states *The significance of climate change and the low carbon economy is also likely to present commercial opportunities for the entire D2N2 business base either through the development and provision of low carbon goods and services, including low carbon housing and retrofit or through savings in areas such as energy or waste reduction, providing a market for local low carbon economy businesses.*

One of the first steps in making this transition is to measure and test the resilience of our existing local economic structures, so that we can identify opportunities to increase our resilience.

¹ <http://ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/snpp/sub-national-population-projections/2012-based-projections/stb-2012-based-snpp.html>

² see Derbyshire Population & Household Forecast Guide, February 2011

³ See table 2.2 <http://highpeak.objective.co.uk/file/3110855>

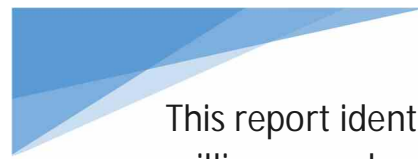
⁴ Dept of Energy and Climate Change . 2014 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-energy-strategy>

What is resilience?

Resilience is about our ability to withstand and adapt to shock and change – what former Crystal Palace manager, Iain Dowie, once called *bouncebackability*. Resilience, like happiness, emerges from a combination of things, in this case diversity, overlap, modularity, social capital, innovation, feedback, and valuing ecosystem services. We suggest this is what we need to build into our local economic system.

Through increasing self-reliance we can build strength and resilience into our community as well as our economy. The idea is not to ‘pull up the drawbridge’ and become a closed economy, but rather to work towards a gradual re-balancing of the economy, to create a ‘virtuous circle’, where local businesses can thrive, with the willing support of the local community, which in turn will provide more local employment, resources to improve local infrastructure, and so on.

In compiling the evidence base we have drawn on a range of data sources; we are grateful to the many local and national organisations who gave us access to their data, and also to the local businesses, visitors and residents who took part in our survey work.



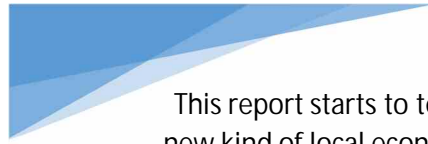
This report identifies a multi-million pound opportunity to create new jobs, grow new enterprises and help existing businesses to thrive.

The analysis looked initially at Buxton's economy as a whole. It then focused on two key sectors - food and energy - to build a picture of what each sector could be worth to our town's economy, if we develop more demand for local products and services, delivered by local independent businesses and using a supply chain closer to home.

Initial findings indicate that:

- Buxton households spend over £30m each year on food and drink, but only 1% of this is spent in local independent shops. Just a 10% increase in local food sourcing would result in an increase of over £800,000 flowing into the local economy per annum.
- Buxton households spend around £12m each year on energy in their homes. Investing in improving the energy efficiency of just 1% of the domestic buildings in the town each year would result in an increase of £300,000 flowing into the local economy annually and would also reduce our energy needs by around £60,000 per annum.
- The introduction of renewable energy generation into just 35 houses in Buxton each year would contribute a further £250,000 to local businesses per annum and benefit householders through savings and income by £65,000 a year. In addition a community renewable energy hydro project could generate £35,000 p.a. through the feed-in-tariff and generate enough electricity for 50 homes.

Together these three achievable changes could see an increase in local employment, economic stability, and satisfaction upon which further positive change can be built. This report starts to tell the story of a new kind of local economy, one based around people, their wellbeing, and their livelihoods, and which also respects resource limits. We hope it usefully contributes to the strategic decisions and economic plans being made for our town and county, and we look forward to working with local organisations to grasp and develop the opportunities to turn this story into reality.



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What we set out to achieve through this study

The Buxton Economic Resilience Study is one of eight projects across Europe in 2014, building on the work done in four UK Transition areas in 2013. This work has been undertaken to see what could be done to help build the resilience of our town, and improve all of our wellbeing, by making changes to our local economic priorities and activities.

An economy on any scale is not simple. Every one of us impacts and is impacted by the global, national and local economy with every business, policy and spending decision we make. Our aim is to:

- help to inform those decisions by providing evidence and data
- encourage new thinking about the interdependence of economic and environmental sustainability
- empower local government, businesses, institutions and individuals to build resilience to change
- improve and sustain a quality of life in Buxton that respects people and planet
- make the case for collaborative and partnership cross sector working

A genuine opportunity to create a resilient local economy:

This report identifies opportunities to create new jobs, grow new enterprises, help existing businesses to thrive and benefit the local economy by over £1.2Million pounds a year. Through people-based, community-led, genuinely sustainable economic development, new livelihoods can be created. At the same time, this approach can help ensure we can feed ourselves, minimise our fuel bills and carbon emissions, and develop a real sense of community empowerment over local economic conditions. This work aims to bring together a coalition of local stakeholder organisations, anchored here in our community, to develop an economic approach designed specifically for Buxton and the High Peak, and shows the value and importance of uniting to deliver real change.

For the full report go to <http://transitionbuxton.co.uk/node/577>