

Sustainable Dunedin City Inc.

Presentation to DCC Symposium

30 November 2007

John Cocks (co-chair) and Miranda Miroso (secretary)

Good afternoon ladies and gentleman.

The Society congratulates the Council for organising this symposium on adapting to Climate Change and Peak Oil, which are both matters of the greatest urgency for our whole community.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. We will talk about

- the Society's vision and objectives
- why the Society was formed
- the Society's activities to date
- needs as the Society sees them.

The Society

The Society is made up of persons interested in the issues of climate change, declining energy security and unsustainable resource use, as they affect Dunedin City.

The Society is not affiliated with any political party.

The Vision of the Society is to facilitate a positive, secure and sustainable future for Dunedin City in the face of these challenges.

The Objectives of the Society are:

- to conduct research and disseminate information on climate change, declining energy security, and sustainability, and to promote awareness of these issues to the wider community.
- to influence individuals, businesses and governments so as to adapt their behaviours and policies to reflect the importance of these issues.
- to foster linkages between organisations with objectives similar to, or complementary to, the Society's own Vision and Objectives.

Why was the Society formed?

The Society was formed after the Hampden Community organised a series of forums on Peak Oil last year. Well-informed people such as Anton Oliver, Professor Rick Sibson, Professor Bob Lloyd and Dr Susan Krumdieck gave talks. Each forum was very well attended and culminated with a workshop about what the community could do to prepare for the decline in cheap oil and energy security.

After Dugald MacTavish convened a meeting of interested people in Dunedin, a public meeting was held in November last year. Then Councillor Leah McBey and Professor Bob Lloyd spoke to a packed Hutton Theatre. In the workshop that followed, the gathering clearly voiced its concern about Climate Change and Peak Oil and about the need for community action. That meeting led to the formation of the Society.

Attendees at the forum were asked to list what they saw as the top challenges facing the Dunedin community. This OVERHEAD illustrates the results.

The top challenges were:

- Water quality and water supply
- Rising energy prices / shortage of fuel supply
- Food security
- Sea level rise
- Extreme storms /adverse weather effects.

Subsequently, attendees responded to the questions:

- A. Objectives suggested for the Society
- B. Questions to be addressed at future meetings
- C. Other ideas / resources / actions for the Society to consider.

The themes that arose out of the many responses (**OVERHEAD**) formed the objectives of the Society. At our foundation meeting in February of this year, and after vigorous discussion, the objectives I showed you in the earlier overhead were adopted.

I will now pass over to Miranda, who will talk about what the Society has been doing.

The activities of the Society have focussed on the objectives.

The activities that the Society has organised throughout the last year have focussed on meeting the Society's objectives that John has just discussed including disseminating information, advocacy, and networking.

Information and its dissemination

In March, for instance, Dr. Susan Krumdieck spoke about "Community planning for sustainability" —how to redevelop our community to be less dependent on fossil fuel, to live within limits. **OVERHEAD** In April, David Holmgren presented (in conjunction with Otago Organics) a lecture called "Towards sustainable suburbs through permaculture re-design". **OVERHEAD** In June, Oliver Brown (from the Institute of Sustainable Development in Geneva) presented a lecture "Weather of mass destruction Climate change and conflict in the 21st Century," a lecture looking at the threats that climate change poses in terms of international security. **OVERHEAD**

Media releases and reports about the Society and its activities have appeared in newspapers and on radio and television. We issue regular newsletters providing up-to-date information about local events, actions and news.

Advocacy

In May the Society prepared and presented its submissions on the Dunedin City Council and Otago Regional Council annual plans. These submissions stressed the following three points:

- that the community outcomes as recorded in the Long Term Council Community Plann do not acknowledge the matters of climate change and energy decline
- that a review of the community outcomes is needed
- and that this should be identified in the annual plan.

In September 2007, the Society held a public meeting at which local body election candidates aired their views on sustainability. All 27 candidates acknowledged that Climate Change and Peak Oil were issues.

Networking

In September the Society held a public meeting to discuss opportunities for establishing focus groups. **OVERHEAD.** Such groups would be either neighbourhood based or activity based. The purpose of such focus groups would be to identify shared concerns, to draw together resources (which in many cases are already existing – such as the Farmers' Market and the Slow Food Movement), and to support each other in action.

Those who attended the workshop were very keen to participate in real action within their communities, and a number of potential actions were suggested. The Society

hopes to find the resources to bring some of them to life, such as the development of urban food crop gardens.

We are in the research stages of developing a multimedia 'community tool kit' for those people interested in helping their neighbourhoods to become more aware of, and more resilient to, the effects of peak oil and climate change. We are aiming to use local (South Island) success stories to inspire and inform.

Climate Change

We believe that the community is extremely aware of Climate Change, as shown by over 1000 people turning out to hear the celebrated Australian Professor Tim Flannery speak about Climate Change. The Government has started to take a strong role here. Some examples are the Emission Trading Scheme, carbon-neutral government procurement, and the household sustainability programme. There has been much about the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and its forecasts of climate change and sea level rise.

Equally impressive are the many initiatives that show community awareness and concern about the need for sustainability in our lives. For instance, Enviroschools programme in Dunedin and elsewhere and its focus on sustainable activities, St John's Church sustainability group, the Tui Motu magazine, the Waitati cluster of groups like Blueskin Baywatch and Waitati Edible Gardens, the Dunedin Environment Education

Trust, the Port Chalmers sustainability group, Organics Otago, the Orokonui Eco-sanctuary, the Farmers' Market, the sustainable building group, Keep Dunedin Beautiful, Zonta, Beach Care, the Yellow Eyed Penguin Trust, the Environment Centre, the Federation of University Graduates, the Harbour Cycle Network, the Campus Greens, the Students for Environmental Action group, and the Sustainable Otago web portal, and a walking advocacy group - Living streets Dunedin.

Peak Oil

But how aware are we of Peak Oil and its implications for our community?

Certainly our local media do not pay the same attention to Peak Oil as they do to Climate Change. As Bob Lloyd says, the need to adapt to Peak Oil is likely to eclipse Climate Change demands in the near future.

There are the initiatives of learned societies including the Royal Society, which ran the lecture series last year on Climate Change and Peak Oil in the Hutton Theatre and which released its document entitled 2020: Energy Opportunities Report of the Energy Panel of The Royal Society of New Zealand, ASPO (The Association for the Study of Peak Oil and Gas), and the recent seminar series organised at the University of Otago by the Energy Research Centre (OERC) which just yesterday held a workshop similar to this one showcasing recently completed, current, and potential research being conducted around the University of Otago in the areas of energy usage, efficiency, and sustainability.

Already communities are acting in advance of local government by assessing existing infrastructure and devising strategies to build in greater resilience and a greater degree of autonomy, with such initiatives as Hampden Community Energy Inc and their activities, and Waitati Edible Gardens aiming to build a community producing its own food needs. There are many other examples and they share a common frustration of having to make preparations for the common good unfunded by local or central government.

Every day, we are exposed to an enormous amount of information. If we type Peak Oil or Climate Change into the internet, we are quickly inundated with information. Many people understand these phenomena and the need to do something at a local community level, at a national level and internationally. But sceptics also weigh in, which is healthy to an extent, but they divert attention from the needs of communities and confound the issues at stake.

[Maybe a little about what other communities are doing?]

I'll now hand back to John who will firstly talk about the urgent need for local leaders to acknowledge and act upon global warming and peak oil issues and secondly will propose a number of ways in which this may be done.

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Acknowledgement

When there is a need, a community looks for leadership. I reflected last weekend on my morning walk that the Council does a good job with City talk, explaining City needs and Council activities. Also, as an example, the Council has been good coming out to meet our Signal Hill community about the boy racer speed problems and helping us work through solutions. These methods of consulting occur more readily when there is a need that is being experienced: they are REactive. But what about PROactivity? Peak Oil and Climate Change needs are currently abstract - we don't experience their effects now. It's a bit like the weather forecaster saying to batten down the hatches on a gloriously fine day. Now, most people take heed of the forecaster's advice and get prepared (even though there is no sign of a storm). However, with Peak Oil there are no community leaders currently saying "we need to prepare now" and there are no experiences to reflect on such as there are with extreme weather events. We know what can happen if you're a disbeliever of weather forecasts and flood warnings. (A recent example is the flooding on the Taieri Plain)

First we have to accept that Peak Oil and Climate Change are real—not academic issues for the scientific community alone but matters that we as a community need to be aware of and for which we must plan—now.

Local leaders need to hear and acknowledge community concerns about Peak Oil and Climate Change. This Symposium is a significant start, a potential opening of a new way forward. Proactivity.

The next challenge is having this acknowledgement grow throughout the community, including the business sector.

Consultation

As I said, many concerned community and educational groups are acting in their own way.

The efforts of these groups stimulate the community, but they need coordination by means of an overarching community vision and community leadership.

Before the recent elections, many community groups, including ours, invited candidates to present their views on sustainability and to respond to questions. This concern and interest is a tremendous resource.

The Local Government Act provides a framework for consultation. A principle of the Act is that “a local authority should make itself aware of, and should have regard to, the views of all of its communities.” A starting point is the process of establishing Community Outcomes. Then, there is a need for articulating these outcomes in tangible and measurable objectives.

The Act also sets out procedures for consulting, which means involving the community from the very start. By the time a Council proposal is presented to the Community under the prescribed special consultative procedure, via the annual plan, the LTCCP or

otherwise, the needs, issues and options should have been well aired. That is, a proposal should be well understood by all before being presented for a formal community verdict.

However consultation can only occur when resources are devoted to making it happen effectively, by engaging with the many community groups and interested parties through effective means, and by giving people a sense that their participation is valued and important.

In the case of Peak Oil and Climate Change, both the consultation and implementation processes must be far sighted and efficient. There is no time for delay.

The Society's initiative to form focus groups anticipates such consultation on the issues associated with adapting to Peak Oil and Climate Change. A challenge for us is to decide on an approach. Options could be:

- to educate the public so each individual becomes concerned enough to participate, or
- to convince the councils that there is enough of a problem for them to start moving without this participation, or
- to convince the councils to help us convince the public.

We believe that the general public perception is that Peak Oil and Climate Change are not issues for immediate action and that a consequence of this perception may be

reduced participation in consultation and action. We believe that the MAGNITUDE of the problems that Peak Oil and Climate Change will create demands urgent council attention, now, and this attention includes working with community groups to help convince the public.

Flexibility and Anticipation

When it comes to determining specific responses in adapting to Peak Oil and Climate Change, the options become confounding. For example, Professor Flannery in his recent talk at the University noted that, whilst there are predictions about the rate of sea level rise and climate change effects, there is no certainty other than change will occur. There are many and complex variables.

Thus, in our planning it would be naïve to simply adopt specific design factors and invest according to these. Rather our approach needs full community involvement and to encompass the four pillars of local government – social, cultural, environmental and economic well- being – in adapting. Our approach needs to be flexible and involve:

- Disseminating appropriate information about the Peak Oil and Climate Change continually – OVERHEAD actions include providing information widely, advertising, coordinating rounds of speakers, funding established community groups to enable them to better utilise their already-gained skills and knowledge.
- Creating a community climate of positive awareness and stimulating coordinated community activities - OVERHEAD actions include developing the DCC website, promoting sustainable activities that are already being carried out in schools, in

businesses, encouraging businesses to get involved and to lead eg the Sustainable Business Network, learning from PROactive institutions such as the Otago Polytechnic .

- Building our Long Term Council Community Plan and other plans with the benefits of this information, awareness and involvement – OVERHEAD our current plans have been developed without taking account of Peak Oil and Climate Change – there is an urgent need for review, based on a real understanding of the risks of Peak Oil and Climate Change.

We should not wait until revised plans have been prepared but start action now as we implement current plans.

In conclusion, we draw attention to the community concern about the need for urgent action as shown through the passionate, dedicated and growing membership of the Sustainable Dunedin City Society, the many other community groups with a sustainability orientation, and the large turnouts at public meetings such as the Flannery address.

We emphasise the need for urgent Council-led community action – for proactivity – in adapting to Peak Oil and Climate Change.