



Crowd Wise

Case Study: Transition Town Lewes

Introduction

The Transition Town movement aims to improve the resilience of local communities, in particular to deal with the threats of climate change and the end of cheap energy.

Set up in 2007, Transition Town Lewes (TTL) is one of the most active Transition Towns, reflecting Lewes' long radical history. It has undertaken 27 practical projects, most notably: OVESCo (the Ouse Valley Energy Services Company Ltd); the Lewes pound; a weekly food market; a car club; a master composter scheme; and Food Up Front Lewes, to help people start to grow their own food.

The Issue

TTL has a number of working groups, including Energy, Waste, Food, Communications, Finance, 10:10 and Heart/Soul. Owing to the loose network structure of the organization, there was no overall decision-making body. Representatives from each working group made up a steering group known as the forum. But it had no mandate to take decisions. Nor was it clear how much authority the working groups had. The result was that:

- The lack of a procedure for making decisions put a great burden on those at the centre who got most involved in trying to resolve problems, to the point of burnout.
- Some decisions that needed to be made didn't get made, or only were only made late in the day.

The need for a defined decision-making body had been agreed in 2009, but by autumn 2010 had not been acted upon. Perry Walker of **nef**, who was living in Lewes at the time, suggested Crowd Wise as a way forward and offered to facilitate its use. This offer was accepted.

The Crowd Wise Event

1. The first Vote

On 28th October 2010, 23 people turned up to a two hour meeting. Initially, five pre-prepared options were presented and voted upon, with the following results:

Option	Consensus Percentage
A	23

	information/discussion meeting.	
<i>NB All the remaining options involve forming a Steering Group to take strategic decisions affecting TTL overall.</i>		
B	The Steering Group is run as an Open Space: anyone can turn up and contribute to decision making.	43
C	The Steering Group consists of the Contacts for the groups	56
D	The Steering Group initially comprises the existing group Contacts. They then put out a call for more members from the whole of TTL, and co-opt anyone who is prepared to commit to attending the monthly meeting.	67
E	The Steering Group is elected.	58

2. Refining the Options

In the next stage, small groups discussed the various options in more detail, identifying the pros and cons, refining them if they wished. As no-one wished to discuss Option A (existing structure), this was discarded. A further option, Option F, was put forward at this stage. It was much the same as Option D but with the proviso that the existing group contacts could choose either by consensus or by voting from those who stepped forward to join them on the steering group.

3. The second Vote

After this discussion, the attendees took part in a second consensus vote. The results were as follows:

B = 24%

C = 30%

D = 50%

E = 30%

F = 50%

It was decided that D and F, being very similar, would be merged to create the final consensus option. It was also agreed that the initial Steering Group, comprising the group contacts, would take the next steps in deciding which elements to incorporate.