

## Responses from Participants Involved in Pilot Online Conversation

### “Need or Want: What Matters Post-Covid-19”

#### Focus on Consumption: 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2020

*“Or will we look back and wonder what made so many of us spend what the British ecological economist, Professor Tim Jackson, has called money we don’t have, on things we don’t need, to create impressions that won’t last, on people we don’t care about?”* (My urge to splurge is over and won’t be returning soon. Clark, P. Irish Times. 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020)

*“A very interesting and enlightening trial run. Not surprisingly, there was agreement about a lot of things such as the brilliant work of our local suppliers, the heightened awareness of waste management, (in my case probably more like waist management), the reduction in the use of transport (cars, buses, trains) and greater use of eco friendly products. We also discussed setting up a share hub, both online and through the ELDA (East Linton District Advertiser) which can be extended to include ideas for keeping young children occupied, utilisation of surplus materials, waste management, promoting environmentally ethical producers and sellers. This will require some dedicated resources to gather ideas, ensure their integrity, put them online and manage the feedback. It could be a project for the local school kids who I’m sure have all the technical skills required!”* **Colin McWhannell**

*“I found this a really useful way to connect with people from our community and reflect on issues in light of how our lives have changed since lockdown. It gave us all space to share our own thoughts aided by some useful questions, as well as listen to others’ experiences and thoughts, and explore ideas shared on how to create practical ongoing positive changes. A very positive experience, food for thought and a great way to encourage a bit of time to reflect.”* **Jo Gibb**

*“There was a discussion of appreciation of the way that smaller local suppliers, both retail and wholesale, had responded rapidly to the requirements of the lockdown by providing efficient, responsive order and deliver services, generally using simple technology [email and telephone].*

*This was contrasted with the response of large supermarkets, which have been slow in establishing available order-deliver services, and slow in providing some degree of protection for their till operators. It was agreed that more locally sourced produce [eg fish, vegetables, cereals,] should be used close to the site of harvest, rather than being trucked to remote users. Practical steps by which the local community can support and encourage this trend should be explored with the producers and retailers.*

*There was consensus that the natural local environment was being much more valued, and that it seems to be in better shape as the lockdown has progressed. Quieter, more birdsong, or maybe just more evident, fewer bizarre cloudscapes and a sky free of aircraft noise and contrails. Discussion centred on teaching kids about making innovative use of “stuff lying around” for making toys, inventing games, and rediscovering old ones. Grandparents’ know-how is likely to be valuable. [Example, how to make a really good, fast “tank” with cotton reel, candle, and rubber bands]. The same applies to cooking and baking. Obligatory home education, despite all the problems, gives opportunities for kids to acquire practical survival skills – mental, physical and social – that may prove to be every bit as important as more academic abilities in future years.*

*The question arose: what's the purpose of these conversations? I think I could identify a couple of themes. One is to engage more people in thinking seriously about ways of addressing the threats of climate change, gaining understanding of the issues, and taking constructive practical actions. The second, related theme, was where the priorities lie between [a] efforts to improve awareness, and [b] completing practical actions – on small or large scale – that one hopes will produce a demonstrably useful outcome that may also be effective in gaining support from individuals, NGOs, or Government bodies. Underlying all these discussions is the need to persuade governments of the need for a fundamental review of the present economic model. [I hope in a later discussion we can learn about Doughnut Economics!]* **Brian McClelland**

*“We acknowledged the fact that although we are ‘isolated’ we still have electricity, gas and clean water - many people are not so lucky. The value of supporting local businesses with the knock on effect of reducing use of a car and thus promoting more exercise by walking or cycling to these venues. (It’s amazing what you can carry on a bike!) We talked about the attempt by those with gardens or even windowsills to try growing some of their own produce - It’s a therapy in itself. Also, the innovative approach to the use of used containers thus reducing costs and reducing green bin rubbish or the local recycling costs. Why on earth were Garden Centres closed when the opportunity to distance customers would seem easier than in supermarkets?”*

*The sheer enjoyment of listening to and appreciating nature and the stillness of roads now were recognised. Reports do comment on a real reduction in air pollution. Lastly, what will I do differently? I plan to reduce plastic waste as much as possible or reuse it. I already compost most of the garden waste and do a lot of growing, but I plan to try more propagating and learning about all the insects and birds we have in the garden!”* **Joan Bell**

*“Any chance for personal reflection and honest conversation about our hopes for the future in a safe space is a good thing. I think the small group format works very well.”* **Philip Revell**

*“Really interesting to hear how others have adapted to life in lockdown; the practical changes they have made towards more sustainable living as well as the use of this time to reflect on what is important. Finding ourselves “more consciously grateful,” experiencing “a real feeling of vulnerability, a reliance on others when having to self-isolate” – wondering whether we actually need two cars. An improved sense of well-being as a result of less driving, spending more time with family, an increased appreciation for what we have - in terms of social relationships, community, the availability of food from local suppliers. All signs of hope, a shared feeling that we do not want to return to pre-coronavirus ‘normal.’ The outcome of the 1.5 hour conversation: the potential for many more conversations and, most importantly, a range of short-term practical actions to be implemented in the community such as the establishment of a network for grandparents to share 'old-fashioned' games with children, using recycled materials and promoting fresh air and exercise, simplicity and less waste; an online share hub, Freecycle style; the development of a directory of local, environmentally ethical producers and sellers - as well as a longer term ambition to shift this region towards the Doughnut economic model, aiming to reach net zero as quickly as possible while promoting social justice and ecological sustainability.”*

**Rosie Harrison**