**Transition Leytonstone Project Reports**

**July 2020**

**Community Fridge (Diana)**

At last year’s June AGM we had a new home for the Fridge and its cabinet. This was the Leytonstone Methodist Church, on the corner of Lister Road and Leytonstone High Road. We are grateful to the church council for agreeing to give us permanent and secure shelter, especially to Flo Corbett and Minister Tony Malcolm, who have been consistently supportive of our efforts.

My report will take the form of timeline for ease of information absorption!

**Fridge Timeline (based on TLSG reports over the year)**

**July 2019:** Fridge cabinet levelled and permanently installed on back wall of church July 16. Electricity installed July 26. Fridge retrieved from Fr Neil’s garage July 27.

**August 2019:** Baseboard and rodent mesh fitted by Chris Ward to fridge cabinet. Allotmenteers bringing their gluts. Connections with Cann Hall Mosque thriving via Fridge volunteer Zubair Anjum, who uses our bakery surplus for his weekly Sunday feasts for the homeless and hungry at Westfield.

**October 2019:** Considering a gutter and downpipe taking water off the roof and harvesting in a small water butt or other receptacle. Worries about extremely variable quantities of surplus food every day. We need to expand the food donor network to be able to provide for the needs of our beneficiaries. Unfortunately this also means that we will need to expand our food donee network.

**March 2020: COVID lockdown**. CFN (Community Fridge Network) recommend fridges close from week ending March 22. We do this, and immediately start a once, then twice-weekly doorstep delivery service to those beneficiaries contacted before closure, and to a few new ones. Church is shut, so all packing of bags takes place out of doors. Days and times of packing depend on weather forecast. New volunteers (both packers and delivery drivers and bikers) coming forward unbidden. Adrienne’s van now used as convenient outdoor food storage unit, in church car park. Ace volunteer Emine is in charge of updating the fridge data spreadsheets (covering attendee numbers/donation weights/composted waste/financial donations) and has redesigned them beautifully.

**June 2020:** We want to reopen and are seeking advice from the CFN as to when. Most Fridges in the network are situated indoors, which is trickier. Street markets were allowed to reopen June 2. New roof/gutter approved by TLSG and installation scheduled for July 13. We hope to reopen July 17. Several small COVID grants applied for (total £1300) and one big one (£5000). We get the £1300. Government food parcels unpopular with recipients, who donate an average of 3 large crates to us weekly. A large pile of unsightly bulky household waste is dumped by neighbours next to our storage garage. Clyde orders clearance very quickly and sends neighbours a PCN.

**July 2020:** New roof and gutter installed July 13. Fridge reopens July 17 with the following protocols: New features: 2m social distancing, masks/gloves/sanitiser for volunteers. Sanitiser for all visitors, no handling of food. Four volunteers: on the fridge, the store cupboard, and the bakery table, plus a further volunteer offering visitors part packed bags of fresh produce offered, as well as a dollop of hand sanitiser.

**Miscellaneous trends over the year:**

* Fridges are getting more media and postgrad student attention: we have had 3 interviews with students (one on Zoom) and the BBC has asked the CFN for the contact details of fridge coordinators in relation to COVID work. Student topics were: *The Role of Community Fridges in the UK, The Personal and Wider Environmental Benefits of Volunteering (especially in the context of community food initiatives), The Impacts of Coronavirus on Charitable Food Distribution Systems in the UK.*
* We have increased our network locally, especially within more faith communities. This has been mainly through offering food donations to them. New additions before COVID: Wanis (biggest employer in Waltham Forest, importer and distributor of Afro Caribbean food. New additions since COVID: Leyton & Wanstead Synagogue, The Cornerstone Church, SWAT (Sikh Welfare & Awareness Team), COVID Mutual Aid (Leytonstone), FeedtheStreetz, The Parker Project, London Ambulance Service.
* Ongoing difficulties: obtaining Halal products. Serious attempts have been made to hook up with halal butchers and wholesalers, but failing to get the food waste message through to them. All they understand is the charity message, which involves purchasing food for the poor and, if a business, sacrificing some profit via donations. Hint: we are finally on the verge of a breakthrough. More about this at the next TLSG Meeting!

**Church Lane Community Garden (Shannon)**

The community garden has remained open two days per week since February, including during lockdown. In March and April we gave away seeds to several dozen households, and in late spring we distributed hundreds of plants.  
  
We have had three regular volunteers, Sam, Phil, and Shannon, for most of the year, and one new volunteer for the summer.  
  
We don’t have any plans to run any workshops or other events for the remainder of the year.  
  
This year we spent some funds to build a pergola near the entrance to the garden, and on buying some grape plants to grow on the pergola. Current garden funds stand at £610. All of the raised beds are coming to the end of their useful life and will require significant investment next year to rebuild.

**Local Produce Stall (RoseMary)**

The stall is doing well, it has a good selection of stock. There was one week in late 2019 when the deliveries to Organiclea failed and the stall did not happen but on all other planned Saturdays it has been there. Since the Covid lockdown the stall has been the only one outside Matalan. It has been rearranged to allow for social distancing for the staff (no more than two) and for the customers, and uses three tables as barriers. All the infrastructure for the stall is brought from the Hornbeam each week. Also since the Covid lockdown both the Hornbeam stall and Leytonstone have increased their sales most weeks to about what was taken on the Saturday before Christmas. So far this has continued, but there may be dips due to customers being able to go away or to eat out again.

OrganicLea are training more of their volunteers to cover stalls including Leytonstone so Rod can take leave and they are opening a new stall within the next week. And I am not needed when they are being trained at Leytonstone and the space for staff is only for 2 people. However it is really good to have someone there who has local knowledge about the community garden and the Community fridge and other shops, facilities and contacts.

Helen Gibson has started regularly helping pack up the stall, this is a bit fiddley to get everything into the van but at least does not have the pushing of the stand back. I have failed to organize other volunteers but will try again, this is entirely my fault.

Lorraine is well and I saw her a month ago. She delivered some of her sauces for a previous customer of hers who we put in contact.

I have also been selling Peter’s marmalade through the stall and £1 from each jar comes to Transition Leytonstone so I have £15 to hand over.

I also want to put on record that some customers still ask after Christine and wish her well.

**Leytonstone Green Directory** **(Sandra)**

The Leytonstone Green Directory has grown from a seed of an idea planted by Ros in March 2019, and has just recently come to fruition.

We held some initial scoping sessions in July and August 2019, which helped us firm up on what we wanted to achieve. The aim was to create an online directory (hopefully to be complemented at some later stage with a hardcopy print version), to support and promote ‘green’ businesses and activities in Leytonstone. We wanted to bring attention to what is already available; encourage and inspire other residents and businesses to join in; and identify any gaps and opportunities for future ventures.

A sub-group was formed to take the project forward - Ros Bedlow, Sandra Beeson, Adrienne Aslan and Rachael Castell. We developed a ‘conversation guide’ to help us introduce the idea to local business owners and determine whether they meet our criteria for inclusion in the Directory, and used this to start approaching local businesses we thought should be included.

The information about each business or project has been collated in a standard format on a website hosted by e-voice (a free service offered to community groups), and grouped into broad categories (e.g. food and drink; energy; repairs & re-use). We’re including keywords so that the database is searchable. Each entry includes an endorsement from a satisfied customer or user.

Website: <https://e-voice.org.uk/leytonstonegreendirectory/>

At the beginning of July we announced the launch of the Directory in a newsletter to our mailing list.

The plan for the next few months is to increase publicity for the site - on Facebook; by linking with other local websites (including adding a page to the main Transition Leytonstone website); through the local press; and potentially through interviews for amateur local radio. Hopefully this will gradually lead to more businesses and other initiatives being suggested for inclusion and the database will continue to grow.

**The Transition Library (Ros)**

The Transition Library continues to grow as people have donated books on a wide range of topics related to sustainability. We now have about 350 books, with 27 categories including:

climate change, economics, food, energy, permaculture, practical gardening, making and mending, social justice, Transition, transport and waste.

The library is in a private house and in normal times can be visited by appointment. During lockdown the system has changed: the catalogue can be emailed to anyone on request, and books selected and made available without contact.

The library is a wonderful resource but has been underused. We would like in the future to find a more public venue for it and publicise it more widely.

**Leytonstone Methodist Church garden (Ros)**

TL’s relationship with Leytonstone Methodist Church began with their kind offer to host the Community Fridge. Following on from this, they asked us if we could help to create a garden to replace the very small circular beds along the fence facing the High Road. They wanted something that would be low maintenance, and attractive and eye-catching when viewed from the High Road.

Using permaculture processes and principles, Phil, Sandra and Ros designed four raised beds with a mixture of shrubs, herbs and flowers, with the aim of providing colour throughout the year, as well as forage for bees, and some food for humans. Some plants were kindly donated, others were bought, and together with a team from the church, we created the beds and did the first planting in January. Quite a large number of small plants were rescued from the old beds and transplanted into the new ones, to fill the spaces until the second planting could take place in the spring.

The second planting did not happen because of lockdown, the church was closed and unfortunately the beds were not maintained for several months. However, most of the plants have survived, have now been watered, and some additional herbs donated and planted. We hope to fill in the gaps in autumn and to run a workshop with the people from the church who will be maintaining the garden.

Before lockdown we were also talking to Roy Wilson and others at the church about talking to the congregation about sustainability issues such as food and waste. We hope this can happen in the not too distant future.