

Core Module

This is a briefing for the *Core Module* as a whole (not for one meeting). This module will encompass quite a number of sessions over four or five years. This briefing needs to be considered before the *First Module*, and revisited throughout the programme.

The *Core Module* is the base camp that we return to after each of our explorations; where we support and challenge each other – and have fun. The other modules can be introduced as members are ready to explore how best to reduce their emissions and impacts in particular areas.

Frequency of meetings

See Suggested Programme Plan (for 14 meetings to cover all modules). If a group can meet more frequently, or for longer each session, so much the better.



Core
Module

Time required per meeting

Perhaps a whole day for first *Core Module* meeting (after the *First Module* meeting); then two-hour sessions for face-to-face meetings and one hour for telephone conferences.

Some of these meetings can include work on the specialist modules.

Plan of a *Core Module* session

A typical meeting takes the following form:

- Prayer
- Introductions (if any new member)
- 'Check-in'
- Discussion and activity
- Resolutions, intercessions and closing prayer.



See <http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/ecocell/ecocell-materials> for prayers, readings, stories and poems that you might consider using

In the 'Check-in' the facilitator welcomes people back and might conduct a 'round robin', in which each member has an opportunity to say where they are on their journey: spiritually, emotionally and in terms of the actions they have taken, and their learning since the previous meeting.

Discussion and activity suggestions:

A range of activities are suggested here, for different stages of the programme. An * means this is an essential component of the programme, otherwise it is optional.

- ***Visualising the future, when we reach the top of the mountain.** On first Core group session, and then to be revisited on the last session. More frequently if group has the energy for it.
- ***Finding out how people actually learned to live within rations in the past, and try and apply that learning to your group.** Briefed for on first Core group session, and then continued throughout the programme, as people report back on progress.
- ***The eco-accountant briefs members on further work on carbon footprints and ecological impacts.** Between the first two sessions.
- ***Supporting each other in taking action.** Each session allow time for this – for instance during the ‘check-in’ time.
- ***Each member to have a personal learning plan.**
- ***A final reflection and evaluation** – Last session.

Optional Sessions

- **Who do you think you are? A psychological, and scriptural, analysis.** Perhaps on the third or fourth session, as a different ways of looking at things.
- **A socio-political analysis of heaven on earth.** Towards the middle or end of the programme, especially as we consider local action on public service emissions and doing more campaigning work.
- **Seeking independent verification of the emission reductions we have achieved** – towards the end.
- **The journey is as important as the destination: discussion topic.**
- **The addiction 12 Steps AA model.** Discussion of scenarios about strategies to tackle personal consumer addictions.
- **Ethical discussion:** how does ecological sustainability, climate destabilisation etc suggest some different ethical principles (or application of ethical principles).
- **False prophets:** ideas and mantras that we need to be aware of and wary of.
- **Working through the domestic disputes** that may arise from involvement in *ecocell*



A possible time plan for the *Core Module*

See '**Suggested Programme Plan**' a *suggested* plan for the whole *ecocell* programme, showing how *Core Module* 'base camp' meetings link with other modules. This suggested plan is spread out over five years. But groups are free to choose their own programme plans and timescales.

More detail on each of the discussion and activity suggestions:

(The optional activities are included in the appendix at the end).

***Visualising the future, when we reach the top of the mountain.** The use of metaphor may help us to visualise the future. This activity might take place on the first Core group session, and then to be revisited on the last session. More frequently if group has the energy for it.

Two characteristics of mountain climbing:

- It is usually cold and windy, and can be wet, or hazardous share your own experiences of mountain and hill climbing. For instance in my case they include the mists suddenly falling as we reached the tops of the Connemara Bens ...
- But the great views and the feelings of exhilaration and achievement as you reach the top. Again share experiences – mine include that of Croagh Patrick, in the West of Ireland, when the dawn breaks on the last Sunday in July.



On the challenges to be expected on our climb.....

It is the year 2029. The black-outs have started – not because of Hitler's bombs of course, but to conserve fuel and reduce emissions. Following the great floods effecting the lowlands and river valleys of Europe, including many parts of Britain, resulting in the deaths of millions of people, a new national government has been elected in Britain (as in nearly all the major European countries).

So, to prepare us for 2029., every member of our group will be given an emission ration that he or she eventually has to learn to live within. Initially it has been set at three tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e). The current UK average figure is about 15 tonnes CO₂e but there is a large variation from person to person. Rations can be shared or 'traded' between people.

CO ₂ e tonnes	Emissions now	With rationing
18		
15		
12		
9		
6		
3		

You are a group of people who have got together to support each other in this quest, to help each other 'climb this mountain'. But, as Christians, you want to do more than comply with the law and the rationing.....

But as the peak comes into view.....

You realise that 'treading lightly' on this planet is the way to a more joyful life on earth. You also want to support the more vulnerable in your community, and those who may have more difficulty in living within their rations – for instance elderly people living on their own in poorly-insulated accommodation.

You may wish to build this scenario further and phrase a few questions on the 'hazards' we anticipate and the glories we might achieve.

Suggest this task (below) as the group revisits this activity – when people have given serious thought to what sustainable living means in practice

Brainstorm your vision of Mountainville the community that you are working towards:

How and where do children play, and learn?
What jobs do people do, for how many hours?
How are leisure times, and holiday times, different to now?
What do people eat, wear, travel around in?
Where do they travel to?
What do older people do?
Where does prayer and worship fit in?
And add in your own questions.



Be creative. Make a few daft suggestions. Record all suggestions. Try to avoid the extremes of just describing your community now, or coming up with *The Good Life* cliché images (I also put in 'good local football team' which tends not to please a certain type of 'greeny!'). People who lived through different times, or in very different places, may have very interesting suggestions. But whatever the ideas, record them first, perhaps even visually, then build your village, town, suburb picture.

Finding out how people actually learned to live within rations in the past, and try and apply that learning to your group. Briefed for on first Core group session, and then continued throughout the programme, as people report back on progress.

'Homework' to follow this:

Read up on the history of World War Two, and its immediate aftermath (when rationing was still in place).

Suggestions for reading: Angus Calder: *The People's War*, Pimlico Press, 1969; Peter Hennessey: *Never Again: Britain 1945-51*, Cape, 1992.

You may want to talk to older members of your community about how they lived and the decisions they made, during World War Two and its aftermath. They may tell you, for instance, about rabbit keeping in the East End of London, about how birthday parties could be really special despite the shortages, about campaigns like 'Dig for Victory' and 'Is your journey really necessary?', about the Land Girls, the Bevin Boys, etc.

You may want to take a trip to the Imperial War Museum in London, or the Imperial War Museum North in Salford. Or watch the John Thaw film *Good Night Mr. Tom* – the heroism in the East End, the welcoming of the kids from London into the homes in the countryside, the organist inspiring the church choir... Or even watch a few episodes of *Foyle's War* – or *Dad's Army*!



There are stories of inspiration and heroism and of intelligent pragmatic adaptation. And of course stories of the other side of human nature too. We need to anticipate resistances – people fudging the issues, people (and businesses) insisting on their ‘rights’ to do what they have always done, etc.

We might also remember that in the aftermath of World War Two, despite the country being nearly bankrupted by the war effort, we had the greatest ever era of welfare reform and development – the NHS, education for all, etc. Wilkinson and Pickett, in their recent study of inequality, stated that this was also the era that did most to break down ‘them and us’ and bring about the greatest ever level of equality in Britain.

It will also be important to discuss how different (as well as how similar) the challenges that we are taking on are... Bombs are not being dropped; society and attitudes have changed...

Alternative ‘homework’:

Explore how people coped with severe shortages in more modern times.

Show *The Power of Community*, the film on how Cuba coped after the oil blockade (seen as a useful resource with transition town groups) and discuss what we could learn from it. Or if members have experience of living in societies where the supermarket shelves were not always full – or even there at all...



The Eco-accountant briefs members on further work on carbon footprints and ecological impacts. Between the first two sessions. Eco-accounting is not yet an ‘exact science’, so there are good, bad and indifferent footprint calculators on the market. We suggest that you use George Marshall’s book *Carbon Detox* as the basis for your accounting – Part 8, Chapters 2 to 6 contain all the calculation briefings – supplemented by all the calculation briefings contained in the different modules of this programme (see comments under *Maps and Compasses* on page 2 of the *Introducing ecocell Document*).

This will take a while.

It’s a bit like the financial record-keeping you have to do if you are self-employed, and some people hate it! But then again some of us love playing with figures, so make sure you use the latter to help the former. But it is essential to do this properly, and to work out how to live within rations required for the ‘carbon war’. Otherwise we cannot meaningfully **account** for our delegated responsibility to care for God’s Earth and all our fellow earth creatures.

Supporting each other in taking action. In each session allow time for this.

Soon after the first Core Module session the group will start on the more ‘practical’ modules – domestic energy, food etc.

Every so often we need to look at the ‘larger map’ and see how far we have got on our journey in carbon-free discipleship. We suggest that we give each member a few opportunities to talk about their action plans and how they are progressing on them, overall, and get feedback and encouragement from the group, as well as advice and practical support to each other.



¹ Wilkinson, Richard and Pickett, Kate, *The Spirit Level: Why more Equal Societies almost always do Better*, Penguin (2009).

Suggested homework:

Each member writes a little passage or story about what *ecocell* journeys in carbon-free discipleship means for him or her. Tony gives you his story to get you started.

Why we need *ecocell* – Tony’s story

Festy Flaherty did not need to be told to respect the laws or the limits set down by the Creator. On his 11 acre farm of soil, bog and rock in Connemara (in the West of Ireland) in the ‘50’s, he had learned from his father and his neighbours how to eke out a living from the soil. He knew when to till, when to sow, when to harvest.

My memories are of Festy out by the road talking to Michael Flaherty (the county council roads man), looking out over the horizons towards the Atlantic. ‘Ah, the signs are good, thanks be to God’ Michael would say – helping Festy decide to cut the hay today on his (south facing) fields, always the first on the peninsula to be cut. So they gathered the neighbours, including the older kids. Even the dole officer’s son (me) was allowed to join in sometimes.

The next day that the signs were good again, they moved down the road to Hegerty’s, next on to Maughan’s across the road and more north-facing. Then to the few fields of Mrs Marty Flaherty, the widow at the end of the road (and to old Maggie Flaherty’s – that is if she was talking to them this year – otherwise she got her relations from in the town to help her).

Could they even receive the Radio Eireann weather forecasts – and even if they could get decent reception how relevant would it be along that weather-variable coast? Michael was probably more reliable anyway.

Festy, Michael and all those neighbours have long gone to their reward. The world has changed – even Connemara has. The nearby village of Ballyflaherty is now known locally as Costa dela Ballyflaherty, a playground for the rich Celtic Tigers.



Now the signs are not good – and we have lost the ability to read them. In *ecocell* we endeavour to learn to read them again, to act on them, and to be inspired by our faith to keep going against the odds. As the Flaherty’s did.

‘As Thomas Berry said, it seems as if humans contain a repressed rage against the restraints under which life on earth is granted.’ Edward P. Echlin *Climate and Christ, A Prophetic Alternative*, Columba Press, 2010.

A final reflection and evaluation [Last session]

As the group undertakes the last module and considers *ecocell 3* for continuing our work forward, it is time to reflect.

Perhaps we might refer back to the programme aims, and ask:

- Is the ‘cherished mountain’ yet visible in the sunlight in the distance?
Or are we still too bogged down in the detail and the difficulties?



- Are we just tackling the easy challenges, or are we taking on the big emission-generators in our lives?
- Are we yet enjoying the process, or are we still like battling ex-smokers working hard to kick a variety of consumerist addictions?
- Are we still just concentrating on our own behaviour and our own emissions, or are we going out to the wider communities (including faith communities) that we have the potential to influence?
- If we are doing the latter, are we doing it effectively?

Hopefully we will feel entitled to celebrate the completion of a wonderful time together. Whatever happens someone will have revised this module by then, working with the people who are completing the journey in carbon-free discipleship.

To finish with the old Irish saying: may the road ride with you on your journey.

And a more universal greeting: God be with you.



Appendix: Optional Activities

Who do you think you are? A psychological, and scriptural, analysis. Perhaps on the third or fourth session, as a different way of looking at things.

Read about the four personality types – survivor, traditionalist, winner, striver - in *Carbon Detox* (by George Marshall). Which of these types do members of the *ecocell* group think they are closest to? Relate this analysis to scripture in a non-judgemental way.

A socio-political analysis of heaven on earth. Towards the middle or end of the programme, especially as we consider local action on public service emissions and doing more campaigning work.

An appropriate set of readings might be shared out between members to read; then one group member volunteer to lead a discussion, to help ‘blend’ a range of ideas together.

Readings might include the following:

- Politics/economics; Herman Daley on steady state economics: how the economy can operate within emission and resource use limits; Tim Jackson on how we can attain a more meaningful type of prosperity without economic growth; Wilkinson and Pickett on how inequality is so detrimental to welfare – and on how carbon rationing would promote welfare as well environmental sustainability. Writing on the contraction and convergence concept.
- Social/psychological: Richard Layard on human happiness or welfare and how growth is not necessary for it; Robert Putnam on social capital or social cohesion (– and its relevance to equality, welfare and sustainability).
- More explicitly environmental: report Zero Carbon Britain 2030 <http://zerocarbonbritain.org/zcb-latest-report-read-online>; Publications on the Transition movement. Green Books has a good selection – see <http://greenbooks.co.uk/home>
- Theological literature relevant to all these themes – e.g. Edward Echlin, Michael Northcott, Alastair MacIntosh.

Seeking independent verification of the emission reductions we have achieved. Towards the end of *ecocell*.

In World War Two you were limited by the ration coupons you had, and the police and other authorities were alert to ‘black marketing’ activities.

But it is very easy for us to fudge difficult decisions, and ‘count away’ the consequences. It is very easy for friends to collude with each other.

For instance, in our house we debated as to whether we should count flights to rural Ireland for the funeral of an elderly relative that we felt obliged to attend – and funerals are held over there within two days, so flying was the only option. Who should the emissions be attributed to?



We wanted to allocate our emissions to Granny, now in a Place where carbon rationing does not apply!).

The pressure for action does not come from the law, or from rations imposed on us by Government. So, as Chris Walton (**Green Christian** Steering Group) points out, the pressure must come from our faith, from our desire to do God’s will.

But as a check that we are actually doing so, can we find people from another group – within *ecocell* or elsewhere, who will inspect our work and our calculations?

The journey is as important as the destination:

Discussion topic – how do we keep sight of this, how do we appreciate the views, support each other as we get frightened by the thunder, experience all the emotions that arise on long and challenging journeys in carbon-free discipleship?



The addiction model:

12 Steps AA model: Discussion of scenarios about strategies to tackle personal consumer addictions.

Ethical discussion:

How does ecological sustainability, climate destabilisation etc suggest some different ethical principles (or application of ethical principles)?

From medical action to prolong life for the affluent elderly - to sharing a bath with your infant children, new questions can be raised about what is right and what is wrong, where what we see as the imperative to preserve life on earth may clash with other ethical perspectives.

False prophets – ideas and mantras that we need to be aware of and wary of:

Various agencies give out advice or guidelines that may need to be challenged – like ‘cycling is not safe’ or like ‘cycling is not safe unless you wear a helmet’; ‘it is not safe (for women) to go out at night’; ‘air travel promotes harmony between peoples of different cultures and races’; ‘elderly people need a temperature of at least 22 degrees Celsius’; ‘bath water needs to be at least 60 degrees’; ‘get people to start small (paper recycling, etc) and the big changes will follow’; and I have not even started on food – the mantras are abundant....

Working through the differences and disputes that may arise from involvement in *ecocell*. CEL member Martin Davis has written specifically about this issue and we can refer interested groups to him. See the following article on the Sunday Times website:

http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/the_way_we_live/article7029278.ece

