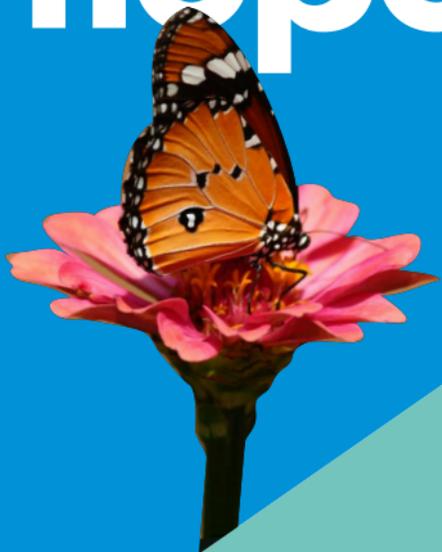


# Is there hope?





Hope is not a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky. It is an axe you break down doors with in an emergency."

- **Rebecca Solnit**,  
*Hope in the Dark*



# Evidence-based hope in a warming world

**The climate is changing faster than we are. The danger of triggering irreversible environmental damage that spirals, feeding off itself, means that winning too slowly is the same as losing. That's why rapid, transformative changes are called for to prevent climate breakdown and create the conditions for people to thrive together.**

Rapid transition shows examples of evidence-based hope for change whose speed and potential scale will steer us towards staying within those boundaries and which advance social justice.

In practice, these are clear, quantifiable changes in our values, behaviours, attitudes, and use of resources, energy, technology, finance and infrastructure that can happen and could guide what we do over the next five to ten years.

Keeping to the globally-recognised 1.5 °C upper limit on global warming means significant changes in economies, lives and jobs. Doing it

fairly in the context of poverty, inequality and conflicts over resources is a huge challenge.

Large and rapid change sometimes seems hard to achieve. But big and radical changes have happened before, and they're happening now too – in technology, finance, policies, infrastructure, attitudes and culture, all around the world.

**Evidence-based hope** – drawing on inspiring and varied stories of rapid transition – shows what kind of changes are possible, how people can help to shape them, and what conditions can make them happen. There's no shortage of talk about the potential of greener technologies and long-term environmental targets, but change is needed now and we want a bigger conversation on the immediate possibilities of rapid transition and more sustainable behaviour. The Alliance is helping to show what is possible and remove excuses for inaction.

# The hopeful map

**Meet the members** – page 54



**Clean energy** – page 34



**Efficient travel** – page 22



**Some highlights from the Rapid Transition Alliance** – page 8



**Enough money** – page 50



**Safe water** – page 46



**Natural advantage** – page 26



**Get involved** – page 57





**Stories of change** – page 12



**Lessons from lockdown** – page 4



**Good food** – page 18



**Better homes** – page 14



**Evidence-based hope in a warming world** – page 1



**Decent work** – page 30



**The hopeful map** – page 2



**Secure rights** – page 38



**Liveable cities** – page 42



# Lessons from lockdown

## What did we learn about rapid transition from the coronavirus pandemic?

Even as the human world paused in the path of a pandemic, it was obvious that people – both those in power and members of the public – were on a steep learning curve. Lessons were learned overnight as countries navigated the path of compromise between potential huge loss of human life and keeping the economy, with all its problems, going as usual. Terrible inequalities and the fragility of our food, healthcare and energy systems were revealed, but so also was humanity's extraordinary ability to work together and solve problems.

## Looking after each other better

- People's behaviour can change overnight to help protect others.
- Money can be found to support incomes and livelihoods.
- Street homelessness can be eliminated.
- Communities can come together to look after each other.
- Working hours, places and practices can be rapidly adapted to meet new needs.
- Involving people in the delivery of important public services can be effective and empowering.
- Special provision can be quickly made by wider society to meet the particular needs of groups such as, often low paid, 'key workers', and those who are more vulnerable – like elderly people.



## Case study

### Innovation for good

During the global pandemic, as seen in earlier crises such as world wars, governments were forced to turn to businesses and ask them to innovate and convert production for the greater good. Engineering firms developed breathing apparatus, brewers made sanitiser and restaurants made food for the homeless and isolated. Industry can switch to making more socially and environmentally useful products, offering decent, meaningful work in an inclusive way.

In the UK, **20,000** ex-National Health Service workers volunteered to return to support existing staff in the coronavirus pandemic, while a call for volunteers from the public was suspended within days after being overwhelmed by **750,000** offers of help.



## More space for people and nature



- Tens of thousands more people now commute by bike, and local authorities are already trying to make this permanent by providing them with more space on streets.
- A lot of travel and flying turned out to be 'unnecessary'. Flexible working led to far less commuting, and the replacement by Zoom and similar systems of international meetings.
- Greener towns and cities are healthier for people and better for nature, which can often bounce back quickly when pressure is removed. People love and use natural places and green space even more than ever.
- Increased focus on the fragile food chain spurred greater interest in urban potential for growing food in gardens, allotments and spare public spaces.
- We can have both less noise pollution and safer streets for childrens' play and community activities.

## Living with less 'stuff' and waste



- People can make do with quite a lot less stuff.
- People don't need to go shopping so often or to buy so much.
- There can be pleasure in making the most of what you already have, sharing with others, and in mending and repurposing stuff.
- People like and respond to a simpler lifestyle, growing their own food and shopping locally.
- Different consumption patterns could help reduce debt.

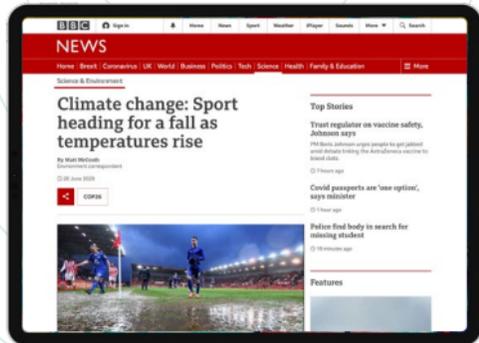
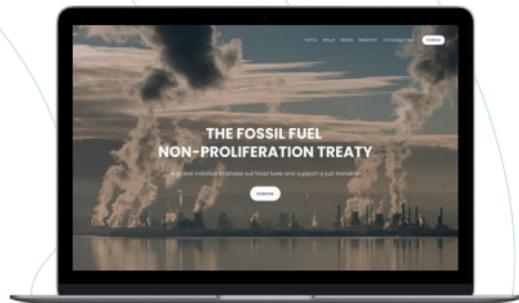




# Some highlights from the Rapid Transition Alliance

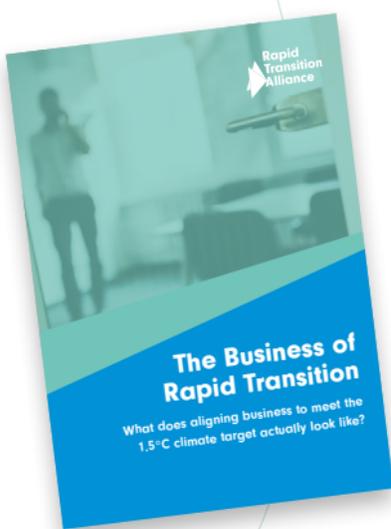
## Initiating the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty campaign

In 2018, the Alliance's Andrew Simms and Peter Newell proposed the idea of a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty designed to work alongside the UN Climate Convention to keep carbon in the ground. Now it is a big, growing international campaign: [www.fossilfueltreaty.org](http://www.fossilfueltreaty.org)



## Kicking off climate conversations in sports

The Alliance helped take climate action and behaviour change to the huge community of international sport with its groundbreaking report *Playing against the clock* and work to bring together a new network of campaigning sports groups.

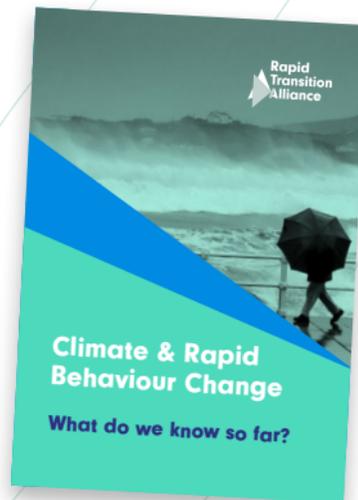


## Getting down to the 'Business of Rapid Transition'

We worked with businesses to picture what it would actually look like to be on course to meet the 1.5 °C Paris Climate target.

## Finding proven precedents of rapid behaviour change from public health

The Alliance gathered evidence of people's ability to change behaviour in the face of big health challenges from examples including smoking, driving, antibiotics use, and sexual health – and showed multiple lessons on creating the conditions for rapid transition.



## Broadcasting possibilities for change

The Alliance collaborated with BBC Ideas on short films showing the possibilities for rapid transition and behaviour change in the face of the climate emergency.



## Taking the message to major cultural events and festivals:

Evidence-based hope goes on tour regularly with our members engaging all kinds of audiences in the possibilities for change, ranging from speaking at big cultural institutions like national theatres to the Glastonbury music festival.



### **Supporting citizens juries and popular protests**

The Alliance provided evidence and speakers to citizens juries and popular demonstrations on the climate emergency from the moment it first launched in Parliament in the UK.



### **Helping the Green New Deal and climate emergency declarations**

Several Alliance members were authors of the original Green New Deal in 2008 and are working now to see its proposals implemented; others are working to turn climate emergency declarations into practical plans of action at local and national levels.



## Stories of change



Stories are one of the most ancient and most effective ways of making sense of the world... When we try to live a good life in a world we seem to be simultaneously destroying, there is nothing more valuable or worth encouraging."

— **Philip Pullman**, author





**'Can I tell you a story?' or 'I want to tell you a list of facts!'. Which of these propositions is more likely to make a person want to listen? We think that many people understand the world through stories. So, you have to be good at telling them if you want to show the possibilities to re-imagine and change how people live.**

Storytelling plays a crucial role in how we share knowledge and learn about the world around us. Not only do stories teach us about life, they can also inspire us, fuel our imaginations and encourage us to act.

We are collecting **stories of change** to share and demonstrate how rapid transition has happened in the past, remove excuses for inaction and show the way ahead.

These types of large scale, rapid changes can seem difficult to achieve but, through storytelling, we aim to show that rapid transition is not only possible and can bring huge benefits, but has also been done before in many different ways.

# Transforming homes to be comfortable and use less energy



**Better  
homes**



**kickstarts  
rapid  
transition.**

**Guaranteeing affordable, energy-efficient and decent shelter improves health and well being, and lowers pollution to benefit everyone.**

**Big global shifts in recent decades have seen populations rise and move to cities and urban areas where space is limited and the provision of housing a challenge. The built environment is one of the biggest users of energy and emitters of carbon, both in construction and day to day use.**

But there are huge economic, environmental and social gains to be made from making sure that new buildings are zero carbon, and existing buildings are retrofitted to become energy efficient. New thinking about how where we build relates to where we work can also radically reduce energy use and improve quality of life by, for example, designing out unnecessary commuting in cars.

New or revived interest in common land ownership, and cooperative or part-communal housing developments are further demonstrating how to change how we live to radically and rapidly reduce our climate impact, while also easing a range of social and health problems.



The Plan for a Green New Deal shall recognize that a national, industrial, economic mobilization of this scope and scale is a historic opportunity to virtually eliminate poverty in the United States and to make prosperity, wealth and economic security available to everyone participating in the transformation."

- **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez**,  
US politician

Almost **40%** of the UK's total final energy consumption occurs in its **29 million** homes and other buildings – improving energy efficiency and installing greener heating will slash carbon emissions.





In the European Union, a huge **84%** of heating and cooling needs are still met by fossil fuels.

China's solar thermal production for domestic hot water grew 20-fold from **3.5 million** square meters in 1998 to **70 million** square meters by 2015.

Stories on [rapidtransition.org](http://rapidtransition.org)

## Denmark's warm Glow

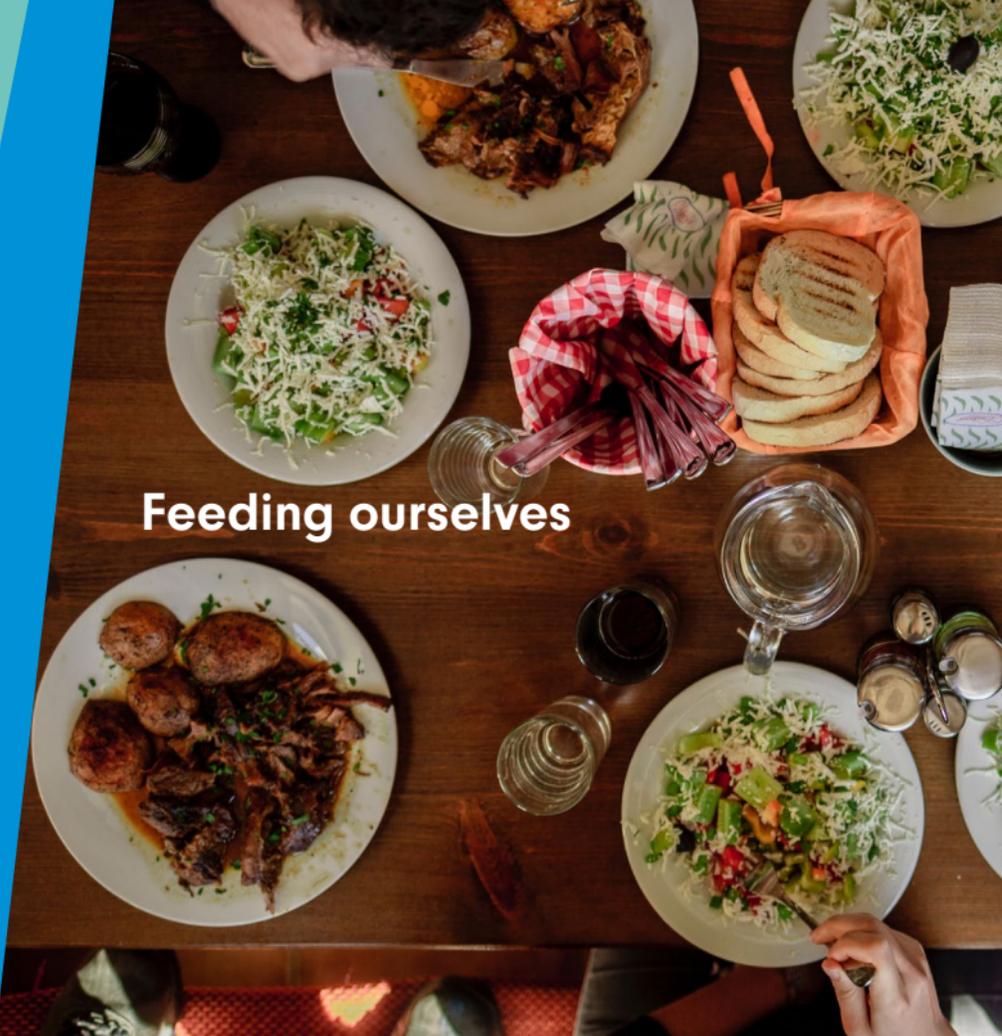
Looking for low-carbon ways to heat homes in a cold climate, Denmark took advantage of its high density urban living. Almost a million household heating systems were converted to more efficient district heating setups in under five years.

## Retrofitting for the future

Much of the housing stock in the global north is old, inefficient and leaky. The Energiesprong system from the Netherlands can clad a house in 10 days, fitting low-carbon innovations that make it net zero carbon.

## Wonder plant rediscovered

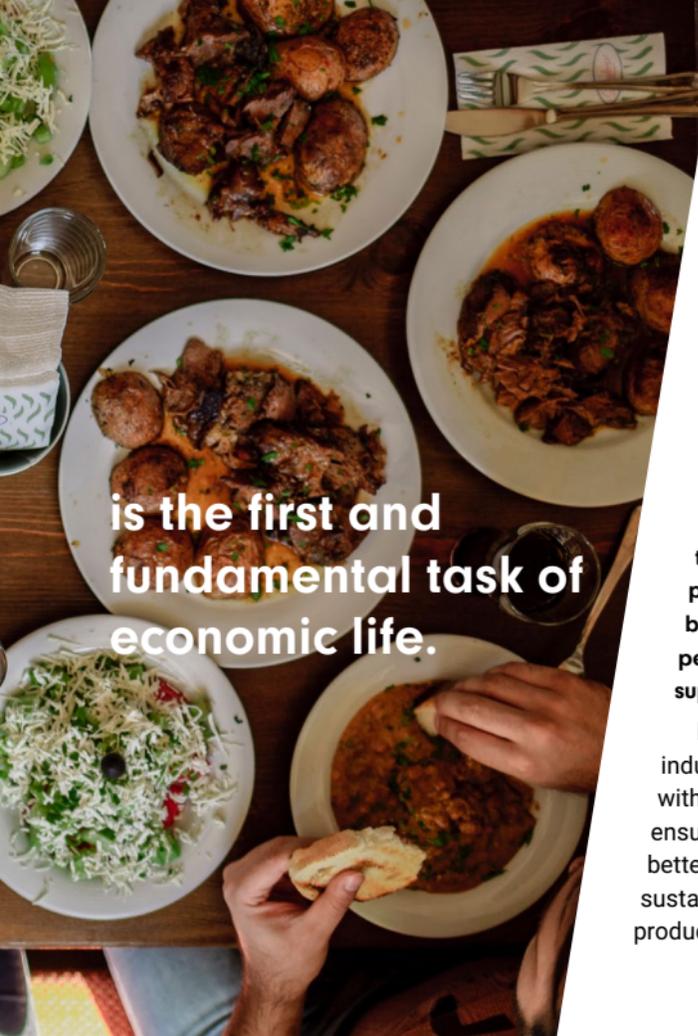
A carbon neutral distribution centre in rural Britain built from hemp saves 50% on electricity and gas. The plant hemp is light, a great insulator, good at regulating moisture and heat, cheap, easy and fast to grow, and non-toxic to handle.



## Feeding ourselves

# Good food





**is the first and  
fundamental task of  
economic life.**

**How the world produces food is both a problem and a potential answer to the climate emergency and making sure everyone gets enough good food to eat.**

Different ways of growing food and getting it onto people's plates can either worsen inequality and climate breakdown or work to reduce them. The scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change say that changing how the world farms to focus more on plant-based food has some of the best potential to bring both climate benefits and meet people's needs. But what people choose to eat, and the best ways for rural people to support themselves, vary hugely from place to place.

Recent decades saw a big shift towards heavily industrialised and more meat-based farming – a model with a major carbon footprint not primarily concerned with ensuring that everyone gets enough good food to eat. But better ways of growing and distributing food, and more sustainable diets, are spreading rapidly; and traditional ways of producing food are being championed too.



Lower-carbon diets aren't just good for the planet, they're also healthier."

— *Science Daily*

To grow a pound of carrots requires **14 gallons** of water; to grow a pound of beef uses **1,846 gallons**.

A study by Columbia University found an astonishing **5,000 acres** of land suitable for urban farming in New York City.



## What a waste

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates the world produces enough food waste to feed 2 billion people each year. Multiple social, climate and broader environmental benefits accrue from reducing food loss and waste, and effective strategies to do so exist all along the food chain.

## Garden to plate

Urban populations are now in the majority globally and cities are finding ways to grow their own food closer to home, using rooftops, public spaces and community farms. Singapore will produce 30% of its food by 2030 and Paris has 130 community gardens already in its Green Hand Charter.

## Vegan power

There was a 350% increase in the number of vegans in Britain from 2006-2016; 542,000 people said they were vegans in 2016. A survey in 2018 put the figure as high as 3.5 million people. Going vegan can reduce an individual's carbon footprint by up to 73%.

The City of Los Angeles' waste collection and food scrap drop-off program has prevented nearly **5 million pounds** of fresh produce being thrown away.



"If it were a country, food loss and waste would be the third largest emitter after China and the United States."

— UN Environment Programme

People need  
to get around,



Efficient travel



but experiences during the global pandemic revealed that much expensive, polluting and time consuming travel is unnecessary.

Rapid shifts in towns and cities to more walking and cycling and good mass public transit can improve communities and the global climate.

The types of transport we choose shape how clean the air that we breathe will be, how safe the streets where children walk and play are, and how convivial our towns and cities can become. Vitaly, it also determines whether affordable, safe and clean mobility is available to everyone who needs it.

Globally, in recent decades, the resource-hungry and energy inefficient private car has been favoured by politicians and planners. High levels of street pollution, divided communities, and deaths and injuries have been the cost, not to mention the contribution to global warming.

But attitudes to travel and transport show signs of turning a corner. Modern mass urban public transport is increasingly seen as an answer to congestion, poor air quality, and economic revival. And, where travel for tourism is concerned, interest in slow travel and the 'staycation' is changing attitudes. In the global North and South, cities are reinventing how we get around so that our choice of transport doesn't drive us over a climate cliff.

Stories on [rapidtransition.org](https://rapidtransition.org)

## Less space for cars makes traffic evaporate

A seminal 1998 UK study of 100 locations showed that when space for cars was cut, traffic declined. Described as ‘traffic evaporation’ it revealed a 25% average overall reduction in traffic. Across the world, cities are trying this out, taking out lanes, removing parking and pedestrianising roads. And it works.

“No one, rich or poor, can escape air pollution. It is a silent public health emergency.”

— **Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**  
WHO director general

## All aboard the electric bus

The first electric bus rolled off the production line in 2009 in Shenzhen, China, and by 2019 the city’s full fleet of 16,359 buses was electric. China continues to invest heavily in electric buses, and while most cities globally saw air pollution worsen in the last decade, Shenzhen’s air quality significantly improved.

## How much do we need to travel?

During the global pandemic, people learned by necessity to work from home, enjoy home entertainment, shop closer to home, walk and cycle more, and holidays far away were largely cancelled. Car use fell to as low as one tenth in many places at the height of lockdown, urban air quality rose, and people who could work from home appreciated the lack of commuting time. How might we keep the best of this going?





“Few things are more democratic than a good public space and a good system of mass public transport.”

— **Federico Gutiérrez**,  
ex-mayor of Medellín,  
Colombia

Every five weeks some **9,500** additional electric buses – the equivalent of London’s entire bus fleet – are deployed in China.

In 2019, some **4.4 billion** passengers made a journey by air (many people taking frequent flights), but estimates suggest that **80%** of the world’s population has never taken a flight.

Pollution from burning fossil fuels kills an estimated **8.7 million** people globally each year according to sophisticated analysis published in the journal Environment Research.

Human health and well being  
are bound to nature,



**Natural  
advantage**

but we are living through  
a mass extinction event  
because of the pressure  
of the economy on  
ecosystems.

## Leaving more space for nature, learning from it and making more green space for people creates a positive cycle.

**We are living in a climate and ecological emergency. But the economy ultimately depends on nature, and enhancing the conditions for life lends a natural advantage to making transformations happen. For rapid transition to thrive within the biosphere's thresholds, we must create more space for nature with policies to restore habitats in urban, suburban and countryside areas. Not only does this benefit other plants and animals, but more contact with nature also brings greater well being and quality of life for people.**

Rapid transition requires practical models for food and farming that will improve human and environmental health, maximise the landscape's

ability to store carbon, promote innovations in land management and ownership, and ease the transition by protecting jobs and creating new green employment opportunities.

In many areas 'rewilding' is an increasingly popular approach. 'Rewilding' is people helping wildlife to recover by changing human behaviours, removing barriers to restoration, regenerating ecosystems and restoring species, and then living in harmony with the rest of nature. Doing it rapidly means reconnecting people with nature and realigning how we live, the restoration of endangered or locally-extinct native species, and the regeneration of rural and urban landscapes with abundant wildlife.

Stories on [rapidtransition.org](http://rapidtransition.org)

## Putting nature first

In Bolivia, indigenous worldviews that prioritise harmony with nature over economic development have been enshrined in law. Their 2009 Constitution recognises *Buen Vivir* (good way of living), as a principle for state action. Bolivia's 2011 Law of Mother Nature was the first national legislation to bestow rights on the natural world.

## The wild side

'Rewilding' – making space for nature with little or no input from humans – is both a defence against climate breakdown and beneficial for human well-being. Native herbivores produce less methane than modern cattle, rewilded land can soak up carbon, and creatures like the beaver work for free, rapidly transforming landscapes.

## River rights

In 2017, after two centuries of physical and legal struggle by the Whanganui people, the New Zealand government passed legislation recognizing the Whanganui River as holding rights and responsibilities equivalent to a person. The river – or those acting for it – will now be able to sue for its own protection under the law.



In 2013, the Woodland Trust estimated that if every household in England were provided with good access to quality green space, it could save an estimated **£2.1 billion** in healthcare costs.

The Andean definition of **'community'** also encompasses the natural world, dissolving the separation of nature and society typical of Western culture and expanding citizenship to include the **non-human world**.



“Climate change is like a fever that is symptomatic of an underlying disease... The underlying cause is the belief that humans are separate from, and superior to nature and that more is better.”

- **Pablo Solon**, Former Bolivian ambassador to the United Nations

Rapid transition opens doors to decent work.

Precarious over-work, unemployment and under-employment characterise the modern global economy.



**Decent  
work**

**A green economy creates useful work that, better shared, spreads its benefits and allows more balanced lives.**

**Increasingly, if you have a job, the hours are likely to be long and the work low-paid and insecure. It's just as bad if the hours are too few and low-paid to sustain a livelihood. If you're unemployed, it's easy to end up being treated as a second class citizen – excluded from many forms of civic and social life.**

Youth unemployment is particularly harsh and socially divisive, often leading to generations being trapped in subsistence. But even when you are in work, it can seem like a treadmill, struggling to meet the costs of living and a home, and in consumer cultures, the promise of a better life always lies just on the other side of the next shopping trip. Evidence says otherwise.

The irony of all of this is that, in an era when the great challenge is to meet everyone's needs as we make the rapid transition to live within the bounds of the biosphere, there is no shortage of good work that needs doing.

An awakening to the 'green collar economy' has institutions as diverse as the International Labour Organisation and multiple industry associations predicting tens of millions of new jobs in low-carbon sectors.

At the same time, both public and private employers are finding that many workers realise greater satisfaction by opting to work shorter weeks, helping to spread the benefits of employment more broadly. Even the economic grandfather of work specialisation, Adam Smith, warned of the human consequences of poor-quality, repetitive work. Now the circular and green economies seem to offer ways to get off the consumer treadmill of endless material accumulation (for those who could even afford it or were prepared to go into debt), as well as opportunities for more meaningful work. By changing ingrained working patterns, the conditions for rapid transition can be created.



“A shorter working week could help solve several connected problems: overwork, unemployment, over-consumption, high carbon emissions, low well-being, entrenched inequalities, and the lack of time to live sustainably, to care for each other, and simply to enjoy life.”

— **Andrew Simms**, co-author, *21 hours*

Stories on [rapidtransition.org](https://rapidtransition.org)

## Home working trends

The global pandemic has hugely accelerated a trend that was growing already, especially in service sectors of the economy, and established it, in a matter of days and weeks, as a new international norm. Millions of people have gone through a rapid transition involving doing their job from home. This throws up many advantages and disadvantages, depending on what “home” looks like.

## Ethical business

Pioneer businesses are changing the priorities of consumption in a range of ways that benefit the environment and could encourage a just transition to better work. These range from co-ops focused on value and access for all, to social enterprise models looking for sustainable products and ways of working, and B-Corps with a globally recognised accreditation.

**One in three** Dutch men either works part-time or compresses his hours. **Three-quarters** of women work part-time, and almost all Dutch part-time workers **do not want** to increase their hours.

### Shorter working week

Working weeks have grown shorter over time as people campaigned for better conditions, and backed up by policies to guarantee essential needs and services, a shorter working week allows available work to be better shared, improved work life balance, and the time needed to live more sustainably.



# Clean energy



Everything we do  
needs energy.



The type of energy we use shapes the world around us, from how clean the air we breathe is, to how shock-proof our economies are.



## Renewables are quick, clean and bring multiple benefits.

**A rapid transition in energy use is at the centre of solving climate breakdown. The world still uses coal, oil and gas for over 80 percent of its energy needs. But the rise of renewable energy around the world is beating all expectations. Meeting climate targets means more than just having lots of solar panels and wind turbines though – it means leaving fossil fuels in the ground, and radically reducing the amount of energy used in high-consuming countries and groups of people.**

A rapid transition to clean and lower energy use can bring jobs, a wide range of health benefits, cleaner air and a more stable climate. Evidence shows that where communities own and develop renewable energy schemes the benefits spread more broadly and any problems are more easily overcome. It's around energy that some of the most rapid and promising changes are happening right now.



Globally the wealthiest **10%** are responsible for half of all emissions... If regulations forced the top **10%** to cut their emissions to the level of the average EU citizen, and the other **90%** made no change in their lifestyles, that would still cut total emissions by a third."

– **Kevin Anderson**, climate scientist

China has been the leading destination for renewable energy investment, accounting for **45%** of the global total in 2019. In around a decade since 2009, **4.3 million** solar products have been sold in Kenya.

In 2015, investment in solar systems in the global South **overtook** that of rich countries for the first time. Since 2013 more new renewable energy capacity has been introduced than coal, oil and gas combined.



## The clean energy only island

The tiny Danish island of Samsø went from being entirely fossil fuel dependent for energy to becoming the World's first 100% renewable island in under a decade. In 1997, the Danish

Government launched a competition to develop a model renewable energy community, in order to prove that the country's Kyoto climate target was doable.

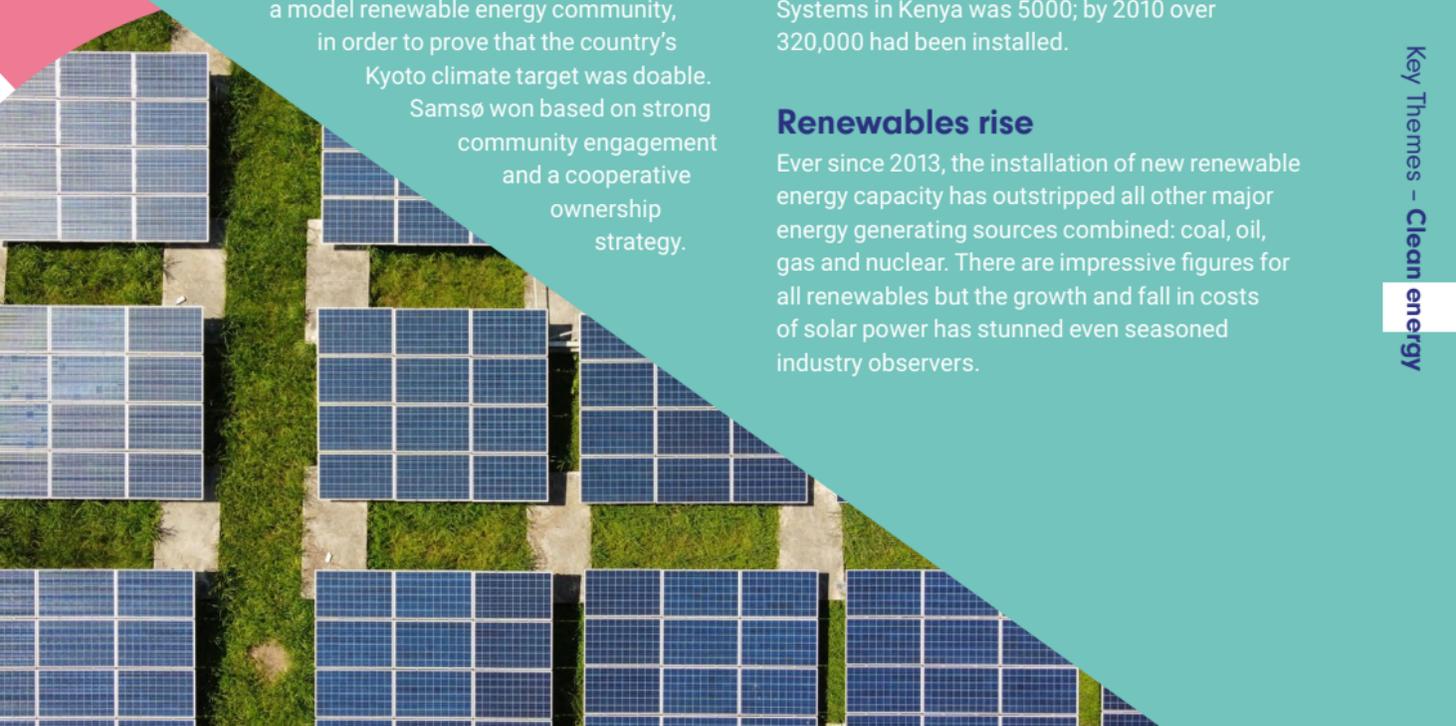
Samsø won based on strong community engagement and a cooperative ownership strategy.

## Kenya goes solar

The Solar Home System (SHS) has brought clean, accessible electricity to rural Kenya quickly and effectively using private sales supported by international funding for research and capacity building. In 1990, the number of Solar Home Systems in Kenya was 5000; by 2010 over 320,000 had been installed.

## Renewables rise

Ever since 2013, the installation of new renewable energy capacity has outstripped all other major energy generating sources combined: coal, oil, gas and nuclear. There are impressive figures for all renewables but the growth and fall in costs of solar power has stunned even seasoned industry observers.



# Secure rights



**Secure rights are the foundation of rapid transition. Without secure rights and a say over how to address climate change,**



**decisions imposed  
from above may be  
resented or rejected.**



For rapid transitions to work for all, they have to be just, and based on real, accessible and democratic decision-making. All kinds of positive rights have been agreed internationally over decades. Access to food, shelter, dignity, and freedom from persecution for all, sit alongside the rights of the child. But too often economic systems become entrenched making securing these rights practically impossible, and climate breakdown is a further assault on all of them.

Sometimes the conflicts become stark and unmissable, such as when land, forest or fishing waters are grabbed from communities for remote, private gain, or a privatised water system prevents access to safe water. Finding ways to reclaim basic rights and see them properly realised and respected is a fundamental part of the picture of rapid transition.

In just **10 years** the village-based NGO 'Tarun Bharat Sangh' (TBS) brought water back to over **1,000** villages and revived five rivers in the Indian province of Rajasthan.

Stories on [rapidtransition.org](https://rapidtransition.org)

## Taking back common control of land

Access to land is the key not only to growing food but to making a living in many parts of the world. Organisations that help people to gain ownership to the land they farm, often through innovative, cooperative and collaborative methods, have been successful across the world. But inequality remains high and therefore access to better work is inaccessible to many.



Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (MST) have used direct action to occupy land and claim ownership for **350,000** families, who now have legal ownership of their small farms.

## Communities stopping fossil fuels

The small US west-coast community of Whatcom County used gaps in existing policies and regulations in August 2016 to obtain a temporary moratorium on new proposals for huge unrefined fossil fuel transport projects in their area. In 2019, a groundbreaking ordinance was introduced to permanently safeguard the health of the local community from harm caused by fossil fuel expansion projects while also protecting industry workers, the climate, and the economy.

## Rejuvenating rivers with rights

Communities in Rajasthan, India, formed a special parliament to represent the life-giving rivers they depend on, showing that local democracy can secure livelihoods while also rapidly solving an environmental crisis and transforming a landscape.



This forest has taught us how to walk lightly, and because we have listened, learned and defended her, she has given us everything: water, clean air, nourishment, shelter, medicines, happiness, meaning. And you are taking all this away, not just from us, but from everyone on the planet, and from future generations."

— **Nemonte Nenquimo**, president of the Waorani organisation



**Liveable  
cities**

**Cities are energy-hungry,  
climate hotspots,**





but when they  
become greener  
we see immediate  
benefits for the  
climate, the  
environment  
and those that  
live there.



Cities are both in the front line of increasingly extreme weather events such as heatwaves and floods, and major sources of the pollution that causes climate breakdown. But green a city, and you help to make it more climate-proof and take the pressure off global warming. Once steps are taken to green cities, a host of other benefits emerge. The air becomes cleaner, reducing childhood asthma and a host of other lethal health complaints directly linked to dirty air. By involving a wide range of people in the process, cities can benefit from their knowledge and ideas to make greener cities work for everyone.

Shifting away from the dominance of polluting private cars toward clean mass-transit systems makes our streets and neighbourhoods safer places to play, and more peaceful for all residents. Living streets bring communities together too. Urban growing can rebuild a relationship between people and real food, make a shift to better diets easier, and also bring people together.

## Stories on [rapidtransition.org](https://rapidtransition.org)

### National park cities

Cities often deny people the multiple health and well-being benefits of contact with green spaces, plants and other animals. The National Park City movement expands the concept of a national park to include an entire capital city for the first time. This is about integrating people and nature to make a park with no hard borders that encompasses daily life.

### Taiwan waves goodbye to rubbish

In 1993, Taiwan collected just 70 percent of its trash, with the rest polluting the environment through littering or burning. Today, manufacturers, importers and consumers all pay towards its collection, recycling and disposal. In Taipei trucks pick up at over 4,000 spots five nights a week, with mobile apps that let users track the trucks.

### Freedom from unnecessary travel

The sudden removal of traffic during the pandemic was hugely beneficial for air quality in the world's cities. In Delhi, India, where air is normally choking, levels of both PM2.5 (small particulates) and the harmful gas nitrogen dioxide fell more than 70 percent. In China, the drops in pollution resulting from coronavirus shutdowns likely saved between 53,000 and 77,000 lives.

One in eight of the world's urban dwellers live in just **33** megacities.

London – the world's first 'National Park City' – is home to **3.8 million** gardens, **30,000** allotments, **300** farms and **8.3 million** trees.



We have in my view a once in a generation opportunity to rebuild our cities and our economies so that they're cleaner, greener, more sustainable and better geared towards meeting the needs of our citizens."

— **Sadiq Khan**, Mayor of London

**Over half** of the world's population live in urban areas, with that share expected to grow to **over two thirds** by 2050. In North America the figure rises to over eight out of ten.

# Safe water



**Water is life.**





**But hundreds of millions of people around the world have to drink from sources not protected from contamination.**

**The greatest disruption to the planet in the wake of warming will be to its water cycle. Worse and longer droughts will happen as well as sudden, heavier and more destructive rainfall and flooding. At the same time, there are struggles over the ownership and control of the systems needed to make safe drinking water available to everyone.**

Changing diets, with some plants placing higher burdens on water supplies, corporate control in farming, and increased demand to grow crops for biofuels, all raise the stakes over questions of who, and what, takes priority in gaining access to stressed water supplies. But around the world people are coming together to guarantee and improve access and rights to water.

Our seas are also bearing the brunt of climate change, with vast swathes of temperature sensitive corals dying or 'bleaching', plastic pollution reaching the deepest ocean trenches, chemical pollution rife, and marine wildlife struggling to survive such rapid change.

[Stories on rapidtransition.org](https://www.rapidtransition.org)

## Community control of water

In India in 2017, the Gurgaon Water Forum (GWF) formed to build a network of stakeholders who could develop a shared vision of a just transition to a sustainable city, with water at its core. Together they are democratizing access to water with the ultimate goal of making their urban water systems sustainable.

## Media can make a rapid difference

Despite pollution in the world's oceans being well publicised for decades, a BBC programme fronted by wildlife expert David Attenborough caused a sea change in 2018, seeing bans on single use plastic items. By March 2019, at the UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi, 170 countries pledged to “significantly reduce” the use of plastics by 2030.

## The new municipal movement

Between 2000 and 2015, there were 235 cases of water ‘remunicipalisation’– bringing water back under public control. As a result of this rapidly spreading trend, 100 million people across 37 countries now benefit from water as a public good, rather than a private commodity.



Bangladesh was the first country to **ban** some types of **plastic bags** that worsen flooding by blocking urban drainage systems.



In the heavily populated US state of California, a drought lasted **376 weeks** from December 27, 2011 to March 5th, 2019, affecting **30%** of the population – over **11 million people**.



When people are directly confronted with the emotionally upsetting impacts of unsustainable production and consumption patterns, they are willing to make personal changes."

A UK survey suggested more people used reusable water bottles in 2019 than they did in 2017, and amongst 18 to 24-year olds, the figure is over **70%**.

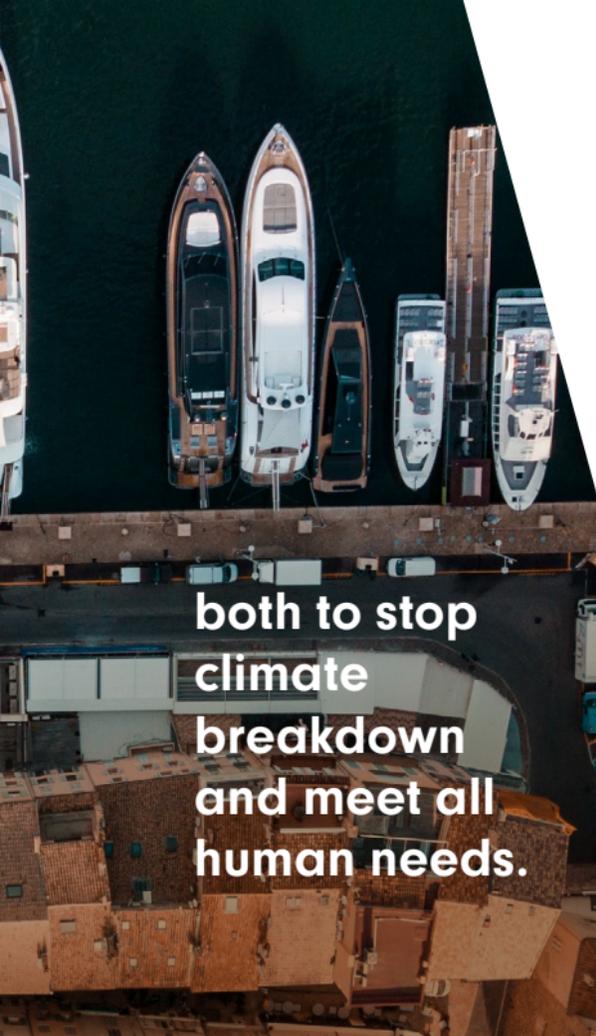
Cape Town's "Day Zero" is its projection for when the city's taps might run dry, only just averted so far, and made **five to six times** more likely by global heating. A global water crisis faces megacities across the world.



There  
is enough  
money  
in the  
world

Enough  
money





**both to stop  
climate  
breakdown  
and meet all  
human needs.**

**But too often it tends to be in the hands of those who need it less, or is being spent on things which don't address the more pressing challenges. Now finance is being reimagined.**

In recent years, the world has seen how huge sums of money can be created by governments overnight when they think something is important enough. Once hard-set policies can change just as quickly. Both happened after the banking crisis of 2007-2008, with trillions used globally to stimulate economies and save the financial system. It happened again as the coronavirus pandemic swept the world. From funding mass vaccination programmes to becoming the wage payer of last resort, public funding came to people's rescue.

Now, innovative ways are emerging everywhere to fund fair and rapid low-carbon transition. From bond issues for community-based, small and medium-scale renewable energy projects, to new financial institutions that support large-scale, low-carbon infrastructure, people are finding the money to make rapid transition possible. More and faster is needed, and how it should be directed is a crucial question for all, but momentum is growing.

Money can always be found for priorities – in the first year of the coronavirus pandemic, the world's four major central banks created **\$7.8 trillion** of public money using quantitative easing (QE) to support their economies.

[Stories on rapidtransition.org](https://www.rapidtransition.org)

### Grow your own local economy

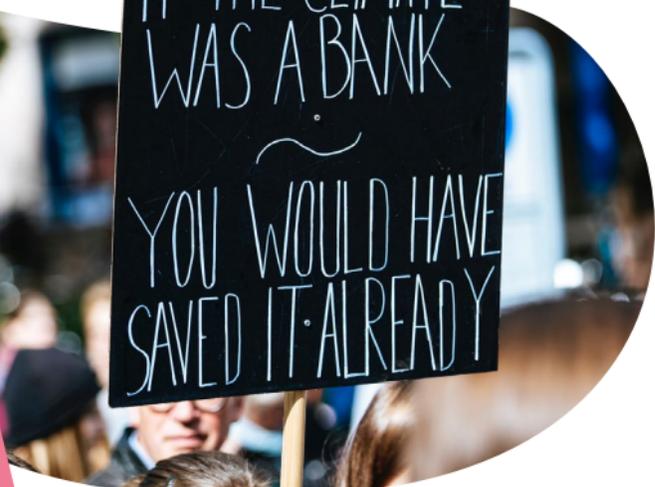
In 2001, Argentina defaulted on its \$95 billion debt, unemployment and social upheaval rocked the country. But a rapid, autonomous adaptation happened at the local level creating a parallel economy. Huertas comunitarias, or community gardens, sprang up alongside community kitchens, groups came together to do everything from making food to building shelters, creating markets, bartering, and providing education.

### The public bank comeback

The highly profitable Bank of North Dakota uses state tax receipts to form the basis of loans, where, crucially, the central purpose of the bank is not to make a profit for external shareholders but to generate benefits for North Dakota.

### Iceland tames the banks

After the 2008 banking crisis, Iceland let its banks go bust and expanded its social safety net. Instead of placating financial markets, it imposed temporary controls on the movement of capital and enabled a 'pots and pans' revolution that included drafting a new citizen-drafted constitution and engaging fully half the electorate.



IF THE CLIMATE  
WAS A BANK  
YOU WOULD HAVE  
SAVED IT ALREADY

More than ten years on from the 2007 banking crash, there are over **20 local Bills** under debate across the US that boost public banking.

One Argentinian self-help community group had **15,000** members and paid out **9,000** unemployment benefits per month in 2002, and the same year there were **200** factories being run by workers' cooperatives, including a 4-star Hotel.



“Iceland’s approach to dealing with the meltdown has put the needs of its population ahead of the markets at every turn.”

— *Bloomberg News*



## Meet the members

Here are just a few... Rapid Transition Alliance members come from across the world and in all shapes and sizes, from single NGOs to huge networks of people tackling climate change challenges on the ground. They all share a belief in the power of collaboration, exchanging knowledge and learning through story and positive examples. They bring their own perspective, often their own members, and networks that extend out into their communities. By signing up to a pledge to work together on building and presenting evidence-based hope to the world, the power and influence of the Alliance is far greater than the sum of its parts.

### **Bikramaditya K Choudhary**

**The South Asia Sustainability Hub & Knowledge Network (SASH&KN)**

“In a rapidly urbanizing society, a transformation of our ways of thinking and doing seems to be needed. Rapid Transition could be one such way out, if we work together to acknowledge the mistakes of the past and build on the successes. Indian cities, like many others around the

world, face multiple structural challenges to sustainable development. But they also have a lot to contribute to a sustainable future based on their experience, commitment to the future and unique ways of being.”





## Joel Onyango

**African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS)**

"We come across various stories that illustrate hope, even at the lowest economic levels of society. These stories prove that everyone in the society, according to their own capacity can contribute towards environmental management and reduce the negative impacts of climate change."

---

## Tzeporah Berman

**Stand.earth**

"Although my country of Canada is relatively wealthy with a stable democracy, and we've committed to Paris climate goals, we are still expanding oil and gas production faster than almost every other country in the world. Until we have an honest conversation about reducing supply and demand, we won't be able to plan for a just transition."

---



## Anna Jonsson

**New Weather Sweden**

"The knowledge of how people before us have managed to change society – in big and small ways – gives us insight into our own piece of the historical puzzle as well as broadening our minds as to what is feasible. Making individual efforts to change sometimes feels insignificant, but with hindsight we can see that all these struggles were part of a big web that made huge shifts possible."

---



## Harriet Lamb

CEO, Ashden

“Carbon-cutting technology must be used to empower marginalised people – from communities in rural Africa living without electricity, to jobseekers here in the UK.”

## Transition Network

Through our collective stories we can inspire possibility, we can prove that transition can happen, we can believe ourselves to be the experts that we need, and we can be energised by knowing what can be achieved if we take action together to re-imagine and rebuild our world.



## Jeremy Leggett

Solarcentury

“We need coordinated action if we are to bring together the many, many people around the world working towards zero carbon, but often in small groups on tiny budgets. There is no time to reinvent the wheel – collaboration is the only game in town now if we are to make the necessary shifts in time.”



# Get involved

We want to learn from where, when and how things have changed very quickly. Do you have a story of rapid transition? It could be something small scale from your neighbourhood or a moment of change in your own life.

It could be a story from the past or now, and from anywhere in the world. We are interested in all areas of life, culture and work. They don't have to be specifically about sustainability, though we'd like you to tell us how they speak to the big challenges of the climate and ecological emergency and equality, and what lessons they might offer for rapid transitions to sustainability.

All our content is licensed under Creative Commons, so you are free to use our materials to hold an event or give talks about rapid transition.

Sign up to our **newsletter** to be kept up to date on rapid transitions. If you represent an organisation, please consider joining the Alliance to take part in making rapid change happen. You can do this by visiting [www.rapidtransition.org](http://www.rapidtransition.org) and also follow us on **twitter** and **facebook**.



**Twitter** @RapidTransition  
**Facebook** @rapidtransitionalliance

**2021**

This pocketbook is published by the Rapid Transition Alliance.

**The Rapid Transition Alliance** is coordinated by the New Weather Institute, the STEPS Centre at the Institute of Development Studies, and the School of Global Studies at the University of Sussex.

The Alliance is made possible by support from the **KR Foundation**: [www.krfund.org](http://www.krfund.org)

**The Rapid Transition Alliance team includes:** Andrew Simms, Peter Newell, Nicky Saunter, Sophie Marsden, Ruby Utting, Nathan Oxley and Lewis Small

