



**capacity global**

living in a clean and healthy environment is everyone's right

## One Planet Culture

This month's edition of One Planet Culture features the documentary *The Power of Community*, which explores how the people of Cuba survived the fall of their Soviet support and thrived despite the American economic embargo. This factsheet is just an introduction to the issues of climate change, peak oil and adapting to a world less dependent on oil; to find out more, visit the Capacity Global website and the links included below.

### Introduction to climate change and peak oil

Climate change is the phrase used to describe the rising temperatures that will bring hotter summers, more frequent storms, and higher sea levels. The rise is due mainly to the increase of several gases in our atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide.

Similar to the glass of a greenhouse, these gases trap heat from the sun, enabling life on Earth. But burning fossil fuels for transportation and energy emit much more quantities of these gases than Nature can handle. Just as double-glazed windows trap more heat in the greenhouse, the accumulation of these gases makes the Earth hotter.

Peak oil is the term used to describe the situation when oil supplies reach their maximum output – after this peak, the supply enters terminal decline. For example, the USA was once the world's largest oil producer but their supply has steadily decreased from its peak in 1970. The same thing will happen on a global scale, if it hasn't already occurred.

This wouldn't be a problem if we didn't rely on oil for so many things – not just petrol and fuel oil for transportation and heating, but other refined oil products which are essential to make petrochemicals. In turn, these petrochemicals are used to make things like fertilizers, detergents, synthetic materials like plastic, and even medicine.

### Why we all need to adapt

Fortunately, there is a solution for both climate change and peak oil – use less oil! It's clear we can't cut oil completely out of our lives, but we can reduce it to a minimum. Adjusting the way we do things will be necessary if we want to reduce the impact that climate change and peak oil have on our way of life.

Adaptation is the ability of a species to survive in a particular environment; climate adaptation refers to our ability to adjust to climate change, to moderate potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities and cope with the consequences. But how can we live with less oil?

We can look at people who have already done just that for examples. During the Cold War, Cuba relied on oil imports from the Soviet Union for their quality of life. But the imports stopped when the Iron Curtain fell – and the Cuban people had to adapt.

Without petrol, public transport and cycling became popular. Without chemical fertilizers and diesel for their tractors, farmers turned to traditional organic methods, like using oxen to plow fields and worms to enrich the soil. Instead of big urban universities, the government created small institutions in over 50 small towns, so students don't have to travel so far.

## How to adapt to a life with less oil

As an individual and as part of your community, you can change your behaviour and make choices for a more sustainable lifestyle. Here are a few ideas on how to live on less oil:

- **Buy or grow your own seasonal, locally-produced organic food.** Organic food is grown without oil-based products like chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and it shouldn't take any oil to get food from your garden to your plate! [www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)
- **Walk or cycle as much as possible.** Use less petrol or diesel, reduce your emissions, keep fit! What's the downside? [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)
- **If you need a car, join a car club or try lift-sharing.** Car clubs split the cost of the car, insurance, fuel and maintenance over the users, so you get all the convenience without the hassles. [www.carclubs.org.uk](http://www.carclubs.org.uk)
- **Consider alternatives to flying.** Trains and buses are much more efficient than planes, and if you factor in the time getting to and waiting at airports, they can also be faster!
- **Turn off the lights when you leave the room, and switch off electrical appliances at the wall.** Use less energy, use less oil and gas, and save money.
- **Insulate your home and install double-glazed windows.** Keeping more heat in your house means less fuel oil or gas needed to heat it up!
- **Switch to a 'green' renewable energy tariff.** Electricity produced from renewable sources like solar or windpower don't use any oil, unlike natural gas. [www.cse.org.uk](http://www.cse.org.uk)
- **Use reusable containers and recycle your plastic.** Recycling plastic bottles means less oil is required to make new plastic. [www.crn.org.uk](http://www.crn.org.uk)
- **Join the Transition Towns movement.** If you don't want to wait for the government to sort things out, but feel your own actions are too small to make an impact, why not take a local community approach to preparing for life after oil? [www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)

## For more information

If you're interested in learning more about shopping ethically or other actions you can do to save the environment, Capacity Global and the Every Actions Counts (EAC) programme can help. We provide advice and support to individuals and voluntary and community organisations who are looking to reduce their impact on the environment and tackle climate change.

Visit the Capacity Global and Every Action Counts websites:

[www.capacity.org.uk](http://www.capacity.org.uk)

[www.everyactioncounts.org.uk](http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk)

To find an EAC Community Champion in your area, or to learn more about becoming one, contact Claire Lyon at BTCV on 01302 388 841 or email [c.lyon@btcv.org.uk](mailto:c.lyon@btcv.org.uk).