

## **Economic Security for all in Devon (Funding proposal)**

Contrary to popular perceptions there is considerable poverty and underemployment in Devon. Currently there are 70 emergency food projects in the county serving 40,000 people including 8000 children. Wages are low compared to the national average (Torridge has the lowest wages in England) while house prices are high. Fuel poverty rates are some of the highest in the country. Rural areas are generally more deprived than elsewhere in England and Plymouth and Torbay are the most deprived towns in the South West.

Within Devon there are a wide variety of new economic initiatives taking place which are breaking new ground. They include community land trusts, ecovillage projects, renewable energy projects, sustainable food production, complementary currencies, wellbeing promotion, transition town projects, and innovative social enterprise amongst many others. Following a Devon wide conference in April 2016, a group of Devon based new economics practitioners from some of these programmes began to meet to explore how they could work together to address economic insecurity, tell a compelling story about new economics in action and provide an evidence base for campaigning for policy change.

**The Group believes that a new organisation needs to set up with the following aim. “To work towards and promote economic security for all in Devon in an ecologically sustainable way” The objectives of this organisation would be:**

- 1) To run practical projects addressing economic insecurity which build on and scale up current initiatives**
- 2) To learn from and support each other in developing a different kind of economy – particularly aiming at economic security for all**
- 3) To develop and devise appropriate new models of economic practice and policy and to create ‘a new story’**
- 4) To campaign for these changes at both local and national level**
- 5) To be nationally and internationally a ‘showcase’ for new economics in action.**

The Group is seeking £6,000 from Network to develop an action plan during 2017. We want to hire an individual to work with us on a part pro bono basis to a) Identify 2/3 project ideas and develop them to the funding proposal stage b) Explore and develop possible key partnerships (e.g.: Exeter University, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Devon Community Foundation, Regen SW, Dartington, Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks) c) Recommend the appropriate type of organisation to establish. The Group is willing to put considerable unpaid time itself to supplement the work of the individual who is hired. The type of projects that will be explored include: Scaling up community food production and allotments; developing new models of community energy; building further on Devon’s pioneering community land trust projects; and exploring how to use the purchasing power of large Devon based public institutions and private businesses to create new social enterprises and small firms.

We would then plan to seek funding from organisations such as Esmee, Tudor and the Big Lottery as well as a possible application to Network as a major project. We believe that what we are proposing breaks new ground and could form a model for the development of a radically different economy- one which is sorely needed in the light of the Brexit vote. Devon with a population of over one million, a mix of both cities and large rural areas, and many new economy projects already running is an ideal pilot location.