



Mission

The Big Lemon's mission is to provide affordable, friendly and sustainable bus and coach services to encourage the shift from private car use to sustainable alternatives.

Is there a link with Transition?

We were a member of the Business & Economics group in Transition Brighton & Hove before it changed its name and then disbanded. Our Managing Director, Tom Druitt, has a keen interest in the Transition movement and has participated in a Transition conference in Totnes as part of his work with Local United.

Your product or service – how much does it help improve resilience in your local community or elsewhere?

We offer bus and coach services using recycled waste vegetable oil that we collect from local restaurants. The oil is processed locally and we use it to run two local bus services, a music festival coach service, a private hire service and a program of walking days out in the Sussex countryside.

Employees

Ten full time, eight part time, one volunteer.

Are you in profit? If not, when do you anticipate being so? How long have you been trading?

Turnover = £387,000; Profit = £19,000. Trading since 9 Jan 2007.

What is your company structure and why did you choose it?

We're a Community Interest Company, because we felt it best reflected our intentions when we set up the business, and we wanted to ensure that there was a legal framework to ensure our aims stood the test of time.

What about financial sustainability? Are you trading or part-trading without money?

We used Director's savings and a community share issue to get started, but it was a nail-biting time! We now have reliable cash flow but it has taken a lot of effort to get to this stage.

Are you looking to build more common wealth & ownership and is priority your profit sharing and/or community benefits versus more traditional investor returns?

Yes. All staff who complete their probationary period become shareholders in the company. We are very involved in the local community and aim to share our experience with a wide audience including local schools, colleges, and members of the public. A brief outline of our work with the community can be found here: <http://www.thebiglemon.com/aboutUs/howWeWork/Community/>. We also run a scheme called "Give Something Back": www.thebiglemon.com/givesomethingback. This raises money for local good causes and our staff social fund.

Localisation – are you sourcing, distributing and interacting locally?

As much as possible, yes! Our fuel for example is collected processed and used locally, reducing our carbon footprint and supporting the local green economy. We have also been keen supporters of Brighton & Hove City Council's "Be Local, Buy Local" campaign (<http://bit.ly/OuDolb>) and use local independent retailers for supplies wherever we can.

Climate impacts – negative, beneficial or neutral?

Realistically every business has some climate impact, but we aim to reduce ours at every opportunity: <http://www.thebiglemon.com/aboutUs/howWeWork/Sustainability/>. Through our use of renewable fuels we save CO2 emissions compared with running the same service on diesel-fuelled vehicles, and in the last year for which we have figures available, 2011, we saved an estimated 278 tonnes of CO2.

Anything else you'd like to share with us?

The Big Lemon has won a number of awards over the last few years. These have included

- 2009: Dandelion Award for Sustainable Business
- 2010: Best Sustainability Initiative, Brighton & Hove Public Service Awards
- 2011: Best Social Enterprise, EU Ethiconomy Awards
- 2012: Best in Responsible Transport, Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards;
Bronze Award "Most Sustainable Small Business" International Green Awards

We have also tried to share our experiences with as wide an audience as possible to inspire, encourage and help others to develop similar sustainability initiatives in their communities. We were humbled and very excited to see reference to this on your website: <http://www.reconomy.org/starting-a-community-scale-transport-enterprise/>

