

Bodhi News November 2006

Bodhi-Eco-Project is now a registered charity (SC037550) and a company limited by guarantee (Company # 310132). And this means you can give us money, and if you are a taxpayer we get more back if you sign a gift aid form. We haven't got the forms yet but we will soon. And this also means we can apply to many more trust funds and public bodies to help raise the money we need for Phase 3: "Capacity Building" which will lead us up to the point of buying land as well as learn and practise the skills we need to live mindfully: a zero carbon – zero waste lifestyle . We've applied to Increase to employ an Education Officer to co-ordinate our events and courses, a Recycling Champion (see below) ; and we are applying to Awards for All for further research and development into Local Authorities.

We have a new management committee: Ratnadevi (chair), Andy Marnie (treasurer), Larry Butler (secretary), Diarmid Baillie, Kate Shaw, Justin Kenrick, Eva Shonveld and Judy Lally. We will soon be officially 'directors' of the company.

Diarmid and Lusi have completed their 5 presentations to local authority planning departments and we are delighted to publish a summary of their findings. Ratnadevi reports from Findhorn, a book review by Antony, and the launch of the new Permaculture Practise group.

DESIGN STUDY GROUP NOTES, September and October '06.

Permaculture Practise Groups. In our September meeting we started a discussion about how to develop and promote Permaculture practise in Bodhi and in Glasgow generally.

An idea for Permaculture weekend projects arose and also an idea to investigate opportunities to assist on eco-building projects wherever they are happening. We saw this as similar to 'WWOOFing' where workers exchange organic farm labour for food, shelter, experience, etc. So we coined 'WWOEBing' to denote 'Willing Workers On Eco Buildings'. One of our motivations would be to gain vital experience and knowledge in the realm of eco building. Other benefits may be fun, exercise, friendship & right livelihood.

These ideas were further developed in our October meeting and out of that was born the 'Permaculture Practise Group' which will meet every five to six weeks and spend at least half a day working on a site. These groups will be facilitated by any member of the group with sufficient knowledge of permaculture and will focus on a particular area of permaculture with a view to experiencing the principles in action. These activities can take place in ANY of our environments including gardens, homes, work places and more. So people can start thinking about places and projects where we could get involved in permaculture that is already happening or places where we could make permaculture happen.

RECYCLING CHAMPION

We also did some brainstorming to assist with the current grant application being made to 'Increase', to fund what we are calling a 'Recycling Champion'. We needed to define what this person's role will be, their job description.

We came up with the following.

- Promote the '5 Rs' : Refuse, Reduce, Repair, Reuse, Recycle.
- Produce and distribute a questionnaire to members to assess their level of current 5 Rs activity.
- Create a toolkit based on this data to enable people to raise this level.
- Enable people to measure their Eco-Footprint at home and at work.
- Help people access resources to help them make changes towards reducing their footprint.
- Begin research into the design of 5 Rs systems in an actual ecovillage.
- Research into how we can so business to serve the wider population in recycling.
- Affect 300 more people outside of our membership.
- Assist in the establishment of food co-ops among members and all over the place to reduce packaging and promote co-operation.

There is no meeting scheduled for the 'design study group' in its usual form in the next month. It has mutated into the 'permaculture practise group' for the time being but will surely arise once again bearing more resemblance to its older form as a valuable forum for input from the wider membership into the management process. When our new website comes online we hope soon to have a page on there for the design study group including a facility for members who can't attend meetings to offer their ideas, creativity and opinions to the process.

Ratnadevi's visit to Findhorn

In October I participated in the 2nd week of the new 4-week Ecovillage Design Education that was taking place at Findhorn. This training course has been developed over 8 years by leading members of the Global Ecovillage Network and has UN approval. I met 30 participants from all over the world and made good connections with quite a few of them. The theme of the week was the Social Design aspect of building an ecovillage, with an emphasis on communication and leadership skills. We had introductions to coaching, NVC, role-play and plenty of opportunity to practise these skills in mock teaching situations. There were useful presentations on different models of decision-making and on conflict resolution. We also covered bio-regionalism: how an eco project is embedded in the immediate neighbourhood, in terms of local culture, food, education, politics, etc.

I particularly appreciated the leadership of May East, who embodies a delightful mixture of spirituality, social activism and playfulness. I gave a

presentation on Bodhi, which was generally received with much positive encouragement. Apparently only 10% of planned eco villages are actually successful, so it was good hearing from May that she was certain that we will be one of them! The reason why so many fail is 'structural conflict', and we have gone a long way already to address some of the key issues to avoid this: produce written documents that outline our vision, choose participatory forms of decisions making, keep minutes of all our decisions, learn good communications skills, design clear membership criteria and develop a balance of 'heart, mind and will' skills within our steering committee. In terms of new learning, the following week on the theme of 'economy' would have been of great interest for me, but unfortunately I wasn't available then. However, the course has provided us with an extensive list of study material and I am looking forward to exploring some of it in our design study group. We also plan to organise a training workshop for Bodhi members on the subject of money soon. When I left, Jonathan Dawson (executive secretary of GEN) and May referred to Bodhi as Findhorn's Scottish sister ecovillage, which was sweet of them. It feels good to have made stronger connections with Findhorn, as there is a lot we can learn from them, looking at both their successes and failures.

BOOK REVIEW

"The Hand-Sculpted House" by Ianto Evans, Michael G. Smith, and Linda Smiley. This is by far the most inspiring and empowering eco-building book I have so far had the pleasure to read, combining a sense of joyful adventure and liberating creativity with excellent and wide-ranging practical advice on designing, planning and building dwellings. For me the great strength that singles it out from the average eco-build book is its fantastically rich and insightful chapters, which deal with the selection of building sites and the positioning of dwellings for maximum aesthetic pleasure and energy efficiency and minimum ecological disruption.....how to create true harmony between dwellings and the environment on several levels at once. Equally precious are the authors' enriching considerations on the importance of the spirit of a house, how subtle design considerations and intuitions can profoundly influence how your house FEELS to live in, giving examples of features of their own dwellings which give them sources of ongoing joy and harmony everyday they spend in their house.

There is also an empowering chapter on the economics of building your own home, arguing that through careful assessment of our true housing needs, clever design, and resourceful sourcing of building materials then eco friendly self-build can be an extremely economical process. The authors challenge us to dream of being mortgage free, freeing us to spend our time more creatively in the ways we really want. As another review of the book states, it is a "bible of radical simplicity"

Beyond these and other universally applicable chapters this book is a practical guide to the ancient and reviving art of building with cob, a highly versatile and sculptural building material made from a mix of earth, straw and water. The authors discuss at length its eco credentials and point out that in Devon and Cornwall there are tens of thousands of cob dwellings over 500 years old still inhabited and much sought after because of their unique character and charm.

Industrialised building techniques put an end to the use of cob, but we have come full circle and this traditional technique, combined with some modern advances in knowledge, has much to offer in the search for more sustainable building methods. Given this longevity in Devon and Cornwall it may well worth investigating cob's suitability for Scotland as they share similar cold damp weather patterns.

All in all I found this to be a wonderful book and would recommend it to anyone who dreams of building or designing their own eco-friendly house, whatever materials they favour. It is rich with insightful ideas and observations from the authors' many years of design and building experience, is charmingly written and illustrated, and extremely empowering. It de-mystifies the whole building process, equips one to minimize the need for expensive experts and specialists and, with cob in particular, argues that any able-bodied person, young or old, can be hands-on with building their own house. I was left rubbing my hands together and thinking "Lets Go!"

Antony Dumskyj

The Hand Sculpted House is available from Permanent Publications (the publishers of Permaculture Magazine) priced £27.50 . www.green-shopping.co.uk

Summary report of five local authority visits October 2006

By Lusi Alderslowe and Diarmid Baillie

The local authority visits were productive in many respects and many different ideas have come from these meetings. In this summary report we focus, in each local authority meeting, on whether Bodhi would receive planning permission for the development which we proposed to them (see other documents for more details of the proposal). This report then sets out a proposal for the next step forward.

Argyle and Bute

This authority seems to be very promising. The people we met with think that we would receive planning permission if we chose a site with existing buildings, of which there are many in A&B. They even showed us around one site adjacent to the council which is likely to be sold (by the council) soon, called Kilmory home farm, in the main town of Lochgilphead. They also told us of like-minded housing associations and other organisations in the area.

Dumfries and Galloway

The local plans have just been adopted so this is not likely to be an option for at least five years. There is an organisation wishing to build 40 new houses of super eco design (with which it could be interesting to partner) but their design was not included in the local plan.

East Ayrshire

Although the man we met was very enthusiastic (it “dove-tails with our aims”) he thought that we wouldn’t be likely to get planning permission unless it was specified in the local plan. We are pursuing an amendment to the amendment to the local plan. If this is not successful then there will not be another review for another five years so it is not worth pursuing at this stage.

Perth and Kinross

The woman we met was enthusiastic about the project, but thought that it would have to go through the local plan process. There are five local plans in the area each up for review at different times. It would be worthwhile investigating when the ‘Highland’ or ‘Eastern’ area local plans are renewed as these seem to be the most promising. If these will be reviewed in the near future it would be worthwhile putting in a submission to include something for an ecovillage in their area. At this stage we could investigate the organisations that were recommended to us and if relevant make contact with them.

South Ayrshire

It seems unlikely that Bodhi would get planning permission in South Ayrshire unless the project gets into the local plan (and/or) has proven amazing financial benefits. Not really worth pursuing.

What next?

The brief summaries above demonstrate that there is a large disparity between different local authorities and their policies, as well as the type of land likely to be available in the near future. We definitely feel that the work has been productive and should be continued, and propose that this should take the following format:

- Make a submission to East Ayrshire to include a larger scale ecological development in their local plan (to be submitted by 27th October);
- Investigate all proposed areas in the Argyll and Bute (including looking for land);
- Find out when the relevant local plans in Perth and Kinross will be reviewed, and make a submission, if in the near future;
- Investigate other local authorities to measure their receptiveness to Bodhi. This can be done by letter (and asking for a written response).

The latter point would include writing questions to be answered; sending letters out to local authorities (such as Glasgow City Council, Clackmannanshire, East and West Dunbartonshire, Renfrew, Inverclyde, Highlands, etc); awaiting replies; chasing up (this takes longer than you might otherwise expect!); compiling responses; and then setting up meetings with local authorities that are particularly promising.

A written response will be initially advantageous for the following reasons: it will take less time and money; more local authorities can be contacted at little extra cost; the written responses will be useful for giving direct quotes as evidence in the future (for example to the Scottish Executive who are currently saying that

their policies are sufficient for local authorities to encourage ecovillage developments); and the written responses will be easier to pass to other ecovillage groups interested in our research. The disadvantages are that many nuances may not be considered; that novel ideas can spring forth when confronted by a friendly face; that many planners when they see a proposal immediately think 'what is the catch, what are they really trying to get here' and have been able to see from our sincerity that we are not 'playing the same games' as some developers, so they have been able to change their view and try to work around the obstacles.

Our proposal is to employ one person to do this, in order that they can focus entirely every week on continuing this. We propose a 6 month contract for 2 days per week.

Dates for your diary:

Saturday 11th November 06: "Carnival of Health"

We really want to create a community of organisations and individuals who successfully convey a message that we take climate change very seriously in this part of the world. We have a very nice, green space made available to us in Glasgow Green and we really want to put on a very special day and feel we will only pull it off with as much creative input from many. Please try to create the time and energy to play a part as we are determined this day will be a catalyst with many positive repercussions for one and all. If there is anything you would like to contribute (or know someone who can), please get in touch, we are looking for musicians, stewards, area coordinators, children entertainers, people to set up and man stalls, first aiders, artists, cyclists, enthusiasm and imagination! Contact: Danny & Lusi, Tel 0141 632 3101.

Sunday 19th November: Launch of the Permaculture Practice Group (PPG) First PPG will be on Sunday beginning at 12 noon with a food-to-share lunch at Danni, Lusi and Robin's flat @ Flat 1/1, 12 Afton Street, just south of Queens Park in Glasgow. Lusi will be teaching us how to measure our Ecological Footprints.

Monday 4th December: NVC practice group @ Diarmid's flat, 2/1, 27 Lacrosse Terrace, tel 0141 339 8101. We will be offering another course in Spring 07. Please let us know if you would like to attend.

Saturday/Sunday November 11-12: Permaculture Design module 3
For more information contact: Sally Wilkin, Events & Workshop Organiser
sally@kilmartin.org Tel 01546 510278, fax 01546 510330 www.kilmartin.org

Tutors: Ed Tyler and Jonny Barton. Tutors: Ed Tyler and Jonny Barton
Forests. Succession in ecosystems. Clear fell/continuous cover forestry.
.Permaculture and the Sea. Note – this section will involve forest walks and a walk to Loch Sween. Buildings and structures.
choice of materials/new (self)build/renovation/maintenance.

Saturday/Sunday 27 & 28 January 2007

Syllabus for fourth module (Kilmartin) –Tutor: Jonny Barton
Ecological/Carbon footprints, Peak Oil and Energy Descent. .Renewable energy systems/ free environmental services. Wind, solar, woodfuel and others. .Waste treatment. Produce no waste. Compost toilets, reedbeds and other treatments systems

Saturday/Sunday 24 & 25 February 2007

Syllabus for fifth module (Kilmartin) –Tutors: Ed Tyler and Jonny Barton (team-teaching) Recycling in the community. The economy: informal/formal/green/true “wealth”. “Fertile territory”: green initiatives funded by the mainstream especially in area of community development. Agenda 21, Sustainable Development Forum, Green Activism. Urban systems. Land access; legal forms: forest villages, community trusts, social enterprise companies. Case studies: Eigg, Gigha, Tighnabruich, Tarbert Conservation Initiative. Trade and commerce. Action learning pathways: towards the diploma

Friday 15th – Friday 22nd December 2006

From Dark to Light: a Winter Solstice Residential retreat at Dhanakosa, Balquhidder, Lochearnhead. Mid-winter is a time to stop & reflect, refreshing our body/mind, & look ahead to the seeds we hope to sow in the coming year. With the help of meditation, yoga, chi-kung, combined with creative writing/drawing and a ritual bonfire, this will be a chance to re-evaluate and re-commit to the practices that lead to change and the fulfilment of our dreams.

The retreat will be led by Ratnadevi & Larry Butler & Linda France who will encourage a relaxed and confidence enhancing atmosphere that allows people to listen to themselves whilst extending their body and mind. A treat for yourself: increased vitality, creativity, calm and deep nourishment. Contact: info@dhanakosa.com www.dhanakosa.com Tel 01877 384 213

April, May or June 2007 (date to be confirmed)

The Great Turning. A residential weekend retreat based on the work Joanna Macy, the Buddhist peace activist and deep ecologist. If you are interested please let us know which weekends you could make in that period.

10th January 2007

Next Bodhi Newsletter will be published mid January 2007 when we should know the results of our fund raising efforts. Please send me your contributions - news reports of visits to eco-projects, workshops, photos, reviews, poems, etc.to: Bodhi: 14 Garrioch Drive, Glasgow G20 8RS.
email: info@bodhi-eco-project.org.uk www.bodhi-eco-project.org.uk

And Watch out for the launch of our newly re-designed website.