

Culdees CoHousing Ecovillage

About Culdees' Project

Updated 26/02/2011

Dear reader

A heartfelt and warm welcome to you.

Our aim at Culdees is to create a caring ecovillage CoHousing community, at one with the natural environment - where life's challenges are seen as opportunities for growth through learning.

Within the following pages lies some information about Culdees, the people here and the work that they are involved in:

What is going on at Culdees?

There are a number of people from different walks of life who consider Culdees a home-from-home. Some live at Culdees on a long-term basis - in a tent in the field, or in one of the caravans. Volunteers, who are accepted, can stay for one month. After that they can apply for an extension, which will be decided upon by the elders.

Who are we?

The central character here is Reverend Mother **Maryse Verkaik-Anand**, an Universal Multi Faith Minister. Maryse says:

I originate from Amsterdam in The Netherlands, where I studied Comparative Religion. I started my own business when barely seventeen, which grew to a 24-strong team. I married and after my two children were born, I gave this business to my colleagues and concentrated more on family life. My husband died when the children were still young, and I continued with his business. Later on, when I moved to Scotland, again I gave the business away to the workers. I moved into a thousand year old castle, eight miles from Culdees, where I lived for twelve years as a hermit in total silence -except when the children, their spouses and my four now-teenage grand-children came to visit.

This situation ended when I re-married: Dr. Anand, a GP from Glasgow. From then on I helped my husband in his surgery a couple of days each week. We made phyto-medicines and saw patients from all over the world in our small private clinic. We had our own laboratory in the Strathclyde University. I also created and work with

ReSOULving, helping individuals use their soul wisdom to resolve issues or aspects of their life which no longer serve them. Other disciplines are 'Perceptual Enrichment Programme', Radionics, and Reiki; I am a Reiki Master. My husband died some years ago; I do miss the contact with patients, and the research into plant-based medicines.

I got an inner calling to start a 'school, based on Human Values', and soon realised that it was not a school-school I had to build, but a 'school of life' and a village as vehicle to carry it. To accommodate this, I bought Boreland Farm, which I plan to gradually transform the 120-acres into a living, growing, Permaculture site and applying Human Values in all aspects.

I myself am passionate about Senior CoHousing: Another reason for considering an alternative way of living was the realisation that if I were to go into a retirement/residential/care or nursing home, I would stick out like a sore thumb. It is likely that the staff, the other residents and myself would all be very unhappy due to my personal choices. Being a vegetarian, having an 'other-than-generally-accepted' relationship with the concept of God, being a Mystic, including Eastern Philosophy and Sufism, practising Meditation/Yoga/Tai-Chi, using alternative Medical Practices, etc. does not, at present, usually generate endearment with the general public. I therefore decided to instigate the senior co-housing aspect, as a complementary component of the overall vision of the Culdees eco-village project -which also includes the multi-generational aspect- before it is too late and I do not have enough energy left to pull it off the ground..

Another reason is that I, -like most people, I believe- like to be surrounded by like-minded people; that there will always be someone with whom one can go for walks and swims and Scottish country dance classes; to dress up and enjoy together the cultural aspects of life like theatre, classical concert, ballet, opera, museum and regular visit to a good restaurant. Share a bottle of good wine or just sit quiet with a good book. Visit the Scala in Milan, the Arena in Verona, Venice, and other cultural cities. Or being accompanied on trips to, for example, India for a spiritual 'top-up' and Ayurvedic treatment.

I follow two studies in the Open University: Environmental Sciences and Social Sciences and hope to eventually do my Ph.D thesis on this project as case study.

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**John** joined us in April 2008. . .

"Although I have a background in electronic engineering, and had worked in the NHS for 20 years, living a fairly conventional life, being interested in gardening and DIY, I have long felt drawn towards some form of intentional community lifestyle in a rural setting, but have been aware of many groups that have started and failed, so I was somewhat cautious in my search. After hearing about Maryse's inspiring vision, I spent a number of weeks volunteering at Culdees in late 2007. Before that, I had been living amongst a buddhist community, and following retirement from my job, I was seeking some form of meaningful life for the future. Although I feel my time with the buddhists was worthwhile, I felt it was time for me to move-on, and I felt drawn towards Maryse's plans for a multi-faith eco-village, where all faiths are respected equally. So, having been made to feel welcome, and taking the plunge, I packed up my possessions and arrived with my fully-laden minibus. Since moving here I have found plenty to occupy my time, ranging from electrical and computer and office tasks to work in the garden and milking the goat, along with numerous other activities. I can't see myself ever getting bored here. From what I have learned about the principles and advantages of co-housing, I look forward to participating as this project develops."

**Sonam** joined us in October 2010. . .

"My name is Sonam. I am 61 and since the age of 18 I came upon and followed Buddhism via the martial arts path, along with theological studies. I always felt I have had a calling towards ordination, despite my colourful past which included being a night-club doorman and power-lifter (and seeing all that this entails within the night-life of the big cities, and being mixed up with this). It was Buddhism that kept me from going down the wrong path and also Buddhism was respected by the people on the other path. I have also been a biker since the age of 16, up to the age of 45 when I had a bad accident hitting a packing case that fell off a trailer, resulting in metalwork in my leg and 9 months on crutches, this giving me an insight into the plight of people with disabilities; which has led, in my later life to training and working with people with disabilities and also elderly care. At the age of 40 I lost my wife through a violent murder; this also changed my life as she was a very spiritual person, not wanting another relationship and respecting her wishes for me, this led me into becoming ordained as a Buddhist monk, as Buddhism helped me deal with the trauma and also guided me to do hospital and prison chaplaincy so I could help people who have committed these crimes and also opened up another path working with the terminally ill, I was giving medicine-Buddha classes for people who were in need of advice on how to deal with what life had dealt them.

I am also a cabinet maker, wood turner and carver and have been involved in making shrine cabinets and items for the temples and centres in my tradition. This meant travelling around and where ever I was I would progress my work and training in the Care industry

I came to Culdees visiting a friend a couple of years ago and liked the manifesto and vision and after a couple of visits decided that I would like to become more involved and become a resident. This involved getting care work in the area and letting my tradition know of my plans, and getting their blessings and in October 2010 I became a resident, helping to promote the dream of M.A. the founder."

In addition, a number of others based at Culdees will be writing something about themselves soon, including:

**Ichijo**, and **Gudo**, (joined us in 2008)

**Dan**: (has been here intermittently for a number of years)

**Neil**:

**Magnus**:

**Rory**:

**Alma**:

**David**, **Marcia**, and **Tatiana**.

We are now wanting to take practical steps towards building our eco-houses and because we have attracted a number of senior participants, we are focusing on the Senior CoHousing project at present. This will be complementary to our Multi-Generational CoHousing project, the two being integrated in such a way as to give people their own privacy and independence, at the same time as providing ample opportunities to collaborate with others amongst our community.

There are two aspects of the Culdee Project:

- 1) The '**Culdee Manifesto**', which is the organisational aspect, and
- 2) The '**Cornerstones**', which is the practical implementation.

The following is the Organisational Part of the Culdees Project:

# The Culdee Manifesto

(Definition of Manifesto: a public declaration of principles and intention.)

Introduction to the plans for a Culdee Human Values based Ecovillage in Fearnan.

(revised version; 1<sup>st</sup> draft was dated 23/09/1999)

*N.B.: The envisaged community based ecovillage is a means to support the Culdee Vision; it is not an end in itself!*

*ECOVILLAGES are communities of people who strive for some of the basic goals such as: self-sufficiency in food, energy, production and services and a lifestyle in harmony with fellow beings and nature.*

*'It takes a village to raise a child'. (African proverb)*

## The Culdee Vision statement: (draft 23-11-2010)

"To create a place where multiple generations, from cradle-to-grave, experience the living of Human Values and ethics, so becoming balanced individuals, and children become responsible role models for the future"

## The Culdee Mission statement: (draft 13-02-2011)

- "To create a Universal Multi Faith Ecovillage with a zero-waste/zero-energy/re-use/recycle/reclaim policy where the people acknowledge the Human Values of Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-Violence and aspire to inspire our children and our children's children (not forgetting each other and ourselves) to look at what can be improved in our society and lead a change by setting an example of how it can be done;
- To create a "School of Life" that encourages us to look beyond, and break through, the limitations of our belief systems and advance together on our journey of life; since we all have abilities far beyond what we use, we discover and joyously investigate the limitless possibilities we are endowed with;
- To encourage the children to examine alternative ways of learning and pass-on what they have learned and not be afraid to become a role-model for other children;
- To create a buddy-system to stimulate and encourage each individual on their chosen, emerging path;
- To recognise that as individuals, we are inter-dependent with one another and with the world around us. We are responsible for ourselves and our part within the whole;
- To foster children who can be given opportunities to share in our aims and abundance;
- To extend invitation to those who wish to contribute their presence and creative inspiration in service of the vision of Culdees. To welcome all to share in our journey of experience and discovery, raising awareness and nurturing the expansion of the consciousness that we are.

## **Synopsis of the Caldee Manifesto:**

To create a community based eco-village modelled on villages as they were 100-150 years ago, which were almost self-sufficient:

- Where three, even four, generations live closely together. (including a Senior Co-housing project within the village)
- Where the commitment to and care for each other is 'from Cradle-to-Grave' with as much emphasis for the healthy development of the children as the respect and inclusion-to-the last of the elderly.
- Where people work where they live.
- Where permaculture principles are applied.
- Where sociocracy is used as a decision making tool.
- Where people create their jobs in a cottage industry-type environment; showing creativity and re-using materials that otherwise would have landed in a land-fill.
- To incorporate a Woodland Burial Site
- Where emphasis is put on restoring the Human Values and re-connect with one's own inner guidance / higher self / God and where there is respect for each unique interpretation.
- Where we 'Walk Our Talk'.
- Where children learn to take responsibility for what they have.
- Where there is a co-operative nature/forest school based on home-schooling.
- Where a buddy-system is functioning so that no-one is left out.
- Where skills are taught from an early age on, regardless of gender, whether it be carpentry, building, engineering, gardening, cooking, sewing, weaving or knitting.
- Where the Scottish culture and Celtic language play an important part.
- Where music making - dance - arts - drama - sports are part of daily life.
- Where nature and wildlife blend naturally within the village.
- Where people grow their own vegetables, fish and meat locally.
- Where people live 'preventative' and make use of the 'alternative' healing systems and locally grown medicinal herbs; create a Physic (medicinal) garden.
- Where people use their building materials from what is quarried and grown locally, and/or as much as possible material is recycled/re-used/reclaimed.
- Where we aim to become a ZWAZE site (Zero Waste Zero Energy)
- Where all organic waste is composted/recycled on site.
- Where all buildings meet high ecological standards;
- Where we aim to be central in ecological pilot schemes.
- Where the village generates its own energy through solar/wind/water/biomass.
- Where we can educate people -young and old alike- from outside on *how* one can 'walk one's talk' by organising training courses and Seminars
- To become a vocational training site on all of the above; a 'University of Life'.

## Ethos and the Name

Culdees is the name of our community.

We are...

based on the values of ...

Truth

Love

Peace

Non-violence

Right Conduct

... aspiring towards ...

Blending the generations

Ecological self-build houses

A self-sufficient Community

Permaculture Projects with

Zero Waste and Zero Energy

Co-operatively home educate our children in Nature

The name **Culdees** has a dual meaning;

*'Companion of God'*

... and ...

*'Place of learning'*

It is also the name given to a group of Christian monastics who were said to inhabit this locality during the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. (It is peculiar to note that *Culdees* is the singular term - the plural of which is *Culdee*.) However, we usually refer to ourselves as *Culdeans*.

*Culdees is meant to be an Universal Multi-faith Community based ecovillage, which is supporting the vision to guide and educate children to become balanced, responsible and caring members of our Global society. Respect is shown for expressions of all existing religions and the regular devotional services reflect the various faiths of residents and guests. The services are open to anyone and people are invited to express and share and explain their own religious practice.*



## Introduction

All the work that takes place at Culdees is done by volunteers. There are always opportunities for volunteers to be involved in any aspect of Culdees that resonates with them. You are very welcome to join us as a volunteer if there is anything in the following pages that speaks to you. Even if all you have are thoughts on a particular area, please do share them with us.

## What have we done so far?

February 2001: Maryse bought Boreland Farm to establish a 'School based on Human Values'

2001-2003: Made the farm house habitable.

2002: Bought a large second hand porta-cabin to temporary house the school.

Levelled and hard-cored the site and erected the Porta-cabin.

Jan-March. 2003: Renovated the stable lad's quarters and converted them into a Bunkhouse. Converted two bedrooms in the farm house for B&B use.

April 2003: Opened Culdees B&B and Bunkhouse. July 2003: Build the large music room; October 2003: Build the loft-office

2004: Mucked out the large barn; build retaining walls, levelled and hard-cored the floor and covered it with a thick layer of play-sand.

Converted the four dingy rooms in the inner courtyard into one large living room with overflow kitchen. Build a large second washing/drying room, replaced the roof beams of another barn, build a food-storage with a loft space above it.

The baby-grand piano, violin, computer, and print/fax/scanning machine were donated. Won the Gold Award for Green tourism.

2005: Bought a large second hand Tipi, two were kindly lent; three static caravans were donated. Made a large chicken pen; fenced off a large goat's pen.

2006: Bought another, slightly smaller, second-hand Tipi; Levelled and hard-cored the permanent site for the static caravans and built an access road to the site; moved five caravans to that site, connected them to water, sewage and electricity; started on the first of the three planned terraces where the Market garden will be built.

Renovated the cottage adjacent to the farmhouse; It now has a modern kitchen with dining area, large sitting/ dining room with inglenook open fireplace, two double bedrooms of which one en-suite and one bathroom. It is available for holiday let to up to 8 people or for long-term let to up to 6 people.

2007: Bought a large Polytunnel and erected it; built raised beds inside and around it; built a long Pergola; built the Recycle Street; built a couple of dry-composting toilets; Built more raised beds on the hill-side. Two more static caravans were donated. We dug out terraces for six more caravans.

2008: Three more caravans arrived, which were connected to water and sewage; The recycle street was finished; built a accommodation pod inside the large barn with old doors and plastered them with lime and bracken; built a Japanese bath and a sauna; built a number of pig houses.

Plans for 2009/2010: (depending on the skills and abilities of the volunteers)

\*To build a bridge over the stream. (almost done) \*Repair the leaking roof on the farm house.

\* Finish and hardcore the remaining caravan-plots; connect them to electricity, water and sewage; \*Divide one static caravan in four bedrooms to house single volunteers; Put in new floor; insulate it; install electric under-floor heating in it as a trial. \*Prepare three static caravans for the first three families with young children to move in for their trial-year.

\*Connect the Portacabin/school/conference/meditation/yoga space to water; install the bathroom and built a small-scale sewage system for it;

Start an awareness campaign for the tree-planting Project and introduce the idea of family-planting days where families can donate -and plant- trees to commemorate loved ones or special days.

Apply for grants to make a 3D model on-scale of the land of Culdees;

Apply for grants to erect a deer fence over a length of 3000 meter;

Design and apply for grants for the Educational Trail which will also function as a Training Circuit with exercise plots and suitable for wheelchair-users; it also will act as access path to the woodland burial site which has been planned; designing and staking out of the trail will be done by students who do their practical year at Culdees; build the trail.

Apply for grants for - and build wildlife observation posts; build a number of dry-composting toilets alongside the trail. We will then plant the 15,000 trees for which a grant was already given.

Built more terraces for which planning permission is already given;

Erect more Polytunnels to start the Market Garden and plant the first trees for the plant nursery.

Start the procedure of designing and applying for planning permission for the farm shop with coffee shop and a large conservatory where people can lunch and look out over Loch Tay.

Introduce the idea of a communal Wind Turbine to the local people and start a work-group to study the feasibility; apply for grants.

Prepare one field for an experimental trial in growing crops of Rice, Barley, Hemp and Oats,; using the 'One Straw Revolution' method.

Erect an internal wall in the large barn made with shredded tetra packs and food wrappings which otherwise would end up in the landfill: a Tetrapackpapercretewall.

Read further on the following pages:

"If one wants to plan a year ahead, one plants rice.  
If one wants to plan a decade ahead, one plants fruit trees.  
If one wants to plan a century ahead, one EDUCATES."  
(Chinese proverb)

"It takes a village to raise a child"  
(African proverb)

#### WHY THE NEED:

In its "living Planet Report" of 2008, the WWF estimates that our demands are already 40% over the earth's carrying capacity(WWF, LZS, GFN (2008) *Living Planet Report 2008* [online, [www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/living\\_planet\\_report/](http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/living_planet_report/) (accessed 01 December 2010). Human activity is now on a scale which involves over half the biomass and severely impacts on the large natural systems such as climate and biosphere. Mankind will need to radically transform its way of life on the planet if that way of life is to be viable for some kind of civilised life. If current trends continue over the next thirty years, the resource burden and ecological service burden imposed by humanity will require more than 4.5 planets earth. Since we only have one planet, clearly something will have to change. There are three basic future scenarios.

- We carry on as we are and hit the limits hard with breakdown of support systems, political chaos and massive population loss
- We introduce increasingly stringent imposed rules such as rationing and the institution of eco-crimes
- We create a design revolution through which we learn to live lightly on the earth, to develop benign technologies and different ways of fulfilling our human aspirations other than the consumer society.

The sane alternative is the third scenario but it will require a mastery of good will, creativity and capacity to transform ourselves and our living arrangements. It is also a task that will take a generation or two, despite the urgency for change.

The coupling of education for leadership in this kind of world in all walks of life for the generations growing up now and their children with the experiments of eco-village design and practice is a clear contribution that increasing numbers of people are attempting. Also Culdees is a contribution to that field of work. As we face the worldwide destruction of our natural resources, the rapid erosion of traditional cultures, the disintegration of moral standards and the globalisation of our economies, communities that stand apart and empower people to live sustainably are crucial. They are the foundation stones for our children and a meaningful future which we would like to bequeath our children, so they, and in turn their children, may

grow up as balanced and healthy human beings who are not afraid to lead the way forward; they are confident, conscientious, empathetic, not afraid to stand their ground and always keeping the benefit for the greater good in mind and guided by selfless love.

"Leadership is idealism in action"

-Sathya Sai Baba -

#### CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE LEADERS / ROLE-MODELS:

Children are our future leaders/role-models. We, as their caretakers, have to ensure that they receive that kind of nurturing, upbringing and education which will prepare them to become well integrated, well balanced, responsible persons with high integrity and high moral standards in order to be able to share their knowledge and lead our countries to a viable future. The children learn how to handle responsibility issues from an early age on: They learn that they are the co-creator of their future and collectively they create the future of their nation.

By introducing a Buddy system, they are mentor -and are answerable- to each other. The moment this systems works well, we can invite school parties to come and stay for a week, to shadow our 'leader' children. Later on, we can organise Exchange Programs for students.

Besides the above, their upbringing at home has to be based on the understanding that children imitate us into the minutest detail, which places an enormous responsibility on our shoulders to be good role models in order to achieve the desired outcome as stated above. *(and I do not mean that parents have to act 'holier than holy; that would only be hypocritical. We are human, with our strengths and weaknesses, but we can demonstrate that we accept ourselves unconditionally, warts and all. It is the way we deal with our shortcomings which is important. And, are we consistent courteous and kind, accommodating, compassionate, helpful, empathetic and honest to everyone around us and the strangers we meet? - It might be fun to set up groups and reflect that to each other )* Many (most) parents, who were not fortunate enough to receive that kind of upbringing, are at loss and revert to their own, often undesirable, role model. The children go out in the world, and are subjected to the decline of morality, integrity and human values in an ever increasing speed. We, as parents, grandparents, caring relatives or fosterers are unable to prevent this happening as our homes are not isolated from the rest of the world.

Non-violence is one of the values we wish to cultivate. It is disturbing to read the results of a study into the effects of seeing violence on television.

[Huesmann, L. R., Moise-Titus, J., Podolski, C. L., & Eron, L. D. (2003). Longitudinal relations between children's exposure to TV violence and their aggressive and violent behavior in young adulthood: 1977-1992. *Developmental Psychology, Vol. 39, No. 2*, pp. 201-221]

Fifteen years ago I received an inner guidance, 'brief', to start a "School based on Education in Human Values", Since we all have abilities far beyond what we use I realised that "school" meant the "School of Life" and " Education" meant: "Educare" which is Latin for "to draw out" in stead of 'put in'. We also must share our knowledge of what we have discovered within. We gradually have to change our own approach to life and learning in order to create a lasting effect and even if we imprisoned our children inside our house, a single household will not have enough influence to bring forth the desired effect. Therefore, as a first step, we have to extend our family into a village which will influence the children.

I recall The Mother, the French visionary Mirra Alfassa, who had in 1954 what she called "A Dream": Fifty five years on her 'dream', Auroville in India, has become a township of 1,500 inhabitants from 40 different nations with two dozen schools, a number of research institutes, cultural centres, a seed bank, forests and sanctuaries, appropriate technology and renewable energy centres and many commercial units. Nearly three million trees have been planted in the past 30 years.

I also recall the words by E.F. Schumacher, economist, (from Small is Beautiful) in "Technology With a Human Face" "...Now it might be said that this is a romantic, a utopian, vision. True enough. What we have today, in modern industrial society, is not romantic and certainly not utopian, as we have it right here. But it is in very deep trouble and holds no promise of survival. We jolly well have to have the courage to *dream* if we want to survive and give our children a chance of surviving...the crisis of the industrial society which will become worse and end in disaster, until or unless we develop a new life-style which is compatible with the real needs of human nature, with the health of living nature around us, and with the resource endowment of the world."....

*"Do not be afraid to build castles in the sky,  
That is where they belong.  
But once the dreams are in place,  
Your job is to build the foundation under them."  
- Henry David Thoreau -*

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**FOR WHOM:** Those people who are not afraid to embark on a great lifestyle change in order to pave the way for today's children to stimulate their children for an inspirational way of living; who are willing to foster those in less fortunate circumstances and to fully commit themselves to the Vision and Mission statement. Who are willing to include in the community others from different cultures and belief systems who want to share the Vision and Mission.

*"Change and growth take place when a person has risked himself and dares  
to become involved with experiments with his own life".  
-Herbert Otto -*

Firstly, parents who already have made the decision not to educate their children in mainstream education, maybe for the above mentioned reasons, and who home-educate their children, or who are thinking to do so, and who are looking for alternative ways of doing so.

A Home-Schooling Co-operative can be set up, where people can pool their time and resources and a teacher can support the parents. Where Montessori, Steiner and Forest schooling systems can be chosen from, tailored to the child's needs. (Of course there are more alternative systems and I would be grateful to learn more about them; the more information, the better) My recommendation is to use a Buddy system, where every child is a buddy to another child, to teach, guide and support each other.

Secondly, couples whose children have already 'flown the nest' , who want a more rewarding lifestyle and who can relate to the vision, mission and what is written down on the following pages.

Thirdly, singles who decided that in order to change the world, one has to begin to change one's own life and who can relate to the vision and what is written down on the following pages.

Fourthly, those amongst the senior generation who can relate to our vision and would like to live this lifestyle. Their experience in life (and hopefully a wisdom arisen from that) is a valuable addition. For these people we are creating a Senior CoHousing development, which is distinct from, but integrated with, a Multi-Generation CoHousing low-impact rural development, all forming part of the ecovillage.

## Two kinds of people are usually attracted to forming communities- Pioneers and Settlers:

Pioneers take risks and leap into the unknown. They start the group, do the research, find the land. They can imagine, visualise something that doesn't exist yet. They can inspire themselves and others to believe that this particular vision is possible and they can make it happen. They use entrepreneurial skills to do all this within their budget ( and time frame?) Use labour, tools and energy to create the physical expression of their vision on the property.

They also have: *Patience, Faith, good communication skills* (or at least one in this group) *Tenacity: (determination and stamina) and the willingness to acknowledge others.* (the courtesy of heartfelt thanks)

Settlers wait and see if the pioneering group can pull it off. They come in later, when more is done about the project, and when there is something more visible to join. Settlers need the pioneers to break the trail for them. Pioneers need the settlers to join when it is time to raise money and make the project happen. Pioneers are like entrepreneurs. Settlers are like wait-and-see investors. Forming community groups need both.

There are two stages: the Founding (Pioneering) stage and the Settling stage.

FIRST STAGE : Founders (Pioneers):

To build an ecovillage is not easy. One has to be able to rely on each other, and share an equal burden. Core groups have to be constituted of people who are able to take responsibility for their own development. The core group needs to be composed of people who can hold the distance and persevere under pressure: there is a lot of sustained work to be done, alongside having to provide for oneself and for one's family, and contributing to the well-being of the group. For the founder group well functioning families and singles with a sound financial situation and good professional capacities need to be attracted. (One or two troubled people in a core group can significantly reduce a project's chances of materialising).

SECOND STAGE: Settlers:

Once the infrastructure is in place, more people can move in. The first year is a 'trial' period where people can live in a rented house (which has to be built in the first stage) or alternatively and may be more realistic, can move in a static caravan. When the trial period is over and all parties concerned are convinced that yes, this is indeed the way forward for this person/family and he/she/they are compatible with the ethos of Culdees, they can start building their house.

FURTHER STAGES:

The ecovillage needs to be well-functioning and gather good momentum before it can embrace other individuals or groups who may need special attention and care. Start-up ecovillage and community groups easily attract people who have been unable to manage their lives in mainstream conditions, and who see the emerging community as a possible salvation from poor partnerships or emotional problems, isolation or poor economy. Once the village has taken shape and there is enough surplus to go around, it can open up and welcome new residents who need presence and support.

COMMUNITY means:

Recognising and relating to others;  
Sharing common resources and providing mutual aid;  
Learning to make good decisions and solve conflicts;  
Emphasising holistic and preventative health practices;  
Provide meaningful work on site and sustenance to all members;  
Allowing for a whole life for children, the elderly and marginal groups;  
Promoting unending education;  
Encouraging unities through respect for differences;  
Fostering cultural expression;  
Green Economics.

ECOVILLAGES are communities of people who strive for some of the basic goals such as: self-sufficiency in food, energy, production and services and a lifestyle in harmony with fellow beings and nature. Those people are willing to scale down their current lifestyle, to live just by their basic needs, and heighten their level of consciousness. However, the ecovillage vision is far more than establishing a cohousing in the countryside and growing your own food. It is about a new low-impact lifestyle that incorporates ecological, social spiritual/cultural and moral dimensions, a lifestyle that re-establishes the local networks that have always been a part of human existence, but which have been disintegrating in more recent history for a variety of reasons. "Important aspects are health and education. The social benefits of health and education are greater than the benefits to the individuals directly concerned because the community as a whole benefits when the individuals have better health or are better educated." [*"Making Social Lives"* p.136, Milton Keynes, The Open University]

Ecovillages are demonstration models which show how the different elements of sustainability synergise; they create new models of social and educational structure, using the design principles of PERMACULTURE which has an ethical basis:

- Earth care - enabling all life systems to continue and increase.
- People care - enabling access to the resources people need for a quality life.
- Limits to population and consumption - to share resources for Earth care and People care.

Permaculture works with nature to make a better world for all. By observing the natural world we can see that there are a set of principles at work. Permaculture design uses these principles to develop integrated systems to provide our needs of food, water, shelter, energy and community in ways that are healthy and efficient. Through permaculture design we can improve the quality and productivity of our individual lives, our society and our environment.



Twelve permaculture design principles allow us to creatively re-design our environment and behaviour in a world of less energy and resources. They are universal - how they are applied vary greatly from project to project:

- Observe and interact.
- Catch and store energy.
- Obtain a yield.
- Apply self-regulation and accept feedback.
- Use and value renewable resources and services.
- Produce no waste.
- Design from patterns to details.
- Integrate rather than segregate.
- Use small and slow solutions.
- Use and value diversity.
- Use edges and value the marginal.
- Creatively use and respond to change.

[I am grateful to the *Permaculture Association* for the above explanation.]

Through introducing a buddy system, our future leaders, the children, are learning to think outside of themselves and be capable of addressing and transforming today's environmental and social challenges.

Through the integration of Cultural, Moral and Spiritual principles into their fabric, many intentional ecovillages echo cultural traditions and return to a way of living where harmony with all living beings, including our Earth, is the backbone of daily life. Ecovillages embody a sense of unity with the natural world. They foster recognition of human life and the Earth itself as part of the larger cosmos.

*"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty  
of the biotic community; it is wrong when it tends otherwise"*  
-Aldo Leopold -

CHILDREN: Based on the understanding that the future of humanity will be decided by its children, through one's attitude towards children; the thoughts surrounding the children, an ecovillager plays an important role to the creation of an environment of trust for children to grow up in. They also provide a loving environment where children are involved in activities such as gardening and building, acting, singing, music making, drawing and painting etc. They learn a variety of skills through practical experience., guided by a Buddy. The practical experiences are tailored on mirroring daily life. Children need plentiful opportunities for direct engagement with Nature: they learn by roaming in nature, by interacting with plants, animals and the elements; they discover the Earth for what it is -the source of their sustenance, of their very lives. They also discover that every blade of grass, every bug, is interrelated with the whole of creation and subsequently aids the child in becoming aware of the essence of the Universe and of himself as part of it. Animals are important companions and teachers for them; looking after pets, watching the animals that are living freely, and making contact with them - these seem to be appropriate for every child - which is helping to form their character right from a very early age. Through the buddy system they learn to function as responsible members of a community and helps them think for themselves and the one who relies on them, while at the same time remembering their place in the whole. Generally, ecovillages are able to foster a balance between personal freedom and one's responsibility to others. The villagers are also an excellent medium as role model for the development of the children, by demonstrating high moral standards and integrity, guided by the values of Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-Violence.

*There is only one nation, the nation of humanity;  
There is only one religion, the religion of love;  
There is only one language, the language of the heart;  
There is only one God, and God is omnipresent.*  
(Sathya Sai Baba)

N.B. The envisaged ecovillage is a means to support the Culdee Vision, not an end in itself!

## SOCIAL DIMENSION:

Ecovillages need a social contract or social management plan.

This plan details:

The vision and objectives of the ecovillage.

The ultimate size of the ecovillage.

How to join the ecovillage, including a trial period.

How to leave an ecovillage, perhaps first granting other residents an option to buy or a right of refusal to an intended buyer of a house.

An internal decision-making and conflict-resolution system.

A range of other matters which concern the functioning of the ecovillage and development of "community" within the village.

*(At the bottom are a few examples of how other ecovillages formulated their vision /objectives /social contracts)*

A Danish study shows that it is the *social dimension* of an ecovillage which is most important to people. In ecovillages people seek a better, more integrated place to raise their children. They want more time for their family and friends with common goals and interests, and less time spent on stressful jobs and commuting. Ecovillages also provide the possibility for integrating the differently abled, the elderly, other weaker groups, and children that gives them a full life.

However, in most intentional ecovillages, the social aspect of the new lifestyle and its ramifications are some of the most difficult to implement well. I would like to introduce a 'Buddy System' where each is allocated a Buddy who is guiding, stimulating and encouraging. Each person is a buddy to someone else, to promote the sense of social responsibility and companionship so that no-one needs to feel isolated. A profound respect for individual differences and an equally deep resistance to 'shoulds' and 'musts' combined with a genuine commitment to confronting difficulties and an openness to trying new things, has produced an eclectic toolbox of methods between ecovillages to deal with conflict resolutions, communication, consensus decision making, group dynamics and consistency in child raising.

A circle of elders is one resource: their wisdom can be used for the benefit of all; Re-evaluation Counselling is a peer counselling technique which involves compassionate listening as tool for understanding; Marshall Rosenberg's Non-violent Communication techniques; Arnold Mindell's conflict resolving methodology; Robert Jungk Future Workshops; Professor J Rudolf Dreikurs' technique in teaching children to take responsibility for their actions and parents to be consequent. In community we are able to be disharmonious and still stick with it, and to help each other through helplessness. The intention to stay present to each other is the main task in a community. It allows one to get the courage to speak up, say out loud what one thinks. The ego is put out there, in public. You can acknowledge it, be obvious about it, and then you can explore it. Finding your voice is healing, there is no constipation of mind, it is all fluid; health is about flow.

Health: Many scientific studies have shown that being part of a community improves an individual's abilities to face challenges in life: 'A loving community improves your immunity'. Care in the community is an essential step integrated into the fabric of community life; once a community can provide the care needed for individuals, it gains the confidence that it can also provide for the big transitions in life -birth and death.

The chosen lifestyle, emotional, social or spiritual solutions are often effective to maintain our health. Simple activities can enhance our health, some of which are: daily meditation, prayer, singing, dancing and music making; yoga and other forms of physical exercise; connecting with nature (walk, earth restoration activities); a healthy diet with locally grown and minimally processed food; communicating and living in harmony with others; expressing oneself through arts', crafts and other creative avenues; building one's own house, and supplying one's own energy.

#### THE CULTURAL - SPIRITUAL DIMENSION:

The spiritual purpose of an ecovillage is the realisation that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Ecovillages are pioneers of an integrated culture, which is able to create whole persons. Their philosophy is based on balancing all the natural realms (nature, human and spirit) and manifesting this balance in the daily rhythm. The awareness and culture of that approach are able to foster a connectedness to the greater whole. The spirit of community facilitates the spiritual growth in people. The cultural dynamics optimises the learning potential in the group. Communities, especially with a spiritual focus, have an ability to facilitate transformation in people, unmatched anywhere else; and that this transformation creates a culture which can optimize knowledge development, by releasing the genius in people. The other is the existential dimension of communities: community members have, on a deep existential level, committed themselves to each other and to serve the community in a spirit of caring and sharing (care for and serve the needs of other people, other beings and one's surroundings). The process of creating an ecovillage, added to a spiritual practice, is a 'highway' to personal development in itself; other people in the community help us hold a mirror to our personality, our strengths and weaknesses. We have many opportunities to learn who we are, and what we need to change in our-selves to improve our lives. We can leave old patterns behind and adopt a new worldview as we go. We help each other realise our divine nature.

When people live together, it is easier for them to gather for meditation, prayer and devotional singing, and to create a simple, 'mindful' lifestyle cooperatively.

*"When the forms of an old culture are dying, the new culture is created by  
a few people who are not afraid to be insecure"*

*- Rudolf Bahro -*

## ECOLOGICAL DIMENSION:

In order to be successful, ecovillages need to be planned.

Each ecovillage needs the following in its planning:

Layout of houses and other shared facilities, pedestrian system, car parking area, community food production/agricultural areas, work space and Earth restoration/wilderness areas.

A total water cycle management and recycling plan.

A plan for renewable energy according to targets of self-sufficiency.

A plan or guidelines for eco-houses

A landscape plan utilising native plants and fruits, nut trees and herbs

Ecovillages need to be car-free - this is a general trait of ecovillages. *Although we will have to establish access points for emergencies.*

*There will be wider appreciation for the ecovillage vision when ecovillages are seen not only as islands of sustainability, but also as dynamic centres of innovation which create tools, technologies and know-how that help address the systemic problems in society which are essentially due to a fragmented way of thinking perpetuated by the educational system in place.*

**Economics:** Even when ecovillager's needs are diminished, the community still will have to find ways of keeping them financially afloat in the long run. In the ecovillages who survived over the years, the people have been successful in planning and creating income-generating activities close to home. Their willingness to lead a simpler life has allowed them to scale down on their expenses and thereby reduce their income needs, freeing up more time and energy to explore new avenues for sustenance close to their heart and hearth. Partial self-sufficiency in the form of local food and energy production, coupled with a strong communal network, provide a sense of security for individuals or groups to dare tackle a change in their economic set-up.

From the outset, it is a good idea to plan the development of local businesses to attract entrepreneurs when designing an ecovillage.

A fully developed ecovillage will eventually mirror the activities and professions one finds in industrial society, but on local scale, with a different kind of organisation (i.e. co-ops), and based on principles of human and environmental ecology. Many of the products and services, which one usually has to outsource and pay for in mainstream society, can be manufactured and carried out within an ecovillage setting.

## Income generating activities:

- the skills of Ecovillage design, ecological building, permaculture consultancy, renewable energy and water treatment are often gathered through experiences, research and education and provide a basis for starting up local businesses. Establishing local circulatory systems (wind, water, soil) can create workplaces. Local water treatment systems alone can create three jobs per 100 families serviced by the systems.
- Consultancy in community skills: Conflict resolution, meeting facilitation and Future Workshops are other possibilities for local income-generating activities.
- Internet businesses are independent of location and fit in well in an ecovillage setting.
- Education: This is probably the most widespread and fastest growing money-earning activities in ecovillages. Although competition in this field is fierce, the integral villages differentiate themselves in that they implement what they teach in their living environment. (experiential education)
- Education: This is probably the most widespread and fastest growing money-earning activity in ecovillages. Ecovillage tourism: This activity is partly related to education, as many ecovillage visitors stay in ecovillages to help build and expand them, or to complete educational modules of the ecovillage curriculum. The Global Ecovillage Network secretariat in Italy started an ecovillage village tourism project called *ecovillage Travels* in 2001.
- Food Production: This is an area in which it is difficult to earn or save money if one goes from the self-sufficiency mode into commercial production. However, some ecovillages have been successful in striking the right balance: One produces fresh foods for their nearest town such as carrots, potatoes and onions. Another one produces wines and cheeses; another one has the most wonderful herb garden and produces herbal teas and yet another one specialises in many different species of delicate mushrooms.
- Healthcare, psychological and physical: Ecovillages increasingly integrate healthcare services in their activity pool. These activities can provide an income and enhance a village's potential for building up a healthy lifestyle supported by professional practitioners. Integrating handicapped residents or building hospices may attract funding from the state.
- Health Products: Essential oils, herbal medicines and other health items are produced and sold in a number of ecovillages. -with great success.
- Arts and Crafts: Music, dancing, theatre, painting, pottery, spinning, weaving and other forms of artistic expression are often part of ecovillager's lifestyle and can be offered for sale directly to visitors. They are also part of the educational curriculum.
- Media, Printing and publishing: Some ecovillages produce music CD's and tapes as well as films and photo exhibitions Some publish books, others have their own printing shops which services both internal and external businesses.

- Shops: Many of the products manufactured in ecovillages are sold through integral village shops. Most organic food shops include a successful café.
- Mail order businesses: a number of ecovillages have mail order catalogues; one is specially successful with a yearly turnover of £ 400,000!

### **Our own speciality as source of income could be:**

- The Senior Co-housing development within the village: For elderly people who are still reasonably fit but who do not fit in the structure of mainstream care systems because of being vegetarian/vegan/ follow a different religion than Church of Scotland/England/Roman Catholic.
- Perform multifaith wedding ceremonies in our tipis; name giving ceremonies and separation ceremonies, which I would like to introduce in our society; people get married in a ceremonial way, but their separation is often acrimonious and conducting a cutting-of-ties ceremony might take the 'sting in the tail' away. The participants of the ceremonies will stay in our three star- guest facilities and eat in our organic restaurant
- Perform multifaith funeral ceremonies.
- Create a woodland burial Site: our Organic coffee shop can provide sustenance for the mourners; some Culdee can learn to make coffins woven from willow;
- Start a tree nursery which provides the trees for the burial site.
- Host school parties in the tipis (children love staying in them) and introduce Permaculture to them and how our zero waste zero energy recycle reuse reclaim policy works in practice and let them shadow our children when the Children's Federation is up-and-running! (*I believe this will have the greatest impact on the outside world: the ripple effect it creates through the children*)
- Extracts from plant materials: Phyto-therapy; (I have 70 inventions of plant based extracts, of which a number are patented).
- Open a clinic where people can stay for a week or a fortnight to receive alternative treatments, like Phyto therapy, ReSOULving, Reiki, and others, as well as the Perceptual Enrichment Programme, for e.g. Dyslexic children.
- Open a Ayurvedic clinic and training school.
- Give Reiki courses: a target group to train is persons with Down Syndrome, so that they can assist Reiki Practitioners.
- Give Permaculture courses.
- Start tree nursery.
- Start a Garden Centre.
- Start an Organic vegetable garden and box-scheme
- Open an Organic farm shop and coffee shop
- Make Goat's cheese and yoghurt, tofu and bread.

Although many income-generating activities are located within ecovillages, ecovillage businesses need not be limited to individual projects. Many of these endeavours benefit from co-operation and exchange between ecovillages, which strengthens ecovillage businesses everywhere.

There are more economic implications: instead of having to involve hard currency in the equation, one can keep transactions within the informal economy (gift or love economy), and outside the formal economy. One community in Italy created their own currency: the Credito. The founders decided to pool their personal savings so that they could invest in land and build the first houses. The community needed to have immediate liquidity in order to start all the planned internal projects, while at the same time having the money to invest in land and houses. They decided to use 'vouchers'. These -'Credits'- were to replace money inside the community, and to support its services. As this system worked well, it was decided to issue Credits every time new citizens joined the community. Each Credit (Credito in Italian) issued corresponded to the same amount of liras deposited in the bank to be used for other investments. Thanks to the community management of the resources, a central "Treasury" was also instituted for all residents citizens. They organised two distinct services: a) An "issuing authority", which issues new credits with a corresponding value in houses and land. This is guaranteed by a real estate cooperative of which all citizens are members and in which they own shares, and b) A "loans service" to place loans at the disposal of community members in order to support companies in the making. In this case we are talking about activities and services, which have ethical and social goals linked to the ideals of the Federation. They decided to produce real coins, to have a system that could be both 'quantifiable' and symbolic. The value of the Credit is now linked to the Euro.

The gift economy, which involves exchanging goods and services outside of formal economic registration systems, is instrumental in strengthening the community by making it less dependent on society at large.

Another alternative system is 'Friendly Favours' which connects generous people to each other: Globalisation has destroyed the value of favours; the Friendly Favour system measures generosity, not financial wealth.

#### WHAT MAKES AN ECOVILLAGE A SUCCESS:

The success of an ecovillage is very dependent on how its individual members relate to the community and how it functions. Its success is also dependent on how its community relates to the wider whole right up to the total planet. These two areas are each explored in the next sections. Section 1 gives some illustrations of the principles that need to guide the individuals and the community. Section 2 describes an holistic framework which relates all the levels from person to planet.



## WHAT MAKES AN ECOVILLAGE A SUCCESS: Section 1:

Ecovillages need a social contract or social management plan, and state their visions and objectives; An internal decision-making and conflict-resolution system. A range of other matters which concern the functioning of the ecovillage and development of "community" within the village. Below are some examples.

Example A:

1. A strong clear set of founding principles given by 'the Mother' in the Auroville Charter.
2. A group of tough pioneers who believe in the transformation of consciousness and see the ecovillage as a living laboratory for evolution.
3. A real environmental focus on building sustainable eco-system, which leads to creative reforestation, seed banks and appropriate energy systems.
4. An intense commitment to art, music, dance and culture. (honouring beauty and the inner being nourishes the imagination and brings extraordinary joy).
5. A deep commitment to new forms of experimental education and the development of the spiritual being.
6. A firm commitment to being willing servitors of the divine (in a philosophical rather than a religious sense).
7. Sheer stubbornness, an absolute persistence and a refusal to believe in the impossibilities.
8. A sense of humour.
9. The courage to laugh at ourselves and acknowledge our mistakes.
10. A commitment to higher collective goals; being part of the solutions for our Planet rather than part of the problem.

The Charter:

- 1 The village belongs to nobody in particular. The village belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in the village, one must be the willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.
- 2 The village will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.
- 3 The village wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, The village will boldly spring towards future realisations.
- 4 The village will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity. (copyright Auroville)

Example B: Statement of Common Ground: *Findhorn's Statement of Common Ground establishes ways for its residents to put their holistic worldview into practice in their daily life. They are the result of 40 years of experience in living a spiritual life:*

1. **Spiritual practice.** I commit myself to achieve spiritual practice and align myself with spirit to work for the greatest good.
2. **Service.** I commit myself to service of others and to our planet, recognising that I must also serve myself in order to practise this effectively.

3. **Personal growth.** I commit myself to the expansion of human consciousness, including my own, and I recognise and change any of my personal attitudes or behaviour patterns which do not serve this aim. I take full responsibility for the spiritual, environmental and human effects of all my activities.
4. **Personal integrity.** I commit myself to maintain high standards of personal integrity, embodying congruence of thought, word and action.
5. **Respecting others.** I commit myself wholeheartedly to respect other people (their differences, their views, their origins, backgrounds and issues), other people's and the community's property and all forms of life, holding these all to be sacred to the divine.
6. **Direct communication.** I commit myself to using clear and honest communication with open listening, heart-felt responses, loving acceptance and straightforwardness.. In public and private I will not speak in a way that maligns or demeans others. I will talk to people rather than about them. I may seek helpful advice, but will not seek to collude.
7. **Reflection.** I recognise that anything I see outside myself -any criticisms, irritations or appreciations - may also be reflections of what is inside me. I commit myself to looking at these within myself, before reflecting them to others.
8. **Responsibility.** I take responsibility for my actions and for my mistakes. I feed back to others in a caring and appropriate fashion, to challenge and support each other to grow.
9. **Non-violence.** I agree not to inflict my attitudes or desires (including sexual) on others. I agree to step in and stop, or at least say that I would like stopped, actions (including manipulation or intimidation) that I feel may be abusive to myself and others in the community.
10. **Perspective.** I take responsibility to work through and put aside my personal issues for the benefit of the whole community. I will resolve all personal and business conflicts as soon as possible. I acknowledge that there may be wider perspectives than my own and deeper issues than those that immediately concern me.
11. **Co-operation.** I recognise that I live in a spiritual community and that it functions only through my co-operation and my good communication. I agree to communicate clearly my decisions. I agree to communicate with others who may be affected by my decisions and to consider their views carefully and respectfully. I recognise that others may make decisions which affect me and I agree to respect the care, integrity and wisdom that they have put into their decision-making process.
12. **Resolution.** I commit myself to every effort to resolve disputes. At any time in a dispute I may call for an advocate, friend, independent observer or mediator to be present. In the event of a dispute continuing unresolved I will have access to the grievance procedure. I commit to following this procedure (to be decided by the community)

13. **Agreements.** I commit myself to keeping agreements I have made and not to break or try to evade any laws, rules or guidelines, to have honest dealings with all bodies and to pay all charges and dues owing.
14. **Commitment.** I commit myself to exercise the spirit of this Statement of Common Ground in all my dealings. (copyright Findhorn Foundation)

Example C: Principles of Spiritual Activism: they are used as key learnings and guidelines that, taken together, comprise a useful framework for 'spiritual activism'.

1. **Transformation of motivation from anger/fear/despair to compassion/love/purpose.** *This is a vital challenge for today's social change movement. This is not to deny the noble emotion of appropriate anger or outrage in the face of social or ecological injustice. Rather, this entails a crucial shift from fighting against evil to working for love, and the long-term results are very different, even if the outer activities appear virtual identical. 'Action follows Being', as the Sufi saying goes. Thus: "a positive future cannot emerge from the mind of anger and despair" (Dalai Lama).*
2. **Non-attachments to outcome.** *This is difficult to put into practice, yet to the extent that we are attached to the result of our work, we rise and fall with our successes and failures - a sure path to burnout. Hold a clear intention, and let go of the outcome, recognising that a larger wisdom is always operating. As Gandhi said: "the victory is in the doing" not the results. Also, remain flexible in the face of changing circumstances: "Planning is invaluable, but plans are useless" (Churchill)*
3. **Integrity is your protection.** *If your work has integrity, this will protect you from negative energy and circumstances. You can often sidestep negative energy from others by becoming "transparent" to it, allowing it to pass through you with no adverse effect upon you. This is a consciousness practice that might be called 'psychic aikido.'*
4. **Integrity in means and ends.** *Integrity in means cultivates integrity in the fruit of one's work. A noble goal cannot be achieved utilising ignoble means.*
5. **Don't demonise your adversaries.** *It makes them more defensive and less perceptive to your views. People respond to arrogance with their own arrogance, creating rigid polarisation. Be a perpetual learner, and constantly challenge your own views.*
6. **You are unique.** *Find and fulfil your true calling. "It is better to tread your own path, however humbly, than that of another, however successfully." (Bhagavad-Gita)*
7. **Love thy enemy.** *Or at least, have compassion for them. This is a vital challenge for our times. This does not mean indulging falsehood or corruption. It means moving from us/them thinking to 'we' consciousness, from separation to cooperation, recognising that we human beings are ultimately far more alike*

- than we are different. This is challenging in situations with people whose views are radically opposed to yours. Be hard on the issue, soft on the people.*
8. **Your work is for the world, not for you.** *In doing service work, you are working for others. The full harvest of your work may not take place in your lifetime, yet your efforts now are making possible a better life for the future generations. Let your fulfillment come in gratitude for being called to do this work, and from doing it with as much compassion, authenticity, fortitude, and forgiveness as you can muster.*
  9. **Selfless service is a myth.** *In serving others, we serve our true selves. "It is in giving that we receive". We are sustained by those we serve, just as we are blessed when we forgive others. As Gandhi said, the practice of clinging to truth confers a 'matchless and universal power' upon those who practice it. Service work is enlightened self-interest, because it cultivates and expanded sense of self that includes all others.*
  10. **Do not insulate yourself from the pain of the world.** *Shielding yourself from heartbreak prevents transformation. Let your heart break open, and learn to move in the world with a broken heart. As Gibran said, "Your pain is in the medicine by which the physician within heals thyself." When we open ourselves to the pain of the world, we become the medicine that heals the world. A broken heart becomes an open heart, and genuine transformation begins.*
  11. **What you attend to, you become.** *Your essence is pliable, and ultimately you become that which you most deeply focus your attention upon. You reap what you sow, so choose your actions carefully. If you constantly engage in battles, you become embattled yourself. If you constantly give love, you become love itself.*
  12. **Rely on faith, and let go of having to figure it out.** *There are larger 'divine' forces at work that we can trust completely without knowing their precise workings or agendas. Faith means trusting the unknown, and offering yourself as a vehicle for the intrinsic benevolence of the cosmos. "The first step to wisdom is silence. The second is listening." If you genuinely ask inwardly and listen for guidance, and then follow it carefully, you are working in accord with these larger forces, and you become the instrument for their music.*
  13. **Love creates the form.** *Not the other way around. The heart crosses the abyss that the mind creates, and operates at depths unknown to the mind. Don't get trapped by "pessimism concerning human nature that is not balanced by an optimism concerning divine nature, or you will overlook the cure of the grace." (Martin Luther King) Let your heart's love infuse your work and you cannot fail, though your dreams may manifest in ways different from what you imagine (from the Satyana Institute, Colorado, U.S.A.)*

**We can base our own guide lines on those three examples.**

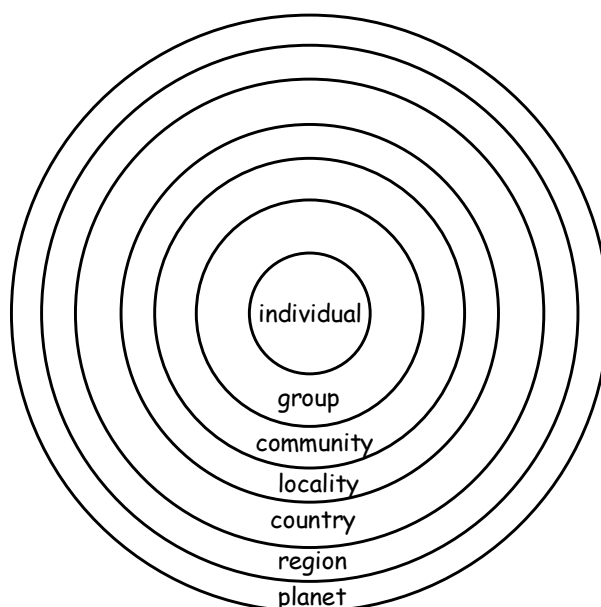
## WHAT MAKES AN ECOVILLAGE A SUCCESS: Section 2:

PLACING THE ECOVILLAGE IN CONTEXT: (This section is contributed by Tony Hodgson , a member of the International Futures Forum and Director of Decision Integrity Limited)

"The challenge in growing the number and role of ecovillages as part of an initiative for restoring viability to the earth is that there are many levels which are all interconnected and dependent on each other. In the past there was some room to manoeuvre in setting up situations in relative isolation as a way of controlling what was and was not present in the given living arrangements. However, the situation is pretty close to vanishing through the multiple forces of population growth, trade expansion, globalisation of media and communications and the spread of technology everywhere.

A holistic perspective requires us to consider whatever our situation is as part of a *holarchy*. This is neither a hierarchy nor a network but a structure of nature that transcends both whilst incorporating features of both. In a holarchy we need to take into account what Arthur Koestler called the *Janus effect*. Any part in a whole has two faces, one is autonomous and acts freely, the other is integral and acts as subservient to a greater whole. This is one way of characterising a fundamental dilemma of any effort to create an alternative life-style, which is the tension between *independence* and *interdependence*.

From a holistic perspective we, as individuals, are nested in six further layers as shown in the diagram, below.



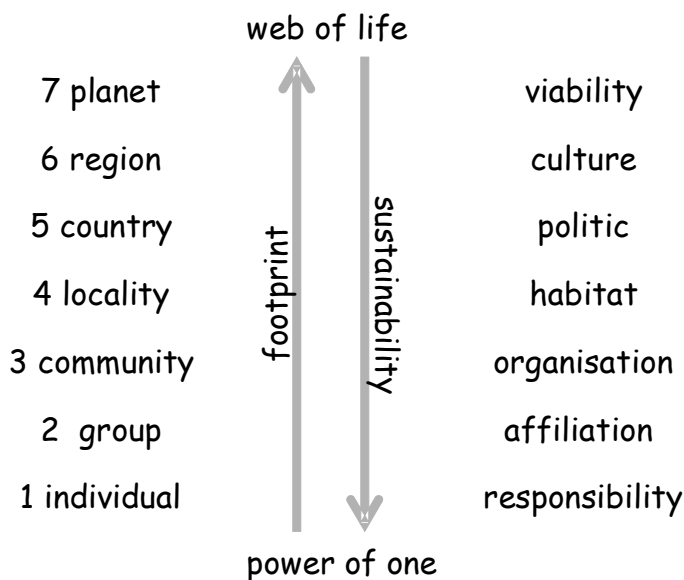
The Viability of Any Level Depends on the Viability of All Other Levels

We can place the ecovillage at the locality/community layers. However, the viability of an ecovillage is dependent on a core group that share values a, aspirations and skills sufficient to maintain the alternative standards. This, in turn, is dependent on

specific individuals who can live and practice the key values. Looking in the wider direction, the locality is also dependent for its health on the kind of governance and social state which contains and surrounds that locality. It is also embedded in a regional culture which will include ethnic, religious and other cultural patterns. Finally, it will be a contributor of some range and scale of the total human footprint and the balance of degenerative and restorative conditions on the planet.

The challenge is that all levels have to be taken into account whatever their condition. If countries are at war, then the locality may be overrun. If unsustainable technology is imposed by market and political forces, then it has to be dealt with, even reformed into a more sustainable form. Placing the village in a cocoon will not work.

The next diagram shows a more specific way of thinking about these issues. It is simply a framework to help discussion and identify where both problems and solutions might lie to enabling viability.



### Interacting Levels in The Search for Sustainability

At the planet end of the scale we have the biosphere and the web of life which ultimately determines whether humanity is viable. At the individual end is "the power of one" which is where human creativity and caring can transform situations. The sum of individuals and their activities determine the human footprint.

Working up the Hierarchy:

1 without individual responsibility all the other levels will be weak and the human project will fall prey to hypocrisy and exploitation.

- 2 without affiliation of human groups as families or bonded affiliations, the generational power will be weak, both in terms of ideas and education of children
- 3 without community there will be insufficient diversity to cover all the aspects of sustainable living and local self-governance
- 4 without a sufficient scale of viable footprint of land, crops and productive areas a community will have a balance of liability rather than restoration
- 5 without a framework for law, justice and provision of wider infrastructure and so on the communities will be unable to mutually support each other through trade, travel, knowledge, art and cultural diversity
- 6 without a regional viability in terms of resources (especially water) , climate and biodiversity, the countries and communities will not be able to flourish
- 7 if the sum total of service demand from nature exceed its capacity then the emergence of catastrophic conditions is, at some point, inevitable, however locally viable some communities might be.

The study and understanding of these levels and how they interact both positively and negatively is an aspect facilitating the development of ecovillages as a component of planetary sustainability."

**OWNERSHIP:** (Needs brainstorming sessions by the discussion group which will be formed)

**Finance:**

To bring Culdees to this point so far has exhausted all my resources. Since my only income is my state pension £39 per week, there was some serious thinking about how to go forward on this less-than shoestring budget: I am of the mind frame that everything is possible and a minor challenge like having no liquidity is when inventiveness is called upon: I looked at the buildings and decided that with manpower the barn adjacent to the house could be transformed into a bunkhouse, to meet the demand for beds by the many hill walkers and Monroe baggers who frequently knocked on the door and asked for accommodation. We opened the Bunkhouse and B&B in April 2003 and at the moment we are able to pay for part of the running costs for the whole place, like council tax, insurances, heat fuel, water, electricity, phone bills and food for the volunteers, which is no mean feat considering that an average monthly oil bill is at this moment about £800 and electricity bills come to £1000 per month! (The first things which need to be tackled is installing a hydro-electricity, wind power, a solar power system, a heat exchange system and a woodchip boiler). We even were able to purchase a polytunnel

I as founder invested in the land and made up for the difference in running costs, and at the moment function as a bank, financing the property for future members

at a presumably reasonable rate of interest and will be reimbursed over time until the loan is paid back. Until then, in order to avoid a 'feudal Lord and serfs' situation which can create resentment, and which could deter competent, solvent and informed community seekers, I will do my best to make my intentions about this subject very clear and it needs a number of bouncing-off ideas-sessions to crystallise my thoughts:

Being a 'benign' owner has had an undesired side-effect in that sense that people project all kinds of parental/authority-figure issues onto me and we attract mostly people with few skills and limited funds who are, perhaps unconsciously, seeking a generous 'parent' to take care of them and I ended up functioning like a substitute mother with a nest of community children to look after, which is not community! (having said that, I do not want to generalise, because there are a number of long-term volunteers who have chosen not to work for money elsewhere but commit themselves to serving this project and so far without even receiving pocket money)

Understandably I am not eager to relinquish any power until or unless others shoulder their load of financial, legal, maintenance and other responsibilities. At the moment I am liable for any lawsuit or damages and financially responsible for maintenance, taxes, insurances with no legal recourse to induce others to pay a share of these expenses if there were a dispute.

(In the United States there is something like a triple Net lease; maybe there is something like that in Scotland).

The idea is that everybody will have to self-build their own eco-house:

My suggestion is that people pay £50,000 for a 50 years lease of the land on which their house will be build. If they move on, say after ten years, they will have a refund minus two percent and shared running costs for each year they stayed. If a community member cannot afford the entire lease fee at once, he/she can make a down payment and payments over time.

If one does not have the money for a down payment then one can become a member of the Housing Co-op which then applies for funding. (The Housing co-op has to be started by the Culdee) The people earn 'sweat equity' while building their house so that, when finished, they will be part-owner of their house (say 25%) and gradually buy out the Housing Co-op

If one of the long-term volunteers wants to become a member with all the decision making rights, how does that to be dealt with? So many hours (minus the ones for food and accommodation and their share in the running cost) are considered a credit point towards a share? How has the ratio to be of members who can afford to pay downright their lease with a down-payment and mortgage member and earn-credit-as we-go-along members?

I myself have some still-un-crystallised ideas and bounce that off you:

Although I have yet not monitored and researched everything, I calculated that the land can provide for the needs for a hundred houses (may be even more) for families, singles and elderly and I issue one hundred leases. Each leaseholder has one vote.



We start the first stage with, say, twenty founder-members who can afford to buy their lease outright (plus those who put money in a 'savings account' until they have the right amount, earning them credit points as they go along). With that amount I pay off my investments and loans and re-invest the rest in a communal kitchen/dining room, a community house where people can reside for their first - trial-year and a number of family houses-for rent for the same purpose, and setting up some income-generating businesses and -most important- replace the old, very unsustainable oil fired Aga and boiler now used for cooking and heating, install Hydro-power, solar panels, wind generators, heat-exchange pumps and a sewage composting system, not to forget to adapt my diesel fuelled car to bio fuel. Beside the paying members, long-term volunteers work alongside them for food and lodging in a caravan

After that first year, the members who want to remain at Culdees start building their house by builders (our own co-operative building business?!) / help each other /self build. The ones which, after all, decided that this life/community is not for them, can leave and their share has to be freed, which can be paid for by the second-stage incomers, the settlers.

Those second-wavers pay also their lease outright. They can move into the vacated communal house or static caravans and start their trial year. The money generated by the second wave, is now used to pay back the last investments. The remaining is now used for building more rental houses, continuing improving the infrastructure and developing more communal space.

Meanwhile the third-wavers, who do not have the money to buy their share outright, have been able to organise themselves financially and structurally and set up a housing co-op and have used their time to apply for funding and grants; they have created credits by working in the community and they can now enter the trial-year and live meanwhile in one of the rental-houses (Housing benefit) until they can move in their own self-build low-cost house.

My own money will now mainly be invested in the rental houses and the rents and income from leases will be my pension. (Again, this thought needs further crystallisation).

I envisage that when the village is well on the way to take shape and is independent and self-supporting and does not need my investments anymore and I know that my 'brief' has been executed as instructed/inspired, I can relinquish control over the development and donate any profits I made to our Charity which we set-up when we bought Boreland farm. (The Universal health and Education Trust)The charity will gradually own everything except the owner-built houses and the founders will get the remaining of the lease -minus running costs back when they move on. Newcomers will have to buy their lease for the original price plus inflation. Everyone will own their houses but not the land.

### Degree of financial interdependence.

There are various possibilities which will have to be decided upon by the core group; e.g.:

- 1) community members can work for community co-op businesses (and/or outside businesses, to start with), share income and share a common treasury. (*This might be a good solution in the pioneering stage*)
- 2) They can have a hybrid economy -working for community businesses and sharing profits for food, housing, medical insurance and other necessities and expansion, but keeping any outside earnings separate. (*once the foundation is laid and the community is running smoothly*)
- 3) They can have fully independent incomes, and share the community expenses.

### Some other issues that has to be decided upon by the core group:

Which things will be an absolute No-No in the community :

Meat? Tobacco? Alcohol? Drugs? Loud music? Cats and Dogs?

RELIGION: There is in fact only one Religion: the Religion of Love. We build a meeting place to worship XX (fill in what you best relate to) The major religions have their space within that place.

"Culdees" means 'Companion of God'; it is my belief that we are constantly accompanied by God/Spirit.

We founded the "Multifaith Companionship of Culdees" and started with 18 founder-members. It is based on the Religion of Love: Respect is shown for expressions of all existing religions and believe systems; the regular devotional services reflect the various faiths of residents and guests. The services are open to anyone and people are invited to express, explain and share their own religious practice.

A NOTE ABOUT CULTS: (in case someone tries to classify our endeavour as 'cult') It is important to be clear about how an eco-village is to be distinguished from a cult which shares a set of living arrangements like an eco- village. The affirmation of clear principles and vision might be mistaken for a process of cult formation. This is not the intention and is less likely to be a danger if certain psychological facts are understood:

Cults are composed of people who subscribe to some fixed religious or ideological belief system which is not to be questioned within the cult. Free ranging inquiry into the wider total range of belief systems is regarded as disloyal or "bad". Cult groups tend to be possessive towards their members and make the boundary conditions between cult and society exclusive. Individual fulfilment is endlessly promised by subjugation to cult norms but is always incompletely delivered. Practical knowledge is mystified and only made accessible to the "initiated".

In the Culdees approach it is important to recognise that there are many sources to the guiding principles and these are open to discussion and development by the learning community. Questioning is encouraged, providing it is constructive and in the spirit of learning. The Culdee companions are learners, not teachers, and questioning is at the core of learning. Culdees is open in its review of what is going on in the world and is linked to many networks of people with different perspectives who themselves are learners. The emerging village will not be a closed community but breathe in and out as people come and go according to where they are in their lives and what they need. Of course, a small core group is needed for continuity, but this will itself change over time as different capacities and skills are needed for its evolution. There is no external promise of individual fulfilment in Culdees. Fulfilment is regarded as a matter for each individual conscience and application of "work on oneself". This may take many forms which is why the heart of Culdees is a multifaith continuous exploration. The "buddy principle" extends to all participants and all are encouraged to learn, do and share what they know.

In brief, Culdees is a learning ecovillage,

#### AFTER WORD FROM MARYSE:

Besides the excerpts of the books which are mentioned below, the ideas I have been able to put down on paper as words, are captured 'like butterflies caught in a net' while they were dancing through my mind: It took me ten years to let the ideas germinate and I spent all those years looking at and calculating every move; like a chess player, imagining the far reaching consequences of each move over and over again in my mind and often another possibility presented itself to be added to make the next step feasible. And I tell you something: each time I included another aspect in the 'Master plan', something happened to confirm the 'wisdom' of my choice, e.g.: when I had written down the vision statement about preparing youth for Leadership, I found in my library, on the shelf *in front* of the books, a book which I did not recall ever having seen before: a book on Leadership, a guideline for the mandatory full-credit course in the Sai Institute of Higher Education. When I decided to include the, in simple words, 'children ruling the roost' concept, something similar happened: I had ordered the whole 'Ringing Cedars' series (see [www.RingingCedars.com](http://www.RingingCedars.com)). When I started reading the third book, I saw on the inside of the front cover photographs of children in a school in Russia. They depicted pictures of the Academician Mikhail Petrovich Shchetinin's forest school. In the book the author describes that the children designed the lay-out of the site and the buildings. The children are not only constructing the buildings themselves, their campus, but their whole future in the process. e.g. a ten year old girl is capable of building a house, doing design drawings and cooking meals, not to mention knowing ballroom dance steps and mastering the fundamentals of Russian martial arts. At this school children take but a year to master the whole ten-year public-school maths

syllabus, along with studying three foreign languages, using a buddy system and reflect ideas on each other. They neither recruit nor produce child prodigies. They simply give the children a chance to discover what already lies within. Three hundred pupils from different Russian cities study there and there is a waiting list of 2,500 hopefuls for an unexpected opening.

I contacted the publisher, since the school does not have e-mail or a website, and they put me into contact with one of the parents whose daughter is studying there. I was told I am welcome to come to the school to study their system. The money will come, no doubt, to enable me to travel to the school.

Things happening like that, are no coincidences; they are in fact my road markers to show where I am on my path.

*This manifesto is still in draft-stage; I am aware that a lot of the text need to be rephrased; we can regard this manifesto as a starting point in the spirit of learning and co-creation of the Culdee vision: I welcome any constructive feedback.*

I need to have serious brainstorming sessions with:

- + Potential Culdee Pioneers, parents and their children;
- + Potential Culdee Settlers, parents and their children;
- + Children in general;
- + Anyone interested in the above mentioned project and who is willing to spend time and energy to help it take shape.

WE NEED:

Three more dedicated and conscientious Trustees; a Patron.

Donations to give momentum to this creative process are tax deductible .

I throw our needs in the Cosmos; at the right time they will be met by the right people.

HEARTFELT THANKS TO:

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who asked me to start a School of Human Values;

Tony Hodgson, whose constructive and extensive feedback including his diagrams, made the Manifesto more comprehensible.

**Acknowledgements:** I was inspired by and used Excerpts and compilations from:

"*Ecovillage living, Restoring the Earth and Her People*", edited by Hildur Jackson and Karen Svensson. and "*Creating a life Together, practical tools to grow ecovillages and Intentional Communities*" by Diana Leafe Christian.

"*Sai Baba's Mahavakya On Leadership; Education in Human Values*" by Dr.M.L.Chibber

and. at the eleventh hour: "*the Ringing Cedars of Russia*" series: "*Anastasia*" , by Vladimir Megre, the RingingCedars Press

I appreciate that people who become interested in Culdees will be in different situations in their lives and on different time paths. I envision a network of all interested people, wherever they are on the planet, able to communicate using new technology, such as Skype, which enables zero or minimal cost communication, chat groups and already the beginnings of reliable video conferencing over the internet. More on this later.

N.B.: If you like the contents of the Culdee Cornerstones and Manifesto, please tell others about it!

Bless you all; May the wind always shine in your face and the wind blow at your back!

Rev. Maryse Anand.

(this document is subject to ongoing revision; the first draft was on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1999)

### Useful Information

CULDEES - Boreland Farm - Fearnan by Aberfeldy - Perthshire - PH15 2PG Scotland

Phone + 44 1887 830519; Mobile + 44 7904 954116

Website: [www.culdeesbunkhouse.co.uk](http://www.culdeesbunkhouse.co.uk) ; E-mail: [contact@culdeesbunkhouse.co.uk](mailto:contact@culdeesbunkhouse.co.uk)

Website: [www.culdees-ecovillage.co.uk](http://www.culdees-ecovillage.co.uk); E-mail: [contact@culdees-ecovillage.co.uk](mailto:contact@culdees-ecovillage.co.uk)

It is possible that you like what you have read and although you cannot be directly involved with the work, you feel supportive of what is going on. You are welcome to make donations to Culdees for any particular part of the work that you feel you would like to support. By talking to us about the Gift Aid option, it means that Culdees can reclaim the basic rate tax paid on your donation. This effectively means that if you contribute £10, the Inland Revenue will give us another £2.80, making the total donation £12.80.

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Thank you for tuning into Culdees

Now read the practical aspects:  
the [Culdees Cornerstones](#)